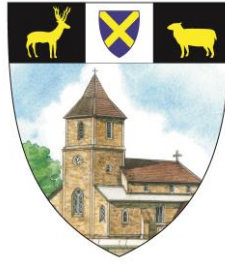


# Sandridge Parish Council



Marshalswick Community Centre,  
The Ridgeway,  
St.Albans,  
Herts  
AL4 9TU

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7<sup>th</sup> December 2023

To : Councillors Graham Leonard (Chair), June Reid, John Hale, Jennifer Roberts, Adam Twidell, James Lambert, Julie Oakley, Maurice Wells, Carol Chalkley, Mary Ternouth, Raihaanah Ahmed, Debbie Chachulski, Mike White, Luke Sieger

**You are summoned to attend a meeting of Sandridge Parish Council, to be held at Marshalswick Community Centre on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7.30pm**

*Simon Thwaites*  
Parish Clerk

Members of the public and press are invited to attend this meeting. Questions or concerns may be submitted to the Clerk in advance of the meeting via email using [clerk@sandridge-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@sandridge-pc.gov.uk) or by post, address as above.

## A G E N D A

- 1. TO RECEIVE AND FORMALLY ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Councillor Carol Chalkley
- 2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**
  - a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda
  - b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests; and
  - c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate
- 3. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THE 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

#### 4. QUESTIONS TO OFFICERS

#### 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS TO RAISE ISSUES OR ASK MEMBERS QUESTIONS

#### CLERK'S REPORTS

#### 6. Monthly Accounts

Please find attached a schedule of creditor payments for the period 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Of note is the higher than usual figure for salaries which includes the 2023/24 pay award, backdated to April. The accounts under the heading 'Online Transfers' are due to be paid on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023. It is;

#### **Recommended**

That the Online Transfers schedule is approved for payment and all other payments are ratified by Full Council.

#### 7. (a) Contract for the Jersey Farm Open Space Bike Track

The contract for the construction of the Jersey Farm Open Space Pump Track was awarded to JB Extreme on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the contract value being £50,000. In March 2023 the Parish Council's internal auditor made a recommendation for The Council to formally approve both the appointment of the contractor and the contract value. A report was made to Full Council by the Clerk in April 2023 but with a request to formally note rather than formally approve the appointment and contract value. It is therefore;

#### **Recommended**

To formally approve the award of the contract to construct the Jersey Farm Open Space Pump Track to JB Extreme Ltd in the sum of £48,400.

*N.B: It is noted that there will be an increase in the contract value once the ongoing traffic survey, carried out to address concerns raised by Herts Highways is complete. Provision for this has been made within the 2024/25 draft Sports and Recreation budget.*

#### **(b) Jersey Farm Open Space Pump Track Update**

A verbal update from the Project, Amenities and Community Engagement Officer on the current position of this project.

#### 8. 2023/24 Budgetary Control and 2024/25 Draft Budget (see also item 7 (b))

The projected position in 2023/24 and the draft budget for 2024/25 were reviewed by the Finance Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 (Appendix 1). The draft has been compiled by the Clerk in consultation with officers, suppliers and committees. It prudently estimates the costs of future inflation, pay awards, capital works and events. The reserves position and the five year forecast (see next item) are based on projected net expenditure of £306,330 in 2023/24 against a budget of £343,095. This represents a projected underspend on budget of £36,675.

In summary, draft net expenditure for 2024/2025 is budgeted to be £357,305. This is an increase of 4.14% on the current year's budget. The draft budget is a combination of ongoing operational expenditure and new one-off items of expenditure as previously agreed by committees. Details of exceptional items may be found in the furthest right-hand column. Please note two items in respect of Sports and Recreation;

1. The sum of £50,000 is shown in the reserves as earmarked for the bike track. This expenditure is not however reflected in the budget at this stage because of uncertainties around if/when it is to be used.
2. The Sports and Recreation capital budget at the adventure playground is shown as £30,000 but without a specific project named. This is because the final cost of complying with planning requirements to build the bike track are unknown and it is probable some of this funding will be required. It's also known that the build costs have increased. Most of the £30,000 should however fund a new project at a location to be determined in 2024/25 once bike track costs are

finalised. Any new project(s) will be brought to Full Council before progressing because of the sums involved.

A further significant update is that several budgets have been brought under the control of the new Committee for Sustainability where previously they've not been overseen by any committee. It is;

### **Recommended**

That the draft 2024/25 budget as attached is approved subject to funding (see item 10).

## **9. 5 Year Model**

The attached five-year financial model gives an overview of the draft budget in Appendix 1 by identifying trends in income, expenditure and the level of reserves. Councillors should ensure when setting budgets that the proposed net expenditure will not create difficulties in maintaining reserves to an acceptable level in future years. It should be noted that an 'acceptable level' can refer to maximum funds held as well as minimum funds held.

The projection supports applying both the recommended draft budget at item 8 and the recommended precept at item 10.

## **10. 2024/25 Draft Reserves, Precept and Funding Requirement**

Appendix 2 details the opening and projected closing position on reserves. The projection assumes that (i) the draft 2024/25 budget is approved, (ii) a 6% increase on the 2023/2024 precept is agreed and (iii) that reserves of £35,064 will be used to support the 2024/2025 budget. Also assumed is the accuracy of the 2023/24 projected outturn. The following should be noted when considering the above points;

Sandridge Parish Council continues to raise the lowest precept in the district (comparable councils - see the attached Reserves Summary) and economic challenges in future years will impact more heavily if the Parish Council fails to maintain balances. A prudent increase in next year's precept will safeguard against the potential for a proportionately higher increase in future years.

In general, future environmental priorities and global unrest could result in increased expenditure for the Parish Council, for example the cost of energy or the costs associated with more severe weather. This would not have been considered when setting CIPFA recommended levels of General Reserves of between 3 and 6 months operational expenditure. It is;

### **Recommended**

That an increase on the 2023/24 precept of 6% is approved for the 2024/25 financial year. This would increase the precept by £18,240 from £304,001 to £322,241 in support of the draft budget at item 8.

## **11. Parish Council Schedule of Internal Controls**

Please see attached a report by the Clerk documenting the internal controls in place to manage risk to The Council. It is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for The Council to formally document and regularly review its internal control systems. It is;

### **Recommended**

That Members formally note the requirement to document internal controls and to carry out a regular review.

## **12. Internal Audit**

Attached is a summary of the 2023/23 Interim Internal Audit. Details were emailed to Members on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Of the 109 audit tests carried out, 108 were positive and 1 negative (please see Audit observations B1 & B2 – these will both be remedied). It is;

### **Recommended**

That Council formally notes and approves the internal auditors report and the Clerk's response to the three recommendations made.

### 13. Matters of Note

- Staff appraisals will be carried out in early January 2024. These will be taken to the HR Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> February.
- A new Salvation Army clothing bank has been ordered for the Village Hall/Spencer Meadow car park. The Parish Office will monitor the bank for fly tipping.
- Grants awarded this year to the Jersey Farm Day Care Centre and the Hornbeam Hedgehog Sanctuary were awarded under the LGA 1972 s.145 and the Open Spaces Act 1906 s.9 & s.10 respectively. These details were omitted on the original minutes.
- Councillor Hale and the Clerk attended the first of three course sessions entitled 'Carbon Literacy' on December 5<sup>th</sup>. These are run by the Groundwork organisation and funded by the County Council.

## **COUNCILLOR AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### 14. Grant Applications

Please see the enclosed grant application from Sustainable St Albans in respect of the forthcoming year's activities.

*Note: Grant expenditure to date this year is £12,531 plus £1,500 awarded to the Friends of Jersey Lane (awaiting bank details)*

### 15. D-Day 80 at the Jersey Farm Woodland Park

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024, D-Day 80, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Normandy landings will be commemorated throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, UK Overseas Territories and at the site of the British Normandy Memorial, overlooking Gold Beach in Normandy. The event will enable communities and individuals to pay tribute to those that gave so much during this campaign to help ensure the freedom we all enjoy today, with the flames from the beacons representing the 'light of peace' that emerged from the dreadful darkness of war. A target of 80 beacons per county has been set.

Full details were sent to all councillors by email on September 4<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup>.



Councillor Twidell has spoken to the Scout's District Commissioner for St Albans and confirmed that they would be keen to participate in lighting a beacon, possibly with some words such as a soldier's memoir spoken during a short ceremony. A member of the British Legion or of one of the local cadet groups could perhaps take the reading. Members are reminded that the Parish Council signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant in March 2023.

It is believed the scouts would have access to a beacon such as the one above if an early commitment is made. This would be mounted on a pole with the ash collected within the base (i.e. without damage to the grass). If unavailable, the Parish Council might wish to purchase a beacon for use on this and future occasions, the cost of which would be around £150. Water buckets and an extinguisher would be made available. Councillor Twidell;

### **Proposes**

1. That the Parish Council participates in the D-Day 80 event on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 in collaboration with other organisations such as the scouts.
2. That the event be held on the Jersey Farm Woodland Park.
3. That a budget of up to £300 be allocated to the event to cover costs such as mentioned above.

**16. Community Festive Lunch**

Councillor Ahmed has organised a community festive lunch at Jersey Farm Community Centre on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December between 12pm and 2pm. Participation in the lunch is free of charge and walk-ins will be welcomed although booking is advised - [stalbanscommunitypantry@gmail.com](mailto:stalbanscommunitypantry@gmail.com) or 07534 523232. Councillors are asked to consider helping on the day, even if only for an hour.

**17. Proposed Diversion of Footpath 26 Sandridge**

Please see attached a report and proposal from Councillor Ternouth.

**18. Meetings of Committees:**

- Sports and Recreation Committee 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023
- Planning Committee – see below

**19. MATTERS OF NOTE ARISING SINCE THE CIRCULATION OF THE AGENDA**

*The Council may not make decisions under this item*

**20. PLANNING MATTERS**

The Planning Committee met on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

Sandridge Parish Council's Planning Committee meets every three weeks to review and respond to planning applications received from the Planning Authority, St. Albans District Council.

Planning applications commented on since the last Full Council meeting are;

22 Skyswood Road AL4 9PG 5/2023/2099

112 Osprey Drive AL4 0LU 5/2023/2206

7 Evans Grove AL4 9PJ 5/2023/2280

Please note: Planning applications received at the Parish Office from the Planning Authority *after* the Parish Council agenda has been published may also be discussed at the meeting as may applications of complexity or applications likely to impact heavily on the Green Belt.

**21. SUGGESTIONS AND/OR MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Note: In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, the Parish Council meeting will be open to the Public unless the Parish Council resolves otherwise**

**Next meeting date – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7.30pm – Marshalswick Community Centre**