



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 8th April 2024.

Present: Cllrs D Woricker (Chairman).
R Aitchison, P. Baker, 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: County & District Cllr William Hunt.
District Cllr Keith Horgan.
There were 5 members of the public present.

MINUTES

108/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllr Elizabeth Johnston (personal).

109/24 CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR
Members of the public were asked to wait outside the meeting room whilst the following two items of business were transacted.

- a. To consider application for co-option onto the Council (Central Ward) from Ms. Kathleen Clements. Ms. Clements introduced herself and gave an overview of her interests and experience.
- b. To consider application for co-option on the Council (Central Ward) from Miss Georgia Griffiths. Miss Griffiths introduced herself and gave an overview of her interests and experience.

A vote by secret ballot was taken for both candidates. Ms. Clements was co-opted as a Central Ward Councillor by a majority vote and Miss. Griffiths was co-opted as a Central Ward Councillor by a unanimous vote. Both Ms. Clements and Miss Griffiths were invited to join the meeting upon signing their respective Declaration of Acceptance of Office forms.

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

110/24 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
Cllr Horgan declared a pecuniary interest in item 116/24c. grant application from Soham Community Group (close relative benefits from the group).

111/24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES
a. Wicken Fen 125th Anniversary Creative Project – Cllr Pallett said that Wicken Fen is celebrating its 125th Anniversary under the care of the

National Trust and the 25th Anniversary of Wicken Vision. An invitation to an event in relation to this was shared with Councillors. Cllr Pallett had attended a meeting at the Fen regarding its Kathy Hinde creative project in response to the Sounds of Wicken Fen.

- b. Local Highways Improvement, High Street – Cllr Horgan said that he and Cllr Jones, a representative from CCC Highways and a High Street resident had met to discuss the scheme and the meeting had been very positive. An alternative to the plan to install bollards had been suggested and further details and costs are awaited.
- c. Further Education provision for Soham – Cllr Woricker had attended a meeting with the Combined Authority regarding sixth form provision for Soham. He had been able to provide a lot of useful data from the Neighbourhood Plan to support the position that Soham students are being held back because there are no further education facilities within the town after GCSE level. Cllr Woricker will report any future developments regarding this.
- d. Naturalist Report re: Drayton Meadows – Cllr Aitchison had met with a representative from the Naturalists' Trust to discuss the short and long-term management of the site. A formal management committee will need to be formed so that biodiversity goals can be achieved.

112/24 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

None.

113/24 COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Apologies that been received from District Cllrs Lucuis Vellacott and Ian Bovingdon.

Cllr William Hunt reported the following: -

- That he is in favour of 20mph speed limits where they are beneficial, but not in a blanket speed reduction scheme.
- A meeting will be held by ECDC's Planning Committee to discuss the planning application for a new medical centre and the Eastern Gateway development. The meeting will be open to the public.
- The election for a Police & Crime Commissioner will take place on 2nd May. Residents must remember to take photo ID in order to vote.

District Cllr Horgan had sent a written report from all District Cllrs and this was NOTED.

114/24 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. APPROVED unanimously – the minutes from the Full Council Meeting held on 11th March 2024. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- b. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 25th March 2024.
- c. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee Meeting held on 2nd April 2024.

115/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

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

116/24 FINANCE & GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- a. APPROVED unanimously – Receipts & Payments for March/April (as listed at the end of the agenda). Proposed Cllr Woodbridge, seconded Cllr Warner.
- b. APPROVED unanimously – bank reconciliation and financial reports to 29th February 2024. Proposed Cllr Woodbridge, seconded Cllr Warner.

Cllr Horgan left the room due to his declared pecuniary interest in the following item: -

- c. APPROVED by a majority – grant application from Soham Community Group, £500.00. Proposed Cllr Woodbridge, seconded Cllr Warner.

Cllr Horgan returned to the meeting.

- d. APPROVED unanimously – the Council’s Asset Register for year ending 31st March 2024. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Jones. Cllr Aitchison proposed a vote of thanks to Cllr Johnston for her work on this.
- e. APPROVED unanimously – increased insurance premium (from £56.00 per annum to £224.00 per annum) re: Legal Expenses. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- f. Review of Standing Orders – it was proposed by Cllr Jones that the Council’s meeting times be extended in Standing Order 3x to two and a half hours (from two hours) and the proposal was seconded by Cllr Horgan and APPROVED by a majority. There were no other changes, and the Standing Orders were APPROVED.
- g. Reviewed and APPROVED unanimously – Risk Management Policy. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Jones.
- h. APPROVED unanimously – co-option of Cllr Patricia Baker onto the Council’s Planning Committee. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Jones.

117/24

PLANNING MATTERS

- a. To consider and respond to planning application: 19/01600/ESO – Land West of A142 between East Fen Common and East of Brewhouse Lane – Outline planning application for up to 540 dwellings, a medical centre (E(e) use class), and up to 1,600 sqm GIA of use classes: E (a)(b)(c)(e)(f)(g) (r) hot food takeaway, F1, and F2 and associated highways and infrastructure works, drainage, open space and landscaping, with all matters reserved save for Phase 1 and 3B including landscaping, drainage, infrastructure works and open space, and access (including highways and infrastructure works) via a new roundabout to the A142, and new access points to the NE boundary of Staploe Medical Centre, the former garden centre, and to the boundary of land between East Fen Common and Cornwell Close. AMENDMENT: Amended Plans.

It was APPROVED unanimously to send a detailed response covering the following points: -

- The Council’s previous responses in relation to the Eastern Gateway stand.
- There must be vehicular access from the development into the town centre.
- Having only one access from the site out onto the A142 is unsustainable and potentially dangerous.
- Drainage – where will water drain to from the site since the IDB has stated that it cannot flow into their Main Drain? If by attenuation ponds, how will these be looked after and what safety measures will be in place to protect residents?
- The development sits between two Commons and will have a detrimental impact on biodiversity. Will an Ecology Report be undertaken? The developer must mitigate the negative effect on the surrounding biodiversity.
- The Council wishes to be involved in s106 negotiations

regarding this development.

- Clarification is sought on where the footpaths and pedestrian access points should be.
- There must be no pedestrian access onto either of the neighbouring Commons directly from the site.
- The Council would like to be involved in the location of litter and dog waste bins.

Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Warner.

118/24

RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS

a. Neighbourhood Plan.

- I. APPROVED unanimously – final documents for submission, and delegation to Cllr Aitchison to make any nominal (spelling or grammatical) changes to the documents if necessary. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Dyer. Cllr Pallett proposed a vote of thanks to Cllr Aitchison for all her hard work in bringing the Neighbourhood Plan to this stage, and Councillors responded with a round of applause.
- II. APPROVED unanimously – submission of final documents to ECDC for Independent Examination. Proposed Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Warner.

b. Pavilion Phase II – NOTED comparison plans for submission for planning application.

c. To consider and approve cost of up to 7 new trees for the recreation ground – Cllr Aitchison said that the trees would cost approximately £250.00 each plus £27.00 for guards and stakes. It was proposed by Cllr Warner that specific cost and species be brought back to Council for consideration, and this was agreed unanimously. It was agreed that the trees should be planted in the autumn when they would not need to be watered.

d. APPROVED unanimously to **withdraw** the Council's support of the proposed blanket 20mph zone in light of the results of the most recent public consultation, and to suggest instead particular areas which would benefit from a reduction in the speed limit. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Warner.

e. APPROVED by a majority – corporate membership of the Mid Anglia Rail Passenger Association (MARPA), cost £25.00 per year. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Chouler.

f. To consider budget for repair & maintenance of churchyard gravestones. It was agreed to consult with Geoffrey Hunter at the Ely Diocese to ascertain the exact course of action the Diocese might want the Council to take before setting a budget or taking any further action.

g. APPROVED by a majority – quotation for replacement swing, cost between £660.00 and £1,085.00 +VAT plus £30.00 +VAT delivery. Proposed Cllr Warner, seconded Cllr Aitchison. The cost of replacement may be covered by the Council's insurance policy with a £100 excess. A claim is currently in progress.

h. APPROVED unanimously – quotation for wet-pour repairs and cleaning in the playground, cost £3,187.00 +VAT. Proposed Cllr Warner, seconded Cllr Pallett.

i. To consider invoice for fencing at property adjacent to the Weatheralls Allotments, £960.00 (VAT unrecoverable). Cllr Horgan proposed to pay a 50% contribution to the fencing as a goodwill gesture and the proposal was seconded by Cllr Jones. Councillors voted 2 in favour, 9 against with 3 abstentions and the proposal was NOT CARRIED.

It was APPROVED unanimously to waive Standing Order 3x and extend the meeting time beyond two hours. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Pallett.

- j. To consider installation of concrete table-tennis table on the Adizone – Cllr Jones proposed to go ahead with the installation of the table however, there was no seconder for the proposal and therefore no vote was taken. Councillors were concerned that the table would not be widely used and that future maintenance costs would fall upon the Council.

119/24 CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION

- a. NOTED – resident response re: recreation ground football goal posts.
- b. NOTED – Police & Crime Commissioner re: update on Youth Fund.

120/24 MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Planning Committee – Monday 29th April.
- Finance & Policy Committee – Tuesday 7th May.
- Annual Full Council Meeting – Monday 13th May.
- Annual Town Meeting – Monday 20th May.

The meeting was closed at 9:23pm.