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SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Soham Town Council meeting held at the Walter Gidney Pavilion,
Fountain Lane recreation ground, Soham on Monday 12th December 2022.

Present: Cllrs E Johnston, D Woricker, R Aitchison, G Dyer, K Horgan, A Jones, P Lane, A Pallett, C Warner, G Woodbridge, and H Ross. M Strand, Town Clerk and M Francis, Assistant Town Clerk.

In attendance: District Cllrs A Jones and I Bovingdon.
District & County Cllr M Goldsack.
There were 2 members of the public present.

The meeting was opened at 7:15pm.

MINUTES

155/22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
None.

156/22 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
NOTED – Cllr Aitchison declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 162/22 e. Royal British Legion request for donation (member).

157/22. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES
a. NOTED - Police engagement on speeding/parking, and police surgeries – Cllrs Horgan and Warner had met with Supt. James Sutherland to review issues with illegal parking on the High Street. Supt. Sutherland said he was keen to address parking issues and would investigate the possibility of using CCTV to do this. He will report back to us by the end of January. It had also been suggested that police 'surgeries' might be reinstated. Cllr Horgan proposed that he and the Clerk contact Inspector Shane Fasey to enquire about this further. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Woodbridge and APPROVED unanimously. Speed checks had taken place at Townsend on 23rd November and the results of these, if available, will be published on the Council's website.

- b. NOTED – Cllr Horgan reported that the order for 50 trees (free of charge) had been confirmed and delivery will be on 6th February. The Community Payback Team had been advised of the delivery date and will let us know when they can come to plant them. Cllr Horgan will attend the planting.
- c. NOTED – Cllr Woricker reported on the Christmas lights which had been put up this week by a team of volunteers. The volunteers, led by Jim Dawson and including people from the Men’s Shed, had done a wonderful job and Councillors thanked everyone involved. Unexpected problems with paperwork had meant the company contracted to put the lights up had been unable to do so. Councillors also thanked Cllr Woricker for organising a team to step in at the last minute.

158/22. PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

A member of the public said that the removal of the disabled parking badge at the Post Office (which had encouraged blue-badge holders to park on the footpath) was a victimisation of blue badge holders who were now forced to park on the road.

Michael Cave (Vogue Athletics) had been expected to speak but was not in attendance at the meeting.

159/22. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

NOTED – written reports from District Cllr Alec Jones and District & County Cllr Mark Goldsack. Cllr Aitchison asked if Soham could be included in the Ely Zipper bus route. Cllr Goldsack said this was not possible at the moment but that he is investigating how this can be done in future.

Cllr Goldsack asked if the Council would consider hosting a meeting about the proposed congestion charge in Cambridge and this will be discussed at the January meeting.

District Cllr Ian Bovingdon said that the ECDC is speaking up for rural areas within the wider conversation around congestion, public transport and electric cars which is often focused on urban areas.

160/22. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. APPROVED by a majority (Cllr Woodbridge abstained) – the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 14th November 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
- b. NOTED – the minutes of the Finance & Policy Meeting held on 8th November 2022.
- c. APPROVED unanimously – the minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 28th November 2022 were approved as a true record.

161/22. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

- a. NOTED – Clerk’s Report (written). Cllr Horgan asked when the planters were due to be moved to outside the Post Office and Cllr Woricker said that CCC would be scheduling the work for as soon as possible after the Christmas and New Year break.
- b. NOTED – Soham to Wicken Cycleway (Byway 113). Cllr Woricker reported that the Council had been approved for a further £800,000 of funding from ECDC, making the total amount of funding for the

cycleway £1.3m. Further funding will be applied for from the Combined Authority if necessary. Cllr Aitchison asked if a bridge over the Lode could be considered as this would provide a direct link from Wicken to Soham railway station. Cllr Woricker said this might be possible later on in the process. Sustrans, who are custodians of the National Cycleway Network, are keen for the new cycleway to be added to the network and are available to help and advise on the process. Councillors thanked Cllrs Woricker and Warner for their work on this so far.

162/22

FINANCE MATTERS

- a. APPROVED unanimously cost of 'summary of species' in the parish report, £84.00 +VAT and, subsequently, habitat map, £336.00 +VAT for the Neighbourhood Plan. Proposed Cllr Warner, seconded Cllr Horgan.
- b. APPROVED unanimously – Receipts & Payments for December 2022 as advised with the agenda. Further invoices which had been received since the agenda was published were also approved as they were regular payments (DDRs), or had already been agreed at quotation. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Warner.
- c. APPROVED unanimously for Finance & Policy Committee to consider quotations for fencing as only one had been received in time for this meeting. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Warner.
- d. NOTED – Cemetery chapel update and consideration of further necessary works. Cllrs Woodbridge and Johnston and the Clerk had met with the Council's approved contractor for repairs to the chapel. On further inspection however, it had transpired that there is bowing to the roof and other extensive issues which had not been previously quoted for. An additional quotation for £60,119.40 +VAT had been received but not in time to be published on this meeting agenda. However, this and the previously accepted quotation (see 151/22) were taken into consideration when setting the budget as it was believed that this work would have to be carried out to secure the future safety and longevity of the building. Cllr Horgan asked if the Council had approached English Heritage for advice and this was confirmed. However, it was agreed to approach them again to see if they can offer any help with the project.
The contractors are keen to start in January and it was agreed they should start on the work which had been agreed. The additional quotation will be considered at the January meeting.
- e. APPROVED by a majority a donation of £500 to the Warm Hub (Royal British Legion) to help fund a car share scheme to enable more residents to attend. Proposed by Cllr Warner, seconded by Cllr Woodbridge (Cllr Aitchison had declared an interest and therefore abstained from the vote).
- f. APPROVED unanimously final budget for 2023-24 as outlined (copies available as an appendix to these minutes). Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Horgan. The budget includes the following Earmarked Reserves: -
 - Planning consultancy services - £10,000.
 - Electronic gates (entrance to pavilion car park) - £5,000.
 - Skatepark - £150,000.
 - Demolition of back hall/Phase II building work (pavilion) - £200,000.

- Chapel repairs (cemetery) - £150,000.
- Chapel repairs legal fees - £10,000.
- Cemetery land preparation - £20,000.
- Neighbourhood Plan - £2,000.
- Cycleway maintenance fund - £10,000.
- Local Highways Improvement - £10,000.
- Civic & Ceremonial (including Coronation of HM King Charles III) - £5,000.
- Drayton Meadows landscaping - £10,000.

The Clerk advised the Council to make a small increase in the precept due to the rise in the cost of utilities and other expenses. However, Councillors agreed, given the current economic climate and the general reserves held by the Council, that they would not increase the precept in 2023-24. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Warner and APPROVED unanimously.

163/22 GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

- APPROVED unanimously – Model Code of Conduct (2020) and Councillor/Officer Protocol – proposed Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- APPROVED unanimously that the Council’s office **should not** be a hate crime reporting centre as requested by ECDC. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Warner. Councillors agreed that it should not be expected of the Council’s staff to deal with potential hate crime issues.

164/22 RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS

- APPROVED unanimously to send a strongly worded response to CCC regarding This Land following their response to the Council’s questions, which had not been addressed. It was also proposed to invite Mr Tom Kelly, Section 151 Officer, CCC and Mr David Lewis, CEO of This Land, to a meeting with the Town Council. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Woodbridge.

The Chairman asked for approval to continue the meeting beyond 9pm and this was AGREED.

165/22 MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 16th January 2023, Walter Gidney Pavilion @ 7.15pm.

Seen to be Green Competition.

The meeting was closed at 9:10pm.

Approved and signed: