



Soham Town Council
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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 13th November 2023.

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

In attendance: District & County Cllr Mark Goldsack.
District Cllr Keith Horgan.
There were 7 members of the public present.

St Andrew's Church PCC – Presentation on Biodiversity Project for the Closed Churchyard.

Members of the PCC gave a presentation on their proposals for biodiversity measures in the closed churchyard. These include bird and bat boxes, tree and shrub planting for wildlife and the replacement of a litter bin. The project will be implemented by volunteers and funded with grants including the Lottery Heritage Fund. Ongoing maintenance will also be carried out by volunteers.

The meeting was opened at 7:15pm.

63/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Glenn Dyer (personal). Cllr Glenn Woodbridge was absent from the meeting.

64/23 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Pallett declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 68/23 b. Planning Minutes (resident of Broad Piece).

65/23 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES

- a. Pride in our Town Award – Cllr Woricker advocated a collective award be made to Soham's Retained Firefighters in recognition of the amazing work they do on behalf of the town. This was APPROVED unanimously. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Chouler. Members of the retained Fire & Rescue Service will be invited to the December meeting to receive the award.
- b. Sale of Land - APPROVED unanimously to sell the Council's small parcels of land through the Council's retained land agent in order to

realise the full potential of their value. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Aitchison.

- c. Local Highways Initiative (LHI) – Cllr Pallett updated Councillors on potential LHI projects: -
- Roundabout at Julius Martin Lane – this had been requested by residents but is not feasible in this location.
 - H-markings outside a property on Station Road to facilitate better access for a disabled resident into their driveway. It was APPROVED unanimously to cover the £120.00 cost of this if the markings cannot be reinstated by Highways free of charge. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Jones. Cllr Woricker will liaise with County Cllr Mark Goldsack and Highways to get this work carried out as quickly as possible.

Other matters raised at the meeting: -

- Cllr Pallett said that a resident's comments on the planning application at Broad Piece regarding drainage had not been uploaded to ECDC's planning portal.
- Cllr Pallett had attended the funeral of former Town Councillor, Fiona Ross.

66/23 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

A member of the public read from a local newspaper article regarding parish councils and their need for transparency and community engagement.

67/23 COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

District & County Cllr Mark Goldsack said that he was glad to hear Soham's Remembrance parade and service had gone well and been well attended. He also reported the following: -

- He is currently dealing with a verge encroachment on Northfield Road which is causing rainwater to collect on the bypass.
- CCC Highways has appointed a new Local Highways Officer for the area.
- A long-awaited report on the peat soil roads in the area had been received stating that it would cost in the region of £300m to repair them. This includes Hasse Road and Great Fen Road.

Following questions from Councillors, Cllr Goldsack gave the following information: -

- Soham Town Council can apply for funding to implement a 20mph speed limit alongside CCC's proposed 20mph scheme.
- Highways are unequivocally responsible for repainting lines on the roads and Cllr Goldsack suggested the Council writes to them highlighting the poor condition of road lining throughout the town.
- In relation to the Eastern Gateway and a new medical centre, Cllr Goldsack said that he would pass on current and forecast patient numbers as given to him by Mereside Medical at a recent meeting.

District Cllr Horgan had attended former Town Councillor, Peter Leonard's funeral which had been very moving.

Cllr Horgan is following up on progress with the Changing Places toilet due to be installed in the Fountain Lane car park.

The consolidated District & County Councillors' report was NOTED.

Cllr Ross asked about comments made by District Cllr Vellacott on biodiversity net gain on the Eastern Gateway development. Cllr Vellacott will be asked to respond at a future meeting.

68/23

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. APPROVED by a majority (1 abstention) – the minutes from the Full Council Meeting held on 9th October 2023. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Jones.
- b. NOTED - the draft minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 30th October 2023. Cllr Pallett asked for it to be noted that the Council had attended the recent ECDC Planning Committee meeting to put forward its objection to the application on Broad Piece.
- c. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on 6th November 2023.

69/23

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

- a. NOTED – Clerk’s Report.

70/23

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- a. APPROVED unanimously – Receipts & Payments for November 2023 (as listed at the end of the agenda). Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- b. APPROVED unanimously – bank reconciliation and financial reports to 30th September 2023. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- c. To consider 2024/25 budget and make further proposals for final budget to be agreed in December. Councillors were asked to put forward any other suggestions for new projects to the Clerk within the next two weeks. A final draft budget and precept proposal will be considered at the December meeting.
- d. APPROVED unanimously – to invest £250,000 into the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Jones. The fund currently yields 5.2% interest and funds are available to withdraw instantly when needed.
- e. APPROVED unanimously to give a donation of £500.00 to Magpas Air Ambulance. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Aitchison.

71/23

RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS

The chairman moved to item 71/23 g. so that members of the PCC could hear the consideration of the proposals they had presented and leave the meeting.

- g. APPROVED unanimously – to support proposals from the PCC and members of the community regarding improvement to the churchyard for wildlife. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Johnston.
- a. Neighbourhood Planning. Cllr Aitchison confirmed that the Pre-Submission Draft Plan consultation had begun on the 1st November and will run until 13th December. Six thousand leaflets had been delivered to households and businesses in the town, and two consultation events had been held in the Pavilion. Disappointingly, only 15 members of the public had attended these events and, so far, only 18 responses had been received to the consultation. Councillors were urged to respond to the consultation and to encourage everyone they know to do the same.

- b. Scout Hut lease – to consider amendments to existing proposed lease. The following conditions were APPROVED unanimously. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Chouler: -
- Minimum term of lease 30 years;
 - Peppercorn rent - £1 per year;
 - Renewal clause;
 - Option for Scouts to exit lease if local group folds, and if the building falls vacant for 3 years or more it reverts to the ownership of the Council.
 - Access for fuel deliveries – via Gardner’s Lane;
 - Access to separate water and other utilities accounts, and the Scout Group to pay all of its own utilities bills.
 - Ability to hire out the building to raise funds for community groups **only** (for payment or donation). The building may not be hired to individuals or businesses as confirmed by the Charity Commission and ECDC’s s106 Officer.

The proposal was approved on the understanding that written confirmation of the advice from the s106 Officer could be obtained regarding hire of the building.

The Scout Group will have to adhere to the general rules of the recreation ground such as no dogs.

The Scout Group will be responsible for repairs to the building and this will be stated in the lease.

It had been made clear that at no time would an extension to the building be allowed.

It was AGREED to engage the Council’s solicitor to draw up a draft lease to include all the above points.

Regarding wheelchair access from the car park, this will not be included in the lease but will be considered by the Council at a future date.

c. Pavilion Phase II –

- To consider and approve architect’s costs for submitting plans to the Local Planning Authority (ECDC) for construction of a new rear hall and associated facilities. A quotation had still not been received from Andrew Fleet Architects. It was therefore APPROVED unanimously to approach other architects to bring forward ideas and quotations for the rebuild of the rear hall. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Pallett. This decision does not exclude Andrew Fleet Architects from the quotation process.
- d. APPROVED unanimously – to give approval to the Council’s land agent to approach landowners re: potential land for community benefit. A number of potential sites have been identified. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Ross.
- e. APPROVED unanimously – approval for Cllr Johnston to meet with Emma Jane Danielsson and land agent re: biodiversity (as part of a wider ECDC initiative). Proposed Cllr Ross, seconded Cllr Horgan. The focus of the Council’s interest is Soham’s wetlands and commons.
- f. APPROVED unanimously – quotation for hanging baskets for 2024 - £2,311.20 +VAT. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Aitchison. Councillors said the baskets had been outstanding and thanked the Council’s grounds team for watering them so well throughout the season.

- h. To consider and respond to invitation for D-Day 80, 6th June 2024. Cllr Aitchison proposed a special drumhead service on the recreation ground with an emphasis on women who had served in the war. The event could include community group stalls and refreshments. Cllr Aitchison and Cllr Chouler will liaise on this and bring back a proposal to a future meeting.
- i. APPROVED unanimously to support the Climate and Ecology Bill. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Ross. The Council will also continue to fight to alleviate climate change issues associated with inappropriate development within the town.
- j. Soham to Wicken Cycleway – to agree Grant Funding Agreement with CCC Highways. Cllr Woricker said that the Agreement was unacceptable in its current form and cannot, therefore, be signed as it states that Soham Town Council would be responsible for any overspend on the construction of the Cycleway. A meeting has been arranged with CCC Highways, the Combined Authority and ECDC to find a solution.
- k. APPROVED unanimously to repair of Brewhouse Lane wall (regardless of the decision to sell the land on which it stands) on the grounds of health and safety. A quotation for £8,865.00 +VAT was accepted as the cheapest of the three received. However, the quotation may have to be revised slightly as it had been put together earlier in the year and building costs had risen since then. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Chouler.

72/23

CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION

- a. NOTED – ECDC re: volunteer Road Safety Officer.
- b. NOTED – Geoffrey Hunter, Diocese of Ely re: the Council's responsibility for the closed churchyard.

73/23

MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Planning Committee – Monday 27th November, 1pm.
- Finance & Policy Committee – Monday 4th December, 10:30am.
- Community Amenities – Monday 4th December, 7:15pm.
- Full Council – Monday 11th December, 7:15pm.

The meeting was closed at 9:05pm.