



## **Annual Roundup**

I think most Soham residents would agree that 2020 has been a very difficult year and I start by thanking 'Soham Handy Helpers', AAA Motorcycles members and Ms Sally Prior as well as the town council Office staff who provided emergency and basic essential services to socially and medically vulnerable residents in Soham, during Lockdown1 (March 2020).

STC, being a part of the Government's essential workforce, continued throughout this pandemic to operate, provide its services to the community and to undertake council's meetings albeit at a reduced frequency to normal. Unfortunately, STC had to close the Pavilion to community groups and the regular events and festivals held on the recreation ground this year due to COVID.

At its November 2020 full council meeting, it was agreed that annual rate demand (precept) for 2021-22 would remain the same as this year at £412,000, however this will generate a slight increase of £1.50 per year being added to a Band D dwelling (£111.30 per year instead of current £109.80- proportionately more or less for higher banded or lower banded properties, respectively). At this meeting, members welcomed Ms Sally Prior, to its ranks as one of your Central Ward representatives and continued its discussions on a number of key strategies to improve the towns amenities and to strengthen its profile, as one of the largest towns in the District.

STC has an opportunity to acquire a large High Street property (Project-50). If the town council proceeds it will be a substantial community investment which will need part funding from C&CPA, of up to half a million pounds. The decision to ultimately proceed or not requires careful consideration.

As a council, STC has been working with and for its community since 1895 and became a town in 1983. Forty years ago, the membership at that time chose not to adopt the style of 'Mayor/Mayoress' for its presiding Chairperson. Since then, the role and responsibilities of successive Chairpersons has increased significantly in representation and civic duties. Please be aware that there is no fiscal advantage or cost to whether the Leader of the town council is styled Chairman/woman or Mayor/Mayoress as the role, like that of a town Councillor, is voluntary. STC is therefore seeking residents' views as to whether it is now appropriate to acknowledge the commitment work and dedication, should they wish, to assume the title of Mayor or Mayoress.

This referendum leaflet has been delivered to residents and I would ask all to consider the matters and materials at hand, then complete and return the response form. Finally, I note that my two year appointment as Chairman of Soham Town Council ends in May 2021, and whilst I do intend to continue as a town Councillor, I take this opportunity to thank my colleagues and the staff for their support and wish the new Chairperson, Mayor or Mayoress well in this elected post.

I close my annual update by wishing all residents the Best Christmas possible in the hope of welcoming a brighter New Year and 2021.

**Cllr Charles Warner - Chairman Soham Town Council**

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