

SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Soham Town Council held at the Pavilion, Soham, on Monday 14 October 2019.

Present: E Johnston (Chairperson), P Lane, D Woricker, P Leonard, H Ross, G Dyer, G Woodbridge, C Gipp & Mesdames R Aitchison, A Pallett & A Woricker.

In Attendance County Cllr B Hunt & District Cllr V Charlesworth.

117/19 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

A resident made representation regarding in his opinion the generally poor quality of road repairs and white lining along the High St undertaken recently by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)-Highways noting specifically that re-lining and road markings around Sand St appeared to be missing.

A resident made representation regarding the locations of a number of bus shelters in and around Ely rail station raising concerns about air quality in this area for pedestrians at peak transport times and querying whether any CO/CO₂ checks and/or monitoring data had been undertaken/obtained by CCC. He also raised a query as to why the amenity of a new bus stop outside Ely Tesco did not have the benefit of a seat and shelter. Cllr Hunt responded that the provision of the bypass had eliminated queuing of HGV's and high sided lorries from Angel Drove to the rail station area eliminating much of the previous pollution effects. On the specific point of a bus shelter outside Tesco's, Cllr Hunt confirmed that Tesco PLC had not been in favour of this position however if the resident would like to contact him by email (agreed via the Office) he would look into these matters and respond to the resident directly.

118/19 COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Cllr Hunt stated he was in attendance as representative of Cllr Goldsack and duly provided report on Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) related matters affecting Soham and/or more generally namely:

- Public road or pathway -issues including obstruction of overhanging trees/bushes. Cllr Goldsack restated the need for the public to report these problems via CCC's website to generate a reference and where not satisfied with response/outcome for them to pass this information onto him to be able to look into the issue(s) on behalf of the resident.
- Cllr Hunt was pleased to report that the recent traveller activity in the town had been dealt with in a swift, efficient manner and had proved to not be of significant inconvenience to the affected residents.
- In partnership with Cambridgeshire Constabulary both ECDC and CCC are looking into the feasibility of employing Village/Town Rangers who would be employed and paid for by the parish/town council but given full training able to undertake civil enforcement/spot fines/record names/film incidents/issue parking tickets etc.
- The new Registry Office is now open at The Dock Ely, and anticipated that CCC archives would be open to the public by Christmas.
- Recycling Centres – Noting most County Councils' charge for this type of facility CCC remain committed to keeping this a free service to its ratepayers and looking to control out-of-county and business use by introducing resident identification by some means (such as APNR registration, utility bill production), banning all commercial business use and limiting domestic small vans and/or trailers use to a maximum of 12 visits a year.

- Verge maintenance- verges on highways will be only cut/maintained where there is an identified need or risk and where road user visibility and splays were required.
- A14 improvement updates-CCllr Hunt noted that 12 of the 21 miles of proposed improvements would be open for use and that the delivery of this was programme of works was one year ahead of planned schedule.
- Soham Railway station-remains on course for delivery 2020.
- Christmas tree 2019- CCllr Hunt noted the annual gift from CCC to Soham.
- Winter grit bin replenishment- noted that CCC provides a refilling service but residents are expected to report when running low/ empty (via website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/help-with-gritting-and-clearing-snow/) and it remains up to individuals to grit those roads/public paths not identified on CCC schedule (mostly residential and town through roads). Grit is provided for public thoroughfares and not for private uses.
- Local Recycling centres (District Council matter) CCllr Hunt noted local collection points in towns and villages had now been removed along with the District's decision not to continue to undertake community refuse collection on unadopted roads. Cllr Ross took significant exception and objection to this action citing that many homeowners on the commons are elderly and unable to struggle with the weight/size of the bins to the end of the unadopted tracks for them to be emptied. DCllr Charlesworth commented that the decision(s) taken in regards to loss of local recycling points had not had the support of the Liberal Democrat District Cllrs but being in the minority had been out-voted by the majority Conservative membership. The Chairman intervened noting that the Town Council was apolitical and cautioned County and District Cllrs alike to restrict their reports to outcomes and not on reasons/opinions or decision based on politics and/or political Parties. Having completed his report and noting as a County Cllr he would not be in attendance until in the New Year CCllr Hunt wished all present a 'Happy Christmas'.

District Cllr Charlesworth was then invited by the Chairman to present report on East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) matters affecting Soham or more generally namely:

- CIL/Regulation 123 Expenditure- DCllr Charlesworth noted a heavy slanting of these Developers monies for infrastructure and amenity improvements towards Ely, but with the exception of VIVA funded project, significant disparity and disproportionately less spend on similar improvements to Soham.

The Clerk noting that the recent Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) had been convened to consider pay rise and remuneration for both District and County (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority) Cllrs but had omitted a similar review (last one in 2007) for parish and town Cllrs. DCllr Charlesworth indicated she would look into the matter.

A resident queried the motivation for, community benefit derived from and quality to governance operated by East Cambridgeshire District Council for its trading arm (Ltd company) citing that profits obtained from publicly owned assets appear at the expense of affordable home provision(s) for local people and existing infrastructure and amenities and notwithstanding these concerns there remains significant public

question and concern to goof governance for any local Authority undertaking commercial activit(ies) where 'conflicts or interest' 'expense' and 'profits' are not made transparent. CCllr Hunt who had previously stated he was in attendance solely as a County Cllr responded as a District Cllr citing that the commercial activity of the District's Trading arm was the reason that the District's precept (rate demand) had been kept the same for the last 5 years.

The Chairman invited the Clerk in capacity of RFO to Soham Town Council to make comment who citing examples noted that in addition to its commercial activities the District Council being the Billing Collection and Planning Authority also had ability to generate additional revenues and income all of which contributed to it being able to maintain its rate demand at a constant level over this extended time period.

119/19

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Warner and A Curtis and duly authorised by the membership. Cllr Chapman was recorded as being absent.

120/19

CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES

Cllr Johnston's cautioned town Cllrs regarding debating matters in a round-robin style using email to items that have, are or will be listed on agendas for consideration at full council and reminded Cllrs that decisions and approvals are taken by the Council as a democratic Corporate Body at meetings to which the public is invited to observe proceedings. At no time or point are town Cllrs as individuals able to take decisions on behalf of, direct the Office to act or spend monies without the full town council's prior approval (and as minuted in the official record).

The Chairman noted the next Planning meeting would be held on Monday 28 October 2019, 1pm Pavilion and that following recommendations from the previous Finance & Policy committee meeting held earlier in the evening the respective Chairmen of Cemetery & Allotment and Community Amenities committee would convene meetings on Thursday 24 October at the Pavilion (commencing 7pm and at 7.45pm, respectively) to discuss projects and financial requests for next financial year and in future strategic forward planning.

Cllr Pallett spoke briefly on the great success of the recent Twinning Association visit culminating with a farewell reception at the Pavilion after the annual Pumpkin Fair (105/19C) and she thanked all Cllrs who had been involved or assisted in making it possible. Cllr Woodbridge noted his involvement in the event and that he found the French visitors to be most polite and raised his concerns that the long standing Twinning arrangement, without active community support and encouraging new membership, would fail.

Cllr Woodbridge, as the town council's representative on the Soham Moor Old Grammar School Fund, updated the membership on recent activities. Noting that the terms under which the Charity operates is to provide monies for educational purposes he noted grants of £4.5K to Soham Village College, £2K to Weatheralls Primary School, £1.8K to St Andrews Primary School and a number of smaller individual student donations.

Cllr Woodbridge requested a vote of thanks be recorded to the resident who had instigated a request for a Commonwealth War Graves (green) sign some years ago and that has recently been installed on the cemetery gate piers and to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for their persistence in eventually obtaining this sign from CWG.

121/19

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Johnston, Aitchison and Pallett declared DPI's to agenda item 127/19 B with Cllr Aitchison declaring in addition a personal interest in item 127/19 A. Having declared a DPI and where no dispensations had been applied for or agreed with the Proper Officer¹ prior to a meeting it remained the responsibility of those Cllrs making DPI declarations² to take the necessary actions to recuse themselves from the meeting and prior to debate and or council decisions to those items and matters.

122/19

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED and APPROVED that the minutes of the meeting on the 9 September 2019 as printed and attached were a true record of proceedings and duly signed as such by the Vice Chairman.

123/19

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CURRENT & WHERE NECESSARY PREVIOUS FULL COUCIL MINUTES (matters not listed on the agenda specifically below to include):

A) Neighbourhood Plan(ning) – Working Group Updates

NOTED that a budget for costs had been prepared and all necessary grant application paperwork had been completed for submission (Central Government). The first public forum for Soham residents will be held on Saturday 18 January 2020 at the Pavilion between 10am and 4pm.

NOTED that printed questionnaires will be distributed to all residents of Soham and Barway with collection boxes being placed in several designated points around the town including one at reception council Offices, The Pavilion.

NOTED next NP meeting is Wednesday 16 October 7.30pm at Pavilion and it is hoped that also business breakfast meeting can be arranged in the New Year.

B) ASB public meeting 12 September 2019 (105/19)

NOTED email summary in report received from Sgt Rabel in which a meeting at ECDC on 7th November 2019 is planned to discuss the provision of Community Safety Accreditation (training) Scheme for East Cambs (so called Town Rangers).

NOTED Cllr Ross' s comment that many aspects and not just financial ones, would need to be carefully considered by Soham Town Council should it decide to employ a person in the role of a Town Ranger and any decisions should not be taken until a full assessment could be made of all materials facts on the matter.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's comments and concern that it appeared that primary duties and functions of Service Providers such as the Police are being delegated to the unpaid voluntary sector, organisations and partnerships.

NOTED Cllr Pallett concerns that more and more services and functions from Higher Tier Authorities are being delegated to/undertaken by lower tier authorities such as Soham Town Council who have in turn a need to increase their own precepts.

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Transport Plan (108/19 (D))

NOTED unfortunately the Finance & Policy Committee were unable to respond on behalf of the town council but all councillors as well as residents did have opportunity to complete the questionnaire prior to the deadline.

¹ Delegated to Clerk Soham Town Council

² Failure to comply with the rules is a criminal offence and may be punished by a *fine* of up to £5,000 and/or disqualification for up to 5 years.

Adizone (Kingfisher) (108/19 (E))

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's disappointment at loss of this amenity.

NOTED Cllr D Woricker's response that all useable/reparable equipment (6 pieces of current 20) would be relocated to the recreation ground whilst opposing goal and basket ball hoops would be provided on the newly laid hard-standing (court) to encourage team play/sports.

Festive Light Provision High St (And closed churchyard) Christmas 2019 (113B).

NOTED due to Policy management changes by CCC-Highways and the need for permits, health and safety (risk assessments), certification for lights, electricity and building structural connections, together with roadside (highway) accreditation and training of volunteers SACT decided over summer recess not to continue to take responsibility to install the festive lights in Soham High St [public thoroughfare] (and closed churchyard)

NOTED a number of options were/are considered at this late stage:

Not have lights this year (not supported by the membership-see Finance and Policy minutes September 2019, full council meeting minutes September October 2019) and as consequence the following options were suggested in discussion by the membership:

PLAN A – To outsource to a company specialising in hire and install at a cost of £10K (not currently budget in precept)

NOTED Cllr Lane's suggestion and his intention to make a request to Soham United Charities at the end of the week for a donation to cover shortfall (circa £7K)

PLAN B – For current SACT volunteers to install lights in closed church yard only (which as private property and maintained (occupied) by Soham Town Council is covered under its current existing insurances) subject to the volunteers agreeing to this and there being suitable electrical connection(s) from the church (TBD) and then to budget for this expenditure in next year's precept.

NOTED Cllr Worickers comment that plan B and reasons for such decisions should be widely advertised.

APPROVED BY MAJORITY PLAN B Proposed by Cllr D Woricker seconded by Cllr A Woricker (6 Votes for and 5 against)

An amendment to Approval (Plan B) that should Plan B not be achievable/practicable for any reason then by default the council approval would revert to Plan A was immediately proposed by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Ross

APPROVED BY MAJORITY THE AMENDMENT (default position) AS STATED (8 votes for, 3 against).

NOTED Cllr Aitchison wanted it to be recorded in Soham Town Council's Official Records that SACT and its volunteers had served the town and provided festive lighting for well over 30 years, raised money to replace all the stock in recent years and that special thanks should be extended to Mr Robert Peacock who had provided much of the technical know-how in this annual community-led activity.

APPROVED VOTE OF THANKS be recorded for SACT and all volunteers.

At 8:35pm Cllr Woodbridge extended his apologies to the membership and left the meeting.

Soham High Street matters including legacy tree planting programme (112/19)

NOTED & APPROVED letter to be issued to all shop holders in the High Street by Cllr Leonard regarding shop and frontage conservation issues including

signage together with ECDC booklet on conservation planning issues for information and reference.

NOTED Cllr Leonard's intention to contact Tesco's PLC current lease holders for Best One (High St) with a view to creating potential 'pop up'³ opportunities in this ground space/store.

NOTED WITH A VOTE OF THANKS to Cllr Leonard for his discussions with various Stakeholders and to Barcham Trees PLC for their generous offer of trees (value £20K but FOC to the town council) to be planted at the two roundabouts at either end of Soham (14 multi stem birch trees at Northern end, 20 small mature species at Southern end)

NOTED & APPROVED costs of £4,470.00 + VAT to pay for Barcham Trees preferred supplier to plant those trees and provide trial pits subject to the Contractors agreement to undertake the works in winter 2019 and for an invoice for payment be provided to the town council in new financial year (commencing 1st April 2020).

124/19

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following committees as printed and approved those recommendations as contained, unless otherwise specified under matters arising (below), be duly adopted.

- a) Finance & Policy - 9 September 2019
- b) Planning - 30 September 2019

125 /19

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM LAST MONTHS' AND PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES –

Financial matters and accounts-July & August 2019 (FP 61/19)

NOTED Office accounts is now using VitalTax™ which is Excell's API compatible software and approved by HMRC to MTD for vat return purposes) which is free for the first year then costs £1 per month.

Cemetery & Allotment issues requiring immediate attention (FP 64/19)

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's request for an update on cemetery improvements which was provided in brief by the Clerk (for more information please refer Finance & Policy committee meeting minutes of earlier in the evening).

Planning -General comments

NOTED planning application 19/00771/FUM -The Soham Lodge Nursing Home Soham Bypass Soham Extension of existing care home to include two storey addition to care home, 15 no. assisted residential apartments, 90 no. assisted residential apartments with ancillary facilities, 54 no. staff bedsits and flats, together with 37 no. open market dwellings has now been received by Office which the committee Chairman noted would be considered at its upcoming October 2019 planning meeting. (Plans available in Office for public inspection)

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's comments that this proposed development is not in the current development envelope or identified within the 2015 Local Plan which the Planning Authority (ECDC) has a duty, amongst other material planning considerations, to consider when making decisions on this proposed Development.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's further concerns about the apparent non-compliance to those stipulations and restrictions contained within the Local Plan 2015 that

³ For Soham Town Council to be involved in certain activities it would need to be a GPC Council (currently eligible)

should be applied/enforced by the Planning Authority to any proposals as 19/00771/FUM that impact common land.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's further comments regarding the Local Plan 2015 which is by demonstration from previous Appeal decisions from the Planning Inspectorate considered the default reference document for the Planning Authority (ECDC). Referring specifically to a number of designated County Wildlife sites⁴ in and around Soham noted in the Local Plan 2015 Cllr Aitchison was surprised by existence of one named 'Mereside Grasslands'- at bottom of Julius Martin Lane. Upon investigation Cllr Aitchison was dismayed to find this county wildlife site had received not only planning permission from ECDC⁵ but is fenced off in anticipation of it being developed.

APPROVED email to Rebecca Saunt Planning Manager ECDC requesting clarification/explanation of protection provided in Local Plan 2015 and measures taken to safeguard not only designated wildlife sites but other irreplaceable habitats including common land by the Planning Authority.

126/19 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS MADE IN SEPTEMBER 2019 & 6 MONTH (OUT-TURN) BUDGET 2020-21 CONSIDERATIONS

NOTED income & RESOLVED to recommend to Council approval of those payments made to 30th September 2019 totalling £28917.65 (inc vat) respectively and as attached to the council minutes as appendices

NOTED budgetary balances as stated at 30 September 2019 respectively and estimated out turn (year end values).

NOTED & APPROVED monthly statement of balances and where appropriate those financial adjustments (virement) to the council's budgets, to its reserves and provisions and to ring fenced monies as held by and approved by full council.

(For more detailed information please refer to minutes of Finance & Policy committee meeting held earlier in the evening)

127/19 CONCLUSION OF AUDIT – YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2019 INCLUDING EXTERNAL AUDITOR EXCEPTIONS SECTION 3

NOTED two 'exemptions' as listed by External Auditors (PKF Littlejohn) and those actions taken in mitigation by Clerk and Finance & Policy Committee at previous committee meetings and accordingly:

APPROVED Risk Management Policy for Soham Town Council to be reviewed annually by Finance & Policy Committee (for fitness of purpose).

128/19 REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY FUNDING/SUPPORT

A) RBL guest invitation Remembrance Sunday parade 2019

NOTED all councillors cordially invited to attend the Parade (Sunday November 10th 2019 commencing 2.30pm, road closures and traffic management being paid for by the town council) followed by Service at St Andrews Church and then tea and refreshment at the Comrades Club Soham (*rsvp* to Cllr Aitchison).

NOTED Chairman will attend as representative of Soham Town Council at parade, laying of the wreath and church service.

⁴ Page 78 of Local Plan: Proposals which would cause harm to County Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland, aged and veteran trees, Local Nature Reserves, Protected Roadside Verges, any other irreplaceable habitats, and green corridors or important species will not be permitted unless the need for, and benefits of development in that location outweigh the potential harm to nature conservation interests.

⁵ Post meeting note: identified planning application no: 18/01304/FUL *Soham Town Council planning committee comments at that time and as submitted included site concerns of flooding and surface water (drainage)* Planning conditions in the approval notice indicate a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) must be submitted or agreed with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of works.

NOTED & APPROVED disbursement cost of wreath (£20) to be taken from Chairman's allowance.

APPROVED £50 donation under s137 to Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2019.

At 9:27pm and having declared DPI's to the following agenda item Cllrs Johnston, Aitchison and Pallett left the meeting with Cllr Woricker assuming temporarily the Chairmanship:

B) Soham Heritage & Tourism (Christmas fair free rides £50 grant tourism)

APPROVED £500 under s145 (LGA 1972) to enable children to enjoy free fairground rides at the annual Christmas fair (festive lights to be turned on at this time).

At 9:29pm Cllrs Johnston, Aitchison and Pallett returned to the meeting and thanking Cllr Woricker Cllr Johnston resumed the Chair.

129/19

CORRESPONDENCE –NOTED ONLY UNLESS OTHERWISE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES.

NOTED Clerk's response that it remains the responsibility of Cllrs to review those matters and items as listed under 'correspondence' (and in the case of the Planning Committee meetings' agenda under 'notifications') and where appropriate to bring attention to the membership any matter for council consideration, decision and/or approval. In the specific matter of CBWIN (Amycespa Appeal against Planning refusal Incinerator Waterbeach) Cllr Horman up to May 2019 (elections) was delegated Cllr in this matter and who had updated the full council on a number of meetings and as recorded in minutes. After May 2019 elections any requests received by the Office were listed (at the July full council and June 2019 Planning Committee meetings) with an invitation sent for a representative to attend either meeting (no response no representation on both occasions).

NOTED Cllr Dyer's response that CBWIN (environmental) issues and concerns (affecting a 10 mile radius) does not impact on Soham/boundary.

-Community Safety Accreditation Scheme for East Cambs? (See agenda item 123/19)
-CCC Highways Roadworks & events report 16th - 30th September 2019 IHMC Incident Report August 2019

-Cambridgeshire ACRE's Annual General Meeting which is being held on Wednesday 25 September 2019, from 2.00pm – 5.00pm, at Little Downham Village Hall, Main Street, Little Downham, Ely, CB6 2ST

-TTRO Mill Croft, Soham – Advance road Closure notice (Kings Parade -Fordham Rd) 18-24/11/2019

-Climate change and Cambridgeshire Climate Emergency - request for Town Cllr delegate.

-City of Ely Council Civic Service - 20th October 2019 invitation to Chairman

-CCC Cambridgeshire Matters (Newsletter September 2019)

-CVVS Monthly News posts include - Community value panel representatives, community funding

-Citizens Advice Rural Cambs – invite to AGM, 15th November 2019

-Emergency TTRO 19/803 - Barcham Road, Soham 19th September 2019 no access (1 day)

-ECDC Consultation - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 23 September to 3 November.

-CAPALC Bulletin September 2019

-CCC Highways Proposed Closure - 82 Station Road, Soham, CB7 5DY - 01/11/2019 - 09/11/2019 (SWL1906/14)

-Email petition regarding climate change - request for potential signature approval

- Adoption of the Forest Heath area Single Issue Review of Core Strategy Policy CS7 and Site Allocations Local Plan documents
- Cambridgeshire Highways Open Days – various October 2019
- Letter of thanks to Soham Town Council, Soham Pumpkin Fair 2019

129/19 MONTHLY PAPERS/BIBIOGRAPHY/PERIODICALS/BULLETINS (LIST TO APPEAR IN MINUTES ONLY)

None recorded as received in month

130/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Soham Town Council will be held on 11 November 2019 commencing at 7:15pm (Finance and Policy Committee meeting prior to evening's full council meeting in council offices from 6:30pm).