

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held at the Pavilion, Soham, on Monday 9 December 2019.

Present: Cllrs C Warner, D Woricker, D Dyer, L Johnston and A Pallett

FP85/19 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

There were no representations made by members of the public in respect of matters under discussion or those arising from previous minutes.

FP86/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by members to items on the agenda or more generally matters under discussion.

FP87/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies or absences were recorded.

FP88/19 FINANCIAL MATTERS & ACCOUNTS – NOVEMBER 2019

NOTED income & RESOLVED to recommend to Council approval of those payments made to 30th November 2019 totalling £ 23672.51 (inc vat) respectively and as attached to the council minutes as appendices.

NOTED receipt of grant (income specified use) of £1690 from Groundworks UK Charity for costs associated with Neighbourhood plan(ning) activities and works.

NOTED budgetary balances as stated for end November 2019 and likely (significant) overall deficit at financial year end caused by additional works in year at cemetery (chapel-unexpected) and transfer of adizone equipment/surface repairs funds which will need to be taken/balanced by town councils general funds at year end¹.

NOTED IIA's previous and current concerns to the level of general funds held by Soham Town Council both in last and this current financial year.

NOTED unexpected (emergency) matters associated with the chapel (roof repairs) matter to be considered at the following full council meeting and will have further significant financial impact on the town councils general funds.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that in light of the likely emergency and unexpected expenditures associated with the chapel and continued use/reduction in general funds of the town council and comments of the IIA that it takes immediate actions in remedy to shortfalls in general funds held by Soham Town Council at the following full council meeting.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL option B (precept £412 000) providing an additional £50K to be placed into general funds above the approved budget of £362 000.

NOTED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that this action (additional £50K to that required for the budget) be adopted for 2020-21 and following 2021-22 financial years.

NOTED & APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that an A4 leaflet be distributed by Anglia Revenues with council tax bills specifically for CB7 (Soham area) costs of estimate £461.56 (net VAT)

¹ Deficits to town councils general funds to be corrected with 2020-21 precept

(pdf copy of agreed text to be received by January 31st 2020) to explain the increase in rate demand for 2020-21

APPROVED that the matter of low levels of general (retained) funds must be considered as part of the precept (rate demand) determination for 2020-21 at the following full council meeting.

NOTED payscales for staff have been reviewed and agreed with summary statement duly signed by the Clerk Chairman and Vice chairman for 2020-21 (effective 1st April 2020- document retained in personnel files -exempt under FOIA including request by Cllrs under Standing Order 11d).

NOTED verification ID documents have yet to be returned by all members in order to change the bank cheque signatory arrangements as well as then be able to introduce electronic payments (reduce bank charges).

NOTED correspondence from Barclays plc indicating that the nominal monthly £ amount credited as being 'customer loyalty' will discontinue in 2020.

NOTED comments of IIA in regards to difficulties to mandate change and banking in general with current (Barclays PLC) and suggestion of transferring accounts a non-high St presence Internet bank (members requested to undertake due diligence on Unity Trust bank/TRIDOS ethical).

NOTED appropriate sum for the purpose of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for parish and town councils in England for 2020-21 is £8.32 per elector (from current £8.12- Soham has 8723 =£72575.36)

NOTED exercise (expenditure) of s137 (see General Power of Competence GPC issue below under FP 89/19) should be proportional to the number of residents (electors) deriving such financial benefit.

NOTED currently Soham Town Council only provide a *de minimus* amount each year against s137 Power (circa 3-5K) and that the resultant expenditure should similarly be proportionate (34-57p/elector).

FP89/19

GOVERNANCE-PROCESS AND PROCEDURES INCLUDING HR MATTERS (FP05/19, 15/09, 25/09, 35/19, FP44/19, FP 53/19, FP62/19, FP 71/19, FP 80/19)

NOTED Cllrs Warner, Pallett and Dyer met briefly on 4th December 2019 for their monthly updates and briefing by the Clerk.

NOTED receipt and content of IIA report which will be considered by full council at following meeting.

NOTED due to the contractual issues as highlighted in previous minutes, Office copier/printer does not have a maintenance or service contract (currently ink bought from internet, no repair cover).

NOTED cover for Ricoh copier/printer can be provided by Latent Digital (previous service level agreement suppliers to Plan Corporate Services) or by Ethos (former photocopier suppliers) both for 0.35p per black white copy 3.5p colour, no minimum monthly charge 36 month contract)

NOTED that the landscape HP printer installed at time of changeover is not on lease agreement (Soham Town Council retains full ownership).

APPROVED matter of copier be delegated to Clerk to continue to resolve.

NOTED & APPROVED Health & Safety consultant to review CPD requirement for ground staff relating to increasing overall capabilities in respect of ground maintenance works that could be reasonable taken in-house including undertaking chainsaw (branch lopping) and chemical spray (licence) qualification(s).

NOTED with the resignation of former elected town Cllr David Chapman that there being 9 elected (unopposed) town Cllrs Soham Town Council and not 2/3 required for eligibility Soham Town Council can no longer consider option of becoming a GPC (General Power of Competence²) council.

NOTED employer pension pool contribution for next financial year will be 21.4% which is a combination of both primary and secondary rates (full 3 year valuation note expected in due course-employee contributions and benefits remain unaffected).

NOTED & APPROVED annual 2020 membership subscription fee of £57 to Cambridgeshire ACRE.

NOTED any further issues will be reported as matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the upcoming evening (December 2019) meeting.

FP90/19 COMMUNITY AMENITIES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION
(FP 08/19, FP 18/19, FP 28/19, FP 36/19, FP 45/19, FP 54/19, FP 64/19, FP 72/19, FP 81/19)

NOTED Chairman's assessment of PC114 (Mill Corner) and this issue will be considered as part of the overall review and improvement programme for Soham street light stock (to commence April 2020).

NOTED the significant running cost reductions, reductions in CO2 emissions and annual maintenance charges where current energy inefficient bulbs are changed to LED's.

NOTED a staged review based on Cllr and residents comments to reduce, remove, change to LED will commence April 2020 and given level of £5000 in proposed budget changes are likely to proceed over 3 years (matter delegated to Chairman of Community Amenities and Assistant Clerk).

NOTED Clerk has negotiated with CCC to delay transfer of electricity supply due to the level of issues associated with the street lighting stock.

NOTED meeting date with Lord of Manor concerning future arrangements in regards to commons management still to be arranged.

NOTED IIA's concerns regarding any formal relationship regarding the management of commons.

NOTED town sign installation continues to be progressed by Chairman with anticipated resolution and install imminently.

NOTED work adizone area (Kingfisher Drive) completed with transfer of the small number of working pieces of gym equipment to recreation ground was signed off by Vice Chairman 25th November 2019

NOTED Clerk has negotiated that at time of recreation ground camera replacement (due to water ingress) that the (aesthetically unacceptable) white bullet camera on front of NAZ building (High St circuit) will be changed over FOC for black with side mounting to be less obtrusive

² At the May 20019 annual meeting Soham Town Council although eligible for GPC approved to defer that decision to a later date (tbd).

and more in keeping with conservation area (complaint received from building owner in regards to this matter).

NOTED hanging basket bracket to be used as template has been provided to Cllr Warner to enable a quote for 5x double hanging baskets like current from local supplier/manufacturer with a view to issuing invoice for same to Balfour Beatty to expedite this long standing issue.

NOTED any further issues will be reported as matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the upcoming evening (December 2019) meeting.

FP 91/19 CEMETERY & ALLOTMENT ISSUES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION (FP 113/18, FP06/19, FP16/09, FP 26/19, FP 37/19, FP 46/19, FP 55/19, FP 64/19, FP 73/19,FP 82/19)

NOTED emergency matters relating to health and safety issues (asbestos) affecting chapel roof repairs will be considered at the following evenings full council meeting.

NOTED expenditure of £4121.76 (net vat) for security fencing at Weatheralls to be considered/noted for approval at following evenings full council meeting under matters arising.

NOTED that expenditure for security fencing will effectively reduce to zero any ring fenced held surplus's for allotment management inclusive of the net income received in current year.

NOTED any further issues will be reported as matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the upcoming evening (December 2019) meeting.

FP 92/19 PLANNING REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION (FP 47/19, FP 56/19, FP 65/19, FP 74/19, FP 83/19)

NOTED any further issues will be reported under matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the upcoming evening (December 2019) meeting.

FP93/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next scheduled meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee of January 13th 2020 will, subject to full council approval under 157/19, be deferred to Monday 10th February 2020 commencing 6.30pm (consistent with decision taken by full council at following evening meeting).

NOTED the current non-chronological sequence (timing) of Finance & Policy Committee meeting before the main monthly full council meeting does not allow those minutes approvals or recommendations to be circulated to the membership.

APPROVED a trial of undertaking the briefing and update meeting of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chairpersons of Standing Committee (membership of the Finance & Policy committee) on same day as Planning Committee meetings (usually last Monday of the month) to enable these draft minutes to be prepared and issued to the full council as part of that following month's full council agenda listing and attachments.

(members are invited to attend a update briefing at council offices on Monday 27th January 2020 10:30am)