

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Full Council Meeting**

**Date of meeting:** Monday 10 June 2024 at 7.30pm

**Present Councillors:** Cllrs Abercrombie (Walker), Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Curtis, de Vries, Eke (Mayor), Freeman, Hawke-Smith, Jones, McBirnie, McLellan and Porch.

**Officers:** Lisa Courtney (Town Clerk), David Broomfield (Financial Officer)  
Terry Frostick (Operations Manager)

**Public:** Essex Police Chief Inspector, Martin Richards (in respect of Min Ref FC107-24)  
PC Ryan Mcnamara from the Town Policing Team ; (in respect of Min Ref FC107-24)  
Mr Steven Hasler, Representative of the Almshouses development (in respect of Min Ref FC108-24)

FC 101-24	<b>Apologies for absence</b>  Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Gadd, Meloy, Reeve and Shotropa.
FC 102-24	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  Cllrs Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Freeman and McBirnie declared generic non-pecuniary interests as District Councillors for Uttlesford District Council (UDC).
FC 103-24	<b>Public Speaking Time</b>  There were no questions arising.
FC 104-24	<b>Updates from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties – for information only</b>  (a) No update from Cllr P Gadd (Essex County Councillor) had been received. (b) A verbal update was received from District Councillor Coote, who noted the Local Plan work is progressing and UDC is confident the Planning Inspectorate will support the plan.
FC 105-24	<b>Mayor's Communications</b>  The Mayor noted the following recent activity:  (a) Mayor Making was a success, the Mayor thanked those who attended and those involved in the running of the event.  (b) The successful Ride London bike race, started in Saffron Walden for a second year.  (c) Jubilee Hub community day, celebrating one year since the doors opened, which the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Ahmed opened.

Signed as a true and accurate record .....  
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	<p>(d) D-Day activities were hugely successful and well supported with the community.</p> <p>(e) He had attended Mayor Making for the Great Dunmow Mayor</p>
FC 106-24	<p><b>To verify the Minutes of the Town Council meetings</b></p> <p>The 13.05.2024 Annual (General) meeting minutes and 13.05.2024 Full Council minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meetings and signed by the Mayor.</p>
FC 107-24	<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 09.05.2024</li> <li>• Planning and Transport 23.05.2024</li> <li>• Finance and Establishment 20.05.2024</li> <li>• Assets and Services 28.05.2024</li> <li>• Draft minutes from the Annual Town Meeting 08.04.2024, for information only as the minutes will be approved at the 2025 Annual Town Meeting.</li> </ul>
FC 108-24	<p><b>Presentation from Essex Police</b></p> <p>The Essex Police Chief Inspector presented to Council noting the following:</p> <p>(a) In the past six months police have seen a 30-40% reduction of anti-social behavior in Saffron Walden.</p> <p>(b) Police have focused on road safety and in 2024 to date, there have been no motorbike accidents. Essex Police are working with UDC to educate and re-enforce road safety measures.</p> <p>(c) The Chief Inspector tries to meet with all parish and town councils twice annually and expressed an interest in hosting another tour of Saffron Walden.</p> <p>(d) PC McNamara was thanked for his visible presence in town and the comfort, support and deterrent that provides to the local community.</p> <p>(e) Ch Insp advised he would like to host an emergency services community day in town (possibly August 2024), which would include a walk around town to review key local issues and concerns. Officers to progress separately.</p> <p>(f) Noted that Essex Police were keen to have direct access to the Council's CCTV system and this would be progressed by Officers.</p> <p>Council thanked the representatives for their time and updates. Both the PC and Chief Inspector left the meeting.</p>

FC 109-24	<p><b>Presentation from Almshouses</b></p> <p>Mr Steve Hasler, presented details to Council on behalf of the Saffron Walden Almshouses, providing an update to Council regarding the works of Primes Close bungalows. It was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The Almshouses have funded 50% of the project.</li> <li>(b) An updated planning application has been submitted.</li> <li>(c) They are hoping to obtain permission to use Swan Meadow for storage.</li> </ul> <p>Council thanked the representative for their presentation and the SWTC planning committee will formally respond as a consultee at a future committee meeting.</p>
FC 110-24	<p><b>Climate Change Update</b></p> <p>Council noted the attached slides detailing the progress against the Climate Action Plan and the current schedule of works. The Climate Change and Environment Working Group Chair, Cllr Hawke-Smith noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The carbon footprint calculations are a priority, and this is required in the first instance to look at reduction measures.</li> <li>(b) Several initiatives have been completed and new projects are constantly being considered alongside grant applications to fund works. Climate change and the Council's carbon footprint has been at the heart of a number of key decisions over the past few years, particularly noticeable in the refurbishment of Nos 3 and 5 Market Place.</li> <li>(c) A&amp;S Committee is due to consider installation of an additional glass panel door in the Town Hall, seeking to retain heat for hirers.</li> </ul> <p>Council thanked officers for the report and the WG chair for the update, it was</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) To note the report and update from Officers and the Chair with thanks;</li> <li>(b) To support the inclusion of a part-time Climate Change Officer post in the 2025/26 budget;</li> <li>(c) To ensure SWTC continues to work alongside UDC in climate change matters, utilising their skills and experience where possible;</li> <li>(d) To note that A &amp; S will further consider the potential installation of a glass door in the Town Hall.</li> </ul>
FC 111-24	<p><b>Update from Tourist Information Centre Working Group</b></p> <p>Council received an update from the WG Chair, Cllr Curtis and Officers regarding the work of the TIC WG. It was <b>Resolved:</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) To receive and note the minutes/notes from meetings held in April and May 2024;</li> <li>(b) That the TIC cannot benefit from rates relief given that UDC is unable to provide rates relief to another precepting authority;</li> <li>(c) To approve the recommendation from the TIC WG (meeting held on 02.05.24), that no further action or works be undertaken in changing the current working practices for disabled access, save for the potential purchase of a lighter ramp for the TIC;</li> <li>(d) To note the reports from TIC Officers that lunch time cover and lone working is proving problematic, creating bottlenecks and delay in customer service;</li> <li>(e) That the TIC WG would focus on working closer with the TIC staff in moving forward in a more positive vein;</li> <li>(f) To ascertain if the use of volunteers could support the TIC function, especially during the lunchtime period;</li> <li>(g) Future projects and considerations include: Updating the website; QR codes on the windows to relevant information; a proposed schedule of works including establishment of a CIC;</li> <li>(h) To note that the WG's initial review of current resourcing levels finds staffing levels are at the barest minimum and adversely impacting on service delivery. The WG's early findings are that no further cuts should be made, despite further cuts being a core part of the WG's terms of reference. In this respect, Council noted that a full update on resourcing levels would be presented to the October Full Council meeting and no further staffing reductions would or should take place until this report was presented;</li> <li>(i) Cllr Porch noted he had been puzzled by the focus on the TIC costs given it was an arm of the Council which made a return in income through shop/ticket sales. He noted that with a new focus of the TIC WG, he believed it was possible to concentrate on service levels and customer delivery, working alongside TIC Officers.</li> </ul>
FC 112-24	<p><b>Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24 (Annual Return)</b></p> <p>The RFO presented financial documents, as considered and approved for recommendation to Full Council from the Finance and Establishment Committee (at its meeting held on 20.05.24):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Annual Internal Audit Report: Council received and accepted the unqualified Internal Auditor's Report as presented</li> <li>(b) Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 with detailed explanations: Noted and accepted.</li> </ul>

	<p>(c) Reconciliation documents: Noted and accepted</p> <p>(d) Asset Register: Noted and accepted</p> <p>(e) Dates for the exercise of public rights: The dates of Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June ending Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024 were approved</p> <p>(f) Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement: Council affirmed all sections.</p> <p>It was <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>Unanimously to receive and approve all AGAR documents as presented.</p>
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FC 113-24	<p><b>May 2024 Annual General Meeting – Neighbourhood Plan</b></p> <p>At the May 2024 AGM, Council acknowledged the potential of reviewing the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in October 2022. The Clerk précised the following items for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The original version of the NP as presented to the external examiner for review (summer 2022), contained site allocations and these were based on the (now withdrawn) local plan. The NP was ‘made’ in October 2022.</li> <li>(b) The NP was heavily reliant on emerging polices from a local plan which was subsequently withdrawn by UDC.</li> <li>(c) On the basis of (b) above, the NP external examiner removed the site allocations from the NP citing that there was insufficient evidence of need as it was reliant on 3<sup>rd</sup> party information. The external examiner advised that if SWTC wished to include sites in the NP, then SWTC must conduct its own housing needs analysis; it had been a conscious decision at the time to rely on the information from the (then) emerging local plan.</li> <li>(d) Govt funding is currently available for NPs, including those being refreshed and funding ranges from £10k for basic funding to an additional potential £8k if the NP meets certain criterion, including site allocations. It is not known if this funding will continue post the elections.</li> <li>(e) The refreshed NP process could be outsourced but this must still include an oversight and management of the process by SWTC. SWTC internal staffing levels must therefore reflect any additional requirements should Council elect to refresh the NP.</li> <li>(f) In the hierarchy of planning documents, the NP must bow down to all of the planning documents above it, including the local plan and the NPPF etc.</li> <li>(g) In terms of timing of any refreshed NP, it may prove beneficial to run purposefully behind the local plan. A refreshed NP ahead of the local plan, may result in NP policies being usurped by those in the local plan. A decision in this respect should be mindful of the local plan progress.</li> </ul>
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	<p>(h) Whilst a NP can allocate sites, these sites are <b>in addition</b> to those in a local plan, not necessarily instead of.</p> <p>It was <b>Resolved</b>:</p> <p>(a) To receive and note the Town Clerk’s update and advice with thanks;</p> <p>(b) To carry this matter forward for further consideration at the September 2024 meeting when further information may be known about the UDC local plan.</p> <p>(c) Resourcing for any refreshed NP should form an integral part of the draft budget for 2025/26.</p>
FC 114-24	<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <p>Council received and noted the written update regarding Council priorities.</p>
FC 115-24	<p><b>Potholes</b></p> <p>Councillors discussed creating a log of potholes in Saffron Walden for reporting to Essex Highways and suggested to progress with the project on 13 July 2024. It was noted there would be a need for a risk assessment, press release and this would be one of several dates. Officers to progress with Councillors (outside of this meeting) regarding the logistics of the works and preparation required.</p>
FC 116-24	<p><b>Reports from other Meetings</b></p> <p>No meetings reported.</p>
FC 117-24	<p><b>Additional Forthcoming Meetings</b></p> <p>No meetings reported.</p>
FC 118-24	<p><b>Urgent Items</b></p> <p>Councillor Asker noted the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Youth Outreach Project celebration will take place on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June at the Jubilee Hub.</p>
FC 119-24	<p><b>Date and time of Next meeting(s)</b></p> <p>The Mayor reminded all that the next meeting is scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024 in the Town Hall Saffron Walden.</p>
FC 120-24	<p><b>Confidential Item – Exclusion of Press and Public (Part II meeting)</b></p> <p>It was <b>Resolved</b>: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.</p>

FC 121-24

**Update on Use and Rental of Nos 3-5 Market Place**

Council received a written report and update regarding completed works at Nos 3-5 Market Place, supported with details of financial costs on the refurbishment programme.

Council thanked and congratulated all staff involved in the project for their efforts, noting the project had come in under the projected budget; this was a particularly commendable effort given the significant increase in the cost of materials in recent months.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 21.40pm