

SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Soham Town Council held at the Pavilion, Soham, on Monday 9 December 2019.

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

In Attendance County Cllr M Goldsack

145/19 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

A resident made representation regarding an A4-size notice that had appeared/been placed at the bottom of Kent's Lane near the Weatheralls' allotments by This Land Ltd stating (this is) 'Private Property – Keep to Footpath'. The resident wanted this sign to be (re)moved as it was factually incorrect as the Weatheralls' allotment land, albeit designated in the Local Plan 2015 for development with and as part of SOHM1 (Eastern Gateway Development) had not been purchased from Soham Town Council by This Land Ltd (current Developer). The resident considered the sign's current position was most misleading and in her opinion not a trivial matter as the lack of attention to detail by these Developers was indicative and a portent of how they would similarly approach the proposed Development during the planning application, approval (and delivery) stages.

Cllr Woodbridge stated that should the allotment land owned by Soham Town Council ever be sold then all legal rules and regulations including requisite time periods/frame pertaining to the disposal of Statutory Allotment lands would be followed/adhered to.

146/19 COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

CCllr Goldsack was invited by the Chairman to present his report on Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) activities and matters affecting Soham or more generally namely:

- Soham Anti-Social Behaviour – CCllr Goldsack noted that there had been a spate of anti-social behaviours/petty crimes in Soham during this last few weeks with blanket/extensive coverage in local social media highlighting and commenting on such matters as criminal damage, intimidation, trespass etc. Cllr Goldsack had been liaising with Sgt Rabel Cambridgeshire Police Ely who had confirmed that the identity of perpetrators and their families were (well) known. CCllr Goldsack confirmed there had as consequence been to increase police presence in Soham last weekend. Cllr Goldsack acknowledged that a number of residents had complained of a perception of (lack of) police presence in Soham relative to that observed by nearby Littleport. CCllr Goldsack noted that when compared and in the last 12 months Littleport residents had on average logged between 45-50 incidents per month via '101'. In comparison Soham residents had logged only 43 logged in the last 12 months. CCllr Goldsack impressed on those present and the Reader that it remained vital that all criminal matters, irrespective of severity, harm and including antisocial behaviours (ASB) should be reported via the website www.Camb.Police.Uk/Report or by phoning '101'. With higher levels of incident reporting including ASB the greater probability of escalation and addressing by the Police by prioritising its resources. CCllr Goldsack impressed on those present and the Reader that social media platforms remain ineffective as by not using the proper official reporting channels will result in lack of knowledge by and

therefore no police intervention. High harm crimes and those of a more serious criminal nature as well as emergencies requiring immediate police presence/assistance should continue to be reported via 999. CClr Goldsack encouraged everyone to report any matters of concern to the Police which would enable them to support the community and reduce petty/minor criminality. Citing as example an incident over the weekend -vandalism to external lights to 'Poppies' restaurant High St) and where the owners were not prepared to report the incident to the proper Authorities but merely via on-line social media. Whilst CClr Goldsack expressed his sympathy regarding the incident the (in)actions of the victim(s) did to enable the Police to take any further action on the particular matter.

- CCC solar farm extension (Soham end)- In 2020 the existing solar farm will be expanded into other adjacent areas of CCC held land and beyond Angle Common. CClr Goldsack has taken a watching brief on this matter with particular regard to the benefits that this project will/can bring to Soham and has briefed town Cllr Johnston on outline details. Now CClr Goldsack is pressing for more concrete plans and details including the possibilities of provision of a new tree-lined walking/cycle green belt around the periphery using existing foot and byeways. County Council will look to produce a route, to provide sign posts and plant the trees in aid and support of its sustainability and cleaner air strategies of carbon neutral projects but would like to engage with the town council and its membership to discuss the future management, maintenance of this proposed community amenity.
- Tree Planting on A142 Roundabouts – Cllr Goldsack was delighted to report that he is actively supporting the tree planting and legacy work initiative delegated to town Cllr Leonard which will in the short term see trees provided FOC by Barcham Trees PLC on the two roundabouts at either end of the A142. This CClr Goldsack believes will provide a dramatic and welcome improvement to the two areas into and out of Soham lifting the image/profile of the town for all. Cllr Goldsack remained committed and supportive of all further/future work proposed by Cllr Leonard.
- Access road and paths to Weatheralls School - After 15 months of negotiations Cllr Goldsack was delighted to inform members of those pathway improvements to Weatheralls School's access and completed last week. This will now allow pedestrians to walk both on dry and in safety up to the entrance of the school avoiding previous deep road and path puddles that have severely inconvenienced parents and children. CClr Goldsack indicated that negotiations will continue to improve the other half of the access road and path that in combination with the planned new crossing section (under MHI initiative funded by the town council) will make all access routes to the school safe, dry and clean. CClr Goldsack will continue to update the membership on progress in coming months.
- Local Highways Officer - After a number of discussions with the local team Highways Officer and to help with mutual understanding, prioritisation and identification of need CClr Goldsack has arranged for the Chairman Cllr Warner to spend a morning with him. Having done this type of exercise last year with the Officer concerned and gained much knowledge and understanding of issues CClr Goldsack believes that the Chairman will similarly benefit. It is hoped that this site visit

survey and discussions will identify the road and High St highway priorities in 2020/21.

- Former town Cllr A Hinsley – CCllr Goldsack mentioned his attendance at the funeral of Mr Tony Hinsley who was a town Cllr and represented the residents of Soham for 29 years. CCllr Goldsack noted that it was often the case that residents' take such representation very much for granted but that in his relatively short tenure compared to Tony Hinsley's and acknowledged that they rarely saw eye to eye on most subjects, nevertheless he wanted to pay his respects and give thanks for what Tony had done in and around the area. CCllr Goldsack was pleased to see a couple of current and recent past councillors also present (town council representatives and wreath-see 148/19 below).
- Christmas Lights – CCllr Goldsack thanked the town council for their hard work in ensuring that there were festive lights in High St this year and he wished all present a happy Christmas and New Year.

The Chairman acknowledged CCllr Goldsack's contribution and there being no DCllrs present to give report the meeting proceeded according to the published agenda:

147/19

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received by the Office. Cllr Ross was recorded as being absent.

148/19

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TOWN CLLR UPDATES

Cllr Warner noted his invitation and attendance recently at the VIVA Annual awards ceremony expressing that it had been a most entertaining and enjoyable event.

On a sombre note Cllr Warner mentioned his and Cllr Aitchison's attendance, representing the town council, at the funeral of former town Cllr Tony Hinsley. Cllr Warner noted that he along with Cllrs Aitchison & Pallett would be attending a meeting with Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Board, District Cllrs and Officers to discuss the ongoing sewage, foul and surface water issues affecting Soham on 16th January 2020 and that he would update the membership of outcomes in due course and at a subsequent meeting.

149/19

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of Interests (DPI's) made by members to items on the agenda declared to the Proper Officer prior to or at the time of the meeting.

150/19

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED and APPROVED that the minutes of the meeting on the 11 November 2019 as printed and attached herein as being a true record of proceedings which were duly signed as such by the Chairman.

151/19

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

A) Neighbourhood Plan(ning) – Working Group Updates

NOTED of the 5500 copies that had been printed and distributed to all Soham residents 210 (two hundred and ten) had been returned representing a 4% return rate which was considered to be quite disappointing relative to the working party's efforts.

NOTED that comments from those returned were consistently ones highlighting lack of shops, lack of ability to get Dr appointment, police presence, cycle routes, public amenities etc and that all would be collated to form the basis of the next steps in neighbourhood plan(ning).

NOTED next meeting of the working group is scheduled for Monday 6 January 2020, at 7.30pm at Pavilion.

NOTED an Open Public Forum Meeting for all residents would be held on Saturday 18 January 2020 10 am at Pavilion.

B) Approved Minutes 11 November 2019 – confirmatory approvals or other matters arising:

i. Mobile air range request (Army Cadets 131/19)

NOTED previous town council approval's allowing 'Skills at Arms' practise by the Army Cadets in the building (COM23/17).

NOTED Cllr D Woricker's comments and objections to the use and encouragement of any weapon, irrespective of whether or not it was deactivated or whether the activity was undertaken under professional supervision and/or for training purposes.

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge comments in support of request citing that activities such as this provided learning and skill opportunities and should be encouraged in a safe, secure and structured environment.

NOTED Cllr Curtiss's and Dyers comments in support of Cllr Woodbridge's assertions that there would be strict safety guidelines to enable the participants to engage in and with the use of weapons in a responsible manner and to understand their use and impact.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison's comments both for and against the proposal

NOTED Cllr Johnston's observations that irrespective of the approval taken it would need to be similarly and consistently applied to the Scouts and Girl Guides building who it had been observed on the night of the public meeting concerning ASB were undertaken fire arms practice.

APPROVED by majority and recorded as following 7 for (Cllrs Johnston, Woodbridge, Curtiss, Dyer, Warner, Pallett, Aitchison) 4 against (Cllrs D Woricker, A Woricker, Gipp, Lane) 1 abstention (Cllr Leonard) to allow the use of mobile air range for air rifle practise by Army Cadets (normal risk health and safety and public liability documentation to be received by Office for retention and prior to commencement).

ii. Cemetery Fees ([and regulations] Cllr Dyer 139/19A) and confirmation of hall hire fees effective 1 April 2020 (5%)

APPROVED unanimously to increase the interment fee both for grave and cremations to the average amount as charged by Ely and Newmarket burial Authorities (used as bench mark) and as recommended by the Chairman of Allotments and Cemetery and for these increases to be adopted effective 1 April 2020.

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge question and confirmation by Clerk that every year a letter is issued in the New Year (annually) indicating increases/changes to regulations to local Funeral Directors

APPROVED all other fees for services will increase by 5% effective 1 April 2020

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge's question and Clerk's confirmation that the allotment fees would increase consistent with lowest rate rise applied for town council services (this year 5% being consistent with hall hire charge rate increase) and that any higher subsequent charge rates above signed tenancy agreement (set at 5%) would require a year's notice period (from October in the year of the proposed increase) consistent with the prescribed notice period requirements relating to statutory allotments

APPROVED unanimously engagement of SF Home and Garden Landscapes Ltd as preferred suppliers to install security fencing along part of Weatheralls allotment boundary (circa 170m) at a cost of £4121.75 + VAT.

NOTED that this expenditure will bring any retained allotment surplus to zero/negative figure in the year.

iii. **Tree Planting & Legacy works (Cllr Leonard 139/19E)**

ACKNOWLEDGED WITH THANKS receipt of glossy brochure prepared by Cllr Leonard entitled 'Trees for Soham' providing a visual 'masterplan' to additional tree planting/presence along verges/roads in and around Soham

NOTED Cllr Goldsack's endorsement and support of this initiative and the generous provision of trees by Barcham trees PLC (plaque to this effect to be installed on the roundabouts in addition to those already present from other commercially paid for/local business advertisements)

NOTED the necessity for additional HR resources including volunteers to take action to nurture (water) those trees, especially mature grown ones being planted but also to undertake additional fundraising/grant application activities. NOTED Chairman's request to add 'fundraising/green volunteering' as an activity required to be adequately (financially) resources to longer term amenity and infrastructure improvement list that is currently being drawn up by the Office.

NOTED those concerns regarding land ownership, ongoing responsibilities, liabilities, maintenance issues, responsibilities and costs with the level of proposed tree works and planting in the proposal.

NOTED member of public's concern about canopy and root growth resulting in pavement disturbance/damage.

APPROVED that all legal matters between benefactors, CCC and Soham Town Council must be addressed and officially signed-off between Parties and prior to any planting work being commenced.

iv. **Grant (MAGPAS 141/19A) and procedureS in general – request that in addition to application Applicant representation at meeting (Cllr Dyer)**

NOTED Applicants confirmation that the funding request is to provide medicine/drugs.

NOTED Chairman's comment and expectation that normal/routine medical supplies and at the point of their need should be obtained/funded by/from NHS.

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge's comment that the NHS is under (significant) financial strain and the Chairman's response that the purchase and provision of drugs is for the prime responsible Authority (NHS) and therefore not a material consideration for a First Tier Authority.

APPROVED BY MAJORITY NOT TO APPROVE grant request on the terms as outlined by Applicant (MAGPAS).

At 8:15pm Cllr Woodbridge gave his apologies and left the meeting. The Chairman at this time requested that the Press and public leave the meeting to allow the commercially sensitive nature of item iv) land (and property) acquisition matter be considered by the membership Accordingly under a resolution of Exclusion of the Public and Press:

v. **Land (and property) acquisition (Cllr Johnson 139/19C)**

ACKNOWLEDGED report provided by Weldon Beesley (appointed Land Agents in the matter) and the intellectual property (IP) nature and content owned by Soham town council.

APPROVED Cllr members would consider report against the land parcel map and by next town council meeting would provide to Cllr Johnston comments who would prepare a summary report to agree further strategies to progressing

land [and where appropriate property] acquisition project forward with allocation of suitable funds

At 8:27pm members of Public and Press were invited back to the meeting and thereafter.

152/19

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 - 11 November 2019
- b) Planning - 25 November 2019

153 /19

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM LAST MONTHS' AND PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (to be specified at time of meeting) – to include:

i.) IIA mid term report (80/19) to include consideration of Chairman/Deputy Chairman stipend/allowance (IRP-FP80/19)

ACKNOWLEDGED RECEIPT AND NOTED those comments and recommendations made by IIA's in her mid term report

NOTED significant debate regarding the provision of £ amount and lack of review (last one performed in 2007) of stipend /allowance for town Cllrs¹ by IRP (appointed by ECDC).

APPROVED BY MAJORITY to follow IRP's previous recommendations for District Cllrs and consistent with the review performed in 2007 to increase current annual allowance of £500 by 24% to £620 for the town council Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chairman of Standing Committees

APPROVED BY MAJORITY an increase in annual allowance from current £400 to £500 for all other elected Cllrs² eligible to receive such and for these payments to remain under each members' discretion to take.

APPROVED BY MAJORITY an annual review to be performed by Finance & Policy related to RPI or some other inflationary measure for recommendation to full council on the matter of (annual) councillor allowances.

ii) Chapel – emergency additional Health & Safety issues affecting current roof repairs (FP70/19 CA13/19B – attached)

NOTED Clerks reminder to members regarding Soham Town Council's Financial Regulations.

ACKNOWLEDGED that the unexpected discovery/(undeclared in structural report provided) of asbestos throughout the roof space of the South Chapel

NOTED Cllr Curtiss's comments that delays to undertaking removal works would not be financially prudent as this would not resolve the current health and safety issue, cause further deterioration to the chapel and add unnecessary additional expense as the roof tiles had already been removed and add to existing Suppliers/Hirers costs.

NOTED Clerks concern that the actual expenditure(s) which cannot be fully quantified currently is likely to be in the region of £50K but that this will again come from and deplete the general funds which have been highlighted as a matter of concern by the IIA report (153/19 I above)

ACKNOWLEDGED those financial concerns but given the practicalities there could be no latitude to delaying the undertaking of asbestos removal and with

¹ £500 Chairman, £400 elected Councillors, taking of annual allowance remains at the discretion of the town Cllr-last Independent Review Panel (IRP) review 2007.

² Elected whether contested or unopposed at Local Elections, not applicable to co-opted Cllrs

this work those additional requirements in making safe the site including bringing in all necessary welfare units on site.

APPROVED cost of the safe removal of the asbestos by Alliance Asbestos Service, previous preferred contractors on Phase 1 refurbishment programme (Pavilion) at a cost of £14646.00 (ex vat).

APPROVED those and any emerging emergency expenditures related to asbestos removal from the South Chapel with full delegation of matter over the Christmas and New Year Period to the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman.

iii) **Delegation of planning application received over Christmas and New Year period requiring urgent comment to Chairman Planning Committee and Chairman Soham Town Council (next scheduled planning committee 16 December 2019 next being Monday 27 January 2020)**

APPROVED unanimously those planning matter delegations over the Christmas and New Year Period.

154/19

RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS MADE IN NOVEMBER 2019 & 6 MONTH (OUT-TURN) BUDGET 2020-21 CONSIDERATIONS

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 & APPROVED budgetary balances as stated at 30 November 2019 respectively.

i) **Consideration & Approval of Precept (domestic rate demand) for Soham Town Council for financial year ending 31 March 2021 (Attached)**

ACKNOWLEDGED RECEIPT of financial summary report for past present and future/projected financial needs and demands prepared by Clerk acting as RFO and as approved for recommendation to full council by the Finance & Policy Committee at the committee meeting held earlier in the evening and as circulated to members in the preceding month.

APPROVED budget of £362000 for financial year commencing April 1st 2020.

NOTED significant debate and discussion for precept request for Soham Town Council to be 362 000 (zero budget), 412000 (to add to current diminished general funds) or £493 000 (to act to capitalise future infrastructure and amenity improvements proposed by past and current administrations).

NOTED Finance & Policy Committee's recommendation for the precept (domestic rate demand) for 2020-21 of £412 000.

NOTED Chairman's advocacy and Vice Chairman's support for the higher precept request of £493 000

APPROVED AFTER SOME FURTHER DEBATE & BY MAJORITY rate demand for Soham Town Council for financial year commencing 1st April 2020 of £412 000.

APPROVED explanatory note as press release be provided to residents along with the tax handbook prepared by Anglian Revenue for the Billing Authority (ECDC).

155/19

CORRESPONDENCE –NOTED ONLY UNLESS OTHERWISE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES-any notes/approvals appear *italicised* and in **BOLD**.

-Cambridgeshire County Council Climate Strategy Consultation (20 Dec - 31 Jan 2020)

-Motion request re national community energy campaign including proposed Draft Resolution

Approved formal support.

