



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 May 2024.

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

In attendance: County & District Cllr Mark Goldsack.
District Cllrs Ian Bovingdon, Keith Horgan and Lucius Vellacott.
There was one member of the public present.

The meeting was opened at 7:15pm.

MINUTES

1/24 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR (CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL) FOR ENSUING CIVIC YEAR (and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office).

Cllr Johnston nominated Cllr Woricker to the office of Mayor and Chairman and the nomination was seconded by Cllr Horgan. 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.

2/24 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR (VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL) FOR ENSUING CIVIC YEAR

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

3/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Hamish Ross and Patricia Baker (personal);

4/24 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

5/24

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES

- a. Wicken Fen Milestone Celebrations – Cllr Johnston said that she and Cllr Horgan had attended this event which celebrated 125 years of Wicken Fen. The event had been informative regarding the well-supported ethos of the Wicken Fen Project and its ongoing aims. Representatives from The National Trust, Wicken Fen, the Forestry Commission and Natural England had all been able to give insight into Soham's own green initiatives and, had shown an interest in the Soham to Wicken Cycleway project.
- b. Visit to French town twinned with Soham – Cllrs Woricker and Pallett had been invited to Soham's twin town, Andrézieux-Bouthéon, and visited last weekend. Cllr Woricker said it had been good to meet the Council's French counterparts who had been very hospitable, and that he had come away freshly enthused in his role as Mayor. It is hoped that at some time in the future, the Council might be able to invite the Maire of Andrézieux-Bouthéon to visit Soham.

6/24

PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

None.

7/24

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

District & County Cllr Mark Goldsack congratulated Cllr Woricker on his re-election as Mayor and Chairman, and reported the following matters:

- Cllr Goldsack has received three enquiries for potential LHI bids in the town at The Shade, on the High Street and on Fordham Road. He has directed enquiries to the Clerk.
- The Shade crossing – a meeting is due to be held this week to look at alternatives to moving the crossing further south.
- High Street planters – CCC has wrongly positioned these and cars are still parking on the pavement behind them.
- The Local Highways Officer for this area is currently on sick leave and Annika Radcliffe, who also covers Ely, is standing in. Highways issues are being progressed and Cllr Goldsack urged Councillors and the public to continue to report issues on the online portal.
- New Town Councillors can contact Cllr Goldsack on any CCC matters which they need clarification on.

District Cllr Lucuis Vellacott reported the following:

- Cllr Vellacott said he was pleased to see that the Council had co-opted three new members recently.
- A proposal to remove Wicken students from having priority admission to St Andrew's Primary School has been revoked by DEMAT and will be consulted on this autumn for September 2026 admissions.
- Speeding on the High Street – Cllr Vellacott has requested evening police patrols.
- Cllr Vellacott has proposed a cross-party motion at ECDC's annual meeting on 23rd May aimed at deterring abuse and intimidation of Councillors, candidates and officers in local government.

Cllr Vellacott said much had been achieved by the District Council in the last year including the Changing Places toilet and grant funding for Drayton Meadows and the closed churchyard.

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

Cllr Aitchison asked about civil parking enforcement in the district. ECDC is currently exploring a Road Safety Police Volunteer scheme to tackle parking issues.

8/24

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. APPROVED by a majority – the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 8th April 2024. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Dyer.
- b. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 29th April 2024.

9/24

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

- a. NOTED – Clerk’s Report.

10/24

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- a. APPROVED by a majority – Receipts & Payments for April/May 2024 (as listed at the end of the agenda). Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- b. APPROVED by a majority – bank reconciliation and financial reports to 31st March. Proposed Cllr Dyer, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- c. NOTED – Internal Auditor’s report for the 2023-24 financial year. Appropriate action will be taken to address issues raised. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Johnston.
- d. APPROVED unanimously and signed by the Chairman and the Clerk – the Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24. Proposed Cllr Chouler, seconded Cllr Warner.
- e. APPROVED unanimously and signed by the Chairman – the Annual Accounting Statements for 2023-24. Proposed Cllr Dyer, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- f. Reviewed and APPROVED unanimously – payments by Direct Debit (as per Financial Regulation 6.7). Proposed Cllr Warner, seconded Cllr Horgan.
- g. NOTED – schedule of Full Council and Committee Meetings.
- h. APPROVED unanimously – membership and appointment of chairpersons for Standing Committees as follows: -
 - Planning Committee – Chairman Cllr Pallett. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
 - Allotments Committee – Chairman Cllr Dyer. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Johnston.
 - Cemetery Committee – Chairman Cllr Woodbridge. Proposed Cllr Woricker, seconded Cllr Johnston.
 - Community Amenities Committee – appointment of Chairman to be made at the meeting on 24th June.
 - 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.

Cllrs Horgan and Warner were appointed to the Allotments Committee, and Cllr Warner was also appointed to the Community Amenities Committee. Cllr Jones was appointed to all Committees as a substitute.

All other Committee membership remained the same.

- i. NOTED - confirmation of membership to working parties and external bodies, AGREED as follows: -
 - Soham Moors Old Grammar School Fund – there is no longer a requirement to have a Council representative.
 - Soham United Charities – Cllr Aitchison.
 - Soham Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Association – Cllrs Jones and Warner.
 - Soham Community Association – clarification will be sought as to whether the SCA wishes to have a Council representative.
 - Barway Village Charity Trustee – Cllrs Johnston and Aitchison.
 - Soham Community Moat Fields 3G (football pitches) initiative – no longer in operation.
 - Youth Services – Cllrs Pallett and Chouler.
 - Wicken Fen Community Forum – Cllrs Woricker and Woodbridge.
 - The Middle Fen and Mere Internal Drainage Board – Cllr Jones if a representative is required.
- j. APPROVED unanimously – grant application from CCC for the Summer Reading Challenge for £250.00. Proposed Cllr Woodbridge, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- k. APPROVED unanimously – grant application for £500.00 from Soham Pumpkin Fair for portable toilets for the event. Proposed Cllr Warner, seconded Cllr Johnston.

11/24

RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS

- a. Neighbourhood Planning – to note confirmation of submission of the Soham & Barway Neighbourhood Plan to ECDC for Regulation 16 Consultation – NOTED. ECDC has received some comments since the consultation went live. Once the consultation closes on 3rd June, and if no changes are necessary, ECDC will put the Plan forward to referendum as soon as possible. The referendum is paid for by ECDC but the Town Council will be responsible for publicising it.
- b. NOTED – Pavilion Phase II Biodiversity Net Gain Report from Andrew Fleet Architects. The increase in biodiversity from the site's current base figure would be 90% if all biodiversity proposals are implemented. This far exceeds the current requirement for all development to increase biodiversity by at least 10%.
- c. To consider the following safety inspection reports and take any necessary action:
 - Fountain Lane Playground
 - Fountain Lane BMX/Skate/Basketball
 - Gym Equipment at Recreation Ground
 - Kingfisher Drive.NOTED – only minor issues had been identified and repairs have been arranged.
- d. To consider and approve budget of £7,500 per year to purchase or lease an open-backed van for use by the grounds maintenance team

- this item was deferred to the next meeting pending further information. It was proposed by Cllr Johnston, seconded by Cllr Jones and APPROVED by a majority, that Cllrs Dyer and Horgan would meet with the grounds maintenance team to discuss their requirements regarding the vehicle's specification. Options for a hybrid or fully electric vehicle will also be investigated.
- e. APPROVED by a majority – removal of the teenage shelter, to be replaced with picnic tables/benches – cost up to £3,000 (see Clerk's report). Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Griffiths. A recorded vote was requested and is as follows: In favour – Cllrs Woricker, Johnston, Aitchison, Chouler, Clements, Dyer, Griffiths, Horgan, Jones and Pallett. Against – Cllrs Warner and Woodbridge.
 - f. APPROVED unanimously – purchase of Trimax grass cutter (to replace 25-year-old gang mowers – see Clerk's report), cost £9,855.00 +VAT. Proposed Cllr Dyer, seconded Cllr Woodbridge. Cllr Johnston left and returned to the meeting during the following item.
 - g. To consider request from resident to place a bench in the cemetery (to be purchased by the resident) – the policy of the Council is not to allow benches to be placed in the cemetery by residents. However, the resident may wish to place a memorial plaque on an existing bench and this option will be offered to them.
 - h. To consider request from resident re: replacement of fencing between their garden and the recreation ground – it was agreed that the Council would prefer to see the fence replaced along the full length of the resident's boundary rather than have the back of the garage exposed and the fence abutted to it as this would be more aesthetically pleasing in the Conservation Area.

12/24

CORRESPONDENCE

- a. NOTED – Rural Services Network re: membership benefits.
- b. NOTED – District Cllr Vellacott re: medical centre planning application.
- c. NOTED – Viva re: SoFest 2024 (safety and events management information).

13/24

MOTION TO EXCLUDE

It was RESOLVED unanimously under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, that public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Johnston.

The meeting was closed to the public at 8:55pm.

14/24

PURCHASE OF LAND

- a. To consider potential land to purchase for community use – Cllr Johnston thanked members of the Community Amenities Committee for their input into selecting potentially suitable sites. The following ideas were put forward and sites suggested which might be suitable for each purpose. For confidentiality, the sites are only identified in these minutes by number: -
 - Cllr Jones – sports hall and facilities – sites 7, 8 and 19.
 - Cllr Warner – community woodlands – sites 15 and 17.

- Cllr Chouler – community events – sites 7,8,11,12,13,14 and 19.
- Cllr Jones – dog walking areas – sites 1,2,3,6,9 and 18.
- Cllr Johnston – wetland habitat – sites 9 and 10.
- Cllr Pallett – events car parking – site 5 and sites yet to be identified.
- Cllr Jones – market square – site yet to be identified.
- Cllr Woricker – cricket pitch – site yet to be identified.
- Cllr Johnston – cemetery – site yet to be identified.

It was proposed by Cllr Woodbridge and seconded by Cllr Jones that Cllr Johnston and the Council's Land Agent would move forward on any of these sites if and when they become available for the activities suggested. Councillors voted 10 in favour with 2 abstentions and the proposal was CARRIED. As they arise, they will be brought back to Full Council for consideration.

15/24 MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Annual Town Meeting, Monday 20th May, 7:15pm.
- Finance & Policy, Monday 3rd June (to be confirmed).
- Planning Committee, Monday 20th May.
- Ordinary Full Council Meeting, Monday 10th June.
- Community Amenities Committee, Monday 24th June & Cemetery walkaround.

For future consideration: Climate change working group/committee.

The meeting was closed at 9:25pm.