



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 11th March 2024.

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

In attendance: District Cllr Keith Horgan.
There were 6 members of the public present.

MINUTES

96/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
None.

97/24 CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR

Members of the public were asked to wait outside the meeting room whilst this item of business was transacted.

- a. To consider application for co-option onto the Council from Mrs Patricia Baker. Mrs Baker introduced herself and gave an overview of her interests and experience She then left the room while a vote by secret ballot was taken. Mrs Baker was duly co-opted as a South Ward Councillor by a unanimous vote and was invited to join the meeting upon signing her Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Members of the public were invited to return to the meeting room.

98/24 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllrs Woricker, Pallett and Aitchison declared pecuniary interests in item 103/24f. Town Twinning travel expenses (members of the Twinning Association).

Cllr Woricker declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 103d. grant application from the Men's Shed (meetings held on land which Cllr Woricker's leases).

Cllr Horgan declared a pecuniary interest in item 103/24d. grant application from the Men's Shed (member of the Men's Shed and beneficiary of its services).

99/24

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES

- a. Meeting with CCC Highways re: reported highways issues – Cllr Woricker said that at a recent meeting with representatives of Highways, all reported issues within the town had been highlighted. Some work had since been carried out but a high number of outstanding reports on the online portal remain unactioned. Another meeting is planned for later in March to see how these matters are progressing.
- b. Funeral Costs for Children – the Assistant Clerk clarified that a government grant scheme covers the fees for the interment of any child stillborn after 24 weeks gestation and up to the age of 18.
- c. Scout Hut lease – Cllr Johnston had met with representatives of the Scout Group after the draft lease had been drawn up and sent to them. It had been a very positive meeting and it is expected that the lease can be signed shortly.
- d. The Commons – Cllr Ross said the Commons are Soham's jewel in the crown and are enjoyed by residents in many different ways. However, he said that the outlook for them at present is not good, and the Council needs to be proactive in working with ECDC and the landowner to improve wildlife and biodiversity. Cllr Johnston is already in contact with both ECDC and the landowner and will liaise with Cllr Ross on progress.

Other matters reported at the meeting: -

- Cllr Aitchison reported that LINK had conducted a review of the town's access to cash and had concluded that the town has adequate provision for the size of the community according to agreed national criteria.
- Cllr Aitchison reported that the Connections Bus will be coming to the recreation ground every Wednesday evening between 7pm and 9pm starting after Easter for 12 weeks.

100/24

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Apologies had been received from County & District Cllr Mark Goldsack and District Cllrs Ian Bovingdon and Lucius Vellacott.

District Cllr Horgan highlighted points from his written report: -

- Digital inclusion training has been arranged by ECDC to help residents with online banking in light of recent branch closures.
- ECDC has clarified the process for obtaining foodbank vouchers.
- Businesses are being encouraged to apply for a grant of up to £30k.

Cllr Pallett noted that the Combined Authority's portion of the Council Tax had risen by 200% for the provision of more bus services, and questioned whether this would directly benefit Soham.

101/24

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. APPROVED by a majority – the minutes from the Full Council Meeting held on 12th February 2024. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- b. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 26th February 2024.

- c. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting held on 4th March 2024.

102/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

- a. NOTED – Clerk’s Report (for information only).

103/24 FINANCE & GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- a. APPROVED by a majority – Receipts & Payments for February/March (as listed at the end of the agenda). Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- b. APPROVED by a majority – bank reconciliation and financial reports to 31st January 2024. Proposed by Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- c. APPROVED by a majority – to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- d. To consider and approve grant application from the Men’s Shed for £500.00.

Cllr Horgan left the room during this item due to his declared pecuniary interest.

It was proposed by Cllr Pallett, seconded by Cllr Warner and APPROVED by a majority that the grant of £500 be awarded.

Cllr Horgan returned to the meeting.

- e. APPROVED by a majority – grant application from Soham Benevolent Association for £500.00. Proposed Cllr Woodbridge, seconded Cllr Warner.
- f. To consider and approve travel expenses for Town Twinning trip to France, cost up to £250.00.

Cllrs Woricker, Pallett and Aitchison left the room during this item due to their declared pecuniary interests. Cllr Johnston took the Chair.

It was proposed by Cllr Horgan and seconded by Cllr Chouler to approve the expenses. Councillors voted 3 in favour and 5 against with one abstention and the proposal was NOT CARRIED.

Cllrs Woricker, Pallett and Aitchison returned to the meeting.

- g. APPROVED unanimously – co-option of Cllr Charles Warner onto the Council’s Planning Committee.

104/24 PLANNING MATTERS

- a. To consider application reference 24/00146/FUM – Land rear of Brewhouse Lane – Development of a new health care facility of 1,895m² (GIA) and pharmacy of 120m² (GIA) (Use Class E(e)), associated car parking, lighting, landscaping, public realm and utilities, demolition of existing Staploe Medical Centre, pharmacy, and 59 Brewhouse Lane (and associated structures), and utilisation of existing access on to Brewhouse Lane.

The following comments were APPROVED: -

- The Town Council supports the comments of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) regarding surface water discharge that the run-off rates do not meet the IDB’s standards, and that

hydraulic calculations related to drainage are incorrect and need to be reviewed.

- The applicant should be made aware that an application for the IDB's Byelaw consent is also required in addition to planning consent.

Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Ross. Councillors voted 9 in favour with 3 abstentions.

- The proposed centre does not appear to be big enough to serve the needs of the growing population of Soham and the surrounding villages it serves.

Proposed Cllr Ross, seconded Cllr Johnston. Councillors voted 5 in favour, 3 against with 4 abstentions.

- The Medical Centre must be accessed from both the North and the South (i.e. from the A142 and from within Soham) but this must not result in a 'rat-run' through the centre out onto the A142 bypass and vice-versa.

Proposed Cllr Warner, seconded Cllr Aitchison. Councillors voted 10 in favour with 2 abstentions.

- b. APPROVED by a majority – letter of support for Mereside Medical regarding the proposed new medical centre and associated funding applications. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Aitchison. A recorded vote was requested and is as follows: - Cllrs Aitchison, Chouler, Pallett, Horgan, Jones, Dyer, Woodbridge and Woricker in favour (8); Cllrs Ross, Johnston and Warner against (3). Cllr Baker abstained.

105/24

RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS

- a. Pavilion Phase II – NOTED outline programme of the project, including key milestones, from Andrew Fleet Architects. Marginal changes had been made to the previous plans and an explanation of what these are will be obtained and reported to Councillors.
- b. To consider complaint from resident re: football goals on the recreation ground. APPROVED by a majority – that the goal posts should remain where they are to provide the most benefit to users. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Pallett. The situation will be monitored over the next few months.
- c. APPROVED by a majority – to accept recommendation from the Community Amenities Committee to extend the Skatepark by 4.8 metres. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Chouler. Councillors voted 7 in favour, 4 against with 1 abstention. The cost of the upgrades and amendments to the skatepark is estimated to be £85k with the current budget standing at £150k.
- d. To consider proposal from Living Sport to install a permanent ping-pong table on the recreation ground. Following consideration, this matter was not put to a vote because there was no Councillor proposer. It was agreed to consider putting the table on the Adizone and this may be brought back to a future meeting for consideration.
- e. To consider and approve cost of up to 7 new trees for the recreation ground – Cllr Aitchison asked that this item be deferred pending further information from Barcham Trees.
- f. To consider response to correspondence from a resident regarding the Local Highways Initiative (LHI) Scheme for the High Street. It was AGREED to respond giving all the background information on this scheme and other work that has taken place to try to alleviate

illegal parking on the High Street. Cllr Horgan will ask CCC Highways whether 'NO PARKING' can be marked on the road across the resident's driveway and offer to help apply for Access Protection Markings.

- g. APPROVED unanimously – flying of D-Day Flag of Peace from 6th June for one week on the recreation ground flagpole.
- h. APPROVED unanimously – article inviting residents to submit their ideas for the LHI Scheme, and to approve expenditure on advertising the article in Jigsaw Magazine for 6 editions, cost £99.00. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Horgan.

106/24 CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION

- a. NOTED – CCC re: weed control regime.
- b. NOTED – Weatheralls Primary School re: admissions consultation outcome.

107/24 MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Planning Committee – Monday 25th March, 1pm.
- Finance & Policy Committee – Tuesday 2nd April, 10:30am.
- Full Council – Monday 8th April, 7:15pm.

Neighbourhood Plan.

The meeting was closed at 9:15pm.