

SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of an EXTRAORDINARY Full Council Meeting

Date of meeting: Monday 25 March 2024 at 7.00pm

Present Councillors: Cllrs Abercrombie, Asker, Coote, Curtis, Eke, Hawke-Smith, Jones, McLellan, Meloy, Reeve.

Officers: Lisa Courtney (Town Clerk), Georgia Arnold (Deputy Town Clerk), Terry Frostick (Operations Manager)

Public: Four members of the public

FC 062-24	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Ahmed, de Vries, Freeman, Gadd, McBirnie, Porch and Shotropa.</p>
FC 063-24	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Cllrs Asker, Coote and Reeve declared generic non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council (UDC).</p>
FC 064-24	<p>Public Speaking Time</p> <p>Ms Rodden, a Saffron Walden resident spoke regarding the proposed move of the Tourist Information Centre. She explained moving the TIC into the Town Hall would be detrimental to the TIC offering and service. The Fry Art Gallery had 10358 visitors in 2023 who supported the local economy including the TIC, further noting the impact of tourism on the local economy and the integral role the TIC played in that process.</p> <p>Mr Everett also spoke and endorsed the comments made by Ms Rodden. Additionally he explained the TIC is the public face of the Council and the service should be retained facing the Market Square to provide a front of house service.</p>
	<p>Reversal of a Previous Decision</p> <p>In accordance with paragraph 7(a) of the Council's Standing Orders, a valid request had been received and verified which requested Council reconsiders and/or reverses a previous decision. The meeting agreed to implement paragraph 7(a) of the Standing Orders to allow further debate and consideration of a previous decision reached relating to the location of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC).</p>
FC 065-24	<p>Motion received from 5 Councillors requesting a review of the decision pertaining to the relocation of the TIC Service</p>

Councillors discussed the decision reached at February Full Council to relocate the TIC service into the Town Hall, it was noted the decision was reached seeking to reduce costs and to provide better disabled access. For clarity the decision from the February Full Council meeting is repeated below:

Extract from February Full Council minutes, as recorded under Min Ref Fc041-24:

Service Changes

Council noted:

- a) *At the November 2023 Council meeting a working group was established including Cllrs Gadd, Abercrombie, Meloy, Curtis and Reeve with officers. Their primary remit was to focus on the matters as raised within the presented written report (Min ref FC 186-23) to Council November 2023.*
- b) *At the January 2024 meeting, Council focused the remit of the working group on potential and further cost savings on the TIC service.*

Officers presented an updated confidential report to Council, which had due regard to the mandate as agreed at the January Full Council meeting. The report contained a series of recommendations. Following consideration and debate of these matters, it was resolved:

- c) *To relocate the TIC service from No 1 Market Place to the former Council Chamber in the Town Hall. The move should be carried out in conjunction with the reduction to 2.5FTE (inclusive of holiday or other cover) staffing.*
- d) *To authorise Officers to negotiate with and appoint a local agent to market No 1 market Place*
- d) *To set aside monies of £10,000 to be used in creating a new and safe shop-type environment for the relocated service and £5,000 towards legal and professional fees to carry out these works*
- e) *To note the contents of this report and that the WG will reconvene to consider other recommendations and in particular how best to implement the resolution of council of January 2024 to achieve significant savings in the net costs of the TIC service including significant staffing cost savings.*

Following considerable and further discussion on the relocation opportunity, Council reaffirmed its commitment to the TIC service and the relocation would have only taken place subject to a tenant being found for 1 Market Place. Council acknowledged the responses received from residents of Saffron Walden and visitors to the town who are opposed to the decision; Cllr Coote noted that Residents for Uttlesford was a resident-led party and the Council was an authority which would give credence and due regard to the views of the local electorate.

	<p>The motion as originally presented by five Councillors was considered being: <i>“We the undersigned, formally request that Saffron Walden Town Council reviews its decision to relocate the TIC service from No 1 Market Place to the Council Chamber. This request allows the Town Council further and greater opportunity to consider all matters relating to the future location of the TIC service”</i></p> <p>The motion was signed by the following: Cllr Jubeyuir Ahmed, Cllr Arthur Coote, Cllr Richard Freeman, Cllr Denise Jones, Cllr Richard Porch</p> <p>The Town Mayor asked for a proposer and seconder for the above motion; none was found therefore the motion fell and was not further debated.</p> <p>In accordance with paragraph 9(b) of the Council’s Standing Orders, an alternative motion directly relating to the specific location of the TIC was proposed by Cllr Coote, seconded by Cllr Eke, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That this Council revokes its decision of 12th February 2024, being: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To relocate the TIC service from No 1 Market Place to the former Council Chamber in the Town Hall, and (b) To authorise Officers to negotiate with and appoint a local agent to market No 1 Market Place. 2. That this Council retains the TIC service in its current No 1 Market Place location; 3. Further that this Council researches the options to improve disabled access to the TIC in its current position. <p>The motion as proposed was debated and it was Resolved: To unanimously adopt the motion and act in accordance with the motion specified above.</p> <p>The residents were thanked for their contribution and for attending the meeting.</p>
FC 066-24	<p>Urgent Items No matters raised.</p>
FC 067-24	<p>Date and time of Next meeting(s)</p> <p>The Mayor reminded all that the next Full Council meeting is scheduled for Monday 15th April 2024 at 7.30pm.</p>

The Mayor closed the meeting at 7.20pm