

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held at the Pavilion, Soham, on Monday 27 January 2020.

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

FP01/20 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.

FP02/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

FP03/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies or absences were recorded.

FP04/20 FINANCIAL MATTERS & ACCOUNTS – DECEMBER 2019 (and January 2020)

NOTED income & RESOLVED to recommend to Council approval of those payments made to 31st December 2019 totalling £97758.24 (inc vat) respectively and as attached to the council minutes as appendices. NOTED actual net income and expense to Q3 2019 (April -Dec) and projected out turn to year ending 31st March 2020 providing assessment that there will be significant shortfall (over spend) as consequence of the forward expenditure (special works) undertaken by both Cemetery and Allotment (external DDA compliant toilet) & Community Amenities (Adizone surface damage [vandalism] resolution) as well as emergency works related to the South Chapel (subsidence and asbestos removal over Christmas and New Year period) all of which have been taken from the town council's general reserves
NOTED IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT this financial year's over spend, and consideration of this and mitigation has been taken by the membership (monies to be replaced in next financial year from precept 202-21 allocations).

NOTED due to procedural changes to the meeting date and time of the Finance & Policy Committee (last Monday in month or to coincide with the monthly Planning Standing committee commencing currently at 9am) that neither the January 2020 monthly accounts nor going forward any monthly accounts will be available for preview by the Finance & Policy Committee prior to them being presented to full council which occurs second Monday in the month.

NOTED an A4 information leaflet, as approved by full council at its December 2019 meeting, was produced by the Chairman Vice Chairman and Clerk over the Christmas and New Year period to explain the domestic rate increase for 202-21 (precept demand for year ending 31st March 2021) which has been forwarded to Anglia Revenues for distribution to CB7 (Soham area) along with all other local annual domestic council tax bills (expected Feb/March).

NOTED verification ID documents have yet to be returned by all members in order to change the current bank cheque signatory arrangements but as consequence of changes to loyalty interest paid,

those current charges attracted by using cheques rather than electronic banking methods accordingly:

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL not to change current bank (signatory) mandate but to continue with current until such time as the council moves to electronic banking (might require change of Banking Provider from current Barclays Bank PLC to Unity Trust bank or TRIDOS) and that this assessment and change would be deferred to commence in the new financial year (post April 2020).

FP05/20

GOVERNANCE-PROCESS AND PROCEDURES INCLUDING HR MATTERS (FP 89/19)

NOTED Clerk has undertaken cost review associated with new Office copier/printer to provide understanding of current recharge to local community groups (current £30 per annum for 200 copies, thereafter additional copying charges applied refer to FP15/19).

NOTED that most community groups do not use their photocopying allowance which is an unfair and disproportionate practice given that there are other more cost effective service providers available/ in the town and accordingly:

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL to set photocopying charges for community groups effective 1st April 2020 on per copy basis at the following rates: A4 B/W single or double sided 15p/sheet (up 5p per sheet from last FY); A4 colour single or double sided 20p/sheet (up 5p per sheet from last FY); A3 B/W single or double sided 20p/sheet (same as last FY); A3 colour single or double sided 30p/sheet (same as last FY).

NOTED that the current lease for the photocopier extends to 5 years and with exception of unusual/unexpected changes to this arrangement no further consideration to recharge services will be made in this timeframe.

NOTED that photocopier Supplier (Corporate Plan Services) is no longer trading and the photocopier (and HP landscape printer) currently retains no ongoing maintenance service or toner agreement. NOTED agency payment from CCC to undertake verge/grass cutting of its land assets has for a number of years not covered the actual number of cuts and consequently costs incurred to maintain this agency service.

NOTED the drive/direction of travel to reduce unnecessary work and encourage wildlife and plants on verge areas by CCC and accordingly

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL not to continue to provide this agency (grass verge cutting) service on behalf of CCC Highways effective 2020 growing season.
- Take a watching brief on verge cutting matters during 2020.

APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL Soham Town Council's draft climate emergency statement and request for a Cllr to act in delegated responsibility for this matter on Chairman's recently circulated amenity and infrastructure improvement 'action plan'.

NOTED & APPROVED written draft Protocol for Soham Town Council to mark the passing of Senior Royal figure (not to be released into the public domain due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the document related to named individuals).

NOTED as highlighted by recent IIA reports regarding website content accessibility (WCAG 2.1) requirements and need for compliance to

these guidelines by Sept 2020 (matter delegated to Mortech Ltd/Cllr Johnston).

NOTED & APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL Cllr Curtis's request to attend NALC new study tours across 2020/21 (Biggleswade on Strategic Planning¹ on 25-26 January 2021) as part of her continuing CPD.

NOTED proposal to change current structure of CAPALC (Local County Association) to incorporated status (company limited by guarantee of membership by £1 share) and Clerks concern regarding the lack of full and frank disclosure by current Board on relevant internal matters related to/underlying this proposed change.

NOTED the usefulness that the town council makes of being a direct access services (DAS) council to the National Association (NALC) but this is dependent/contingent on being a local association member (in this case CAPALC).

NOTED the significant increases in fees charged by CAPALC over the last few years

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that should CAPALC proceed with its intention to change its legal status (EGM 19:00 on Monday 2 March at the Millennium Pavilion, Somersham,) not retain membership initially unless a letter of indemnity is produced by current CAPALC Board (members) holding Soham Town Council harmless to any past actions or activities in the event these result in liabilities transferring onto or passed onto the new legal entity.

NOTED recent public meeting organised by CCllr Goldsack on ASB and that the Clerk and Chairman would be meeting with Sgt Rabel later in the week to investigate the possibility of assisting in community resilience on matters relating to High St CCTV provision and improving incident/contact reporting for residents who are unable or unwilling to use 101/electronic (email) means to contact the Police to record antisocial/low harm/value crimes.

NOTED any further issues will be reported as matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the up February 2020 meeting.

FP06/20

COMMUNITY AMENITIES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION
(FP 9019)

NOTED Cllr Woricker continues to progress Soham Town Council's street lighting stock assessment with a written report highlighting recommendation(s) for repair or removal to be considered by members at a subsequent full council meeting.

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

NOTED Cllr Johnston has recently attended a Qua Fen residents committee meeting but currently and until the owner (Lord of the Manor) establishes a legally recognised entity (management committee) to regulate and manage these public open access lands no input funding contribution or assistance can be considered by Soham Town Council or ECDC (under s106 developers agreement).

¹ The three study tours are: Frome Town Council on 8-9 June 2020 will focus on health and wellbeing; Folkestone Town Council on 7-8 September 2020 will focus on climate change; Biggleswade Town Council on 25-26 January 2021 will focus on strategic planning

NOTED replacement of white bullet camera on front of NAZ building to black where not completed in next quarter (FOC) then it should be made part of specification with the proposed new upgraded CCTV works to commence in new financial year.

NOTED email confirmation from Balfour Beatty they will pay upon receipt of invoice for 5x double hanging basket brackets which were removed in error during PFI changeover works to street light efficiency and column removal works between Balfour Beatty and CCC (2015 16) .

NOTED the recreation ground, Fountain Lane is now registered with HM Land Registry (effective 14th January 2020) and the heads of terms (HOT's) can be progressed to finally generate a formal lease between Soham Town Council as the landowners and Scout and Girl Guide Community building (which should have been in place before occupation in 2011).

NOTED recent mains water issues at the Scout and Girl Guide Hut highlighted that the town council continues to pay for the water amenity provision (since occupation in 2011) and that a new submeter would be fitted to enable option to recharge in proposed heads of terms (lease).

NOTED last correspondence from Soham Town Council indicating 'notice of claim' to Ambulance Station registered at HM Land Registry by Soham United Charities was in January last year (73/18) and the town councils current and continued interest in purchasing this building for improving amenity and infrastructure in the town²

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

correspondence be issued to Soham United Charities Secretary with original without prejudice offer to purchase (115/17) when the property³ it was subject to open auction together with additional offer of assistance to enable the Charity to resolve its current registration difficulties with Charities Commission.

NOTED recent email correspondence from Lloyds Bank Mobile banking Branch highlighting the end of 2 year commercial van parking arrangement with Soham Town Council effective 31st March 2020 and requesting review of charges in light of an offer received from another business for siting this facility on their public car park ('at a much lower rate than what we currently pay') accordingly

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL not to reduce charges from current but in response detail benefits offered by parking on a stable private roadway allowing for significant risk and crime reduced (CCTV) presence, dedicated disabled parking and toilets amenities for both staff and its customers.

NOTED request by Larry Gray and Son for fun fair 2020 on recreation ground and

² Page 282 current Local Plan 2015 The public car park is one of the two main car parks which serve the town centre. It also contains some public toilets and a disused ambulance station. The car park is currently small, and the whole area is unattractive and could benefit from being re-developed in the future as funds become available. Any re-development should look at the potential to reconfigure and increase the number of car parking spaces available, whilst retaining as much of the open space and green areas as possible. Access to the car park should be made clearer, and more user friendly. The frontage of the site should be opened up and landscaped, with views into the park from Fountain Lane. To facilitate this the ambulance station will need to be demolished, and opportunities explored to refurbish or re-locate the public toilets within the site.

³ Building is likely to have asbestos roof and this will be most costly to remove/make safe

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL to allow Larry Gray & Son's annual fun fair on the recreation ground (arriving Tuesday 14 th April 2020 opening Friday 17th until Sunday 19th inc then following week open from 23rd until 25 th inc) for £500 + VAT with additional disbursement payment for breach of byelaw (dogs on the recreation) by event of £500.

NOTED under the lease signed between Soham Town Council and Soham Town Rangers (Junior Football) for land and building occupancy at Kingfisher Drive (previous request for extension of lease's current expiry date 1st September 2023 rejected by Soham Town Council in 2018, COM 15/18k, ratified by full council 122/18)

- APPROVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that the rent review should remain unaltered and continue at current £25 annual ground rent (invoiced annually in arrears) until expiry of lease 1st September 2023) where vacant possession of the site will be required (Cllr Johnston remains in active discussions with relevant Parties about progression and transfer to another site with dedicated pitch and changing room facilities).

NOTED any further issues will be reported as matter(s) arising and considered by full council at February 2020 meeting.

FP 07/20

CEMETERY & ALLOTMENT ISSUES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION (FP 91/19)

NOTED those emergency subsidence related works (asbestos, roof and gable end repairs to South chapel) improvement (front flint wall and railings) and preparative ground works (end boundary fence and sub terranean conduit installation for electrical amenity under PA 18/01683/FUL).

NOTED Clerk has received exemption certificate from Anglian Revenue in regards to waive of non-domestic rate charge (circa £1200 per annum) until building is reinstated/in occupation.

NOTED Clerk has issued a challenge under a number of material considerations to the non-domestic rate valuation charge on this building with Valuation Office Agency (VOA) which may take up to 18 months for determination.

NOTED part security fence to western boundary at Weatheralls allotments has been installed.

NOTED any further issues will be reported as matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the February 2020 meeting.

FP 08/20

PLANNING REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION (FP 92/19)

NOTED monthly Planning Committee commencing 1pm with two large scale housing planning applications (Broad Piece and Eastern Gateway) listed for comment.

NOTED Chairman will update the members on his, Chairman of Planning Committee and Cllr Aitchison's recent meeting with representatives of Anglia Water, ECDC Planning, District and County Cllrs regarding ongoing foul water (sewage) and surface water drainage incapacity issues within Soham at the February 2020 full council meeting.

NOTED any further issues will be reported under matter(s) arising and considered by full council at the February 2020 meeting.

FP09/20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next scheduled meeting of the Finance & Policy Monday 23 March 2020 commencing 9am).