

**Minutes of Sandon Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 25th March 2015 at 7.30 pm
Sandon Village Hall**

Present: Cllr K Bolton, Cllr F Cannon, Cllr J de Uphaugh, Cllr P Wallbridge,
Cllr J Wharton, Cllr R Wornham (Chairman)

In attendance: District Cllr S Jarvis, Mr M Wicksteed (Responsible Financial Officer)
Ms M Parker (Clerk), Mr & Mrs C Hoefkens, Mrs P Sinclair

- 15.14 Welcome and apologies for absence
Cllr R Wornham welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Hunter and Mr D Camps.
Members of the parish were welcomed and Mrs Sinclair asked to make a representation and was invited to do so at the end of the meeting.
- 15.15 Requests for dispensation for disclosable pecuniary interest on items on the agenda – Localism Act 2011 s33
No conflicts were declared.
- 15.16 Minutes of Sandon Parish Council meeting held on 14th January 2015
Resolved, that the Minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and be signed by Cllr R Wornham.
- 15.17 Reports on actions agreed at the last Council meeting (not covered elsewhere in the agenda)
Item 14.50 - Hope Close lighting: Cllr Wornham reported that the issue with the street lamps being lit from 2 am to 5 am continued. Whilst the Council had deployed someone to inspect the lamps, a glitch in the system meant that the job had been marked as completed and was not therefore followed up on. Cllr Wornham brought this to the attention of Cllr Hunter and it was hoped that the timing of the lights would soon be changed.
Item 15.04 – The purchase of a heavy duty strimmer did not take place as unfortunately when the application was made monies in the NHDC grant fund had already been allocated. However, following discussions with Cllr Jarvis, the RFO learnt that the next round of funding will open on 2nd June and an application will be submitted at that time.
Item 15.07 - Horse riding on Roe Green: **Resolved**, Clerk to insert a polite notice in the Gazette asking riders to avoid riding on the grass.
- 15.18 Chairman's report
Cllr Wornham highlighted the need for new Parish Councillors to be elected at the Parish election on 7th May as three of the current Councillors would be not be standing for re-election. He was pleased to report that sufficient prospective candidates had come forward but more were welcome – please contact the Chairman/Clerk.

The Parish Assembly will take place on Wednesday 22nd April in the Village Hall. The Chairman will deliver an invitation to each household.

Cllr Hunter was unable to be present but asked for his gratitude to be minuted to all Sandon Parish Councillors for their work during his tenure over the past four years. In particular he wished to thank the retiring Chairman and two retiring Councillors.

15.19 Planning Applications received since 19th March

15/00345/1

Beckfield House, Green End, Sandon

Single storey side link extension

Councillors reviewed the proposal to form a side extension to attach the garage to the house. There were no reasons to object.

Resolved, Clerk to respond to NHDC as above.

15.20 Safety Report dated 24th March 2015

Mr M Wicksteed reported that in his role as Safety Officer he carried out monthly inspections of the play equipment on 18th February 2015 and 24th March 2015 from which no defects were noted that represented significant health and safety hazards. The following was summarised:

- . Damage to turf by slide and swings possibly caused by a vehicle was noted.
- . It was pleasing to see a reduction in litter on Roe Green.
- . Chris Mace kindly volunteered to assist with grass cutting. The ground remained dry enough for Church End to be cut.
- . The RFO sent a letter on behalf of the Parish Council to acknowledge and thank Chris Mace for his voluntary help over the past year and expressed the Council's wish that he continued to help with grass cutting around the village in the coming year. It was noted that by confirming this request in writing as a volunteer he is covered under the Council's public liability insurance.
- . Climbing frame needs to be repainted. Council agreed the colour (RAL 6005 Green).
- . The responsibility for the maintenance of the Council's fairway mower was discussed.
Resolved, that Cllr Wornham continues to undertake routine greasing and when maintenance such as cylinder sharpening is required the cost will be met by the Council.

Church Tower access ladder

The Safety Officer informed Councillors that further to discussions at the last meeting, the PCC had made no progress in agreeing to the installation of a safety board. Councillors were keen to ensure that safety measures were in place as soon as possible and agreed that the installation of the safety board at the base of the ladder together with a safety notice would be an effective measure. Cllr Cannon proposed that the Parish Council fund the safety board, Cllr Wallbridge seconded and all agreed.

Resolved, that the Responsible Financial Officer was authorised to obtain 3 quotes for the manufacture and installation of the safety board. The decision on the choice of contractor was delegated to the Chairman up to a maximum price of £300.

Checklist for Village inspections

The auditor highlighted the need to evidence the Chairman and RFO's periodic inspections of the village open spaces, structures and trees. The RFO proposed that an additional column for this purpose be added to the current safety checklist, to which all agreed.

Resolved, that the Responsible Financial Officer add a column to the current checklist form.

15.21 Financial matters

1. Finance Report for year to 25th March 2015

The RFO presented the Financial Report for the year to 25th March. The accounts were reviewed and accepted and the following year-to-date highlights were noted:

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| . Total receipts | £7,444.25 |
| . Total payments | £4,712.50 |
| . Payments since last meeting Salaries/HMRC | £500.00 |
| . Available balance | £6,077.86 |

Authorise March payments

The RFO requested approval for the RFO expenses and Village Hall rent for PC meetings totalling £133.55. The Clerk had not submitted expenses but will do so. A maximum limit of £100 was authorised.

Resolved, payment approved and cheques duly signed. The cheque for the Clerk's expenses up to £100 was authorised.

Bank Mandate

The RFO informed Councillors that the PC's current account had been renamed by the bank as a Treasurers Current Account. Bearing in mind that two of the retiring Councillors were cheque signatories, it was proposed that Cllr Wharton be made a signatory with immediate effect and that the two outgoing Councillors (Cllr Bolton and Wallbridge) be removed at the same time.

Resolved, the RFO will complete the bank mandate as above.

Grants

It was noted that Friends of Sandon School had not yet paid in the cheque for the £500 grant awarded to them. Cllr Cannon will remind FOSS.

The RFO was delighted to report that a letter of thanks was received from the pupils of Sandon School for their grant.

Contribution to Village Hall refurbishment

It was agreed that a once off contribution of £1,500 would be made to the Sandon Village Hall Committee from Parish Council funds, to be put towards the cost of the recently completed refurbishment works in the Village Hall. Proposed by Cllr Wallbridge, seconded by Cllr Wharton and all agreed.

Resolved, the RFO will provide the Village Hall Committee with a cheque for £1,500.

2. Business Risk Assessment

The Responsible Financial Officer presented the Financial & Business Risk Assessment February 2015 which all Councillors confirmed they had read. The new column (as above) will be added in relation to village inspections in future. Cllr Cannon proposed acceptance and all agreed.

Resolved, that the Register was unanimously approved and signed by Cllr Wornham.

3. Internal Audit Report 2014-15

The Responsible Financial Officer presented the Internal Audit Report 2014-15 which was carried out by David Camps, Auditor, on 11th March 2015. Mr Camps sent his apologies for being unable to attend to present the audit. The audit report was circulated to everyone and confirmed as read. It was noted that:

- The Standing Orders review period of 5 years was unanimously approved
- The correction was noted that a copy of the Village Hall insurance schedule is kept on the Parish Council's file.
- The Parish Council and Village Hall Committee were to look jointly at the adequacy of the insurance cover in relation to rebuilding costs of the Village Hall in line with RICS guidelines.

Resolved, that the RFO will meet with Kay Bolton of the Village Hall Committee before the next renewal in September.

- The procedure for evidencing the Chairman and RFO's inspection of village open spaces was formalised (see agenda item 15.07 above).

Resolved, the recommendations in the internal audit report were accepted and duly signed by the Responsible Financial Officer and the Chairman.

4. Internal Audit Effectiveness Review 2015

The purpose of the review was to ensure compliance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2006. The Chairman led Councillors through the questions under the following two headings: 1 - Meeting the Standards and 2 - Characteristics of Effectiveness. Councillors answered the questions and all were in agreement. The Chairman annotated the responses on the document.

Resolved, Cllr Wornham was authorised to sign the document as a true record.

5. Insurance Review

The levels of insurance cover need to be reviewed annually and these had been included in the Financial Report, the Responsible Financial Officer drew the Councillors attention to these and it was agreed that they were appropriate.

Resolved, the current levels of insurance cover for the council are adequate.

6. Review of Council Standing Orders

The 5 year review cycle for Standing Orders previously agreed was formally ratified.

Councillors were unanimous in thanking Mr Wicksteed, the RFO, for the huge amount of work he had done in completing the accounts so efficiently.

15.22 District Cllr Steve Jarvis report

Planning - Cllr Jarvis advised that 2,800 people responded to the consultation on the Local Plan and that it had now closed. The results of the consultation will be available online but not for some months.

Council tax – Council tax has increased by 1.9%; Parish Council increase is also 1.9%.

Bus services – A consultation was underway on restructuring bus services and there is a risk that local services that are relied upon for travel to Letchworth, Buntingford and local villages will be cut which is a threat to the accessibility to shops and health services. A petition in support of maintaining sufficient services is available for those who wish to sign it – contact Cllr Jarvis.

Resolved, the Parish Council will send a letter to object to cuts in local bus services to the County Council.

15.23 To receive the Clerk's report (for information only)

Notices have been posted regarding the PC election. There was nothing else to report.

15.24 Any Other Business

Fencing around

Cllr Wharton informed Councillors that Mr Chris Mace had kindly offered to erect a post and chain fence to designate the car parking areas surrounding the Village Hall. It was noted that the posts would need to be removed for village events on the green. Councillors were grateful for Mr Mace's kind offer and would like more details.

Resolved, Cllr Wharton will ask Mr Mace for suggested plans.

15.25 Date of next meetings

- . Wednesday, 22nd April at 7.15 for 7.15 pm – Annual Assembly
- . Wednesday, 13th May at 7.30 pm.

15.26 To suggest agenda items for the next meeting of the Parish Council

None.

Members of the public's participation

Mrs Pat Sinclair explained that she had asked to address the meeting to open up discussion about building developments in the village. Mrs Sinclair appreciated the efforts of the Parish Council in preserving the tranquillity and character of Sandon but pointed out that the Parish Council's powers were limited. Mrs Sinclair felt that the time had come for a group voice with the aim to preserve the rurality and biodiversity of Sandon. She hoped that such a group or forum would have the approval of the Parish Council whilst at the same time being independent and separate from the PC.

It was suggested that Mrs Sinclair could survey local opinion at the forthcoming Annual Assembly on 22nd April. The Chairman offered to include a letter from Mrs Sinclair with the invitation to the Parish Annual Assembly which he will shortly hand deliver to each household in the village.

Flooding at Mill End

Mr Hoefkens drew attention to the two waterways at the far end of Mill End where the road floods due to poor maintenance of the drains.

The Chairman undertook to contact NHDC.

The Chairman thanked the Parishioners for attending the meeting and for their input.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Chairman

Date