

SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the TOWN COUNCIL MEETING held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER of the TOWN HALL on **Monday 10th February 2020 at 7.30pm.**

Present: Councillors Asker, A Coote (Chair), De Vries, Eke, Fairhurst, Freeman, Frost (until Min Ref FC 026-2-), Gadd, Hawke-Smith, Light, McLellan, Millward, Porch and Roberts.

Also Present: Cllr John Moran, Essex County Council

Officers: Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk

FC 016-20	Apologies for absence Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs S Coote and Toy.
FC 017-20	Declarations of Interest Cllrs Asker, A Coote, Eke, De Vries, Fairhurst, Freeman and Light declared generic non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council (UDC).
FC 018-20	Public Speaking Time There were no questions arising
FC 019-20	County Councillor Update Cllr John Moran was present and spoke further to the written report which he had provided. The following matters were discussed: (a) Zebra Crossing at Ashdon Road Cllr Moran advised that the crossing had been approved by ECC Highways along with footpath improvements (the details of which are awaited). (b) High Street Paving Cllr Moran advised that works near George Street / Hill Street would commence in March 2020 (c) Bollards at the junction of Castle Street / Church Street Cllr Moran advised bollards would likely be installed on the footpath for future protection of the museum wall (d) Little Walden Road Cllr Moran advised the speed reduction works at Little Walden were due for implementation end March 2020

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(e) Debden Road

Cllr Moran noted that capital funding had been set aside from 2021/22 to address the flooding issues but noted that design works could be started now. He noted that some residents had already accessed the ECC flood funding for new doors, flood defences etc.

(f) ECC Budget

Cllr Moran undertook to provide a copy of the ECC Highways budget to SWTC

(g) Speed Limit Audley End Road

Councillors further noted the need to review the speed limit at Audley End Road/Spring Hill to its junction with the B1383. Cllr Moran advised that a special case would need to be made to ECC Highways for the limit to be anything other than the national speed limit. Town Councillors believed this was therefore an appropriate process to follow and that a special case should be submitted, noting the mixed use of the road and the confusing variable speed limits.

Cllr Moran advised that the Town Council should submit an application to the Local Highways Panel (LHP) in order for this request to be formally considered. He noted the next LHP meeting was March 2020. It was resolved that SWTC Officers would submit an LHP application forthwith.

(h) Pedestrian Crossing from Swan Meadow Car Park across The High Street

Cllr Gadd reminded all of the request previously submitted by SWTC for a pedestrian crossing point. Cllr Moran noted that it was unlikely a crossing would be installed given the close proximity to the traffic lights and existing crossing points. This was noted.

(i) Traffic Lights in the High Street

Cllr Coote noted that the fire engines frequently struggle to access in and out of town due to the traffic congestion at the traffic lights of High Street / George Street. He suggested that a roundabout may be a better solution for traffic flow. Cllr Moran advised that the fire service would be temporarily displaced in the summer when works are carried out to The Culvert and that perhaps was an opportunity to further review. Cllr Coote pressed for a meeting with the Chief Fire Officer so that all problems could be progressed sooner rather than later.

(j) Traffic Management Survey for SW

Councillors discussed the feasibility of having a new traffic study for SW which would help to better inform future decisions on traffic movement and flow. It would also be of assistance for any future development proposals. Cllr Moran advised that the cost would likely be in the region of £500k and that perhaps there were S106 monies available for this study. Cllr Moran undertook to review S106 monies further and to keep SWTC informed of opportunities.

	<p>(k) Lamp Columns Cllr Coote noted that a number of lamp columns appear to be temporarily decommissioned and queried the rationale of this, noting they were perhaps awaiting new LED lights. Cllr Moran advised that these columns were due for removal and would not be replaced; he noted this had been a decision of ECC Highways Lighting Department (Cabinet Member for Highways responsibility being Cllr Kevin Bentley).</p> <p>(l) Site Meeting It was agreed that a site meeting would be set up to review and discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Street / Museum Street • Cycling Initiatives • Debden Road • Audley End Road speed limit <p>Town Clerk to progress</p>
FC 020-20	<p>Mayor's Communications</p> <p>The Mayor's communications were noted.</p>
FC 021-20	<p>To verify the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th January 2019</p> <p>The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.</p>
FC 022-20	<p>Committee Minutes</p> <p>Council received and noted the minutes from the following Committee meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Road Traffic 9th January 2020 (approved minutes) • Planning and Road Traffic 23rd January 2020 (draft minutes) • Finance and Establishment 20th January 2020 (draft minutes) • Assets and Services 27th January 2020 (draft minutes)
FC 023-20	<p>Mayoral Selection from May 2020 - Future arrangements for the nomination and election of Town Mayor</p> <p>Councillors discussed the role and responsibilities of the Mayor. The current Mayor, Cllr A Coote, noted how time consuming the role was; noting it was incredibly enjoyable and rewarding but is too broad a responsibility for any one individual. He noted support for the splitting of the Mayoral role, not to reduce or diminish in any respect the civic and ceremonial role of the Mayor and that in fact a split role of Mayor and Leader would allow more time and commitment to be given to the civic and ceremonial duties. He noted respect for the position of Mayor and that he did not seek to undermine the current responsibility but rather to allow the role to develop by reducing some of the administration and management responsibilities from it. Cllr Coote advised he thought the role of a Leader would be more fitting to deal with business matters and management and</p>

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	<p>that this post should be appointed on an annual basis, as the current Mayoral system. Cllr Coote noted his support for the Mayoral nomination process, noting that the current elected process was democratic and equal unlike the previous “Buggins” system where members were appointed on a seniority basis of number of service years and percentage of votes won.</p> <p>Cllr Gadd noted that the current Mayoral role may not lend itself to those who work either full or part time as the remit is so broad and wide-ranging with considerable time commitment required; this had the potential to actively discriminate against those that worked.</p> <p>Cllr Asker noted that during her time as Mayor, she had experienced the same issues as Cllr Coote; primarily that whilst the role was incredibly rewarding and enjoyable it was equally too much responsibility for one individual. Over the past few years, the civic and ceremonial elements to the role had grown enormously as had the management element, especially given the number of projects and initiatives now being delivered by the Town Council.</p> <p>Cllr Light sought clarity on what was being proposed and wished to better understand how any split role would work and where responsibilities would lie. Cllr Coote noted that the purpose of this agenda item was to simply discuss opportunities and that further, specific proposals would need to be brought forward to a future Council meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Fairhurst noted the need to ensure democracy prevailed at all times. The Town Clerk noted the need to comply with the LGA 1972, s101 which provided for the discharge of functions (noting that no-one individual Councillor had any greater right or authority than any other, save for that provided for under LGA 1972, S12, 39(2))</p> <p>It was Resolved:</p> <p>That the Town Clerk brings forward a paper to the March Full Council meeting with proposed division of responsibility between the Mayoral civic and ceremonial role and that of the proposed Leader role.</p>
FC 024-20	<p>Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the SWTC Funded PCSO</p> <p>Members noted the revised SLA as received from UDC; it was Resolved:</p> <p>That the SLA be approved on the condition that Section 6 is amended to include the Town Council in the Tasking Process for the PCSO together with Essex Police and UDC and that Cllr Toy and the Town Clerk be authorised to agree the necessary amendments, and that the Council should not enter into the SLA until those amendments have been made.</p>
FC 025-20	<p>Sure Start Services</p> <p>Cllrs Coote and Millward updated Council on progress to date regarding the proposals to establish a new Sure Start service in SW. Council noted the need</p>

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	<p>to ensure there was a need and demand for the service, it was</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That Cllrs Coote and Millward be requested to carry out consultation to ascertain the needs basis and that a scoping report identifying the main challenges, issues and proposed solutions be brought forward to a future Council meeting for further consideration. This report to include details of finances, assets and resources required along with a need's analysis.</p>
<p>Cllr Frost offered her apologies and left the meeting</p>	
FC 026-20	<p>Initiative to Address Dog fouling in Saffron Walden</p> <p>Cllr Coote advised Council of the enormous on-line support for an initiative to address dog fouling which includes spraying the dog mess with fluorescent paint to raise awareness. He noted that UDC will lead on this project, providing spray paint to volunteers on this initiative.</p> <p>It was Resolved:</p> <p>That SWTC supports this initiative and will issue a press release advising the public of the spray painting of dog mess. Further that any press release will note the need for dog owners to be considerate to the environment by disposing of dog waste appropriately and that the Town Council is running a poster competition with school children.</p>
FC 027-20	<p>Climate Strike Action proposed in Saffron Walden</p> <p>Members noted the strike action proposed by young people in SW who will meet outside the Town Hall at 12.30pm on Friday 14th February 2020. It was</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That SWTC issues a press release to support the aims and objectives of the young people and that the Council would welcome an opportunity to meet with the young people to keep them informed of the Town Council's climate change initiatives and to see how we can work together for the furtherance of environmentally friendly initiatives.</p>
FC 028-20	<p>Public Rights of Way</p> <p>Members noted the concerns regarding unregistered footpaths. It was</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the Town Council would undertake to register all footpaths with Essex County Council and that Cllr Roberts would lead on this project.</p>

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FC 029-20	<p>Reports from other Meetings</p> <p>Council received a verbal update from the following meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Audley End Masterplan: Cllr Freeman updated on telephone conversation had with the consultants (b) Essex Cultural Diversity Project: Cllr Gadd updated on discussions to date (c) SW Bid AGM: Cllr De Vries reported on the AGM held on 13.01.20. Members expressed concerns regarding the £31,016 held by the BID as current operating surplus and requested details of the Bid's primary aims and objectives and proposals for the expenditure of this money. Councillors expressed concern at the apparent lack of retail engagement and Cllr De Vries noted that he will address this by contacting and/or visiting all businesses in the BID area to seek their views and opinions on BID priorities. <p>Cllr De Vries noted that BIDs are particularly successful in towns where there is not an active Town or Parish Council as the BID will largely undertake work synonymous with the work of the Local Council. In the case of Saffron Walden, there is an exceptionally active Town Council (including the Tourist Information Centre) which initiates and provides a number of activities and thus the work of the BID is more limited.</p>
FC 030-20	<p>Additional Forthcoming Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) HMS Lapwing Association – Saffron Walden Reunion – Saturday 21st March 2020 at 2.30pm. A Memorial Service will be held at the Close Garden, Saffron Walden to which the Town Mayor and all Councillors are invited. The Mayor will lay a wreath in memory of the loss of the Saffron Walden adopted ship and the crew. (b) UDC Local Councils' Liaison Forum – Tuesday 18th February, 7.30pm at UDC Council Chamber (agenda details tbc) (c) A one-day free exhibition at the Gibson Library – Saturday 22nd February between 10am and 4pm; an opportunity to view the portraits (as owned by SWTC) which have been kindly restored by SW Museum
FC 031-20	<p>UDC Planning Process</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that to date, no specific response had been received from UDC in respect of the Town Council's complaint regarding planning procedures and policies. An acknowledgement email had been received but no further correspondence to date.</p> <p>Members were particularly aggrieved at this lack of communication and lack of change to any process or procedure at UDC in planning matters. Of particular concern is the failure to comply with the Local Government Association's guidance dated December 2019 "<i>Probity in Planning. Advice for councillors and officers making planning decisions</i>". Section 8 "<i>discussions before a decision is</i></p>

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	<p><i>taken</i>" (page 15) of the publication specifically refers to early engagement and pre-application discussions to which Councillors are encouraged to attend. SWTC has requested that Town Councillors and Officers be invited to pre-application meetings with developers and that notes from any such meetings are made available; to date this request has not been enacted by UDC and the Town Council remains at a distance and uninvolved or unaware of pre-application meetings and advice given to developer by UDC Planning Officers.</p> <p>It was Resolved:</p> <p>That the Town Clerk should write to Ms Dawn French, Chief Executive Officer and Mr Gordon Glenday, Assistant Director of Planning of UDC to request that UDC adopts and adheres to the LGA Probity in Planning guidance with immediate effect and that UDC keeps SWTC informed of this implementation. Further that should UDC decline to do so, that their reasons for refusal are made known to SWTC.</p> <p>Cllrs Fairhurst and Freeman declared declarations of interest in this matter as members of UDC Planning Committee and did not participate in the voting process for this consideration.</p>
FC 032-20	<p>Urgent Information Items</p> <p>There were no matters for discussion or information</p>
FC 033-20	<p>Date and time of Next Meeting(s)</p> <p>Full Council Monday 9th March 2020, 7.30pm Council Chamber, Town Hall</p>

The Mayor closed the meeting at 10.00pm