

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of Annual (General) Council Meeting**

**Date of meeting:** Monday 13th May 2024 at 7.00pm

**Present Councillors:** Abercrombie, Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Curtis, de Vries, Eke, Freeman, Hawke-Smith, McLellan, Meloy, Porch, Reeve and Shotropa.

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

**Five members of the public**

AM 01-24	<p><b>Election of Town Mayor</b></p> <p>Cllr Coote nominated Cllr Eke; this was seconded by Cllr Reeve. Cllr Eke accepted the nomination.</p> <p>There were no further nominations to the position of Mayor, it was unanimously agreed to nominate Cllr Eke as Mayor for the period 2024/25.</p> <p>Cllr Eke took the Chair and addressed Council in his capacity as newly elected Mayor.</p>
AM 02-24	<p><b>Declaration of Acceptance of Office – the Mayor</b></p> <p>Cllr Eke read and signed the declaration of office; this was witnessed by the Town Clerk and was formally received by Council.</p>
AM 03-24	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Gadd, Jones and McBirnie.</p>
AM 04-24	<p><b>To receive any Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Cllrs Ahmed, Asker, Coote, Freeman and Reeve declared a generic non-pecuniary interest as members of Uttlesford District Council.</p>
AM 05-24	<p><b>Mayor to address the Council – Cllr Eke</b></p> <p>The newly elected Mayor thanked Council for the support, noting it is an honour to serve the community and he will do his utmost to uphold high standards of office. He noted his pride and admiration for all that SWTC has achieved in the current and previous administration including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair and refurbishment of the Town Hall</li> <li>• Upgrade of play areas</li> <li>• Community events, often free of charge to local residents</li> <li>• Management of public open spaces</li> <li>• Imaginative use of our assets and the significant financial return</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent financial governance</li> <li>• Significant and improved service delivery</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Eke noted he wished to build upon existing and strong relationships between Officers and Councillors, creating an even more effective and unified Council team. Cllr Eke advised his nominated charities for 2024/25 are Mind in West Essex and Citizens Advice.</p>
AM 06-24	<p><b>To receive thanks for the retiring Mayor from Cllr Eke</b></p> <p>The Mayor passed on his thanks to Cllr Asker for her time as Mayor and Council gave Cllr Asker a round of applause.</p>
AM 07-24	<p><b>Retiring Mayor to reply – Cllr Asker</b></p> <p>Cllr Asker thanked Councillors for the support, she noted it had been an honour to be Mayor for an unusual third term. Cllr Asker passed on her thanks to the Town Clerk, Operations Manager, the Mayoral Secretary and the wider SWTC team for their support during her term; she noted the staffing team had been incredibly helpful and supportive during her term of office.</p> <p>It was noted circa £11,000 has been raised for her chosen charities Faircroft House and the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project.</p>
AM 08-24	<p><b>Election of Deputy Town Mayor</b></p> <p>Cllr Freeman nominated Cllr Ahmed; this was seconded by Cllr Reeve and accepted by Cllr Ahmed.</p> <p>There were no other nominations for Deputy Mayor and it was unanimously agreed to elect Cllr Ahmed to the post of Deputy Mayor for 2024/25.</p>
AM 09-24	<p><b>Declaration of Acceptance of Office – Deputy Mayor</b></p> <p>Cllr Ahmed read and signed the declaration of office; this was witnessed by the Town Clerk and was formally received by Council.</p>
AM 10-24	<p><b>50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Saffron Walden Town Council</b></p> <p>The Mayor thanked former Town Councillors for attending the meeting to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SWTC.</p>
AM 11-24	<p><b>Public Speaking Time</b></p> <p>There were no questions arising from any members of the public present.</p>

<p>AM 12-24</p>	<p><b>Nomination of Leader</b></p> <p>Council noted the proposal as per the agenda to amend the Mayoral and Leader policy, reducing the post of Leader to serve for one year (not two) and the proposed appointment of a Deputy Leader. Councillors noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) That Cllr Gadd has stood down from his position as Leader and thanks were given to him in his role since May 2020;</li> <li>b) The Leader position is a relatively new concept and whilst it has served SWTC well, this may be the time and opportunity to review current processes;</li> <li>c) Whilst the role of Leader has proven beneficial, particularly to support full time working Mayors, an opportunity could be taken in 2024/25 (whilst Cllr Eke is Mayor and he is retired from work), to review the role, responsibility and purpose of the Leader position and to experience how SWTC operates without the post of Leader;</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Coote proposed the following motion:  <i>“That the Town Council reverts to having the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2024/25, with the Town Mayor readopting the role and responsibility for direct communications with Officers (effectively adopting the role of Leader), and that during the year the opportunity is taken to review and consider any future process and/or format in dealing with both the civic and business areas of the Council”.</i></p> <p>Cllr Asker seconded the motion which became the substantive motion.</p> <p>It was <b>Resolved:</b> to adopt the motion as proposed. No amendments were made to the Mayoral/Leader policy and neither was it rescinded but in enacting the resolution as above, Council will consider future formats and opportunities in readiness for the Annual Meeting in May 2025.</p>
<p>AM 13-24</p>	<p><b>Appointment of Members to Committees</b></p> <p>It was unanimously <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>To retain the current committee membership, save with changes required in recognising the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor are both ex-officio members of each committee, (as per Standing Order 4d, xvii). Cllr Asker was appointed to the Assets &amp; Services Committee.</p>
<p>AM 14-24</p>	<p><b>Committee Terms of Reference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Council noted the proposed amendment to the Council’s Terms of Reference, it was <b>Resolved:</b></li> </ul> <p>To adopt the proposed addition with amendments (under a new section 3.3, in Full Council) with the agreed addition being:  <i>To the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and/or Chair of F &amp; E Committee</i>  <b>3.3 To have independent access to external HR, personnel and other relevant advice, limited to the Council’s appointed HR Advisor and to incur expenditure,</b></p>

*subject to this expenditure being administered through Senior Officers of the Town Council, and subject to the limitations of any agreed budget. In the first instance, this access is granted to the Town Mayor, and in their absence to the Deputy Town Mayor and in both of their absences, to the Chair of the Finance and Establishment Committee.*

No other amendments (ie to other Committees) were made.

**b) It was unanimously Resolved:**

To adopt the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) terms of reference.

Cllr Freeman noted the importance of NPs and that SWTC should take the opportunity to review and potentially refresh the existing SW NP. It was **Resolved:**

To carry this matter forward to a future Full Council meeting, as part of the review of Council's core priorities.

**Appointment of Members to Working Groups**

The working group membership was unanimously agreed as follows:

- a) Splash Park  
Cllrs Abercrombie (Chair), Reeve, Freeman, Porch and Shotropa.
- b) Climate Change and Environment  
Cllrs Freeman, Gadd, Hawke-Smith (Chair), Meloy and Reeve
- c) Budget 2025/26 (new proposed WG)  
Cllrs Curtis, de Vries, Eke, Freeman, Hawke-Smith, Porch, and Reeve.  
(noted the WG will elect the Chair at its first meeting)
- d) Tourist Information Centre  
Abercrombie, Coote, Curtis (Chair), de Vries, Meloy, Porch and Reeve
- e) Local Government Association Scoping Group  
Cllrs Asker, Curtis, Eke, Gadd  
(noted this work postponed until November/December 2024 and that WG membership should be re-confirmed at that time)
- f) POS/PROW (to meet autumn 2024)  
Freeman, Gadd, McLellan, Meloy
- g) Speeding (to meet autumn 2024)  
Eke, Freeman, Gadd and Hawke-Smith.

AM  
15-24

	<p>h) Play Area WG</p> <p>Membership was not agreed and that the matter be carried forward to the December Full Council meeting at which time Council may initiate this work.</p>
AM 16-24	<p><b>Working Group Terms of Reference</b></p> <p>It was unanimously <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>To adopt the Terms of Reference as recommended for adoption by the Splash Park, Climate Change and Environment and Tourist Information Centre</p>
AM 17-24	<p><b>Calendar of future meetings</b></p> <p>It was unanimously <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>To adopt the calendar of meetings as proposed.</p>
AM 18-24	<p><b>To consider representation or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back</b></p> <p>It was unanimously <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>That the following are elected Council representatives on external bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alderman's House – Mayor (ex-officio), Cllr Hawke-Smith and Reeve</li> <li>• Essex County Council Passenger Transport - Cllr McLellan</li> <li>• Uttlesford Community Transport - Cllr McLellan</li> <li>• Stansted Watch - Cllr Eke</li> <li>• Friends of Bridge End Garden - Cllr Gadd</li> <li>• Little Walden Village Hall - Cllr Curtis</li> <li>• Business Improvement District - Cllr Eke</li> <li>• Uttlesford Association Local Councils - Mayor and Deputy Mayor</li> <li>• Citizen's Advice - Cllr Freeman</li> <li>• Youth Outreach Project- Cllr Porch</li> <li>• Youth Initiative Working Group - Cllr Porch</li> <li>• Saffron Walden Cricket Club - Cllr Porch</li> <li>• Saffron Walden Organisation for Sport - Cllr Gadd and McBirnie</li> <li>• Saffron Walden Arts Trust - Cllr Reeve</li> <li>• Heritage Development Group - Cllr Eke and Porch</li> </ul>
AM 19-24	<p><b>Annual review of policies and practices.</b></p> <p>It was <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>To note that in accordance with Standing Orders and best practice, a number of policies and procedures should be reviewed annually. The Annual Meeting noted this requirement</p>

	and that the polices / procedures etc will come forward to the appropriate Committee meetings and/or Full Council meetings in due course.
AM 20-24	<p><b>Year-end accounts</b></p> <p>It was <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>To note that the year-end accounts will be presented to a future Full Council meeting.</p>
AM 21-24	<p><b>Insurance cover</b></p> <p>It was <b>Resolved:</b></p> <p>To note that the arrangements for insurance cover will be reviewed by Officers in June 2023.</p>
AM 22-24	<p><b>Date and time of Next Meeting(s)</b></p> <p>The next Full Council meeting will take place on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm in the Town Hall Saffron Walden.</p>

Meeting closed 8.05pm.