

SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council of Southwold, held in the Council Chamber at 6pm on Tuesday 31st August 2021.

PRESENT:	Councillor	J Windell – Town Mayor
	“	D Beavan
	“	Miss A Betts
	“	I Bradbury
	“	S Flunder (arrived 6.30pm)
	“	Mrs J Jordan
	“	M Ladd
	“	M Rowan-Robinson (arrived 6.15pm)
	“	J Sutton
	“	R Temple

Also present; The Town Clerk. 3 people listening on Zoom.

1. **Apologies:**

To receive apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Cllr Goldsmith and Cllr Jeans.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson arrived at 6.15pm. Cllr Flunder arrived at 6.30pm.

2. **Declarations of interest:**

a) *To receive any declarations of Personal Interest regarding the agenda. Nil.*

b) *To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests regarding the agenda. Nil.*

c) *To note the decision of the Town Clerk regarding requests for dispensations relating to this agenda. Not applicable.*

d) *Councillors to be reminded of the requirement for them to individually update their Register of Interests as appropriate. Noted.*

3. **Minutes:** *To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 27th July 2021. On the proposal of Cllr Jordan, seconded by Cllr Betts it was RESOLVED by all to approve the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 27th July 2021.*

4. **Public Forum**

a) *To receive a report from East Suffolk Ward Councillor D Beavan. Report has been circulated. East Suffolk Ward Cllr Beavan noted town and parish council concerns about planning and the referral process, and has put forward a constitutional amendment to ESC regarding the reintroduction of call in. Also concerned about the use of properties as a business and the payment/non-payment of business rates. There are also concerns about which of these might have received Covid grants – and this information does not appear to be in the public domain. There is no update on the ESC consultation regarding residents parking scheme. Cllr Beavan has been in touch with ESC Kerry Blair about the appearance of the town and the need for improvement.*

ESC Cllr Beavan will then take questions from Councillors and electors.
Nil.

- b) *To receive report from Suffolk County Councillor M Ladd including update on Bailey Bridge.* SCC next full council 8th September. Cllr Ladd has been appointed as Chair of SCC Scrutiny Cttee and the Cttee will be looking first at the SCC homeworking policies and the Covid impact on employees of the County Council. With regards to Bailey Bridge, the end of September is the scheduled completion date with the bridge to open by 1st October 2021. A small working group meet every Thursday to consider claims from those needing passes for the Ferry – priority is given to those needing to cross for employment, education and social care reasons. 12 – 15 tickets have been issued to date and the SCC grant has also paid for some taxis. If all of the grant is not used, then it is hoped that regular users of the ferry might be able to be offered a free trip over a weekend before the bridge reopens.

SCC Cllr Ladd will then take questions from Councillors and electors.

Written questions for SCC ward councillor

- i) *Pothole maintenance* - SCC Cllr Ladd advised that these can be monitored via the online system. The requirement for repairs needs to be reported online, and a repair should then be carried out within 8 weeks. Criteria is presently very strict for the repairs, and this is being challenged by some of the members. Cllr Ladd asked that any outstanding after 8 weeks be reported to him and he will chase. Cllr Windell noted that some repairs have been done today.

- ii) *State of the dead trees, new growth on some trees which is interfering with pedestrian access and also overhanging branches/hedges, in particular those on Pier Avenue trees* - SCC Cllr Ladd advised that some trees have died, and he had wanted these replaced. However SCC highways advised that a full survey would be required to ensure that roots do not affect footpaths/drains. SCC Cllr Ladd would need to pay out of Highways budget. Trialled a tree in April, which seems better than the old ones. SCC Cllr Ladd does now have new budget allocation for 2021-2022 and would hope to get more planted next year. Regarding hedges – not all are SCC. Cllr Ladd asked that he be advised of any SCC hedges that require maintenance.

- c) *To receive comments on matters on the agenda (each will be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes).*

(10 minutes will be allocated overall for this section- subject to Town Mayor discretion).

written questions had been received as follows;

- a) *Ferry Road Garden update* – Cllr Goldsmith to be asked to provide an update at next L and E meeting.
- b) *Boating Lake update* – Cllr Rowan-Robinson as Chair of Land E cttee advised that there is not much to report at the present. The grant bid is being prepared and this is still part of the Council plans to achieve.
- c) *State of the paths onto Town Farm Marsh* – the Town Mayor advised on behalf of the Common Trust that all of the footpaths on the lower Common had been cut and that further maintenance will be carried out early next year. Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that there had been comments about brambles on the SCC path along Buss Creek to the harbour– this to be reported to SCC.

Questions relating to Station Yard – the Town Mayor advised that these will be dealt with under Station Yard agenda item.

5. **To receive reports from Committees:**

- a) *To receive the report of the meeting of the Planning and Development Committee meeting held on 3rd August 2021 and 17th August 2021. No recommendations. Noted.*
- b) *To receive a verbal update from Planning and Development Committee on any further planning/development matters to be brought to the attention of the Council. Nil*
- c) *To receive the report of the Landlords Committee meeting held on 4th August 2021. Recommendations in relation to 1 Strickland Place and Marsh 5 fencing.*

1 Strickland Place – quote received to take plans through to planning application - £3755 plus VAT. On the proposal of Cllr Jordan, seconded by Cllr Bradbury it was agreed with 1 abstention that this quote be accepted.

Fencing for perimeter of Marsh 5 – It had been previously agreed that the fencing should be the responsibility of the Council rather than of the tenant - quote received for £4860 incl VAT. On the proposal of Cllr Jordan, seconded by Cllr Temple it was agreed by all to approve the quote.

- d) *Sustainable Transport cttee – to receive verbal update regarding a) presentation to Cllrs from ESC parking services. Debrief of ESC parking services presentation received from Cllr Bradbury of which all Councillors had received a copy. Cllr Bradbury advised that there has been no update from ESC on the ESC proposed residents parking scheme and no date known for the consultation.*

Communications received regarding High Street traffic management. The Town Clerk and Chair of the Sustainable Travel Committee have met with 2 members of the public who wished to discuss traffic management within the town. A zoom meeting has been arranged with the SCC Highways officer to discuss these matters further.

6. **To receive reports from working groups.**

- a) **N Plan Task and Finish Group.** *(N Plan = as per Town Council priorities 2019 – 2022 c) encourage full time residency within the Town d) Preserve and enhance the natural and built environment).*

Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that the Neighbourhood Plan has gone to the Examiner and the Examiner has sent back some initial comments which Cllr Rowan-Robinson and Cllr Jeans will provide a response to.

7. **To receive reports from the Town Council representatives on other bodies/organisations, of meetings attended:**

Reports to be provided in written format and circulated to members prior to the meeting unless time allows for a verbal report to be given, subject to the Chairs discretion.

- a) *East Anglia One and Two/Sizewell – East Anglia One and Two Cllr Flunder advised members that the DCO order has been finalised and that the Secretary of State has 3 months to respond to proposal. Concerns relate to the Friston Station and the impact on the A12 and the AONB. The Vanguard Project was overturned by the courts.*

Sizewell C – controversy now relates to Chinese involvement. The reactor has not been proven yet. DCO is in its first stages. New issue relates to the need to have a desalination plant. This is causing concern as EDF will need to extract water. SALC have arranged 2 Zoom calls with local councils, one is tomorrow, and one is in October. These projects will have major impact on East Anglia and its towns/villages. Cllr Flunder suggested that Council takes a position itself in due course on the project.

b) *Southwold and Walberswick Flood and Coast Board* – Southwold & Walberswick Flood and Coast Board. Cllr Beavan advised that there is a meeting soon. Will be important as outfall is closed again and Potters Bridge will therefore flood.

8. **To receive update from Station Road Project Board meeting of 24th August 2021 on; a) the design review b) operator tender process c) structural report** (*Project = as per Town Council priorities 2019 – 2022 b) Diversify and enhance the local economy*).

Members of the Project Board had not yet received notes from the August meeting. Verbal report was provided to members.

Cllr Flunder advised members of a concern about the amount of lettable space. Design 9a has not yet been finalised but it is understood that it includes a flat/café/workspaces. Operators have suggested a mezzanine floor could be installed to increase the space available – and this is to be costed. Recognising the 2-year delay to the project and the increase in costs over this period, additional funding might be required. ESC Economic Development Team will prepare an application for additional funding from LEP. Members were advised that the cashflow presently shows that the project is marginal, with inflation of construction costs being a risk, together with the lack of supply of materials including timber/steel. There are still some unknown costs. No assumptions have been made about VAT. Party wall notices are being issued and utilities resolved. Operators have had input with the project managers with regards to design and floorspace. The brief/agent needs to be selected. Operator procurement will be carried out through agents. Project Manager advises that a written package should be available mid- end September to be sent to potential operators.

Members were advised that the mezzanine floor would cost in region of £250k - £290k and including inflation and fees this potentially could amount to £350k in total which is not in the current budget. A mezzanine floor could go in later if required and it is not part of Design 9a, which is still work in progress.

Project Board members agreed that the date of the Project Board meetings ought to be before the monthly Town Council meetings so that briefs from these meetings could then be available, as the project is fast moving, and it is difficult to remember everything that the meeting discusses.

Discussion took place regarding VAT. Latest design has been designed with VAT being recovered and it was stated that the VAT situation needs to be clear if VAT is/is not to be reclaimed. VAT can be reclaimed so long as STC charges VAT on rent.

It was suggested that bringing in an operator may not make rents affordable. It was acknowledged that it had previously been mentioned that STC does not need to seek a large return in order for the investment return to exceed the sum that STC was previously receiving.

The Town Mayor referred back to the questions received within the public section and responded as follows.

1) *New Designs* – the Town Mayor advised that the plans are yet to be finalised.

2) *Request for design to be eco-friendly and include Solar panels/heat pumps* – the Town Mayor advised that the design will be created with appropriate considerations. as per STC climate principles.

3) *Surveyor's report* – the Town Mayor advised that the report reaffirmed that the foundations are insubstantial and that the intrusive surveys are being carried out to assist with the party wall agreements.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that the demolition has to go ahead as there is nothing in the report to suggest buildings can remain. Cllr Ladd advised that the statement about the lack of depth/quality of footings means any reuse would not be structurally sound. Cllr Beavan advised that his concern is that this is not a structural survey and that he would have preferred that a full structural survey was carried out. Cllr Ladd clarified to members that the heading on the report is “structural appraisal” and that if the Council wished to insist that a structural survey was requested, then this should be taken up with the authors. Cllr Windell offered to discuss the structural report with the member of the public and suggested that the member of public raising the question should contact him.

9. **Financial Matters**

a) *Accounts for Payment - To receive and confirm the Accounts for Payment for August 2021 (circulated to members).* **On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jordan it was agreed by all to confirm the Accounts for Payment for August 2021. All agreed.**

b) *To receive report and recommendations of Finance and Governance Meeting Rep 08.21 held on 4th August 2021.*

Recommendations in relation to; Internal Control Statement.

Internal Control - additional wording to be considered and if agreed approve as per draft policy circulated. It was proposed by Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Temple to approve the policy. All agreed.

10. **Date of next Town Council Meeting:** Wednesday 29th September 2021. 7.30pm start. Agreed by all.

Cllr Flunder asked re having informal communications with Reydon Parish Councillors. Cllr Ladd advised that some individual Councillors did meet when he was Mayor and would support such discussions but advised that this would need to be up to individuals as, by its very nature, it would not be a full Council matter.

Cllr Sutton advised that the memorial service for John and Brenda Miller will be on 17th September 2021.

14. **It was RESOLVED by all re Exclusion of Public and Press:** *Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies*

(Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is resolved, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following.

To receive confidential papers and recommendations;

Finance cttee meeting 4th August 2021 report Conf Rep Fin 08/21– Received. No recommendations.

Employment working group report Conf Employ 2/2021– recommendation re Town Manager - extension of position to 31st March 2022. It was proposed by Cllr Ladd, seconded by Cllr Rowan-Robinson and agreed by all to approve the recommendation contained within the report.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Signed

Dated.....

DRAFT