

SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Full Council Meeting

Date of meeting: Monday 30 October 2023 at 10.00am in the Town Hall, Saffron Walden.

Present Councillors: Cllrs Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Curtis, Eke, Freeman, Gadd, Hawke-Smith, Jones, McBirnie, McLellan, Meloy, Porch.

Officers: Georgia Arnold (Deputy Town Clerk) and Terry Frostick (Operations Manager)

Public: Five residents of Well Green Close

FC 161-23	<p>Apologies for absence Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Abercrombie, de Vries, Frost, Reeve and Shotropa.</p>
FC 162-23	<p>Declarations of Interest Cllrs Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Freeman and McBirnie declared generic non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council (UDC). Cllr Gadd declared a generic non-pecuniary interest as County Councillor for Essex County Council.</p>
FC 163-23	<p>Public Speaking Time Mr Williams spoke further to the agenda item, Well Green Close, noting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thanks to SWTC for arranging this meeting.• All residents of the close assumed it was registered Public Open Space, noting SWTC has managed the land for several years and it is used by residents and children to play football and ride bikes.• The sale and any future building on the land would be detrimental to the environment and residents due to the lack of amenity space. <p>Ms Gilder spoke further, agreeing with Mr Williams comments and additionally noted the land is well used as open space, provides a footpath to Hill Top Lane and mature trees are well established next to the land, any building would cause harm to the environment. Ms Perry agreed with the comments made, noting residents always understood the land was public open space and not privately owned.</p>
FC 164-23	<p>Land at Well Green Close Saffron Walden Council noted the written report attached to the agenda, explaining the land at Well Green Close is available to purchase at auction on 2 November 2023 with a £3,000 starting price. Council thanked the residents for the attending the meeting, noting their comments and evidence that the land is well used as open space and a right of way for pedestrians, therefore preservation of the land in some way is required.</p>

	<p>Council noted other pieces of land could be in a similar situation and Council should set a working group at a future meeting to ensure village green or PROW status is requested where appropriate.</p> <p>Members discussed the options for this site being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Seeking registration of a public right of way and /or village green status. It was noted Fields in Trust could be considered but this can only be obtained by being the owner. b) Submitting a bid at the auction potentially utilising ward member initiative funds (it was confirmed this is an eligible cause for the funding) and/or utilising resident donations which would require a legal agreement before the 2nd November auction (which was considered unlikely). c) Should either of these options be pursued the auctioneer and owner must be notified by sending both a letter from SWTC's solicitor. d) As SWTC has maintained the land the several years, a case could be made for adverse possession. <p>The Deputy Town Clerk noted: SWTC has £3,672 remaining in its legal and professional services budget for 2023/24, but does not have a specific budget set aside for the acquisition of land and that in order to meet the potential auction price, third-party monies would be required to fund the purchase.</p> <p>It was unanimously resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Seek registration of the land as village green status and a PROW b) SWTC's solicitor to write to the auctioneer and owner notifying both SWTC's intent prior to the auction and the potential pursuit of adverse possession. c) Submit a bid at the auction at a maximum of £5,000 using SWTC reserves and Ward Member monies, acknowledging a legal agreement with the residents would not be concluded before the auction on 2 November. The Town Clerk would be delegated this authority, or another officer should she be unavailable, online registration to submit a bid will be required prior. d) The legal fees should not exceed £3,000. e) At the November Full Council meeting to establish a working group to review other potential sites which could be at a similar position and seek establishment of a village green status and/or PROW, each on their own merits.
FC 165-23	Urgent Items - No matters raised.
FC 166-23	<p>Date and time of Next meeting(s)</p> <p>The Mayor reminded all that the next meeting is scheduled for 13 November 2023 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall, Saffron Walden.</p>

The Mayor closed the meeting at 10.45am