

SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Soham Town Council held via Zoom with live streaming using YouTube on Tuesday 4 May 2021.

Present: C Warner (Chairperson), P Lane, D Woricker, P Leonard, H Ross, G Dyer, P Leonard, & Mesdames R Aitchison, E Johnston, A Woricker, C Simoes, S Prior & A Pallett

PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

There were no comments from members of the public.

NOTED Cllr Pallett made representation regarding her views and concerns in relation to the planning and the town councils committee responsible for providing comments to the Planning Authority (ECDC) and wished them to be recorded:

"I've been thinking about this for some weeks now. The following are my own thoughts, feelings and observations. Please indulge me.

The recent Pandemic lockdown has shown STC has been able to help the community by keeping going. They followed the guidelines and embraced new technology and much more and have proven to be a good council. They deserve respect.

ECDC historically, have seemingly not cared about Soham residents or Soham Town Council despite our input and ideas, possibly because of poor communication. STC always seem to be the last to know about new town schemes for Soham, funding schemes, donations to local groups etc. A better line of communication and trust is needed between the authorities.

ECDC have in the past and will continue I'm sure to ignore Local plans, boundaries, policies and land supply figures whether we are to capacity or not. Their goal is to populate Soham wherever and whenever without a care if the residents want Or do not want any more houses spoiling their way of life, security, and Town. Their planning committee claims to be democratic. I reserve judgement.

We are only a lower tier council and as such any planning comments are treated by ECDC Planning as Advisory. Our comments, in most cases have not always been recognised by ECDC planning including their committee to the detriment and future of Soham residents.

We are in no position to help our residents, however hard we try because of the complexities of the planning laws.

We may only be an Advisory council but we know our own Town better than those outsiders who decide our fate through desk top analysis. Applications are not looked at holistically. Most residents feel we have too many developments and too small infrastructure. They feel helpless because they have no voice or choice. We all know the ECDC planning procedure.

Government pressure to populate our town to capacity regardless of losing our heritage, greens spaces etc and political and monetary conflicts very often upset Soham residents who do not understand planning law does not embrace humanitarianism.

The Government Planning White Paper may bring on newer policies and laws for better housing etc .The pandemic has proved there is a requirement for more green spaces and more rooms in houses, for the sake of peoples' mental health. We will see.

Chair of STC Planning is an interesting pursuit but somewhat one sided. The support can be minimal. Any fool can do the job but no one likes to be thought

of one. But one likes to help others and give support and be listened to. It's no fun flogging a dead horse.

Before Zoom became successful , STC agreed at their full meeting that delegated powers could be passed to the Chair and planning Chair to gather comments from the planning committee members. This was in position until Zoom resumed. It set me thinking and an idea began to form.

To save time, money, energy and emotion I believe this Council does not need a special committee meeting for Planning, let alone a Chair. This could be simplified. We are paperless now. All Planning Applications are on line only. We do not need a gathering of councillors to scan a screen together in a meeting when this can be done more efficiently at home. All councillors could be involved and report their comments to the office. Material Planning considerations are the only valid comments a councillor can make and should be recognised by ECDC Planning. The STC Chair could report any major planning comments or issues at the Full Council's monthly meetings. This will bring all councillors and the public up to speed. Any major development applications could be invited to the Full Council with their presentations.

I am sure saving time and money would be beneficial to both Soham Town Council and the Councillors.

The aforementioned thoughts, feelings, observations and ideas are mine and mine alone. Be they right or wrong.

In conclusion having given my time and energy on a non starter, I regret that I cannot continue as Chair of a Standing Planning Committee or indeed be on the committee as it will be against my principles and feelings of justice. I am therefore standing down both as chair and member of STC Planning committee. It will be up to protocol and the new chair to decide the best way to tackle Planning. Do we stick in the mud or welcome new ideas and technology and step into the 21st century.

I shall continue as a lower tier councillor because I care about Soham its residents and its youth.

I thank the outgoing Soham Town Council Chair for his hard work and support and for allowing me to speak.

I congratulate and wish his new successor all the best and hope he/she have taken note of some of my observations and ideas.

I thank you all for your indulgence. I am not open to comments or discussion.'
Thereafter:

NOTED written reports had been received from CCllr Goldsack and DCllr Jones which had been circulated to the membership prior to the meeting.

NOTED Cllr Warner thanked the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for their support and guidance during his tenure as Chairman, Cllr Johnston as acting as his second in command as Vice Chairman, to Cllr Pallett for her diligence and perseverance with planning and the frustrations that she so eloquently observed in her comments under 'public comment time' above, Cllr Aitchison for her help with environmental issues and with Soham's neighbourhood plan, Cllr Prior for the setting up of Soham Handy Helpers and working with AAA motorcycles during the COVID pandemic and to Cllr Leonard for his persistent focus on greening up the town and getting results.

57/21

NOMINATIONS FOR & ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN¹ FOR THE ENSUING CIVIC YEAR:

¹ Noted that due to the real time Youtube streaming of the meeting and to maintain members' right to confidentiality in casting their votes both the nominations and ballot for both the Chairman and Vice Chairman positions proceeded before the meeting.

NOTED Clerk declared the nomination received for Chairman was as follows:
Cllr Elizabeth Johnston (Proposed Cllr Aitchison Seconded Cllr Ross)
DECLARED being unopposed and uncontested that Cllr Johnston was duly
elected to serve as Chairman for Soham Town Council for the ensuing civic
year.

*Cllr Johnston was invited and assumed the chairperson's role for the remainder of the
meeting.*

NOTED Cllr Johnston's thanks to her fellow councillors for their confidence
and her intention to do her utmost for the benefit of Soham town.
NOTED her own vote of thanks to the outgoing Chairman Cllr Warner for
steering the town council what in the last year and due to COVID had been
most difficult times and for his help and support as his Vice-Chair.
NOTED Cllr Aitchison paid a heartfelt tribute to Cllr Warner for his commitment
to not only the town council but the residents during his tenure.

58/21 NOMINATIONS FOR & ELECTION OF VICE CHARMAN FOR THE ENSUING
CIVIC YEAR:

NOTED Cllr Johnston declared the nominations received for Vice Chairperson
were as follows:
Cllr Charles Warner (Proposed Cllr Pallett & Seconded Cllr Aitchison)
Cllr David Woricker (Proposed Cllr E Johnston, seconded Cllr C Simoes)
DECLARED by majority vote of the membership Cllr David Woricker was duly
elected to serve as Vice Chairperson for Soham Town Council for the ensuing
Civic Year.

59/21 ANNUAL MEETING (GOVERNANCE) MATTERS – STANDING ORDER 5

A) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY CLLRS of the current governance
documents for Soham Town Council under which the membership are
expected to work/abide (Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of
Conduct previously provided when elected/co-opted further copies available
on request)

B) UNDER PARISH COUNCILS (GENERAL POWER OF
COMPETENCE-[PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS]) ORDER 2012

NOTED due to lack of minimum number of electorally mandated Cllrs (elected
unopposed /uncontested) currently does not meet the eligibility requirements
to exercise the Power of General Competency (GPC)

NOTED membership's congratulations to the Assistant Town Clerk on passing
her CiLCA qualification

NOTED that the town council as a Body Corporate will now be progressing
and working towards foundation level (quality council status) Local Council
Award Scheme (LCAS) to underpin at next local elections (2023) the town
council will be able to confirm and operate under GPC.

B) CONFIRMATION OF SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL AND ANY
PROPOSED COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THE YEAR

APPROVED schedule of meetings with acknowledgement that meetings will
be subject to revision/change including where necessary cancellation(s) until
further notice until current COVID pandemic is declared over/in remission.

C) MEMBERSHIP & APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSONS TO
STANDING COMMITTEES

REQUESTED by Chairman and following Cllr Pallett's statements earlier in
the evening to defer this matter to the next meeting to enable her and the Vice
Chairman in discussions with the Clerk to review the current committee

structure, its delegated roles under Terms of Reference including appointment of chairpersons -matters to be relisted at next full council meeting.

APPROVED all incumbent chairpersons of current Standing Committees to remain in post until further consideration on the matter noting with Cllr Palletts' resignation and Cllr D Worickers' election to Vice Chairperson there are currently two vacancies arising for Planning and Community Amenity Committees respectively.

D) CONFIRMATION MEMBERSHIP TO ANY WORKING PARTIES & TO ANY EXTERNAL BODIES &/OR REPRESENTATIONS FOR THE ENSUING CIVIC YEAR (previously considered at March 2021 meeting as attached no current representative on Wicken Fen Forum).

NOTED Cllr D Woricker appointment as representative to the Wicken Fen Forum until further notice (subject to any outcomes in relation to minute 59/21 C above).

60/21

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Woodbridge and duly noted by the membership. Apologies were also received from CCllr M Goldsack & DCllr A Jones

61/21

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST TO ITEMS ON AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest recorded by those members present.

62/21

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 APRIL 2021 (ATTACHED)

RESOLVED and APPROVED that the minutes of the meeting on the 12 April 2021 as printed and attached herein as being a true record of proceedings which were duly signed as being such by the Chairman.

63/21

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CURRENT & WHERE NECESSARY PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MINUTES (matters not listed on the agenda specifically below BUT to include):

A) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN(NING) - WORKING GROUP UPDATES – *Any approvals to be made by Soham Town Council as Lead Body [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s61F(1), (2)] including aspects of designation of neighbourhood area, appointment of consultant, grant application AOB.*

NOTED Cllr Aitchison has submitted the application for necessary grant funding to employ Consultant from Cambridgeshire Acre to assist in the preparation of Soham NP

NOTED a business survey has gone live on the NP website and with a leaflet drop (with thanks to Cllr Johnston) has elicited 7 responses which in comparison to the previous one at Christmas represents a 100% improvement. NOTED there is also a green space survey nearing completion and will also appear on the NP website

B) Strategic considerations (projects) suggested by Cllrs for capitalisation from capital gains generated from potential disposal to existing community assets-land (56/21)

NOTED Cllr Johnston's suggestion paper which was circulated to members and her request for further consideration of the membership for ideas to be brought forward and relisted at the next full council meeting.

C) Any other pertinent matters (Cllrs must specify at the meeting the minute number(s) to which they wish to refer)

NOTED no matters were raised by members for further consideration.

64/21

PREVIOUS MONTH'S STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following committees as printed and approved those recommendations as contained, unless otherwise specified under matters arising (below), be duly adopted.

- Planning Committee 26 April 2021.

65/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST AND PREVIOUS MONTHS STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES(to be specified at time of meeting-members are reminded they must indicate the official minute reference to which they are referring):

NOTED no matters were raised by members for further consideration.

66/21 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS MADE & STATEMENT OF BALANCES AS AT 30 April 2021 (attached)

NOTED income & RESOLVED approval of those payments made to 30 April 2021 totalling £57349.89 (inc. vat) respectively and as attached to the council minutes as appendices.

67/21 AUDIT COMMISSION ANNUAL RETURN (AGAR) FORM FOR SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2021:

I) APPROVED unanimously 'yes' in answer to questions 1-8 (question 9 not applicable) on Section 1-Annual governance statement, Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) form for Soham Town Council for the year ending 31st March 2021

II) APPROVED unanimously set of accounts prepared by Responsible Financial Officer to year end - inclusive of bank reconciliation, reconciliation between boxes 7 & 8, explanation of variance between current and previous financial asset register valuation returns as stated on Section 2 (nominal, known or proxy valuations noting that there is work in progress in RIC Red book valuations of the land and property owned by Soham Town Council) and statement of account for statutory allotment provision

III) APPROVED unanimously the figures as presented in Section 2-Accounting statement, Annual Governance Statement for Soham Town Council for the year ending 31st March 2021

IV) CONSIDERED any 'exceptions' noted by External Auditors on previous years AGAR and:

a) CONFIRMED those restitutive actions taken in year (none required as this was an accounting convention)

b) RECONFIRMED without amendment Soham Town Councils Risk Assessment & Management Policy.

V) RECONFIRMED unanimously the annual appointment of Canalbs Ltd as IIA to Soham Town Council for 2021-22 (year ending 31st March 2022-noted that Annual Internal Audit (IIA) report and completion and signature for section 3 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/20 will occur² after approval of Section 1 and 2 as approved under I and IV above).

² Scheduled to take place face to face 20th May 2021.

68/21 **Budget 2021-22 considerations where any (set as previous 2020-21 financial year by full council (87/20D) Additional Expenditure considerations for coming year- Any approvals in respect of works:**

- i) Cemetery- (Chairman of Standing Committee)
- ii) Allotments (Chairman of Standing Committee)
- iii) Community Amenities (Chairman of Standing Committee)
- iv) Planning (Chairman of Standing Committee)

NOTED & MATTERS DEFERRED UNDER APPROVAL made under minute 59/20C above.

69/21 **CORRESPONDENCE –TO BE NOTED ONLY UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED (italicised and in bold) IN THE MINUTES. (matters in bold or as highlighted in red BOLD considered to be more relevant to Soham) Unless otherwise indicated all correspondence emailed/circulated to Cllrs as received):**

- RBL Touchpoint Editions no 54 7th April 2021, 55 - 20 April 2021; 56 21st April 2021
- The Rural Bulletin - 13 April 2021 20 April 2021
- Responses to West Suffolk Local Plan Issues and Options consultation
- Proposed Closure - 119/121 Brook Street, Soham, 01/06/2021 - 04/06/2021
- IHMC March Incident Report; Roadworks & events bulletin 16th - 30th April 2021
- ICCM Member Newsletter 13th April 2021
- ECDC May Bank Holiday Waste Collections
- Letter from Lord Callanan, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. (Case Ref: LF41220)-Local Energy Bill
- NOTED Cllr Lanes request for this material***
- Network Rail/Murphy - Soham station residents notifications 21 April 2021
- NOTED Cllr Warner's comment in observation there is another rail station being built in the area comprising 2 platforms to take full length trains for £20m as opposed to the reintroduction of a Soham station comprising single platform a ticket machine and capacity to only take shortened trains for £18m poor value for money (source article The Times)***
- Cambridgeshire Drought Damaged Road Resurfacing/Reconstruction - weekly update
- Civic Voice - update - 23rd April 2021

70/21 **MONTHLY PAPERS/BIBIOGRAPHY/PERIODICALS/BULLETINS (LIST TO APPEAR IN MINUTES ONLY)**

The Clerk Magazine	May 2021	Vol 52 No 3.
Andrezieux-Boutheon magazine	May 2021	No 245

71/21 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 14th June 2021
 - Annual meeting of Soham Town (meeting of the Residents) 28th June 2021 - please note this is NOT a Soham Town council meeting
- (face to face /subject to cancellation due to any further COVID restrictions by Central Government - date and venue confirmed at the time of agenda publication)**