

SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Soham Town Council held via Zoom with live streaming (Youtube) on Monday 14 September 2020.

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

In Attendance CCllr M Goldsack & DCllrs D Schumann & A Jones. Mr Ben Richardson (Saunders Boston Architects) & Andrew Jones (Tillyards, Chartered Surveyors) were in attendance as expert Consultants to 67/20b (Exclusion of Public and Press)

61/20 PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

Cllr Warner read out a request/question received from a resident regarding the lack of resurfacing and relining of the roads through Soham High which had been promised by CCllr Goldsack and highlighted at a previous council meeting. CCllr Goldsack replied stating that it was his understanding the road element rather than current and now completed pavement works should commence shortly beginning at Sand Street and continuing up to the bridge (The Ship). CCllr Goldsack confirmed that he would obtain further information from the Highways Officer concerned and report back on this issue to the Town Council via the Clerk's Office.

62/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS WITH specific reference to:

- i) Coronavirus – COVID-19 – Due to new government guidance tonights planned hybrid meeting had to be changed to remote to comply with the rule of 6. Until this restriction is lifted/changed all council meetings including any committee meetings will take place via Zoom (with live stream via Youtube when required).

Soham Ghost walk 2020 (Cllr Johnston)

NOTED WITHOUT OBJECTION Cllr Johnston's proposal to film the annual Halloween walk round Soham cemetery which will be able to be viewed in real time using Youtube.

Flowerbeds

NOTED WITH THANKS to Soham Town Forum's service in providing the various flower beds in the town but that the group will no longer be able to undertake this community activity due to lack of funds (matter to be considered under budgeting by Finance & Policy Committee)

- ii) CCTV provision throughout town –the Chairman updated members regarding the installation of all new higher specification cameras (planned infrastructure improvement approved budget 2020) with remote log in and AI software including ANPR capacity.

- iii) Goalposts, drugs & ASB on the recreation ground – The Chairman noted after he had highlighted his concerns to Sgt Rabel he had been impressed with the local police response and increased presence to deal with the drug supply in the town.

Cllr Warner noted that he along with Cllr Pallett had been in discussion with some local youths regarding the possibility of providing portable goal posts on the recreation ground. It had been agreed that their own efforts in raising funds would be beneficial and provide more ownership of this equipment which hopefully in turn will reduce them being vandalised. Cllr Warner hoped that some of those spoken to would be

- attending the next council meeting to encourage engagement with the council and enable them to see how the council functions
- iv) Soham Radio . The Chairman noted that this community service commenced during lockdown and is currently being streamed live on the internet via www.sohamradio.org, WhatsApp and mobile. It is hoped that its success on these media platforms will enable it to obtain the Ofcom licence necessary for it to transmit on the radio frequency. All information including contacts and phone-in number has been uploaded onto STC's website for information.
 - v) The Shade Common – Cllr Johnston confirmed that the QC's advice, the conveyance document between CCC and MAFF and the town council's proposed public statement had been read by some members present and would be made available into the public domain. Indicating that at this time there was no legal avenue to successfully challenge the (the loss of) the land formerly known as the Shade Common she nevertheless indicated that CCC as a public Body had not received any mandate from residents/electorate to develop this land in direction or manner currently being undertaken.
 - vi) Council Membership Matters – The Chairman reminded all councillors of the six month rule relating to their automatic disqualification (section 81 LGA 1972) that had not been displaced by the Coronavirus Emergency Bill. Having lost one member already to this stipulation Cllr Warner urged members when summoned to wherever possible attend meetings and this can be done virtually at present.

63/20

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

The Chairman invited CCllr Goldsack to present his report on Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) matters affecting Soham or more generally namely:

- Pathway improvements – Pathways throughout the town have been redressed/resurfaced. Cllr Goldsack noted that many elderly and vulnerable people are more worried about trips and falls than that of crime and ASB. Cllr Goldsack noted that footpath issues and obstructions (ie Queensway and Bushel Lane) should be reported via CCC's online fault page but to let him know of any persistent issues and problems and he would chase the Highways Dept.
- LHI. Cllr Goldsack noted that The Shade school/Kingfisher Rd pedestrian crossing which the town council contributed to (LH1 2019/20) had been completed and was already a great success. There are issues related to illegal parking which remains an enforcement issue for the Police. Parents had commented that they feel much safer already walking their children to the school.
- Police items - The 2 young perpetrators of much of the ASB/petty crime have been dealt with through the Court. One has left the area, whilst the other is awaiting sentencing on 6 further cases. The events of last week saw 3 people arrested, two being charged with attempted murder and one for accessory. A fourth man was released without charge. The victim remains critically ill in hospital. CCllr Goldsack noted that in his opinion there was much tension between the 'supporters' for each group but the Police have assured him that they have increased foot and vehicle patrols in the area to calm and reassure residents that there are no further individuals involved. CCllr Goldsack noted that the Police have been stretched not only the enforcement required by current Coronavirus in general but by this incident but had, in his opinion done an amazing job in our town over the last few months.

- Students returning to school - This has gone well with all schools reporting strong attendance and no issues as yet. The schools have been directed by Jonathan Leis and the County Council schools team, and have worked diligently during the summer to be ready for the September restart. CCllr Goldsack stated that Covid-19 virus is not defeated and children while less affected are not immune to its harm or to passing the virus on. Guidance continues to encourage and enforce that adults continue to follow precautions. Acknowledging that this is a really difficult and challenging time in all our lifetimes, but people have lost love ones so he thinks that wearing a mask to visit a shop, and staying home safe and well is not such a stretch for everyone to follow.
- Northern Gateway (Soham). CCllr Goldsack noted that during the summer he had been working with Cllr Johnston (Delegated by Council to land allocation matters) on the future of the CC land to the North of Soham including the land formerly known as the Shade common. CCllr Goldsack considered it key that together acceptable longer term plans for this area that supports not just open public access on former commonland, planned for development including leisure provision and amenity facilities for the town could be achieved. Their first of many exploratory meetings proved constructive and successful and he awaits the next stage/steps.
- Soham Railway Station – Cllr Goldsack reported that on 2nd September 2020 work began on the new railway station for Soham expected to take just over a year with hopefully initial passenger traffic commencing as early as this next November. In support of this CCllr Goldsack has liaised with C&PCA officers for the project and been assured we all are working with County Highways officers to mitigate the effect of the railway on the surrounding roads and houses to Mereside, Clay Street, Gardeners Lane, Fountain Lane and Station Road. The knock on effect of any suggested changes here will obviously impact and affect Mill Corner, Dobebe Way and other outer linked roads. CCllr Goldsack confirmed that he had sought assurances that any proposals for changes in lines, road direction, widths etc, will come before the town council and town residents before being adopted and he assured the membership he would keep them abreast of all developments as they unfold.

Cllr Warner raised concerns that these preliminary site works had been started/commenced without the correct wildlife licences and ecological mitigation measures in place breaching planning conditions. CCllr Goldsack noted that planning and enforcement of planning conditions remained a District Council matter and that perhaps DCllr Schumann was better placed to make enquiry/comment/advise. CCllr Goldsack indicated that his remit extended to the rail station infrastructure improvement and that he would make enquiries to the relevant Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority Officer.

Noting that a request for funding for the Manshed was on the published agenda Cllr Warner raised a query to CCllr Goldsack that it was his and others understanding that he had secured CCC funds. CCllr Goldsack replied that although he intended to visit this group next week he was no longer instrumental in the workings to this group and being very much on the periphery of this matter now since the group had undergone a number of changes both in its membership as well as overall direction which had precipitated some “parting of ways”. CCllr Goldsack noted a new constitution for the group was awaited and that

Liz Avery had been heavily involved with the group via the CCC's Innovation and cultivation funds. Cllr Warner noted that Wendy Landsdown again from CCC had also pledged money would be made available to this group but as yet nothing had been received.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Goldsack for his contribution and then invited DCllr D Schumann and Jones to present report on East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) on matters affecting Soham or more generally namely:

- COVID Grants – DCllr Schumann reported that ECDC as the receiving Authority for Government aid had distributed 1300 grants throughout the district, which he reported was well above the national average.
- Soham Railway Station – DCllr Schumann confirmed that as a resident affected by the works he as well as others have now received official letters from Network Rail regarding commencement of works.
- Mepal Outdoor Centre – DCllr Schumann confirmed that the The Leader of ECDC Anna Bailey had sent a letter put to all parish & town councils regarding the outdoor centre (appears in correspondence list in minutes).
- Soham Market Town's Funds – DCllr Schumann confirmed that he along with the Chairman, certain town and County Cllrs had met during the summer recess to discuss this possible funding stream to the town and the needs and wants that have been identified to steer rather than having some arbitrary improvements imposed by the Market Town Plan. The Chairman asked what if any contingency planning for COVID (round 2, outbreaks) had been undertaken. DCllr Schumann confirmed that a Board lead by the County Council as the responsible Body for Public Health had been established with all relevant Agencies to react and deal with local and national spikes. DCllr Schumann however confirmed that although the District Council was not the lead Agency in this issue it had taken steps to build the issue of COVID as a matter of course into all its risk assessments and registers. The Chairman noted those previous concerns and complaints raised that subsequent COVID spikes would lead to similarly poorly co-ordinated activities from higher levels charged with these activities.

DCllr Jones spoke briefly noting that as he and his other Liberal Democrat colleague had not been actively involved in any of the work undertaken by their Conservative colleagues over the summer recess he had little to report save as to sending DCllr Charlesworth's apologies for tonight's meeting.

The Chairman reiterated his concerns relating to the flora and fauna destruction occurring now at the station and those contiguous housing developments sites along Mereside. CCllr Goldsack clarified these two activities were not linked but the Chairman said that they were by virtue of the entire tree line to the site spanning these two developments had been removed.

DCllr Schumann indicated that grant monies had been made available from central government to improve and give preference to cycle and walking infrastructure development. Noting that in Soham such improvements were particularly challenging and difficult to deliver as the roads in general did not on the whole provide the widths he would welcome any suggestions from the members.

DCllr Schumann noted government plans to potentially radically review and shake current planning regulations¹. ECDC has met on this subject and he raised concerns for the legitimacy and enforceability of neighbourhood plans (NPs'). Currently it would appear that should (zoning become) these revisions become legislation it would appear that NP's will have less significant and weight than currently however DCllr Schumann will keep the town council updated as matters progress.

At 8:44pm the declared the town council was in session:

64/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received by Cllr G Dyer and duly authorised by the membership. The Clerk being unable to join the meeting (all active ports /screens being used by the membership) Cllr Johnston advised those in attendance that apologies had also received from CCllr B Hunt & DCllr V Charlesworth.

65/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest recorded for those members present.

66/20 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2020

RESOLVED and APPROVED that the minutes of the meeting on the 13 July 2020 as printed and attached herein as being a true record of proceedings which were duly signed as such by the Chairman.

67/20 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 Cllr Aitchison (lead Cllr in matter) indicated that the meeting scheduled for Wednesday 16 September 2020 had been cancelled due to the current COVID situation (rule of six).

NOTED the competition which was run over the Summer break to encourage engagement of residents to neighborhood plan had received no entries and Cllr Aitchison queried the level of interest combined with the proposed changes to Planning may have the effect of making this activity redundant.

¹ What is zonal planning and can it work?

At the heart of the Government's Planning White Paper is the introduction of a 'zonal' planning system, that would see permission granted automatically on sites that have been earmarked for development. The new system would see local authorities being asked to split all the land in their administrative area into three categories: growth, renewal and protection. Growth areas will be categorised as suitable for "substantial development", with permission being granted automatically to developments that meet the requirements of a council's local plan.

But what does it mean in practice?

Zoning is an established concept that is used by many countries across the world. From a UK perspective, introducing a zonal planning system would usher in a complete rethink of how land and development is governed. Our system can be described as discretionary, with decisions on planning generally being taken on a case-by-case basis. It would be a significant shift in how our system could operate in the future.

With the permission of membership, the Chairman varied the Order of the Agenda so that 67/20 (B) strategic infrastructure & amenity improvements was moved to the end of the meeting (under Exclusion of Public & Press).

68/20 PREVIOUS MONTHS STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

- a) Finance & Policy - None
- b) Planning - 27 July 2020
24 August 2020

Cllr Pallett indicated that the planning committee met using a combination of hybrid and remote technologies and the minutes were approved without additional comment.

69/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM LAST MONTHS' AND PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (to be specified at time of meeting) – to include:

No members raised any matters for further consideration.

70/20 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS MADE & STATEMENT OF BALANCES AS AT 31 JULY & 31 AUGUST 2020 RESPECTIVELY, INCLUDING STATEMENT OF BALANCES

NOTED income & RESOLVED approval of those payments made to 31 July & 31 August 2020 totalling £22407.47 and 26057.54 (inc vat) respectively and as attached to the council minutes as appendices.

A) CONCLUSION OF AUDIT – YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020 INCLUDING EXTERNAL AUDITOR EXCEPTIONS SECTION 3

NOTED the exemption raised by the External Auditors in regards to accounting consistency and convention under section 1 (answering yes instead of no under section 1 Governance question 7).

NOTED the accounting convention would be applied to any subsequent re-evaluation required to the town council's asset base where not written off under Section 2 box 9.

NOTED WITH A VOTE OF THANKS to the Clerk acting as Responsible Financial Officer for her continued work in this regard.

Motion moved by Cllr Johnston that for this financial year (ending 31st March 2021) no further financial awards in grants would be made by the Town Council.

Resolution in the same proposed by Cllr Johnston seconded by Cllr D Woricker and duly APPROVED by majority to suspend all grant or funding awards from the town council to 31st March 2021 to take effect at end of current meeting. (noted Cllr Leonard's objection & Cllr Ross abstaining from vote).

71/20 REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE, FUNDING/FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

A) LHI 2020 - 2021

NOTED- the town council had received no resident applications or request for funding for any scheme for 2020-21 (contributions still to be paid for previous successful Kingfisher crossing bid and Clay St LHI current submission- considered and approved at May 2020 meeting)

APPROVED Cllr Pallett would submit an appropriate speed reduction (traffic calming) measure for Broad Piece subject to receipt of evidence base for need and supporting campaign (signed petition) from residents.

B) 1st Soham Boys Brigade (£500)

APPROVED grant of £500 (s137)

C) Soham Mens Shed

NOTED comments made in Public Comment time where alternative funding seems to have been promised from CCC but not materialised and due to lack of completed grant application form the Chairman instructed the membership that they were unable to consider the matter (will not be listed again due to resolution taken under 56/20 above)

72/20

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

- Open letter: Utilising road verges for biodiversity & habitat (Extinction Rebellion Cambridge)
- Local Highway Improvement 2021/22 Update
- Rural/Market Towns Group and COVID-19
- Cambridge Eastern Access online engagement (3rd August) Agenda for the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly meeting: Thursday 10th September 2020
- Cambridgeshire Surface Programme Update 23.7.2020
- CBWIN campaign – IT'S FINALLY OVER
- Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders for Remembrance Events during Covid-19
- Community Gritting Scheme applications for Winter 2020 – 2021
- Virtual Touchpoint Soham Branch Royal British Legion Wednesday 12th August 2020; Wednesday 2nd September 2020
- IHMC July Incident Report
- IHMC Roadworks & events bulletin 16th - 31st August 2020; 1st - 15th September 2020
- Letter from Cllr Anna Bailey Leader of ECDC concerning Mepal Outdoor centre
- Letter from Cllr Dupre regarding Mepal Outdoor Centre crematorium plan
- Cambs PPC update from the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner: Parish, Town and City Council briefings
- Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- Institute of Crematoria and 27th August - Deceased Management Advisory Group Lessons learnt during COVID
- Soham Radio
- SCA Newsletter Summer and Autumn editions
- CCC Highways Autumn Micro Asphalt Program
- The Local Electricity Bill's Reintroduction
- Keep Britain Tidy - next pick Saturday 26th September meeting outside the pavilion at 11am.

73/20

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

Clerks & Council Direct	September 2020 Issue 131
The Clerk Magazine	Sept.
Allotment & Leisure Gardener	Issue 2 2020
ICCM The Journal	Autumn 2020
Andrezieux-Boutheon	No 239 September 2020

74/20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12th OCTOBER 2020 (date and venue tbc)

- Next planning committee meeting OR meeting of Chairman & Chairman of Planning under this Standing Committee's Terms of Reference 28th SEPTEMBER 2020

The Chairman closed the meeting at 08.37pm and under Exclusion of Public and Press the following matter(s) were considered:

67/20

B) STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE & AMENITY IMPROVMENTS.

ii) Allotments

APPROVED UNANOMOUSLY subject to statutory requirements in relation to procedures for rent review and tenancy agreements at Statutory Allotments that annual rent for allotments from October 2021 (years time) will be increased to £37 per 10 pole (percentage, proportion of multiple of thereof).

iii) Cemetery

NOTED that the provision of the DDA compliant cemetery toilet remains to be delivered as part of the town council strategic infrastructure and improvement programme of works (5 year plan) and that this will need budgeting consideration.

iv) Land (and Building) acquisition – Community assets

a) Existing Back Hall (Condition)

APPROVED & DELEGATED to Clerk that a structural engineers report be obtained in relation to the back hall (matter to be relisted)

b) Options including Phase II-After significant discussion

APPROVED current comprehensive plans including statements for the new build (Phase II) as outlined by Mr Ben Richardson Saunders Boston Architects to be submitted to Planning Authority (ECDC).

APPROVED to add consideration to the provision of these community facilities by an entirely new route and option of a separate asset acquisition funded in part from a financial draw down of the £1m implementation programme received in relation to Soham Market Town Master Plan produced by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (C&PCA) from those exploratory meetings held over the summer recess by the Chairman and a select members of the town councillors (funding application submitted by the Chairman to C&PCA during the summer recess, outcome TBD).

APPROVED that this option (new asset acquisition) required further substantive investigation and information from the Combined Authority and ECDC which would require the convening of an extra ordinary meeting (EOM) and approvals to include consultation(s) with residents.