



Soham Town Council  
PO Box 21  
The Walter Gidney Pavilion  
Fountain Lane  
Soham  
Cambridgeshire CB7 9PL  
Town Clerk: MJ Strand  
Tel: 01353 723472  
Email: [info@soham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@soham-tc.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.soham-tc.gov.uk](http://www.soham-tc.gov.uk)

## **SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Soham Town Council Annual Meeting held at the Walter Gidney Pavilion, Fountain Lane, Recreation Ground, Soham, on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

**Present:** Cllrs D Woricker (Chairman), E Johnston (Vice-Chair), K Horgan, G Dyer, A Jones, T Chouler, A Pallett, R Aitchison and H Ross. M Strand, Town Clerk, M Francis, Assistant Clerk.

**In attendance:** District Cllrs Ian Bovingdon, Keith Horgan & Lucius Vellacott. There were 3 members of the public present.

### **MINUTES**

Before the meeting was opened, Mayor Elizabeth Johnston thanked all Councillors for their support during her two years as the first Mayor of Soham. In particular, Cllr Johnston thanked the following: - Cllr Rosemary Aitchison for her unstinting support through some very difficult times and her willingness to help with all manner of tasks; Mr John Aitchison who is not a Councillor but works hard on behalf of the Council as a volunteer; three residents who consistently attend meetings and to one resident in particular who spent two months fighting on behalf of the Town against revisions to the Local Development Plan; Cllr Glenn Woodbridge who always does what he says he will, and does it well; the Assistant Clerk, Melanie Francis, who supported the Mayor and the Council through an extremely difficult period and Cllr Hamish Ross for his persistence, and passion for the Commons.

The meeting was opened at 7:18pm.

#### **1/23 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR (CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL) FOR ENSUING CIVIC YEAR (and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office).**

Cllr Horgan nominated Cllr Woricker to the office of Mayor and Chairman and the nomination was seconded by Cllr Aitchison. Councillors voted unanimously in favour, and it was RESOLVED that Cllr Woricker be duly elected.

Cllr Woricker signed the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Woricker thanked Cllr Johnston for being a wonderful Mayor, Chairman, and ambassador for Soham, and welcomed the Council's newest member, Cllr Tony Chouler.

Cllr Woricker then congratulated newly elected County and District Councillors Ian Bovingdon, Mark Goldsack, Keith Horgan and Lucius Vellacott and said that he hoped they would be able to attend the Council's meetings regularly. He also thanked Cllr Alec Jones for his work as a District Councillor over the last four years.

**2/23 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR (VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL) FOR ENSUING CIVIC YEAR**

Cllr Woricker nominated Cllr Johnston to the office of Deputy Mayor and Vice-Chairman and the nomination was seconded by Cllr Dyer. Councillors voted unanimously in favour, and it was RESOLVED that Cllr Johnston be duly appointed.

**3/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Glenn Woodbridge (administrative).

**4/23 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

**5/23 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**

- APPROVED unanimously – adoption of the General Power of Competence. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Johnston.

**6/23 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES**

- a. Flood Resilience – Cllr Aitchison had attended a Flood Resilience Day hosted by CCC as part of its Community Flood Action Programme which had been very useful. Information from the presentations will be made available on the Council's website.

**7/23 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME**

None.

**8/23 COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

District Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the youngest District Councillor to be elected in the country, said he was determined to represent Soham to the very best of his ability, and that he wants to stay in touch with the people who voted for him.

District Cllr Ian Bovingdon said that he was looking forward to completing the work that he had already started after being re-elected on 4<sup>th</sup> May. In particular, his focus will be on tackling illegal parking across the district, although potholes are also at the very top of his priority list.

District Cllr Keith Horgan said that he will work hard on behalf of Soham and East Cambridgeshire. He also said that he will consolidate monthly reports from all District Cllrs representing Soham to bring to the Council's meetings.

9/23

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. APPROVED unanimously – the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- b. APPROVED unanimously – the minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

10/23

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.**

- a. NOTED – Clerk’s Report (written).

11/23

**FINANCE MATTERS**

- a. APPROVED unanimously – Receipts & Payments for May 2023 (as listed at the end of the agenda). Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Aitchison.

12/23

**GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

- a. NOTED – confirmation of schedule of Full Council and Committee Meetings. Wherever possible, Full Council meetings are held on the second Monday of the month and Planning Committee meetings are held on the last Monday of the month. Other standing committees meet as and when called by their respective Chairpersons.

- b. APPROVED unanimously – membership and appointment of chairpersons to Standing Committees as follows: -

- Planning Committee – Chairman Cllr Pallett. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Johnston.
- Allotments Committee – Chairman Cllr Dyer. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Jones.
- Cemetery Committee – Chairman Cllr Woodbridge. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Dyer.
- Community Amenities Committee – Chairman Cllr Johnston. Proposed Cllr Dyer, seconded Cllr Horgan.
- Finance & Policy Committee – Chairman Cllr Woricker (as set out in the Standing Committees’ Terms of Reference).

The Chairman and Vice-Chair are ex-officio members of all Standing Committees.

Cllr Jones was appointed to the Community Amenities Committee and the Allotments Committee. All other membership remained the same as the previous year with the exception of Charles Warner and Philip Lane who had not stood for re-election.

- c. NOTED – confirmation of membership to working parties and external bodies, AGREED as follows: -

- There is no longer any need for a Council representative on the Old Moors Charity.
- Cllr Aitchison is the representative for Soham United Charities.
- Cllr Jones is the representative for Soham Allotment and Gardens Association.

All other representatives remain the same.

- d. NOTED – April Health & Safety report from Adams Payne Safety Ltd. APPROVED unanimously – proposal to discontinue the Council’s request for a monthly report and to ask for a bi-annual report instead. Proposed Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Jones.

- e. APPROVED unanimously – the Clerk’s recommendation to continue with the Council’s current provider, Mor-Tech Ltd, under a new contract costing £175.00 +VAT per month. This includes remote

hosting and support of all the Council's IT and software. Proposed Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Horgan.

- f. APPROVED unanimously – to engage Aubergine to design the Council's new website. Costs - £975 +VAT for set up plus £250.00 +VAT to transfer 2 years' data and an annual support fee of £299.00 +VAT plus £100 +VAT per year for the domain name registration. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- g. APPROVED unanimously – quotation for Cemetery Mapping and Burials Software from Pear Technology, cost £4,445.00 +VAT plus £150.00 +VAT annual support fee. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Horgan.

13/23

### **RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS**

Cllr Woricker proposed to change the order of items so that item c. could be discussed after item e. and this was agreed.

- a. Neighbourhood Planning – Cllr Aitchison said that the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing and will come to Full Council for approval before going out to referendum. The consultant working on this has said that about 6 days' work is needed to complete the plan. This, together with other necessary expenditure, is likely to mean a further cost of around £7,000.00. It is hoped that this will be met by grant funding. However, it was agreed that the Council would very much support completing the Plan if further grants could not be obtained.
- b. APPROVED unanimously – quotation for further work on the Cemetery chapel which is necessary because of poor workmanship of previous contractor - £2,119.50 +VAT. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Jones.
- d. APPROVED unanimously – planting and wildlife scheme for Drayton Meadows. Cllr Johnston had provided a plan showing that the area would be left predominantly wild but with walkways and a well-being area with benches for people to enjoy. Proposed Cllr Ross, seconded Cllr Jones. More details will be worked out and presented to Council at a future meeting. It was noted that a bin for the area would have to be emptied by the Council's groundsmen.
- e. Sale of Land at Brewhouse Lane, Guntons Close and Pratt Street. Cllr Johnston presented three options for selling the three pieces of land together. Cllr Dyer proposed, and Cllr Chouler seconded, to sell the land with an overage. Councillors voted 4 in favour and 4 against with one abstention. The Chairman used his casting vote against the proposal which was NOT CARRIED. Cllr Woricker proposed to approach the CLT and local housing associations to offer them first refusal. If neither can offer market value for the land, then it would be sold with an overage of 35% over 25 years. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Ross. Councillors voted 5 in favour, 2 against with 2 abstentions and the proposal was CARRIED. In accordance with proper practices, the land will not be sold for less than its market value and the proposal to sell will be advertised for two consecutive weeks in the local press.
- c. APPROVED unanimously – to delay accepting a quotation for the repair of the boundary wall at Brewhouse Lane play area as the land is to be put up for sale. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Aitchison.

- f. APPROVED unanimously – quotation for fabrication of new gates and fencing at Weatheralls Allotments to prevent fly-tipping (see 213/23d), cost £4,480.00 +VAT. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Jones.
- g. APPROVED unanimously – request from ECDC to place CCTV camera in the Fountain Lane public toilets (costs to met by ECDC) and to link the camera to the Council's CCTV system. Proposed Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Jones.
- h. NOTED – consideration of the following annual safety inspection reports and action taken: -
- Fountain Lane Playground
  - Fountain Lane BMX/Skate/Basketball
  - Gym Equipment at Recreation Ground
  - Kingfisher Drive.
- Minor repairs are being carried out by the Council's groundsmen, and quotations are being obtained for any work which requires a specialist play equipment contractor.
- i. APPROVED unanimously to repair the current skatepark and pursue options for extending it to the south. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- j. APPROVED unanimously – proposal to demolish existing rear hall, kitchen and toilets at the pavilion as per planning permission granted in December 2021, with a view to replacing the structure in the future. All groups who use the area for storage will be asked to remove their things. Temporary storage, kitchen facilities and a staff rest area to replace the building will be considered at the June meeting. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Johnston.
- k. To consider and approve proposal to remove two newly planted trees (in a year's time) in the recreation ground following complaint from a resident. A report from the Trees Officer at ECDC was NOTED. Cllr Horgan proposed that the trees should be removed and replanted in another location. The proposal was not seconded and therefore not taken to a vote. Cllr Aitchison proposed that the trees should be left where they are (the line of the trees is in keeping with historical records showing a line of trees in the same location up until the early 1980's, and the Trees Officer had given no legitimate reason to remove them). Cllr Ross seconded the proposal. Cllr Horgan asked for the vote to be recorded. In favour were Cllrs Aitchison, Pallett, Jones, Ross, Chouler, Dyer, Johnston and Woricker. Against was Cllr Horgan. The proposal to leave the trees in their current location was therefore CARRIED.

APPROVED unanimously – to waive Standing Orders and continue beyond the two-hour time limit for meetings. Proposed by Cllr Woricker.

- l. CONSIDERED and approved unanimously **not** to re-position the football goals following a complaint from a resident. The request to replace removed vegetation with trees was also turned down because trees in this location would affect the integrity of the boundary wall.

- m. CONSIDERED and approved unanimously **not** to remove and re-position the bench on the north side of the recreation ground as requested. It was noted that the PCSO did not support removal of the bench and that she had said that there was no evidence to support the allegation of drug-taking in this location.
- n. CONSIDERED – correspondence from a resident requesting a tree be planted outside the Vape Shop as previously planned – The Council agreed to respond that it would plant a tree in this location at some time in the future if the opportunity to do so arises.
- o. APPROVED unanimously – to support proposed 20mph zone, with the addition of Bushel Lane and Qua Fen Common to the A142 Soham bypass. Proposed Cllr Ross, seconded Cllr Pallett.

**14/23**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- a. NOTED – grant thank you letters from CAMSAR, Soham Gardening Club and Bumbly Bees.

**15/23**

**MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- Annual Town Meeting, Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 7:15pm.
- Ordinary Full Council Meeting, Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June, 7:15pm.
- Planning Committee, Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1pm.

The meeting was closed at 9:35pm.