

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Full Council Meeting**

**Date of meeting:** Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall Saffron Walden

**Present Councillors:** Cllrs Abercrombie, Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Curtis, Eke (Mayor), Freeman, Hawke-Smith, McLellan, Meloy, Porch, Reeve, Parker

**Officers:** Deputy Town Clerk, Operations Manager  
Events Officer and Bookings Officer (until minute reference FC 131-24)

**Public:** Representative of Bellway

FC 122-24	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs de Vries, Gadd, Jones, McBirnie, Shotropa.</p>
FC 123-24	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Cllrs Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Freeman and Reeve declared generic non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council (UDC).</p>
FC 124-24	<p><b>Public Speaking Time</b></p> <p>There were no questions arising.</p>
FC 125-24	<p><b>Updates from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties – for information only</b></p> <p>(a) An update report was not received from Cllr P Gadd as the Essex County Councillor. As District Councillors the following updates were provided:</p> <p>(b) Cllr Coote noted there were discrepancies in distribution of the postal votes for the recent election, being an unfortunate mistake. An independent report is being prepared as to how and why this happened. And UDC is continuing to review its social housing contractors.</p> <p>(c) Cllr Freeman noted UDC has purchased an improved audio-visual system to aid public meetings.</p> <p>(d) Cllr Reeve noted he has been logging the several accidents occurring at the Borough Lane and Debden Road traffic lights, sharing this information with Essex Highways to see if any suitable mitigations could be installed.</p>
FC 126-24	<p><b>Mayor's Communications</b></p> <p>The Mayor noted the following recent activities, expressing how rewarding the role of Mayor is.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Suffolk Day in Haverhill, which was a pleasant event and an opportunity to meet other mayors.</li><li>b. Dame Bradbury School – prize giving ceremony and a sporting music session.</li><li>c. Fete de la Musique – which was again a wonderful event and very well organised.</li><li>d. The Saffron Walden Choral Society performance at Saffron Hall.</li><li>e. 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptist Church.</li></ol>

FC 127-24	<p><b>To verify the Minutes of the Town Council meetings</b></p> <p>The 10.06.2024 Full Council minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meetings and signed by the Mayor.</p>
FC 128-24	<p><b>To receive the Minutes of the Previous Meetings</b></p> <p>Council received and noted the minutes from the following Committee meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Transport 13.06.2024 (Approved minutes)</li> <li>• Planning and Transport 27.06.2024 (draft minutes)</li> <li>• Finance and Establishment 17.06.2024 (draft minutes)</li> <li>• Assets and Services 24.06.2024 (draft minutes)</li> </ul>
FC 129-24	<p><b>Little Walden and Castle Ward Election</b></p> <p>Council welcomed Cllr Cherry Parker as the successfully elected as ward member of Little Walden and Castle Ward. Cllr Parker thanked Council and officers for the warm welcome and is looking forward to working together.</p> <p>It was noted Cllr Parker has signed and returned her acceptance of office and is due to attend all July committee meetings; at the September Council meeting Council will be asked to appoint her committee and working group membership.</p>
FC 130-24	<p><b>Events and Bookings Update</b></p> <p>The events and bookings officers provided a presentation on the works and activities carried out in 2024 and future, the following was noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The events officer has a focus on providing free or low-cost community events for the community; including but not limited to: The band stand season, beach on the common, Christmas activities and more. Since the events officer was appointed, several new relationships have been formed with businesses who regularly support these activities in kind and/or with monetary sponsorship – with over £20,000 received in 2023/24 in sponsorship and grant funding toward the activities.</li> <li>b) The events officer also supports the: Jubilee Hub Partnership and most recently supported the one-year anniversary celebration. Additionally, the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Programme, in hosting pop up taster youth club sessions.</li> <li>c) Cllr Reeve cited the recent Shakespeare Sonnet Walk which sold over 80 tickets with the support of officers and the work with SWYOP is a fantastic contribution.</li> <li>d) The bookings officer explained her role supports the bookings, weddings and market function for the council, which has rapidly grown in a relatively short space of time. SWTC sometimes hosts four weddings on a Saturday with several receptions taking place in Bridge End Garden, receiving several supportive testimonials.</li> <li>e) The market offering is ever growing, with an increasing list of traders and thanks to the successfully received grant funding SWTC is hosting its sixth pop up start up market supporting new traders.</li> </ol>

	<p>f) The relationship with hirers has grown with several repeat bookings annually, thus an increased revenue of 216% from 2016 to 2024.</p> <p>Council thanked the officers for their time and informative presentation, demonstrating the marvellous job carried out. Officers were thanked for their continued and successful efforts, all of which supports the community offering available locally. Council thanked all officers with a round of applause.</p>
FC 131-24	<p><b>Splash Park Recommendation and Strategic Public Open Space S106 monies</b></p> <p>It was noted the June A&amp;S Committee considered the reports attached to the agenda, being findings from the splash park working group and consideration in how to spend the Strategic POS S106 monies.</p> <p>In considering the reports the A&amp;S committee made the following recommendation to full council (extract June A&amp;S draft minutes):</p> <p><i>It was resolved to recommend to July Full Council:</i></p> <p><i>To prepare a project plan, seeking approval from the developer to use the strategic S106 monies to fund the splash park project (as considered in agenda item 6).</i></p> <p><i>To install a splash park in Saffron Walden, noting the current proposed location is neighbouring the skate park (subject to receipt of the S106 monies and approval from UDC as the current landowner).</i></p> <p>The following was raised:</p> <p>a) Cllr Abercrombie, chair of the splash park working group spoke further to the reports, noting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The working group recommends installation of a once used system splash park, with toilets and concessions neighbouring the skate park on Thaxted Road.</li> <li>ii. The S106 monies can not be spent as proposed within the S106 because the land is not within SWTC control (as detailed within the report). The developer is minded issuing a letter of comfort to allow spend of the money on another project at a different site. The working group recommends installation of a splash park neighbouring the skate park because this land is adjacent to the s106 site out of SWTC control.</li> </ol> <p>b) Cllr Hawke-Smith the Assets and Services committee chair noted this project was considered by committee who favoured the proposal acknowledging a splash park is a council priority of the action plan.</p> <p>c) Discussion around whether the location proposed it the most suitable, noted existing facility (water/electricity) connections could be utilised which would save on installation costs. The specific location next to the skate park and the type of splash park (with or</p>

	<p>without features) is yet to be determined, in the first instance the principle of pursuing the project is to be agreed.</p> <p>d) Water consumption was a concern, it was noted other councils operating splash parks advised their water authority is supportive because it typically reduces private paddling pools.</p> <p>Cllr Abercombie proposed to pursue with the splash park project and support the recommendation of the assets and services committee.</p> <p>Council acknowledged:</p> <p>e) The skate park location requires consent from UDC as the landowner.</p> <p>f) A project plan needs to be prepared for consideration by the developer whether to allow spend of the funds.</p> <p>Cllr Freeman seconded the proposal.</p> <p>It was agreed and resolved to:</p> <p>Continue with the splash park project, seeking to instal a once used system with concessions and toilets neighbouring the skate park. Subject to receipt of the S106 funds for installation and consent from UDC as the landowner.</p>
FC 132-24	<p><b>Financial Administration for the year ending 2024/25</b></p> <p>Council noted the following documents recommended by June Finance Committee, relating to financial administration and management for 2024/25.</p> <p>It was unanimously agreed to adopt the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Internal Auditor’s scope of works 2024/25, seeking appointment of the internal auditor</li> <li>b) Risk Assessments 2024/25</li> <li>c) Internal Control Measures for 2024/25</li> </ul>
FC 133-24	<p><b>Tourism, Culture and Heritage Workshop - 25/07/2024</b></p> <p>Council noted in promoting the importance of tourism to the arts, culture and the town’s economy, SWTC has organised a workshop, hosted by Cultural Engine and third parties have also been invited, this is due to take place on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024, starting at 6pm, in the Town Hall (room tbc) and lasting approximately 2-3 hours.</p> <p>Cllr Meloy queried whether SWTC has a Tourism Strategy, it was acknowledged SWTC does not yet have a strategy in place and this work is being further investigated by the TIC Working Group. Other councillors felt the workshop is an opportunity to have an open discussion to begin this work.</p> <p>Council discussed the recent TIC staffing changes and acknowledged this is likely to be brought up in the workshop and considered whether it would be beneficial to have an allocated time for this topic in the workshop. It was agreed the focus of the workshop should be the tourism service, separate to the tourism staffing element and Council requested the</p>

	<p>agenda wording below was amended to remove “<i>this is within the context of an ongoing review of the TIC service</i>”</p> <p><i>This workshop aims to refocus minds on the bigger picture relating to tourism, culture and heritage, this within the context of an ongoing review of the TIC services.</i></p> <p>Council sought the staffing element was not considered as part of the workshop.</p>
FC 134-24	<p><b>Biodiversity Statements</b></p> <p>Council noted the prepared Biodiversity statements, recommended for adoption by the Climate Change and Environment Working Group.</p> <p>Cllr McLellan noted he has recently supported another parish who received third party grant funding to support mapping all environmental assets in the area, not only those in their stewardship.</p> <p>Council discussed this and agreed in the first instance the working group should focus on the assets within SWTC control. It was acknowledged any further work will need appropriate resourcing, perhaps with a dedicated officer on climate change.</p> <p>It was unanimously agreed to adopt the statements.</p>
FC 135-24	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>Council unanimously agreed to re-adopt the following policies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Health and Safety</li> <li>b. Environmental</li> </ol>
FC 136-24	<p><b>Town Hall Works</b></p> <p>The Operations Manager provided council with a verbal update on works required to the Town Hall, noting the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Urgent works are required to the exterior of the Town Hall for the safety of the building and tender quotes have been received.</li> <li>b. The urgent works will cost circa £28-30k.</li> <li>c. The current EMR balance is insufficient for the works and will require use of the general reserves as an interim until income is received (being rent / S106 payments).</li> </ol> <p>Council supported the operations manager in the required works, supporting use of the general reserves as an interim measure, monies will be ‘paid back’ from income received.</p>
FC 137-24	<p><b>Reports from other Meetings</b></p> <p>Cllr McLellan attended the Uttlesford Community Travel Annual General Meeting, UCT passed on their thanks to SWTC for their continued support. It was noted UDC has unfortunately reduced their funding and whether SWTC could seek UDC increase or retain their usual contribution.</p>

FC 138-24	<p><b>Additional Forthcoming Meetings</b></p> <p>Council noted on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August at 8.30am – SWTC will host a Staff and councillor informal meet up, Town Hall Saffron Walden. To provide an opportunity for new staff and councillors to meet one another.</p>
FC 139-24	<p><b>Urgent Items</b></p> <p>No matters raised.</p>
FC 140-24	<p><b>Date and time of Next meeting(s)</b></p> <p>The Mayor reminded all that the next meeting is scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024, with no August Council meeting.</p>

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.10pm

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