

SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council of Southwold, held at the Stella Peskett Millennium Hall at 6.30pm on Tuesday 25th May 2021.

PRESENT:	Councillor	J Windell – Town Mayor
	“	D Beavan
	“	Miss A Betts
	“	I Bradbury
	“	Mrs P Goldsmith
	“	Mrs J Jeans
	“	Mrs J Jordan
	“	M Ladd
	“	M Rowan-Robinson
	“	J Sutton
	“	R Temple

Also present; 11 members of the public, the High Steward and the Town Clerk.

Declarations of Acceptance of Office from new Councillors had been completed before the meeting.

- Apologies:** *To receive apologies for absence.*
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Flunder.

a) *To welcome new Councillors.* Councillors Sutton and Temple were welcomed to the meeting.
- Declarations of interest:**

a) *To receive any declarations of Personal Interest regarding the agenda.* Cllr Rowan-Robinson declared a Personal Interest in Agenda item 7 as Chair of Trustees of Southwold Arts Centre

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.
- Minutes:** (i) To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council meetings held on Tuesday 27th April 2021 and Thursday 29th April 2021 and the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 18th May 2021.

On the proposal of Cllr Jeans, seconded by Cllr Jordan it was RESOLVED by all to approve the Minutes of the Town Council meetings held on 27th April 2021, 29th April 2021 and 18th May 2021.
- Public Forum**

a) *To receive a report from East Suffolk Ward Councillor D Beavan.*
ESC Cllr Beavan advised that ESC is now meeting up in person and that ESC is suggesting that members have regular flow tests. Mike Pickles has been selected as

the Southwold representative on the Harbour Mgt Board - it is considered that this is disappointing, and that ESC have let Southwold down.

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

There were no questions from Councillors or electors.

- b) *To receive report from Suffolk County Councillor M Ladd including update on Bailey Bridge.*

SCC Cllr Ladd advised that SCC AGM is to be held on Thursday with 75 Councillors at Wherstead Park.

Bailey Bridge – press release has gone out and is on the Town Council and SCC websites. Mitigation measures have been put in place with Dani Church who will use 2 vehicles – 1 boat – 1 rowing boat. SCC is looking at subsidies, and about cycles and children in order to try to mitigate some of these issues.

Queens Green Canopy Campaign Suffolk. This is a tree planting campaign which hopes to create biodiversity. Leisure & Environment to consider.

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

Cllr Goldsmith asked SCC Cllr Ladd what hours Dani Church would operate – workers might need this facility after 6pm. SCC Cllr Ladd advised that they are looking at 8am – 8pm.

Questions from members of the public:

A resident asked what the start for the Bailey Bridge repairs would be as SCC announced in February that they hoped it would start in the Spring. SCC Cllr Ladd advised that an independent inspection was done in April. Discussions had taken place about trying to keep the bridge open until September, but this is not possible. SCC Cllr Ladd explained the issues at the bridge and the duty of care of SCC re the public use of it.

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

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

Cllr Windell explained that Council has received a letter from the Southwold & Reydon Society with 21 questions about Station Road project. This is being answered and it will go to the Project Board to check the information before responding.

Station Road regeneration project.

A resident spoke regarding the Southwold & Reydon Society letter as they do not feel that they have had answers and await a reply.

A resident advised that they had sat in the Finance Committee meeting and advised that some members of the cttee seemed to express a comment that they felt the project was financially unviable. The resident was invited to speak to the Town Mayor after this meeting regarding this comment.

A resident asked about the environmental audit and asked who is doing it? Cllr Windell advised that it was Chicks.

A resident asked about the existing structure and whether there was a report available. The meeting was advised by a resident that 400 people do not want offices on Station

Yard. Cllr Windell advised those present that this would be an employment hub not just offices and advised that there are people also in favour of the project and offered to meet the resident to view the petition.

A resident advised that they supported the project. A debate took place regarding the potential length of time that the existing structures might be able to be used for.

Cllr Beavan left the meeting at 6.50pm.

Further comments were made regarding the stated potential for the use of existing structures, and the manner in which people had been approached to agree to the petition.

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

a) *To receive the report of the meeting of the Planning and Development Committee meeting held Thursday 20th May 2021 – verbal report. No recommendations*

Cllr Jeans spoke regarding the Tennis Club application. The meeting was advised that this will go through as ESC have approved it – STC feels that this is disappointing. Cllr Jeans advised that re 11 Cautley Road – 5 applications have been submitted over the years and 2 appeals lodged – with the applicant losing the appeal. The house is now on the market for £1.5m despite the applicants previously advising that they would live there.

Cllr Jeans spoke re The Links – as there is a rumour that the owner wants to convert this to Airbnb and would need vehicular access off the Common past St Barnabas. As the footpath has been maintained by STC, Council will speak to their solicitor to place a caution at HMLR on the land, and then to register the land.

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

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).*

To receive update on the Reg 16 Consultation.

Cllr Rowan Robinson advised that Council is still awaiting ESC confirmation re Regulation 16 dates.

b) **Comms working group** – *to receive verbal update.*

Cllr Bradbury advised that there has been much going on within the Council over recent weeks and that comms is sometimes last to be factored into the time available. *Social media* – STC is very concerned about this. There have been varying views from professionals about the Town Council becoming involved with social media. However, a new Facebook page has been created and the Council will do a post at least once a week to provide a topical update on something relevant. Some local people are interested in doing this for Council and this is all work in progress.

Website – has been revised and updated and is much more user friendly.

Hybrid meetings – in view of the government cessation of remote meetings, the Town Clerk and technician are going to visit Bungay and Beccles to see how/if they are filming meetings. The public participation has been very good over Zoom, and it was

noted that it would be useful for the Council to try to film meetings to keep this interest ongoing.

Station Road Comms – will be done professionally – various operators tendering.

Internal comms - the internal system is all being altered to Microsoft 365.

Cllr Jeans noted that the new website is very good and advised that the comms group has compiled a history document on the changing employment uses of Station Yard and this is on the Town Council website.

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) Allotment Holders – Cllr Bradbury – no meeting held.
- b) Blyth Estuary Group – Cllr Rowan-Robinson – no meeting held.
Cllr Bradbury advised that selection for the Harbour Management Board is with ESC Cabinet to ratify.
Cllr Bradbury would hope that the Antiques Fair on South Green will be held on 1st August 2021.
- c) Christmas Lights - Cllr Goldsmith – no meeting held. Cllr Ladd advised that the Christmas Lights Committee is struggling and a request for volunteers was made.
- d) Harbour Users – Cllr Jordan - no meeting held.
- e) RDC – Cllr Goldsmith - no meeting held.
- f) East Anglia One and Two/Sizewell C – Cllr Bradbury advised that 2 District Councillors have resigned in the Leiston area as a result of being disappointed with the ESC decision statement on this issue.
- g) Southwold Hospital Group – Cllr Windell - buildings are nearly complete. Topping off carried out last week and the project should be opening September/October 2021.
- h) The Southwold and Walberswick Flood Board – SCC Cllr Ladd advised that a 2nd meeting had been held on Friday and the group will be looking at Terms of Reference. Cllr Ladd advised that there should be an STC member on the group and he will be recommending this –Town Mayor to be put forward as the rep.
- i) Summer Theatre – Cllr Rowan-Robinson – Matthew Townshend Productions season is coming this summer. Social distancing will be maintained in the theatre.

8. To confirm membership of Committees/Working groups/Task and Finish and other groups for 2021/2022

To confirm membership of Committees/task and finish groups for 2021/22.

Vacancies

Cllr Temple – will join Planning Committee. Agreed by all.

Cllr Sutton – will join Planning Committee and Leisure & Environment Committee.

Agreed by all.

(Cllr Sutton would like to sit on the Finance Committee if/when there becomes a vacancy).

Cllr Jeans will liaise with Cllr Temple and Cllr Sutton about the Planning Committee.

Cllr Ladd advised that the biggest expenditure for STC is on properties. However apart from Cllr Ladd the Finance & Governance Cttee members and Landlords Cttee members are the same people.

Cllr Bradbury – confirmed that he would come off Landlords Cttee.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson – would urge Councillors to come to Leisure & Environment Cttee as they are sometimes short of a quorum.

To confirm delegated budget of £25k for Leisure and Environment Committee for 2021/22 as per Town Council Budget.

On the proposal of Cllr Rowan-Robinson, seconded by Cllr Betts it was agreed to confirm a delegated budget of £25k for Leisure and Environment Committee for 2021/22. All agreed.

9. **To confirm Town Council Representatives on outside bodies for 2021/22**

Town Council Representatives on outside bodies for 2021/22.

As previously.

It was unanimously agreed to approve the membership of Town Council representatives on outside bodies for 2021/22 as per membership for 2020/2021.

10. **Station Road Project Update regarding discussions with operators.**

Cllr Bradbury advised that this is a Project which will have its own momentum. There will need to be an operator ready to go to ensure that the project gets off the ground. In view of their experience, three organisations who run hubs locally are giving advice/guidance on design principles for such a hub. It is thought that at least two of these might bid to be the operator of the new hub – an operator will be procured as part of the process.

Cllr Jeans advised that the Town Council voted that the space will be multi-use and that this has not changed - this is not just office space and asked whether the operators are aware of this. Cllr Bradbury advised that they were.

Cllr Windell advised that in the DLA report conclusion it was stated that “correct mix and style” was important. It was suggested that the area should be referred to as “an employment hub.”

Cllr Ladd advised that the space had constantly been referred to as “flexible workspace”. Therefore, this can include office and other spaces. Cllr Bradbury reaffirmed that these will be “flexible workspaces” and should also be to do with “innovation”.

Cllr Sutton advised that he had sat in on Zoom from DLA which had referred to office space. Would like to ask Council to put out comms re mixed use workspace and the need to create jobs. Cllr Ladd advised that the Council has always referred to “flexible workspace”.

With reference to the Southwold & Reydon Society, Cllr Jeans advised that the Q & A would be a very good way to get the correct messaging out and suggested that STC needs to clear air with Southwold & Reydon Society. East Suffolk has a need for micro businesses – and this message does not seem to have been made clear enough. DLA was asked to look at impact of office space due to Covid 19 so this may not have helped the overall messaging.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that the original financial models might have been based on office space, but this did not reflect the original planning application. Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that he too always said “mixed flexible use” and that although CCF fund might be thinking of office space, job creation is the key factor.

Cllr Windell advised that job creation is the key factor and Cllr Ladd confirmed that the CCF has said that the project is about job creation and employment.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson advised that with regards to the question about how much support there is from the community, for this scheme the data in the Town Plan reflects that 90%

of responses supported the need to increase employment in Southwold and the creation of jobs.

11. **Financial Matters**

a) **Financial Officer:** to re-appoint the Clerk as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer for 2021/22.

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jordan, it was unanimously agreed to re-appoint the Clerk as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer for 2021/22.

b) **Internal Auditor**

i. To confirm that SALC are an effective internal auditor for Town Council audit requirements.

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jeans, it was unanimously agreed to confirm that SALC are an effective internal auditor for Town Council audit requirements.

ii. To appoint SALC as the internal auditor for 2021/22.

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jordan, it was unanimously agreed to confirm that SALC are an effective internal auditor for Town Council audit requirements.

iii. To receive Internal Control Statement and to confirm that Internal Controls are appropriate and effective for Council purposes as per the Internal Control Policy. Quarterly reviews will be as minuted by F and G Cttee for 2021/2022.

On the proposal of Cllr Ladd, seconded by Cllr Betts, it was unanimously agreed to confirm that Internal Controls are appropriate and effective for Council purposes. Minimum quarterly reviews to be undertaken and minuted by F and G cttee.

iv. To receive and note the SALC internal audit report for 2020/21 and the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 on the AGAR.

On the proposal of Cllr Ladd, seconded by Cllr Betts, it was unanimously agreed to receive and note the SALC internal audit report for 2020/21, and the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 as on the AGAR.

v. To Resolve to adopt the Action Plan arising from the internal audit report – Finance Cttee to review action note and report back to Full Council.

On the proposal of Cllr Ladd seconded by Cllr Betts it was RESOLVED unanimously to adopt the action plan provided, arising from the internal audit report.

c) **Risk Assessment:** To receive draft Risk Assessment for 2021/22 – *Finance Cttee to consider action in Internal Audit Report.* **On the proposal of Cllr Ladd seconded by Cllr Betts it was RESOLVED unanimously to receive the Risk Assessment for 2021/2022 and for the Finance Cttee to review the suggestion arising in the internal audit report.**

Cllr Bradbury and Cllr Ladd provided sincere thanks to the Town Clerk/ RFO for all the work undertaken in relation to the Council Audit and finances.

d) Accounts 2020/21:

i) To receive and if approved, confirm Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement, of the Annual Return to the Audit Commission, for the year ended 31st March 2021 and provide permission for signature as required. (*Note: (i) In signing the Annual Governance Statement the Town Council is obliged under Schedule 12, para 41(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to record and note the yes/no answers in Section 1) and provide permission for the Chairman of this meeting to sign these accordingly.*

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jordan, it was unanimously RESOLVED to receive and approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Return to the Audit Commission, for the year ended 31st March 2021. The Town Council RESOLVED that the appropriate answers in boxes 1 – 8 inclusive were yes, and that the answer in Section 9 was N/A.

ii) To consider and approve Section 2, the Statement of Accounts, of the Annual Return to the Audit Commission for the year ended 31st March 2021 and provide permission for the Chairman of this meeting to sign these accordingly.

On the recommendation of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jordan, and unanimously agreed, it was RESOLVED to confirm Section 2, the Statement of Accounts of the Annual Return to the Audit Commission for the year ended 31st March 2021 and to provide permission for these to be signed off accordingly.

e) To Resolve to re-adopt the Reserves Policy together with the earmarked reserves as detailed on 31st March 2021.

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jordan, and agreed by all to re-adopt the Reserves Policy and to approve the Earmarked reserves as detailed at 31st March 2021.

f) To confirm the General Power of Competence for Southwold Town Council.

To Resolve that; Southwold Town Council hereby confirms the General Power of Competence. Southwold Town Council confirms that it meets the criteria for eligibility relating to the electoral mandate and relevant training of the clerk.

On the proposal of Cllr Jeans, seconded by Cllr Rowan-Robinson, and agreed by all to confirm the General Power of Competence for Southwold Town Council.

12. Financial Matters

a) *Accounts for Payment* - To receive and confirm the Accounts for Payment for May 2021 (*circulated to members*).

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, seconded by Cllr Jeans it was agreed by all to approve the Accounts for payment for May 2021.

b) *To receive report and recommendations of Finance and Governance Ctee* - Meeting 30th April 2021 FIN Rep 05.21. Report was received and noted.
No recommendations.

13. Model Code of Conduct:

to confirm the Model Code of Conduct as set out in the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 including clause 12(2) and to reaffirm the Suffolk local Code of Conduct as adopted 29th July 2014.

The Town Mayor read out the Nolan Principles and said he would expect these to be agreed and respected by all together with the conventions of Council in respect of the

decisions being corporate agreements, wearing of appropriate business dress for public meetings, and treating all others with respect. The Town Mayor also reminded members of the media policy which states that the Town Clerk and the Chairman are those who are authorised to represent the Town Council.

Cllr Rowan-Robinson spoke with regards to the behaviour of Councillors and advised that when he was Mayor and meeting with other Councils it was apparent that many Councils have problems in this respect. Councils have very little power to do anything, and it was felt that social media is used unfairly to attack Councils. Councillors are volunteers, trying to do the best for Southwold – and just trying to make sure there is a future for Southwold as a town and for it not to be just a “theme place”. Both the Town Plan and Neighbourhood Plan are trying to create a more level playing field for the town. Cllr Rowan-Robinson suggested that the Code of Conduct Regulations are not strong enough to stop Councils from malicious attacks and would hope that Code of Conduct could be enforced.

Discussion took place regarding ‘respect’, and that the Code of Conduct does not have as much robustness as it should do.

On the proposal of Cllr Ladd, seconded by Cllr Jordan, it was unanimously agreed to confirm the Model Code of Conduct as set out in the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 including clause 12(2) and to reaffirm the Suffolk local Code of Conduct as adopted 29th July 2014.

14. **Standing Orders:**

To adopt the Town Council’s Standing Orders for 2021/2022 and to re-confirm the Financial Standing Orders for 2021/22 – both updated as per model NALC requirements in Nov 2020.

On the proposal of Cllr Betts, second by Cllr Rowan-Robinson, it was unanimously RESOLVED to adopt the Town Council’s Standing Orders for 2021/2022 and to adopt the Financial Standing Orders for 2021/22 (financial documents as agreed by Council).

15. **Sealing of Documents 21/22:** to authorise the Clerk to seal legal and civic documents.

On the proposal of Cllr Jeans, seconded by Cllr Betts, it was unanimously agreed to authorise the Clerk to seal legal and civic documents.

16. **GDPR** – to confirm that Council and Councillors are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to collecting, using and protecting personal information in accordance with provisions of GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

On the proposal of Cllr Jeans, seconded by Cllr Betts it was RESOLVED by all to agree that Councillors are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to collecting, using and protecting personal information in accordance with provisions of GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

17. **Date of next Town Council Meeting:**

Tuesday 29th June 2021. Venue and time to be confirmed.

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.

Nil

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8pm.

Signed

Dated.....

DRAFT