

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**HELD IN THE MOOT, THE PRIORY CENTRE, ST NEOTS**  
**ON WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**PRESENT:** Cllr G S E Thorpe - Chairman

Cllr Mrs B Arnold

Cllr Mrs J Bird

Cllr Ms F Birks

Cllr B Chapman

Cllr Mrs D Collins

Cllr Mrs K Cooper

Cllr A Cummings

Cllr R W J Eaton

Cllr D Harty

Cllr D Mrs J Hayward

Cllr L Roberts

Cllr P K Ursell

Cllr S van de Kerkhove

The Chairman proposed a motion to add two items to the agenda on the grounds of urgency. Both items to be reviewed under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 – Exclusion of the Press and Public.

Item 1 To advise members of the expected rent for the Eatons Community Centre Pre-School Scheme.

Item 2 To receive an update on the cinema project.

**69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Cooper-Marsh (unwell), Cllr D Giles (holiday), Cllr Mrs Ottolangui (holiday) and Cllr D Terry (unwell).

**70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were declared for Item 9 – Grant Applications:-

Cllrs B Chapman and R Eaton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 4, Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau.

Cllrs D Harty and Mrs J Hayward declared a prejudicial interest in Item 5, ESCA.

Cllr Mrs D Collins declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 9, St John Ambulance.

Cllrs G Thorpe, D Harty, R Eaton and Mrs K Cooper declared a personal interest in Item 14, Shady Walk.

## 71. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor reported that the Mayoral Team had attended 15 events this month and had 18 appointments booked for next month.

The Mayor thanked the Councillors for their assistance and support at the Riverside Festival which was held on the Bank Holiday weekend. He reported that feedback was very positive and it had been a well received event. He reminded members of the forthcoming Duck Race on 26 September and asked for their support for this event.

The Mayor reported that he and the Acting Town Clerk had attended the Eatons Community Licensing Hearing and that licensing arrangements for the centre had now been confirmed.

## 72. MINUTES

- (i) The Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings held on 29 July, 12 August and 26 August were **RECEIVED**.
- (ii) The Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 29 July 2009 were **APPROVED**.

Cllr B Chapman said that a number of items on these minutes had not been actioned.

## 73. EATONS COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Eatons Community Centre Committee presented the Minutes of the Meetings held on 3 July 2009 and 5 August 2009 and members **APPROVED** the recommendations contained therein.

Cllr Chapman requested clarification on the costs of the kitchen fit-out. It was **AGREED** that the Chairman would supply a written answer and that this would be copied to all Councillors.

## 74. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee presented the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 September and asked members to approve the recommendations contained therein.

### Eatons Community Centre Staffing

Members **APPROVED** the recommendation that the Acting Town Clerk hold a meeting with the current Part-time Caretakers and Cleaners of the Priory Centre to ascertain if they could cover the caretaking requirements on an interim basis and to report back to the Personnel Committee.

### Review of Staffing Structure

Members **APPROVED** the recommendation that a staffing structure review be carried out by East of England Regional Assembly consultants before the recruitment of the senior roles and to make a virement from the Office Refurbishment budget of a maximum of £9,825.

### Health & Safety Handbook

The recommendation that the new Health & Safety Handbook be issued to all staff when the updated Personnel Handbook is adopted, was **APPROVED**.

## 75. **BLACK CAT RADIO PRESENTATION**

Councillors received a presentation from Tony Gillham and Mark Hansard of Black Cat Radio Ltd who are applying for a full time licence to broadcast out of St Neots.

Black Cat Radio presently broadcasts from Buckden on a temporary licence. The company feel that St Neots should have its own full-time community radio station and are looking for suitable sites for a station and mast in the area. They asked the Town Council for help in locating these sites.

The meeting listened to recent broadcasts from the station incorporating local news, events and issues in the town. Mr Gillham said that they needed an estimated £98,000 per year to run the station; 50 per cent of which would come from advertising and 50 per cent in grants from bodies such as the EDA or Ofcom.

Mr Gillham and Mr Hansard then took questions from Councillors who asked where would be the best location for these premises and then gave suggestions of sites which could be considered, such as Gate Lodge and the Council's Operations Depot. They confirmed that there would be no environmental or health implications as the electricity generated from the radio mast would only represent that of a 25 or 50w lightbulb. The mast would not be situated in the middle of a built up area as the optimum reception would be obtained if the mast was sited on land such as farmland.

The Chairman thanked Black Cat Radio for their presentation. It was **AGREED** that the Acting Town Clerk and Town Mayor would arrange a meeting to discuss in more detail any support that the Council can offer the radio station and a report would be brought back to Council at a later date.

## **76. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING**

The Acting Town Clerk reminded members that as a result of a recent investigation into the conduct of a Town Councillors, the Standards Board had recommended that all Councillors be offered Code of Conduct Training. She had received little confirmation to date of which Councillors would be willing to take up this training.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Acting Town Clerk would arrange training for Councillors in October.

## **77. FESTIVAL REPORT**

The Town Centre Manager reported on the recent Bank Holiday Riverside Festival. He gave a brief history of this year's project and reminded members that he had initially been charged with researching the feasibility of holding a festival this year. This research had shown that, due to the lack of preparation time this year, grant funding from other bodies was not an option, but income was available from sponsors, advertising and pitch fees.

Revenue had been raised by holding Car Boot Sales and Programme sales. The Car Boot Sales had proved so popular that future sales were being arranged.

The weekend had been organised in conjunction with the Carnival Court and feedback from the town and members of the public who attended the event was very positive.

Mr McCormick said that this year's Festival had provided a solid basis on which to build future bigger and better events. He hoped that the Council would pursue grant funding in years to come as it could be a valuable source of income for the Festival. A draft budget reconciliation for the weekend showed a final balance of £5,479.87 (copy attached to the signed copy of these minutes).

It was **RESOLVED** that the final balance raised this year be carried over for next year's Festival.

## **78. CONNECT 2 BRIDGE STEERING GROUP**

The Acting Town Clerk informed members that she had become aware that, although County and District Councillors were on the Connect 2 Bridge Steering Group, Town Councillors had not been included. She had contacted the Group and they had agreed that two Council representatives should be involved, preferably one from Eynesbury and one from Eaton Socon.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr S van de Kerkhove and Cllr D Giles be appointed as Town Council representatives on this Group.

## 79. GRANT APPLICATIONS

Additional information had been requested from six local groups seeking Grant Aid from the Town Council. This information had now been supplied.

It was **RESOLVED** that this item be deferred back to the Grant Aid Committee and their recommendations be brought back to the Council.

## 80. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Operations Manager advised members that letters had been sent by recorded delivery to the High Street shops requesting permission to erect the cross street lighting on their buildings. The response had been very poor and he therefore requested members to approve the erection of some of these lights on the outside of the Priory Centre, where they could be seen as vehicles and pedestrians crossed the river bridge into the town.

He had previously been instructed to investigate the planting of a "live" Christmas tree on Eynesbury Green and the cost of installing an underground electrical supply to light the tree. The cost of hiring the machinery to plant a tree was prohibitive and he asked members to defer this until next year and to agree to purchase a "dead" tree for this year.

Members **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Some of the cross street lights be erected on external walls of the Priory Centre
- (ii) A three year contract be engaged for the erection of column lights and that the Mayor be given delegated authority to sign the contract on behalf of the Town Council
- (iii) A cut Christmas tree be purchased for Eynesbury Green this year and the Operations Manager review the purchase of a "living" Christmas tree next year.

## 81. ST JOHN AMBULANCE

Cllr Mrs D Collins left the room for this item.

The Acting Town Clerk reported that she had received a letter from Simon Adlam requesting Councillors reconsider the options available in order for them to acquire additional land at Cemetery Road. Councillors felt that the situation had not changed and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Acting Town write to Simon Adlam to reiterate the offer of a 25 year lease on the land.

## **82. OUTSIDE BODIES**

Cllr Mrs Bird had attended a meeting of the Environment Agency Flood Alleviation Scheme which was being built in The Paddocks, Eaton Ford.

She informed members that the structure was now complete and the landscaping would be finished in November.

Cllr Mrs Bird had also attended a meeting of the Christian Performing Arts, a sub-committee of Churches Together. The proposed Passion Play which would take place next year now had its own website, [www.passion2010.org.uk](http://www.passion2010.org.uk), which contained details of forthcoming auditions.

Cllr S van de Kerkhove and Cllr Mrs D Collins had attended an Eynesbury Villagers' Association/Luminus Group/Huntingdonshire District Council "Voice Your Choice" meeting, whereby local community groups have been invited to apply for £70,000 to fund local projects.

## **83. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

The Acting Town Clerk reported the following Items:

- (i) The Eatons Community Centre Shared Level Agreement had been completed and returned by Cambridgeshire County Council.
- (ii) The Acting Clerk had received notification of the boundary changes which are expected to take place next year.
- (iii) Cambridgeshire County Council had notified local Parishes of a Community Engagement Strategy Consultation which would take place over 12 weeks between 1 September and 24 November 2009.
- (iv) HDC announced a new Neighbourhood Engagement Forum, details of which will be circulated to Councillors.
- (v) The Acting Town Clerk informed members that she had received notification of a Compulsory Purchase Order for an area of Sidney Banks Playing Field in respect of the proposed foot/cycle bridge between Eynesbury and Eaton Socon.

## **84. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To resolve that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and by reason of the confidential nature of the remainder of the business, the press and public be excluded from the meeting.

**85. SHADY WALK**

The Acting Town Clerk reported that she had received an email from Michael Huntington at Huntingdonshire District Council requesting permission to include a third of the land at Shady Walk within the Development Brief for the Old Fire Station Site.

After a long debate it was

**RESOLVED** that the land at Shady Walk can be included in the Development Brief for the use of a cinema only within the old Fire Station site in Huntingdon Street.

**86. URGENT ITEM – SCREEN EAST**

Cllr Chapman informed members that the Cinema Advisory Group had prepared a grant application to be submitted to Screen East. This would cover the costs for the preparation of artists' impressions and the initial survey which would strengthen the case for a cinema in the town and is also a requirement for outline planning application.

If the application for £6,500 is successful it would be required to accompany the outline planning permission at a later date this therefore would reduce the risk to the operators.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Mayor be authorised to sign the Screen East application to go out the following day, subject to the approval of the Responsible Finance Officer on her return from leave.

A Recorded Vote was taken on this item.

**87. URGENT ITEM - EATONS COMMUNITY CENTRE PRE-SCHOOL**

Cllr D Harty declared a prejudicial interest and left the room.

Two tenders had been received for the Eatons Pre-School but neither included payment for rent, utilities or cleaning. It had been agreed at the Personnel Committee that cleaning would be the responsibility of the Pre-School.

Concern had been expressed by Councillors that no rent would be received and the Committee had been advised by Cambridgeshire County Council that a realistic rental price could be £400pm.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- (i) to instruct the Committee to seek to a rent of at least £400 for the first 12 calendar months and undertake a review of the rent after that date, and that the lease contract to reflect this.

- (ii) that the Pre-school be responsible for the cleaning of their own area and maintenance of fire protection equipment and PAT testing.

The meeting closed at 10.46pm.

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CHAIRMAN  
09.09.09