



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 July 2024.

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

In attendance: County Cllr William Hunt.
District Cllrs Keith Horgan and Lucius Vellacott.
There were 3 members of the public present.

The meeting was opened at 7:15pm.

MINUTES

Before the meeting was opened the Chairman asked members of the public to remain quiet when Council is in session. Members of the public may speak during public comment time and at the discretion of the Chairman only.

27/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Glenn Dyer, Glenn Woodbridge and Kathleen Clements (personal).
Cllr Charles Warner was absent from the meeting.

28/24 COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

29/24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES

The Chairman gave a vote of thanks to Lucy Frazer KC for her hard work as the MP for this area over the last 9 years, and congratulated Charlotte Cane on her election as the new MP for this area (now Ely and East Cambridgeshire) in last week's General Election. With the Council's agreement, the Chairman will write to both Ms. Frazer and Ms. Cane to reflect these sentiments.

- a. Acquisition of land – Cllr Johnston said that contact had been made with local landowners and more feedback on progress will be given at future meetings of Full Council and the Community Amenities Committee.
- b. Cemetery walkabout – Cllr Woricker said that there are a few matters to action from the walkabout but that the cemetery is generally looking very good. Cllr Aitchison said that the hedge at the front of

the ashes plot is suitable to encourage pollinators and should be left in place, following a request from the grounds staff as to whether it should be removed. The hedge should be thoroughly weeded and then cut back in the autumn.

Other matters reported at the meeting: -

- Cllr Chouler thanked the Council on behalf of the Royal British Legion for its donation towards the D-Day 80th Commemorations. There are some funds left over and these will be returned to the Council.

30/24 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

A resident complained about the lack of opportunity for the public to speak at Council meetings.

31/24 COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

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

Both District Cllrs in attendance called attention to the Extraordinary Planning Committee meeting due to be held on Tuesday 13th August at 2pm to determine applications for the Eastern Gateway, and the new medical centre.

Cllr Horgan had attended the recent 'Coffee with a Cop' session and had passed on details of antisocial driving that had been brought to his attention.

The vicar of St Andrew's, Soham, had read out prayers at ECDC's first meeting of the new municipal year.

Cllr Vellacott congratulated Charlotte Cane on her election as MP for Ely and East Cambridgeshire.

He will relay concerns regarding the Eastern Gateway planning application whilst fully supporting the application for a new medical centre.

It has been agreed to introduce black wheeled bins (180L) which will be collected fortnightly, and a weekly food waste collection. Additional blue and green bins will be provided free of charge. Black sacks for this year will be distributed from now until the end of August.

County Cllr Hunt will Chair the Extraordinary Planning Committee meeting for the Eastern Gateway and medical centre and has allowed twice as much time per speaker given the importance of these two applications.

32/24 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. APPROVED by a majority – the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held 10th June 2024. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Griffiths.
- b. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 24th June 2024.
- c. NOTED – the draft minutes of the Community Amenities Meeting held on 24th June 2024.

33/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.

- a. NOTED – Clerk's Report. Updates were given as follows: -

- The teenage shelter has been removed and replaced with 3 picnic benches (including one with wheelchair access).
- The newly appointed grounds person had resigned within their probation period and the post has been readvertised. Six applications have been received so far.

34/24

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- APPROVED unanimously – Receipts & Payments for June/July 2024 (as listed at the end of the agenda). Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Chouler with one correction – the Clerk’s manual was £51.50 +VAT not £511.50 +VAT as published.
- APPROVED unanimously – bank reconciliation and financial reports to 31st May 2024. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Aitchison.
- APPROVED unanimously – updated Terms of Reference for the Council’s Standing Committees. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Johnston.
- REVIEWED – policies: Code of Conduct, Safeguarding, Debit Card, and Website Accessibility Policies. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Jones.

35/24

RECREATION GROUND/PAVILION/TOWN MATTERS

- Pavilion Phase II – update: Cllr Johnston said that fundraising for the project has begun with several funding sources identified. The pre-application report from the planning officer is still awaited and a full application will be submitted as soon as possible after this is received. It was APPROVED unanimously to delegate to Cllr Johnston and the Clerk (with the Chairman copied in) power to agree any minor changes to the planning application suggested by the pre-application report so that a full application can be submitted without delay. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Chouler.
- Neighbourhood Plan:
 - Update on Examination and retrospective approval of consultancy expenditure, £795.00 +VAT (paid under delegated powers). Cllr Aitchison said that the consultant had been extremely helpful and had drafted a response to the Examiner’s questions. The expenditure was APPROVED unanimously (retrospectively). Proposed Cllr Griffiths, seconded Cllr Horgan.
 - APPROVED unanimously – Working Group’s comments and recommendations following the Regulation 16 Consultation. Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Jones. Comments include the following: -
 - inclusion of the Commons as local green spaces;
 - a concern regarding green energy and the loss of agricultural land;

The comments and response drafted by the consultant will now go back to the Examiner and if he is satisfied, the Plan will be put forward for referendum. A vote of at least 50% in favour is needed for the Plan to come into force. Once the date of the referendum is known it will be advertised on the Council’s website and Facebook page, via banners in various locations in the town and in the local magazine.
- APPROVED unanimously to accept resident’s offer of £500 to part-fund a replacement bench in St Andrew’s Churchyard, and request

to install commemorative plaque alongside existing plaque installed in 1974. (Total cost of bench £750.35 inclusive of VAT which cannot be claimed back, plus up to £50 for the plaque.) Proposed Cllr Horgan, seconded Cllr Chouler. The Chairman thanked the benefactor (who wishes to remain anonymous) for their very generous offer.

- d. APPROVED unanimously – recommendation of the Community Amenities Committee to purchase outright a Moveable Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS), cost £5,750.00 including two posts and two batteries. Proposed Cllr Pallett, seconded Cllr Jones. Also APPROVED unanimously that its first position will be on Broad Piece. Proposed Cllr Jones, seconded Cllr Aitchison. Other locations for approval are: Fordham Road, The Shade and Kingfisher drive.
- e. To consider correspondence from resident re: position of football goals on the recreation ground. It was agreed that the goal posts are in the best position for use by residents and in relation to the rest of the recreation ground and that this matter should now be closed. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Chouler and APPROVED unanimously.
- f. APPROVED unanimously – to facilitate information event on gardening activities in relation to climate change and the Council's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Pallett. The event will aim to bring together advisors on horticulture and gardening, open green spaces and green energy to encourage residents to take action on climate change. Cllr Aitchison will contact ECDC to ask if they would partner with the Council to put this event together.
- g. APPROVED unanimously – guided walk around Drayton Meadows. Cllr Aitchison suggested Sunday 18th August from 2pm for a family orientated event for anyone interested in the flora and fauna at the Meadows. It is hoped to have an Entomologist and an Ornithologist on hand to advise on insects and birds present; Cllr Aitchison will be able to advise on plants. Dogs on leads will be welcome. Proposed Cllr Johnston, seconded Cllr Pallett.
- h. NOTED – Health & Safety report. All necessary actions will be undertaken.

36/24

PLANNING MATTERS

- a. 19/01600/ESO Land west of A142 between East Fen Common and Qua 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) sui generis (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. Location: Land West Of A142. **AMENDMENT: Update on the Ecology and Transport chapters of the Environmental Statement, amended PROW proposal and amended landscape drawings, including details for tree planting.**

The following comments and objections were APPROVED unanimously. Proposed Cllr Aitchison, seconded Cllr Ross: -

- The public rights of way shown are inaccurate and out of date;
- The tree planting proposal is inadequate and there is not enough screening between properties.
- Ecology – the development will struggle to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain and a new calculation (given the recent change in legislation) should be made. Policy SBNP12 Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats (bi.) of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan states:

The minimum biodiversity net gain for all qualifying developments shall be 20%, rather than the national mandatory minimum of 10%, unless demonstrated through an independent assessment that it would make the development unviable.

- The biodiversity of the adjacent Commons should be protected in line with Policy SBNP11 Soham's Commons (7.3) which states:
Development proposals will also be expected to explore opportunities to enhance biodiversity and limit any impact on the Commons by unauthorised access.
- Vehicular access points from Cornwall Close and the old garden centre on the A142 are wholly unsuitable. A new transport analysis must be undertaken before permission for these access routes is considered. These routes as mentioned in the application do not appear to be on the map provided.
- An increase in traffic across the Commons will endanger livestock and other animals which are kept on the Commons.
- The Cundall Report (November 2023) recommends the applicant to undertake a safety study and consider proportionate highway safety measures along the A142 Soham bypass and the junctions with Northfield Road and Paddock Street, or demonstrate why such measures are not required to comply with Local Plan policy. Has this study been undertaken?

- b. To consider a Council representative to attend ECDC's Extraordinary Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday 13th August at 2pm where applications 19/01600/ESO Soham Eastern Gateway and 24/00146/FUM Soham Medical Centre are to be determined – Cllrs Horgan and Jones will attend on behalf of the Council to relay the Council's previously agreed comments on both applications and will meet with the Clerk beforehand to collate these and produce a prepared statement to be read at the meeting. It will be made clear that the Council objects to the Eastern Gateway as proposed but supports the plans for a much-needed new medical centre. Proposed Cllr Ross, seconded Cllr Chouler and agreed by a majority (Cllrs Horgan and Jones abstained from the vote). Residents may contact Democratic Services at ECDC if they wish to speak at the meeting.

37/24

MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Planning Committee, Monday 29th July, 1pm.
- Finance & Policy Committee, Monday 5th August, 10:30am (to be confirmed).
- Full Council, Monday 9th September, 7:15pm.

The meeting was closed at 9:15pm.