

SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Soham Town Council held via Zoom with live streaming using YouTube on Monday 9 November 2020.

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

In Attendance CCllr B Hunt & DCllrs D Schumann, I Bovingdon & A Jones.
Participant Ms Lizzie Wales, Youth & Community Coordinator East Cambridgeshire District Council
Members of the public using Zoom codes but not recorded as participants): Ms Ella Rolfe Cambridgeshire County Council, Rev Eleanor Whalley.

76/20

PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

Ms Lizzie Wales provided a Powerpoint presentation to the council with request for approval for non-permanent goalposts on the recreation ground to assist the Police and Youth Community Workers with combating anti-social behaviours on the recreation ground/in the town.

NOTED these goalposts will replace the need for makeshift (jumpers on the ground) be of a temporary (not fixed but with stakes into to the ground) nature, not full size, will be placed near the skatepark and at no cost to the town council (from CC Community Reach Fund match funding by youths). In addition th stipulations will include no formal matches being organised necessitating a need for white markings/pitch lines and would result in loss of amenities for other recreation ground users).

NOTED Cllr Woodbridge's comments in concern, being a former detached youth worker, relating to the need for better/alternate evening activities where neither goalposts nor football activities would be effective/accessible (due to night time conditions).

NOTED Cllr Leonard's comments in concern to the apparent piecemeal approach to tackling youth issues (lack of holistic strategy) and there remains a need for more amenity land and ground in general in addition to the current recreation ground used by the town's expanding population

APPROVED by majority permission, under the conditions and stipulations above, for allowing temporary goalposts onto the recreation ground¹.

(NOTED Ms Wales would circulate the presentation to all Cllrs after the meeting).

NOTED Mr David Shaunessy representing Soham Radio was not present although an email in response indicating receipt of the necessary Zoom codes had been previously received by the Office.

NOTED Cllr Warner read out a statement and request from a resident regarding This Land Ltd and involving Cambridgeshire County Council under 'Rotten Boroughs' in a recent Private Eye publication (see initial response by CCllr Hunt under minute 78/20).

77/20

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & TWON COUNCILLOR UPDATES INCLUDED:

¹ To be monitored by the town council office -any antisocial behaviours and nuisances caused to Soham Town Council, recreation ground users or neighbouring properties will result in them being removed without further notice.

NOTED Cllr Warner had received one of the due diligence reports expected under those approvals made by full council at its previous months EOM (75/20) from Carter Jonas (economic assessment gross value added) and that he would circulate this proprietary document under Cllr privilege to all town and District Cllrs after the meeting.

-Environment/biodiversity initiative (Cllr Aitchison)

NOTED this research initiative was being undertaken by Cllr Aitchison who indicated that preliminary data obtained from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biological Records Office listed at least 1116 different species of animals, insects, plants & birds as having been recorded in Soham since this reference record began.

NOTED according to this reference source the last recorded sighting of the Great Water Parsnip was on Qua Fen, Great Meadow and Horse Fen, Soham in 1968 and is on the current 'red list' whilst others species noted in and around Soham remain of special interest and/or on the endangered list such as the Great Crested Newt which was a cause for continued concern and planning approval breaches at the proposed Railway station/Mereside developments.

NOTED that information in the source reference materials was not current with more common species 'sighting dates' being well out of date.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison encouraged members and residents take the opportunity to assist in updating these records logging 'sightings' of all species, common or not where possible with an OS map grid reference and photograph for inclusion into the records which will prove useful in protecting and improving habitats for all flora and fauna species.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison confirmed that meteorological (rain fall and ground water levels) for Soham had been consistent over the reference period of time and as natural factors had not changed/had impact in the decline of the species observed on the sites of specific scientific interest in Soham. Cllr Aitchison concluded that species demise was more likely to be from a combination of human impact/other non natural (pesticides) activities destroying natural habitats.

NOTED Cllr Warner's comments that this work is vitally important as a living working record and document especially where planning applications are received for large housing development in the town enabling the membership to respond to and highlight the detrimental impact of high density urbanisations on the flora and fauna for this rural town and surrounding open space areas such as the commons to ensure that Developers undertake and demonstrate their proposals provide the biodiversity net-gain consistent with the ecological supplementary planning documents added to the Local Plan 2015.

High Street regeneration & legacy tree planting (Cllr Leonard COM 12/19 iii Cllr Leonard, 139/18, 151/19 b iii)

NOTED Cllr Leonard is currently spearheading 3 initiatives for High St and heritage (legacy) improvements to the town which include:

1. The Peterborough & Cambridgeshire Combined Authority which are funding seven trees combination of native copper beech and disease resistant elms, for planting at either end of the town.
2. Initiative with Barcham Trees who will donate trees for planting purposes on the roundabouts at either end of the town, which has been on hold waiting for a funding by the town council for pilot holes and planting.
3. Cambridgeshire County Council has also offered 10 trees to be funded and maintained by them to be planted along the High Street (Awaiting outcome of the trial pits for location suitability)

NOTED that the proposed 2021-22 budget includes a £5k contribution for these activities (min 87/20 [from April 1st 2021] see below)

78/20

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

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

- Cllr Hunt noted the residents' concerns regarding the article in Private Eye (76/20 above) and asked that the town council forward it to him so that an appropriate officer(s) may respond.
- C20 St Leonards Crossing proposed to be closed by Network Rail will, after 3 years of objection and argument, not be closed.
- CC's revenue from public transport service due to COVID were seriously reduced (Park & Ride services down 75%, guided busway by 81% and Ely station car parking service charges are almost absolutely 100% down from last year and pre COVID) and that this lack of demand may be something that will not change when this current pandemic ends due to changes in home working practices.
- Cllr Hunt noted Soham Town Councils request for direct benefit (Connection) to the County Council's Solar Farms but this currently remains unfeasible as all energy produced is feed into the National Grid irrespective however this might change in future as clearly there is cost benefit to producing and using locally sourced renewable energy
- CCC are trialling and investigating the use of electric scooters as options in built up (urban) areas but Cllr Hunt cited his reservations to such modes of transport for their use and public liabilities arising from incident /accident.
- Histon Road Cambridge is being converted so that cycles, buses and cars can travel in both directions and this work is due to be completed very soon with similar improvement works commencing along Milton Road next year. These works are being funded by Cambridge City Council and not by CCC although it is the Contractor completing works.
- CCC Tree Policy Cllr Hunt indicated that CCC's current policy is that if a tree dies, is broken or damaged on CCC owned lands then it is replaced with 2 trees (providing net biodiversity gain). If this appear not to be the case then please residents are advised to contact Cllr Hunt.
- CC's COVID work -Cllr Hunt noted that 30,000 plus people either medically shielding or socially vulnerable had been assisted in Lockdown 1 and that this had been due to the excellent Village/Town/District/County co-operation which included Soham Town Council however this pandemic and its direct and indirect effects will likely produce a £30 million deficit in CCC's finances this year.
- Cllr Hunt indicated that CCC embraces and remains a multicultural and tolerant organisation and will not tolerate prejudice in any form. In example he indicated that recently CCC had adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in conciliation of these Principles. However the council does not agree with reducing Police budgets, advocate antisocial behaviour and/or civil disobedience/disorder.
- The 'BP roundabout' works near Witchford have now been completed with the Lancaster Way roundabout works starting in January/February 2021.
- Cllr Hunt noted that there were now two new mobile libraries in service in addition to the current fleet and that these should be viewed as 'little embassies' working within communities offering a wider use and services in help to those residents living in more isolated locals in our communities.
- Cllr Hunt noted his delight that Viva Theatre community group had received £495,000 in grant (which is in addition to the £300 000 loan

already received) from CCC noting he was glad to lend his support to provision of public purse monies to this company that he considered was of benefit to all Soham residents.

- Cllr Hunt noted and thanked CCllr Mark Goldsack for his initiative to offer free meals to children during half term.
- NOTED Cllr Hunt wished the members and residents a Happy Christmas hoping that next year will prove a better year for all.

NOTED Cllr Ross request for clarification regarding CCC's Tree Policy (2 for 1) and CCllr Hunt confirmed that this Policy was only applicable for those trees damaged on public highways (and associated verge) CCC owned land.

The Chairman thanked CCllr Hunt for his contribution and then invited DCllrs Bovingdon, D Schumann and Jones to present their reports on East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) on matters affecting Soham or more generally namely:

DCllr Bovingdon confirmed that the emailed note that was forwarded out of courtesy and under privilege to the town Cllrs recently should remain confidential and not be distributed until the actual proposals and bids contained had been considered by the Combined Authority. However he did indicate that where approved these initiatives should have significant and beneficial impact to the town.

DCllr Schumann indicated that the proposals if approved represented significant investments to the town and its High St since the successful heritage lottery intervention some 15 years ago and that although the bid remained confidential at present and until the Combined Board convened to consider approval he remained hopeful for a successful outcome.

DCllr Schumann indicated that at a recent District Council a motion was passed regarding taking action to the illegal parking which was a blight in the District particularly to Littleport, Ely and Soham. Primarily citing that the problem was that there was no effective parking enforcement undertaken by the Police the District Council approved that it would investigate 3 potential solutions noting that the preferred current option was to employ a dedicated PCSO to this role, paid for and managed by the District Council DCllr Schumann confirmed that both the convince Chief Constable Police & Crime Commissioner would need to be convinced and agree to this proposal.

NOTED Cllr Warner's had emailed a response to DCllr Schumann's original communication clarifying a number of inaccuracies in that note including his concerns relating to the bid made by DCllr Bovingdon and Schumann for some of the market town monies specifically to the proposed expansion to the High St wifi services outward from the High St which without care and consideration would have potential negative and damaging effects on the town councils current CCTV system and provision (reducing band width).

NOTED both DCllrs Schumann and Bovingdon were unaware of the Chairman's emailed response² but both Cllr Warner and DCllr Schumann agreed that it was critical that this issue should be discussed with the relevant experts/stakeholders and before actual works to ensure that there was no repetition, duplication or conflicts that might hinder positive outcomes for all residents.

NOTED Cllr Ross's concerns relating to the potential loss of out-of-hours GP surgery in Ely and in Fenland D Schumann replied that this is not a District Council matter use representation on Board via the Leader of the District Council.

² Post meeting note: Email in response sent by the Chairman had not included D Schumann and I Bovingdon in the recipients list

NOTED DCllr Jones comment that as the Liberal Democrats and Party in opposition at the District Council that its members continued to attempt to hold the Conservative majority to account on various subjects (such as the Mepal centre becoming a crematorium, the current white paper on Planning reforms, alternative options to parking enforcement and the provision of ratepayers money to its trading arms, Streetscene and Palace Green Homes potentially leaving the ratepayer exposed and liable should these companies fail) but he expressed that being in the minority it was difficult to exercising the proper overview and scrutiny which residents not only assume is happening but are entitled to expect.

At 8:07 pm the Chairman declared the town council in session (with D and Cllrs links being removed but who could follow proceedings/democratic process via Youtube being streamed live):

79/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr A Woricker and duly authorised by the membership.

80/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

At 8:10pm with permission of membership, the Chairman varied the Order of the Agenda so that matters under 81/20 Town Cllr Vacancy and 82/20 Mr Robert Spriddell – Land Agent could be moved to the end of the meeting (terminating the live Youtube streaming and considerations under Exclusion of Public & Press).

83/20 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2020 & EOM HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2020 (ATTACHED)

RESOLVED and APPROVED that the minutes of the meeting on the 14 September 2020 and EOM on 14 October 2020 as printed and attached herein were true records of proceedings which were duly signed as such by the Chairman

84/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CURRENT & WHERE NECESSARY PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MINUTES (matters not listed on the agenda specifically below BUT to include):

A) UPDATE FROM CHAIRMAN IN RELATION TO APPROVALS MADE AT PREVIOUS MONTHS EOM (75/20)

NOTED by Chairman that he had received the financial evaluation report for Project-50 from Carter Jonas and that he expected the market valuations and survey/building reports in the very near future to add to the other due diligence and supporting documents that were being collated should a bid for match funding from the Combined Authority under the Market Town fund for this project proceed.

- i) **RESOLVED BY MAJORITY** (proposed by Cllr Johnston, seconded by Cllr Ross) to seek the Secretary of State Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) approval for a proposed Public Works Loan (PWL) with borrowing of up to £500 000 (1/2 million in match funding);
- ii) **ACKNOWLEDGED BY MAJORITY** that as part of the PWLB application process and resolution to seek SoS approval there was a need to consult with local residents on borrowing/proposed project explaining the proposed project, those funding options available

including seeking public support to increase the precept to cover the cost of any loan repayments (e.g. newsletter/website/in the agenda of public meeting), running costs and overheads and open question regarding the style of 'Chairman' vs 'Mayor'.

- iii) **Planning application fee** (Phase II Pavilion refurbishment) £3,696 + £25 handling fee (previous approval to proceed with PA).

APPROVED unanimously to pay the planning application fee which effectively allows this project (Phase II new build) to reach a natural halt to further progression (consistent with its previous approval to demolish existing which would commence works under planning approvals).

- B) **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN(NING) - WORKING GROUP UPDATES** – Any approvals to be made by Soham Town Council as Lead Body [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s61F(1), (2)] including aspects of designation of neighbourhood area, appointment of consultant, grant application AOB.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison noted the White Paper regarding Planning reforms proposed by Central Government which are likely to significantly alter how Neighbourhood Plans are perceived and their relative weight alongside District Local Plans and NPPF's.

APPROVED that the current working party continues with its activities and produce a Neighbourhood Plan but that it should consider this potential influence and relative emphasis that these changes will place on design codes.

NOTED Cllr Aitchison plans to organise a Zoom meeting for the working party to discuss this matter further.

NOTED Chairman's and Vice Chairman's comments in regards to ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan irrespective of the White Paper and changes to the Planning system should remain tied in with and underpin the town's overall strategic plans for amenity and infrastructure improvements.

85/20

PREVIOUS MONTH'S STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

- a) Finance & Policy - none, met as working Party no minutes produced
b) Planning - 28th September & 26th October 2020

NOTED IN CONFIRMATION by the Chairman of Planning that at its meeting on 26 October 2020 Linden Homes (outline proposal for 210 houses land south of Cherrytree Lane Soham) was adamant that although it had an emerging allocation in the draft Local Plan 2017 it is not allocated within the current 2015 Local Plan (development zone) but that due to the lack of delivery of sites within Soham being below its housing allocation/quota, the Developers consider the site remains viable for potential sustainable for development.

86/20

MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST AND PREVIOUS MONTHS STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES(to be specified at time of meeting- members are reminded they must indicate the official minute reference to which they are referring):

- A) Proposed application to divert a public right of way at Soham Eastern Gateway [CJ-WORKSITE.FID445385]

APPROVED unanimously to object to any proposal that would alter this footpath from that of its current route.

NOTED that Section 1, 2 and 4 of the proposed Eastern Gateway development immediately borders the adjacent commons (East and Qua Fen) and that this proposed diversion should not be viewed as a(another) inappropriate 'nature bund' providing connectivity between the two as there are already significant

concerns to the lack of protection to the existing flora and fauna on these commons.

NOTED that should this application in diversion be submitted to the Planning Authority and irrespective of the town councils objections (See above) that should it gain approval then the planning conditions/stipulations must ensure that the land that is "freed up" by its diversion is not counted as open land 'green space' provision for the Eastern Gateway development, that the proposal for installation of path lighting should be environmentally friendly (carbon neutral) and must remain the responsibility of the Developer, the management committee responsible for this development or be transferred to CCC stock.

NOTED Chairman's comments in regards to planning proposal that must demonstrate net environmental gains of around +10% and that Cllr Aitchison's current initiatives under 77/20 and Neighbourhood Plans can only strengthen the objections to this particular development proceeding.

87/20

RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS MADE & STATEMENT OF BALANCES AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER & 31 OCTOBER 2020 RESPECTIVELY, INCLUDING STATEMENT OF BALANCES & SIX MONTH INCOME & EXPENDITURE OUTTURN (attached)

NOTED income & RESOLVED approval of those payments made to 30 September & 31 October 2020 totalling £59840.21 and £19104.05 (inc vat) respectively and as attached to the council minutes as appendices.

B) APPROVED unanimously the normal rate of 5% increase to fee and charges effective April 1st 2021 for community room hire and burials.

NOTED that this annual increase excludes the current proposals to increase the allotment rents (effective 2021).

C) APPROVED unanimously the proposed BUDGET 2021-22

D) APPROVED PRECEPT 2021-22 BY MAJORITY (proposed by Cllr Pallett and seconded by Cllr Johnston) the recommendation (Finance & Policy Committee meeting as a working party) that outside of any additional monies required for proposed project under agenda item 84/20i & ii (Project-50 above, 75/20) that the precept (rate demand) for Soham Town Council for 2021-22 (year ending 31st March 2022) be set at £412 000 (same amount as current years' financial request) noting this will result in an increase of 1.36% (from £109.80 to £111.30, equiv. of £1.50/year increase to current Band D properties) due to decrease in Band D equivalence set by ECDC as Billing Authority from current 3750.5 to 3701.8).

NOTED request by Cllr Aitchison to publicise that in the current economic climate that the town council has not increased its annual rate demand amount levied from the resident.

88/20

REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE, FUNDING/FINANCIAL SUPPORT.(None received at time of publication of agenda & consistent with previous approval under 70/20 no applications will be considered in this financial year)

NOTED there will be no Christmas fair provided by Soham Heritage & Tourism this year due to COVID-19.

NOTED that the town council will be providing its Christmas lights in spite of the current situation with an anticipated turn-on for festive cheer week ending 20th November 2020 .

72/20

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

- SCA Newsletter (Sept 2020)
- CCC UPDATED: Autumn Micro Asphalt Program
- CCC Highway events diary - September 2020
- IHMC August Incident Report; Roadworks & events bulletin 16th - 30th September 2020; Roadworks & events bulletin 1st - 15th October 2020; IHMC September Incident Report
- NOTED ECDC Helium-filled balloons and lanterns ban on council owned land (charter to sign up to)***
- APPROVED Soham Town Council will sign up to the initiative on council owned land.***
- News release: Cambridgeshire launches £500K top-up to broadband vouchers for rural residents
- Cambridgeshire County Council's consultation on the A10/A142 Lancaster Way roundabout
- Covid 19 Snake
- Ely Area Capacity Enhancement programme Consultation - 21st September – 1st November 2020
- Soham Station community letter Sep 2020
- Sunnica Energy Farm: statutory consultation
- Network Rail - Soham station update
- FINAL WEEK TO HAVE YOUR SAY: Consultation on proposed relocation of Urgent Treatment Centre
- Updated Micro Asphalt Program Autumn 2020
- East Cambridgeshire District Council: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Consultation
- Test & Trace Self Isolation Payment
- Request A Pallett Letter of congratulations to New Mayor/retirement of former (Andrezeiux-Boutheon)***
- APPROVED letters in congratulations be sent (Cllr Pallett to provide drafts).***
- Royal British Legion Remembrance Ideas for 2020
- Richard Kay Strategic Planning Manager ECDC - Briefing Note on planning policy matters - for PCs and TCs
- NOTED Cllr Pallett had completed the 34 questionnaire relating to the recent consultation (White Paper on Planning)***

73/20

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

Bulletin	War Memorial Trust	Number 87 November 2020
Andrezeiux-Boutheon Magazine		No 240 October 2020

74/20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14 December 2020 (date and venue tbc)

- Next planning committee meeting OR meeting of Chairman & Chairman of Planning under this Standing Committee's Terms of Reference 30 November 2020 whichever appropriate

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

81/20

TOWN CLLR VACANCY (NORTH,SOUTH & CENTRAL WARDS)

NOTED currently FOUR (4) vacancies for Soham Town Councillor (2x South, 1x Central & 1x North Ward respectively)

NOTED following questioning by members the application for one of the vacancies proceeded by way of ballot of the existing membership.

APPROVED UNANAMOUSLY that Ms Sally Prior be co-opted as town Cllr (Central Ward) to Soham Town Council.

NOTED upon signing the Declaration of Acceptances in the presence of the Clerk newly appointed Cllr S Prior was made welcome and invited to join the remaining part of the meeting by the Chairman.

NOTED the other vacancies will continue to be advertised in the usual manner on council noticeboards/website.

82/20

BY INVITATION – MR ROBERT SPRIDDELL – LAND AGENT APPOINTED BY SOHAM TOWN COUNCIL IN 2020 – UPDATE.

NOTED discussions continue with landowner to purchase Millcroft allotments for potential to repurpose as additional cemetery provision subject to those provisions regarding transferring allotment land (189/18).

NOTED those additional preparative discussions with the Landowner to other tracts of land potentially available which have the potential to add/improve amenity facilities for Soham residents (tbd) but that these works will require further council approvals relating to land acquisition under 189/20.

APPROVED possible further land investigations to include the opportunities for further leasing, 'environmental banking' as an effective way of managing green open spaces and provision within the town

NOTED Environment Bill (Act) will come into force in Spring 2021 and this will help protect open land in general. This will also enforce the practice and demonstration of biodiversity net-gain which would mean that Developers must contribute towards environmental improvements as part of planning approvals.

APPROVED Executive Officers and Clerk to provide a clear brief (specification) to Mr Spridell to pursue the possibilities of engaging him t as one of its core external Contractor (experts) to add value to both its core planning comment activities and to the Cllrs knowledge and resource base for 2021-22 (monies allocated and to be from running costs from this budgetary heading) which is in addition to his current project-based engagement Contract (allocated amenity reserves under 189/18).