



Sodbury Town Council

**Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council
14th December 2021 at 19:30 hrs held at
Chipping Sodbury Town Hall, Charter Suite**

Present: Councillors B Allen, J Ball (Chair), L Banister, A Gregson, C Hays, B Romaine, P Rumney, A Rush, L Rush, P Smith, S Spooner, S Tubby, A Williams

Cate Davidson – Town Clerk
Jackie Murley – Assistant Clerk

Public x 2

Evacuation statement read out by the Chairman

A Public Participation

An Old Sodbury resident addressed Members in relation to his Freedom of Information Request (Agenda item 444) as he considered it a human right to have access to the information. The resident advised that a family member is a qualified Solicitor and that he is a specialist information security consultant and that STC had the basic facts wrong and continued that the FOI Act 2000 S41 related to commercial and was not appropriate in this instance. The FOI principle was to release information and no valid exemptions existed. He concluded that if the Town Council (TC) did not adhere to his FOI request, the matter would be referred to the Information Commissioner's Office and the TC would be fined for breaking the law. He added he would give the TC "free advice – our choice".

436 Apologies and Chairman's Remark

Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Gibson, Gilpin

437 Declarations of Interests and Granting of Dispensations

None

438 Reports from South Gloucestershire Councillors on matters relating to the Parish and not included on the Agenda

Cllr A Rush reported (1) with regard to the Consultation for parking restrictions in Elm Close, ie yellow lines and he was due to meet with an SGC officer the following day. In addition, he would make a recommendation for yellow lines in Horse Street, near The Boot PH; (2) a Council meeting was due on 15/12/21 remotely via Teams and noted that decisions could not be made; (3) an error occurred in his reporting of the Council Tax increase at November's meeting with the correct figure being 3.99% (not 4.99%)

439 Reports from representatives from other bodies on matters relating to the Parish and not included on the Agenda

Cllr Banister reported (1) the Chamber of Commerce event scheduled for the following day had been cancelled and would be rescheduled for the New Year; (2)

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the Library had its AGM and a social event for volunteers last week. Martin Burton, SGC Head of Library Services gave a talk which was well received and overall a successful event; (3) attendance at a 'Thrive' funding meeting – an initiative by SGC to help High Streets recover from pandemic – funds were still available. A specification was awaited on criteria requirement to obtain funding; (4) Chipping Sodbury Town Lands Charity had grants available and applications could be made via the Clerk to the Trustees, eg for Winter fuel bills.

Cllr A Rush added he awaited an update from SGC with regard to High Street funding and where money could be spent with the deadline for spending being 31 March 2022.

Cllr Allen reported attendance at a Parish Plan meeting. The installation of the Waitrose bench – still being sorted.

Cllr A Rush confirmed Family Food 4 Free (FF4F) had been reported to Enforcement. Cllr Ball added the “shop” would be pulling out of its residence within 6 weeks.

Cllr Spooner reported (1) with regard to the Tourist Information Centre and that it was now closed until March. Ways to make the building more economical were being considered, particularly with regard to improving insulation. A grant had been agreed in principle from Sodbury TC for maintenance works; (2) SWaN Group continued with tree planting in Old Sodbury and a community event was scheduled for New Years Day. More trees were awaited and the project was progressing well.

440 Approval of Minutes of Full Council Meeting of 9th November 2021

RESOLVED the Minutes of Full Council Meeting of 9th November 2021 are approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

441 Matters Arising

The Clerk updated as follows:-

- With regard to the Artisan Market – the issue with the Baptist Church had been resolved. Due to COVID, the Market had missed a week in December.
- Confirmation that correspondence had been sent to Fannon Estates and was an ongoing issue
- With regard to the parking restriction proposals for Elm Close, Cllr A Rush was due to meet with SGC.
- The matter of trees in the High Street would be referred to Environment & Leisure Committee but should be noted that initial investigations had revealed trees in pots did not thrive well.

442 Finance – Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the schedule of payments and Bank Reconciliation were approved

429 Correspondence

Requiring Response/Comments/Action

Grass Roots Planning Ltd – Community Shop in Old Sodbury (e-mail circulated)
See Agenda item 446

444 Freedom of Information Request

STC was in receipt of a FOI request in relation to land along Badminton Road and e-mails appertaining to the matter including authors of such to be divulged. A report prepared by the Clerk and advice from NALC was circulated by e-mail prior to the

meeting with the report being published publicly with the agenda. Members considered the request in detail and the following noted:-

- The clerk was in receipt of confirmation from a resident who had contacted the council originally, that they did not want their information divulged
- STC's residents assume anonymity – they should be protected
- We have a duty of care to our Parishioners
- The resident made comment that SGC policy states that information will be made public and it did not accept confidential comments. Why doesn't STC do the same? The Clerk responded that STC publishes its Private Policy on the website.
- The Clerk highlighted that her original advice was that the town council should not get involved in such matters
- Members were unsure what they were voting on and changed their opinion. Seven Councillors signed to bring the matter back for review in the light of better understanding
- The resident stated he was upset when the situation changed and that a financial commitment had been made
- The Clerk added she was satisfied all due process had been followed and advice in her report has not changed following the residents comments at the start of the meeting.

RESOLVED to support the Clerk's opinion together with advice from NALC not to release information and the Clerk to write to the complainant to this effect.

445 Budget 2022/23

All Members were provided with a copy of the Budget and Precept papers in advance of the meeting. At a Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 30th November 2021, the Budget and Precept were considered in detail and recommended to Full Council for approval.

The Clerk reported confirmation had been received from SGC that the Council Tax Base had reduced which was contrary to expectations.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Budget be approved

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Precept of £282,414.00 be approved and submitted to South Gloucestershire Council.

Cllr Spooner confirmed he had looked at the Public Works Loan Board loans with the Clerk and that there would be no saving in refinancing them.

446 Proposed Development – South of Badminton Road, Old Sodbury

The Clerk reported she was in receipt of an e-mail from Grassroots Planning Ltd (circulated) with a proposal to locate a village shop at the Village Hall and seeking Members views on the notion. The Clerk had responded that the Village Hall was not under the remit of Sodbury TC and to liaise with the Hall direct but was asked to take the matter to Councillors.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to respond to that effect with no further comment from Members.

447 Local Government Pension Scheme – Employers Discretions (e-mailed)
Members considered the report and it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Employers Discretions as tabled.

448 Meeting Dates 2022
RESOLVED Meeting Dates 2022 approved and it was noted the Full Council meeting in May would take place on the first Tuesday of the month.

The possibility of cancelling January’s meeting was considered and the Clerk to update in the New Year when a fuller picture of (1) pandemic numbers and (2) Agenda items would be available.

449 Public seating – Market Pitchings
The Council was in receipt of a request from the Rotary Club to install a public seat on the Pitchings outside of The Spar. Members discussed the matter and concern raised that it could encourage congregating and the need for neighbours and businesses to be considered.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree to a seat on the proviso consultation was carried out with neighbouring shops, houses and flats and, should the seat cause a problem in any way, to be removed/relocated.

450 Items of Report
Cllr A Rush updated with regard to the Local Plan and that it would not be available until 2023.
Cllr Rumney reported with regard to the proposed development off St Johns Way and the lack of thought gone into it. St Johns Way already busy with traffic from Ladden Garden Village. Recommendation was made to write to Persimmon Public Relations rather than SGC with any concerns of the development.
Cllr Williams reported continued speeding in Old Sodbury Badminton Road with cars travelling at 60/70mph. 30mph should start at Cross Hands PH. Cllr A Rush to liaise with SGC.
Cllr Allen reported with regard to Community Engagement Forums and that the Chair and Vice Chair re-election would take place in 2023.
Cllr Ball thanked staff and fellow Members for their hard work throughout the year.

435 Next Full Council Meeting: 11th January 2021 at 19:30 hrs – Chipping Sodbury Town Hall, Charter Suite – Subject to Clerk & Chairmans decision in January

Dated

Signed

The meeting closed at 20:35

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