



Council Offices, The Priory Centre, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 2BH
Tel: 01480 388911 - Email: enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk - Web: www.stneots-tc.gov.uk

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

will be held on

WEDNESDAY 8TH MAY 2024 at 6.30pm at
The Priory Centre, St Neots, PE19 2BH

The Parish Meeting is an opportunity for residents of St Neots to raise any matters of concern to them that relates to their local community. It would be helpful to have written notice of any matters to be raised but it is not essential. Matters can be raised at the meeting without prior notice. For any queries, please contact the Clerk to the Council by emailing enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk or call 01480 388911.

A G E N D A

1. Welcome and Introduction by Town Mayor, Cllr Rob Simonis
2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9 May 2023.
3. To receive a report from the Mayor on the Council's activities for 2023/2024.
4. Presentation of funds raised for the Mayor's nominated charities.
6. To receive comments and queries from residents on any matters relating to St Neots.

Cllr R. Simonis
Town Mayor

MINUTES OF THE ST NEOTS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**HELD ON 9th MAY 2023 at 7:00pm
at The Priory Centre, St Neots, PE19 2BH**

1. Welcome and Introduction by Town Mayor, Cllr Ben Pitt

The meeting opened at 7:00pm with 27 members of the public in attendance.

Councillor B. Pitt, Mayor of St Neots welcomed everyone present to the Annual Parish meeting.

2. Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes taken at the Annual Town Meeting held on 22 March 2022 were received and noted.

3. Mayor's Report on Town Council Activity during 2022/23

The Mayor provided a report on mayoral and council activities which had taken place over the 2022-2023 Council year. Particular highlights for the Mayor included;

- The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, celebrating the amazing life of this country's longest-serving monarch. The tragic news of her death on 8 September. Announcing news of her death and the new King was such an extraordinary historic moment.
- The Coronation of King Charles III on 6 May 2023.
- Presenting the Freedom of the Town to Councillors Derek and Sandie Giles.
- Visiting Overloaded Support - a wonderful organisation that provides a welcoming environment for young people who aren't in a position to attend normal school
- Visiting the leaving party for the Mass Vaccination Centre staff and volunteers in St Neots, who literally saved lives through their work at the Priory and Eatons Centres.
- Attending Pottery for Mental Health classes, organised by Cross Keys Homes.

The highlights been very varied, showing the breadth of what happens in St Neots thanks to the wonderful volunteers, organisations and businesses that we have in our town.

Thanks were given to the Council staff and Councillors for their energy, dedication and wisdom over the past year.

To all the community activists, volunteers and everyone who makes this town the great place it is - and who strive to make it even better - you really are the lifeblood of St Neots, so thank you.

4. Presentation from Huntingdonshire District Council on the Market Towns Programme

The meeting received a presentation from Huntingdonshire District Council on the Market Towns Programme. This included;

- 1) Background on the programme and selection of projects that would be delivered across St Neots, St Ives and Huntingdon. The vast majority of funding available was allocated to St Neots.

2) Information on Market Square and High Street improvements;

- Final designs were complete and would be promoted locally in the coming weeks.
- The District Council would shortly be going out to procurement to appoint a contractor to deliver the Market Square and High Street Scheme.
- Market Square works are due to start at the end of October 2023. Despite inflation levels the project is anticipated to come within budget for a high-quality scheme.
- Market Square and High Street works will take approximately 12 months to complete.

3) Priory Centre Redevelopment;

- The District Council will work closely with the Town Council who are the tenant for the building.
- A tender process to appoint architects was successful, with a significant number of submissions.
- Appointment of a successful tenderer is due to happen within the next few weeks.
- Once an architect and design team is in place work will begin with partners to develop a design for the Priory Centre refurbishment which will be consulted on with residents before another tender process for building delivery.

4) The Future of the Old Falcon;

- This is a landmark building in a good location and the District Council would like to see this improved and put into use.
- Although the original Future High Street Fund application focused on acquisition, there is not enough funding provided to deliver this. The District Council is working with the owner to bring forward a scheme for planning which will be successful and give benefit to the town. Work is ongoing.

5) Digital Wayboards

- The District Council is looking to deliver digital boards in St Neots, St Ives, Huntingdon and Ramsey. These are still to be developed, but will be interactive.

6) Market Square Staging

- Inclusion of a performance area and supporting infrastructure to enhance the Market Square refurbishment is being developed. This is not a Future High Street Fund project but is able to come forward through legacy funding. At this stage the project needs to be further considered and developed.

5. **Mayor's Charities**

Town Mayor, Cllr Ben Pitt announced that fundraising efforts this year had raised over £14,883 for local charities. The Mayor went on to award funding raised by the Mayor's Charities to the following bodies;

- Young Peoples Counselling Service £4,961
- Disability in Huntingdonshire £4,961
- Loves Farm Community Money Advice £4,916

6. Questions and Queries Raised

The following questions were raised by members of the public in attendance;

Q. Priory Centre Redevelopment

Is the redevelopment of the Priory Centre intended to enhance cultural and community facilities by bringing in professional performance or will it focus on local theatre, as this would make a considerable difference to the design scheme.

Representatives for Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) commented that use would form part of consultation processes which would be taking place prior to Christmas 2023. It was agreed that it is important to recognise the differences between uses alongside a business case for the building. The investment was to help achieve a building that can deliver more and to a higher standard, but not the detriment of the community element. There must be a balanced outcome.

It was commented that touring productions could help provide a big cultural benefit to the town, but that capacity numbers for the building may well determine whether this is feasible. Final costs will determine what can ultimately be delivered.

It was noted that the Town Council had submitted a list of key design priorities to HDC that it would like to see delivered through the scheme. These would be considered and developed by the design team as part of their consultation and design process.

It was explained that initial options for the new design of the building will be presented to Councillors and residents soon.

Q. Market Square

Once the Market Square is redeveloped will control and permission for its use sit with Cambridgeshire County Council?

It is not currently proposed to change the status of the Market Square but the need to ensure it is an easy space to use, book and facilitate community activity has been highlighted and will be considered as part of the project.

Q. Old Falcon

What is the status of the Old Falcon? Why can't a Compulsory Purchase Order be pursued?

It was explained that obtaining planning permission for a feasible scheme was critical and that Huntingdonshire District Council would be working with the landlord to bring forward a scheme for approval that will benefit the town if delivered.

Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are complicated formal processes which are subject to approval from the Secretary of State, these can take a significant time and could be challenged if not enough has been done to work with the owner to bring forward positive solutions, such as the work being undertaken on a successful planning application. Working with the owner of the building is seen as the quickest way to bring it back into use.

Those present commented on the impact the Old Falcon could have on a redeveloped Market Square and linking this in with art funding opportunities.

Q. Town Council Youth Worker

Does the Town Council have the expertise required to employ a youth worker or should that money be spent to support organisations that are already in place to deliver youth work?

It was explained that the funding for the Council's Youth Worker post was in part coming from grant funding and directly employing a youth worker had not been the first plan of delivery. Unfortunately, the partner originally intended to manage the delivery of the role was unable to proceed and as such the Town Council agreed to deliver the new role to ensure the funding and resource would not be lost to St Neots. It was commented that organisations across the sector are struggling with recruitment of qualified youth workers and the Town Council will work closely with Cambridgeshire County Council's Youth Team to deliver and manage the position.

Q. Traffic Wardens

Can traffic wardens be introduced to help tackle parking issues in St Neots.

It was noted that the matter sat with Cambridgeshire County Council and that they were in the process of decriminalizing parking offences which would allow traffic wardens to be implemented. At present parking offences are criminal acts and power to respond sits with the police. The process to decriminalize parking offences and introduce civic parking enforcement can be lengthy and must be done through an application to the Department for Transport. Cambridgeshire County Council has been advised that approval to commence civil parking enforcement is anticipated in 2024 or 2025, dependant on any Parliamentary delays.

The Meeting closed at 8:20pm

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Town Mayor