

**Minutes of a Meeting of St Ives Town Council
held on Wednesday 13 January 2021 via Zoom**

Present:

Town Mayor: Councillor J Pallant

Deputy Town Mayor: Councillor P Hussain

Councillors: D Rowe, M King, A Dickinson, J Davies, A Ayers-Wilson, J Tiddy, N Dibben, R D'Souza, P Pope, N Wells, C Smith *[from Item C136.00]*

In attendance:

County Councillor: K Reynolds

Town Clerk: A Benfield

Committee Clerk: S Rawlinson

The Town Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers before the Meeting.

C133.00 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors R Fuller, Dr C Pegoraro and T Drye (all Personal).

C134.00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item C141.00 – Councillor N Wells – non pecuniary interest as a resident living opposite to George Yard.

C135.00 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Town Mayor welcomed the large number of members of the public present at the meeting. He had put out a call on social media for residents to attend to give first hand accounts of the ways they had been affected by the recent floods.

Residents provided individual reports as follows:

One resident's industrial unit for car storage had been flooded to 3' deep, all of the cars were flooded out and badly affected. His insurers appeared to be co-operating on this occasion but he had great concerns on whether he would be able to get insurance going forward.

Resident owned 37 acres of land on the flood plain. His sister's house on St Audrey Lane was flooded. Part of the problem was that Marley Gap Brook which was designed to intercept flood water was ineffective due to fallen trees blocking the channel. There were also fallen trees in Parson's Drove drainage channel which caused water to back up around the industrial estate area.

He would like to know who is responsible for the various ditches around the area. The Environment Agency is responsible for Parson's Drove, it is not known who has responsibility for Marley Gap or the drain on Rookery Close.

The ditch in St Audrey Lane is jointly managed by the County Council and HDC. This ditch is full of bull rushes which formed a mat and blocked outlets.

During the 1947 floods, there was a parish drain which ran across Warner's Park and under Needingworth Road into Farthing Lane which was the original town sewer. There was once a kind of weir within the drain which was removed and thereby increased water flow. The water was directed alongside the old railway off Harrison Way.

He considered that the Council could provide more help with information and setting up a co-ordination centre.

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Initials

Resident of Elsworth Close was flooded on Christmas Eve by failure of drainage and flooding. There was 2' of sewage throughout his house. His family has had to move out and will not be able to return for 6-8 months.

He wanted to know why the drains backed up so much and what could be done about it. Elsworth Close was not in the flood area.

Resident who has lived in Farthing Close for 12 years and has never witnessed such flooding. He wanted to know who was accountable for the maintenance of drains and ditches and would like to see a simpler process for reporting issues to the correct authority so that prompt action could be taken. He noted that Chorus Homes had responsibility for clearing the drains once a year but that had not been done this year.

Harding Way – a company whose warehouse was flooded. There was some history of flooding on the site following an incident in 1998 and low level floods had been experienced since. The Council had stated that blockages in Marley Gap Brook could have been the cause, although they had cleared it in the autumn. Her company had suffered a six figure loss of stock and equipment as they had been unable to get contents insurance against flooding.

She was working on building a case and would like others to participate in this in the hope of receiving some compensation for uninsured losses.

Also had raw sewage through his property in Elsworth Close. Was very annoyed when he reported issues to HDC and was informed the case had been closed although no action had been taken. He would pass his contact details onto the Clerk and invited Members to contact him so that he could show them the extent of the damage.

Elsworth Close. Water was coming out of the foul sewer and running into storm drains. They understood the pumping station near the BP garage on St Audrey Lane broke down which caused foul sewage to back up throughout the system.

Seven houses were flooded on Elsworth Close with belongings and cars wrecked. The toilets bubbled up with overflowing sewage. Anglian Water attended but did not solve the problem. The pumping station alarm went off that night. They had spoken to an Anglian Water engineer who was tracing the problem back to find the source of issues because the drains began flooding again.

Warner's Grove. Never experienced flooding like this in 44 years. At 7.45 am on Christmas Eve grey water began fountaining out of the sewer under his lawn under severe pressure which did not dissipate until the end of that day.

Elsworth Close resident. At 11.30 in the evening the toilets backing up was the first sign of a problem. He had concerns about the amount of new developments in the surrounding area and wondered if this had any impact on flooding. His household was now living in temporary accommodation.

One resident thanked the Town Mayor for showing an interest in the plight of residents. No other authority had done so. There was an enormous psychological impact even though possessions could be replaced. He had sewage in his house and had a power cut at 2 am. He had been unable to get any information until the next morning.

Marley Brook was still clogged with fallen trees and he was concerned about the heavy rainfall if the drains weren't cleared.

Hazel Way. House and garage flooded. The drains there have difficulty in coping with mild flash flooding in generally dry weather. At 3 am grey and rainwater came up the street. There were serious drainage issues in that area.

Broadway resident. Had intended to address the Council on matters relating to the Great Ouse Way but due to the nature of the discussion would email his information to Members instead. He lived by the river and the problem was not due to river water but rather the poor drainage and sewer infrastructure in some areas which needed to be addressed urgently.

The Town Mayor commented that he was grateful to the Ouse Valley Trust for its work on improving River drainage.

The Town Mayor thanked residents for attending. The Town Council took this matter very seriously and would do whatever it could to help.

C136.00

CO-OPTION

There had been three applications for co-option, one of which had been withdrawn earlier in the day.

The Town Clerk advised Members on the system for ballots and that with 12 members present the successful candidate would require a majority of 7 votes to be appointed.

The meeting was briefly suspended to permit the candidates to explain briefly why they wished to be co-opted:

Tomasz Rakoczy: Had lived in St Ives for two years. He had great optimism for the future of St Ives and wished to work to make improvements to benefit the community.

Craig Smith: Had lived in St Ives for 20 years and was keen to get into the inner workings of the town. He had community involvement with the Carnival and Christmas Lights and wished to actively support the economic development of the town.

The first round of voting was held with Mr Smith emerging as the successful candidate with 8 votes to 4. Mr Smith signed his Declaration of Acceptance of office before Members.

RESOLVED: that Craig Smith be co-opted to serve as a Member of the Town Council.

[Councillor C Smith joined the Meeting]

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Rakoczy for attending the meeting and for his interest in co-option.

C137.00

MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 December 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor at a future date.

C138.00

COMMITTEE REPORT

Members received and noted the following Minutes:

C138.01 Planning Committee held on 9 December 2020.
It was noted that the meeting scheduled for 16 December had not taken place.

C139.00

TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor informed Members he had quite a busy Christmas period. He thanked all those joining him for the time capsule burial event in the Norris garden.

He expressed his gratitude to Councillors Pope and Hussain for their hard work in helping with the Christmas Day food deliveries and also the Town Clerk and the many volunteers. Over 70 people received hot Christmas dinners. He had received many messages of thanks from residents receiving them.

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C140.00 ST IVES FLOODING**C140.01 Conference on Flooding**

The Town Mayor reported that he had attended a meeting of the District Council in the previous week which was one of a series of workshops organised for each of the towns affected by flooding. He had given an account of the situation in St Ives, supported by photographs he had taken.

There was some confusion about which authorities were responsible for which ditches and drains, this was a complex situation which might not be resolved quickly. There was a huge appetite in the meeting to ensure these difficulties are resolved with everyone committed to ensuring it did not happen again.

HDC had responsibility for some areas and was putting together a scrutiny panel to gather evidence. The evidence from St Ives would contribute to this. The County Council were the flood risk leading authority who were also involved and would investigate evidence provided. There would be involvement from the Environment Agency and Anglian Water. The Town Council had no direct role in flooding matters. It was noted that Warner's Park had been affected by the floods.

C140.02 Town Council actions

Members considered that residents needed accountability going forward and that possibly the Council could lobby and push for this.

Information on who was responsible for which areas was paramount and the Council could publish this information to make it readily available for residents.

It was agreed that the Council should push for the issues regarding clearance of Marley Gap and problems with the pumping station to be resolved as soon as possible.

County Councillor Reynolds stated that the County Council had a procedure for reporting flooding and blocked ditches which was the appropriate reporting mechanism. The question of responsibility for areas was not a simple one to resolve as some areas came under Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the District and County Councils as well as private landowners.

The Cambs and Peterborough Flood and Water Partnership which consisted of local environment agencies and councils were putting together as much evidence as possible in order to do a mapping exercise.

Cutbacks had resulted in drainage gullies not being cleared as often as in the past and Highways was an area consistently reduced by budget cuts. Councillor Reynolds hoped to get money put into budgets to restore the situation. He would be happy to receive any information from residents which he would forward to appropriate authorities.

Following an enquiry on the Inter-Towns Forum, the Town Clerk reported that the group had not met in the last 12 months, although most had been involved in the flooding conference. It was possible to call a meeting but she proposed doing so when all the data had been compiled. Improved communications was a priority. Councillor Rowe agreed to assist with the production of a disaster recovery plan.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk look at putting together some emergency procedures for publication on the Council's website to make residents aware of services and resources.

C140.03 Matters arising from flooding conference

The lead agency during the incident was the Police force. The Resilience Forum organised by the County Council had the Police as lead agency because the problems were county wide. Communication problems had been identified in that information was not always coming down as far as the Town Council when it needed to.

The Town Mayor stated that the Annual Town Meeting was an appropriate forum for further discussion of these issues and that representatives from all agencies could be invited to attend to contribute to the meeting.

One of the main issues was provision of sandbags and it was considered that looking into the costs of providing this was something the Council could do, although there was no legal obligation for it to do so.

The Town Mayor thanked members of the public for attending and sharing their experiences. He reiterated that the Council was determined to make sure this did not happen again. He would come back to residents with updates and would continue to pursue solutions on their behalf.

C141.00 GEORGE YARD

Members received an update report on George Yard and the Council's application for it to be added to the Definitive Map. It was noted that there was currently a backlog of applications. Members would be kept informed of progress.

RESOLVED: that the information be received and noted.

[Councillor A Ayers-Wilson left the Meeting]

C142.00 FENS BIOSPHERE

Members were in receipt of information on the current consultation. The area involved was of a considerable size but did include St Ives.

RESOLVED: that the information be put out on the Council's social media channels.

C143.00 RURAL MARKET TOWNS GROUP

Consideration was given to subscribing formally to the group. It was considered this might prove to be a useful forum when the current situation improved, particularly in looking at the high street economy and, possibly, flooding issues.

RESOLVED: that a subscription be made to the Rural Market Towns Group at a fee of £150.

C144.00 ST IVES CARES

A successful bid had been made to the County Council's Innovate and Cultivate Fund in order to continue the work started by the Community Hub.

The Town Mayor thanked the Town Clerk and members of the community who had put the bid together, he was delighted that it had been successful.

The Town Clerk informed Members that the Council would need to do the work and three volunteers were needed to join a strategic planning group to help deliver the project. The Town Hall would undertake the administrative tasks although funds were budgeted for a Project Manager.

Councillors D Rowe, M King, P Pope and C Smith indicated their willingness to be involved with the project.

- RESOLVED: C144.01** that the successful funding bid be noted
- C144.02** that acceptance of the grant of £49,752.00 over 2 years be confirmed
- C144.03** that a Strategic Planning Group be formed from amongst the councillors indicating their willingness to assist with facilitating delivery of the project.

C145.00 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Members were in receipt of proposed Schedule of Council and Committee Meetings for 2021/22.

Consideration was given to changing the calendar of meetings to avoid a clash with meetings of the District Council.

After discussion it was agreed that meetings remain as listed and are held on Wednesdays.

- RESOLVED: C145.01** that the Schedule, once amended to show the correct calendar dates, be received and adopted
- C145.02** that meetings of the Council and Standing Committees continue to be held on Wednesdays

C146.00 REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES

RESOLVED: that the report from Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre be received and noted.

C147.00 ROLLING PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: that the Rolling Programme be received and noted.

C148.00 ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

RESOLVED: that the schedule of orders for payment be received and noted.

C149.00 BANK RECONCILIATION

RESOLVED: that the Bank Reconciliation be received and noted.

C150.00 BUDGET REPORT

RESOLVED: that the Budget Report be received and noted.

C151.00 POLICE REPORT

No official report had been received. The Town Clerk stated that she was circulating the Neighbourhood Watch information she received to members on a weekly basis.

Councillor Pope had been asked to send any questions to the Police for response. He asked members to pass any questions to him prior to each Council meeting.

C152.00 CCTV REPORT

RESOLVED: that the report for December 2020 be received and noted.

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C153.00 COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS
No report was received.

C154.00 DISTRICT COUNCIL MATTERS
No report was received.

Town Mayor:

Dated:

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