

ASSET & SERVICES COMMITTEE
SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ASSETS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING in the Garden Rooms, Jubilee Gardens, Saffron Walden.

Date of meeting: Monday 27th February 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors Coote, Freeman, Hawke-Smith (substituting for de Vries), McLellan (Chair) and Toy

Public: Four representatives of Affinity Water and approximately 15 members of the public

Officers: Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk and Terry Frostick, Operations Manager

A & S 013-23	Apologies for absence Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs de Vries (who was substituted by Hawke-Smith), Frost, Light and Roberts.
A & S 014-23	Declarations of Interest Cllrs Coote and Freeman declared non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council
A & S 015-23	Minutes of the last meeting of the Assets & Services Committee 23.01.2023 The minutes of 23.01.2023 Assets & Services Committee meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.
A & S 016-23	Public Speaking Time There were no questions or matters arising from the public other than those in relation to agenda item 7 Affinity Water and 9 Youth Outreach.
A & S 017-23	Garden Rooms, Jubilee Gardens Committee noted the lease has now been signed by SWTC and Committee passed their thanks to the Town Clerk for her progression on this matter.
A & S 018-23	Committee agreed to bring forward agenda item 7, Affinity Water.
A & S 019-23	Affinity Water Four representatives of Affinity Water spoke regarding the water softener treatment options in Saffron Walden, it was noted that:

- January 2021 the softening equipment failed and a public consultation was carried out in May 2021. In July 2021 Affinity agreed to research alternative softening treatments available.
- The findings of this technical investigation illustrated that no viable equipment is available that meets the appropriate water standards and therefore Affinity Water can no longer offer water softening. The reasons being:
 - The costs of the new equipment would be too high and would need to be met by all customers, which would be unfair on customers who do not receive the service elsewhere.
 - It is likely water shortages will increase and Affinity needs to start adapting its resource usages.
- Communication will be sent to all Saffron Walden residents on 28 February 2023 alongside a dedicated website and Q&A.

Committee raised the following:

- The Saffron Walden water hardness has increased, and Affinity Water must be obliged to provide the softening treatment.
- Does the softening treatment exist elsewhere in the country as this must meet the specifications.

Committee and Affinity Water representatives discussed the changes in water usage in the future and Affinity Water is looking in the future at harvesting grey water at new developments so usage is reduced. Committee asked to be kept up to date with these conversations.

The Chair took a series of questions from the public; Members of the public raised the following:

- Historically Lee Valley was the water authority until transferred to Affinity Water around 1963 and this Statutory Instrument included the water softening treatment and legislatively therefore this must continue.
- Disappointment that it has taken two years to reach this resolution and how much money it has taken to research alternate equipment.
- Likely a customer challenge group would be arranged.

Affinity Water confirmed legal advice been sought for this termination in service, which will be shared with Council. It was Resolved:

- (a) To note the attendance with thanks to the representatives from Affinity Water and the members of public for their participation in the discussions
- (b) During the presentation, Affinity Water had noted pilot projects they are running on new developments using grey water / water harvesting. It was noted this aspiration is included in the recently made 'SW Neighbourhood Plan'. Recognising SWTC is keen to encourage developers to use grey water, Affinity Water agreed to provide further details to SWTC on these pilot projects
- (c) To request Affinity Water to provide further information on the 10% surcharge historically levied in SW residents. Affinity Water historically charged a 10% surcharge in SW – what was the margin on the 10% extra? What was the cost of supplying this extra service (water softening) vs the income vs the profit made?

	<p>(d) Affinity was requested to provide a full cost analysis of income from surcharge, over cost of delivery, over profit made.</p> <p>(e) Affinity Water agreed to share details of the legal advice they had received regarding compliance with the Statutory Instrument Lee Valley Water 1963</p>
A & S 020-23	<p>Town Council Events and Activities</p> <p>Committee noted the upcoming events and activities scheduled for the year including the 'save the date' poster (which was attached to the agenda).</p> <p>Cllr Coote thanked Officers for their progression with this post, noting the positive impact it was having on the community. It was noted that the post has predominately focussed on community events and activities over the past 18-months; this position supports those most vulnerable in our community and the Town Council's ability to provide cost neutral (to the Council), often free of charge (at source) community events.</p>
A & S 021-23	<p>Anglo-American Play Area Refurbishment</p> <p>Officers provided the following timeline for the refurbishment works at Anglo-American Play Area, which was noted by committee:</p> <p>W/c 27/02 - finish removals W/c 06/03/23 – W/c 20/03/23 – new equipment installed W/c 27/03/23 – Wet pour installed W/c 03/04/23 Inspections and snagging work Aiming for opening w/c 10/04 during the Easter holidays with a formal opening event to take place that week.</p>
A & S 022-23	<p>Youth Outreach Project</p> <p>Committee noted the two reports attached to the agenda.</p> <p>The Chair of the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project spoke further to the provided report noting the activities carried out so far by the group.</p> <p>Committee noted the positive impact the activities have on the youth members.</p> <p>It was resolved to re-adopt the service level agreement for 2023-24 as recommended in the officer's report.</p>
A & S 023-23	<p>Christmas Light Contract</p> <p>Committee noted two quotes have been received for the Christmas Lights contract as detailed in the officer report, attached to the agenda, noting the recommendation from the Working Group to progress with Quote A which meets the annual budget allocation.</p> <p>Members discussed changing the name of the project to Festive Lights but it was agreed to remain with Christmas Light project.</p>

	Cllr Coote proposed to progress with quote A as recommended by officers, this was seconded by the Chair and agreed by Committee. Cllr Toy abstained.
A & S 024-23	Urgent Information Items There were no matters arising
A & S 025-23	Date and time of Next Meeting Noted and agreed as being 27 th March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall, Saffron Walden.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.15 pm