

## Full Town Council

**Present:** Cllrs Slade (Chair), Banks, Bolanz, Chapman, Collins, Cooper-Marsh, Goodman, Hitchin, Johnson, Kumar, Macnab-Grieve, Pitt, Simonis, J Smith, and S Smith

**Absent:** Cllrs Crompton, Dundas-Todorov, Dunford, Mascarenhas, Maslen and Terry

**In attendance:** Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Project Delivery Manager

**Minutes** of the meeting of St Neots Town Council held on **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024** at **7.15pm** in the Eatons Centre, 18 The Maltings, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

### Public Participation

There were four members of the public present.

A Member of the public addressed the Council in relation to agenda item 10 – the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan.

The resident addressed the Council in their role as Chairman of the Pightle as well as a local resident. In addressing the Council the resident drew the Council's attention to the importance of protecting and enhancing green space land in St Neots, with particular reference to the land known locally as 'The Cow Field'. The land, which is almost part of the flood plain is widely used and it was asked that the Council support having it taken of the list of sites for development consideration.

### ACTIONS

#### 090 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Crompton, Dundas-Todorov, Dunford, Mascarenhas, Maslen and Terry

Admin

#### 091 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

#### 092 Council Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 as a true and accurate record.

#### 093 County and District Councillor Reports

HDC Cllr Andrew Jennings addressed the Council, reporting as follows;

- HDC are consulting on three key documents as part of the Local Plan development and consultation. A drop in event is to be held in Loves Farmhouse for interested members of the public. Councillors are asked to encourage residents to engage and respond with the process.



- A community health and wealth building strategy fund has been launched. The fund of £750,000 has become available from interest receipts. The purpose of the fund is to support physical and mental health.
- The Licensing committee granted a new licence for rugby club.
- The Development Management Committee met recently and reviewed one application relating to St Neots. This was the Priory Centre refurbishment application which was approved.
- Local grants have been awarded to St Neots Initiative, Loves Farm Community Centre, and St Neots Tennis Club.
- The Community Chest Fund is still open, and Councillors were asked to encourage constituents to apply.
- The Town and Parish Forum is taking place on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 in Burgess Hall, Members were encouraged to attend.

*The Chairperson brought agenda item 10 up the agenda due to the presence of public who had spoken on the matter.*

#### **094 Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan**

The Chairperson introduced correspondence from Huntingdonshire District Council on Local Plan consultation process which was due to run until 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

The Chair explained that there were three key documents which were being consulted on;

- Further Issues and Options
- Land Availability Assessments
- Sustainability Appraisals

Cllr Pitt stated he would not sit on a Working Group, should one be set up or take part in the Council's discussions due to his position as a cabinet member at HDC. He commented that this is the time decisions happen on whether developments should come forward. A lot of sites that have been put forward and it is important for the Council to engage in the process.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council set up a working group to consider the Local Plan documentation and bring back proposed responses to the consultation.

A Member expressed support for the resident's request that the Council respond stating that the 'Cow Field' be removed from possible sites for consideration. It was commented that when the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was prepared



there were reasons why the designated open green space stopped before this area. The Council should consider applying to the District Council to extend green space along riverside. Any building on it would impact flooding in different areas of the town.

**RESOLVED** that the Council establish a Working Group to consider the Local Plan documentation and recommend consultation responses to the Full Council.

Membership: Cllrs S. Smith, Chapman, Bolanz and Hitchin

### **Committee Minutes**

- 095 i) Members received and noted minutes of the Extraordinary Planning Committee Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024.
- 096 ii) Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024.
- 097 iii) Members received and noted minutes of the Promotion and Events Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024.
- 098 iv) Members received and noted minutes of the Environment and Emergency Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- 099 v) Members Operations and Amenities Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- 100 vi) Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee agenda held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The Chairperson explained that the Committee had resolved to object to a planning application for the former Brook and Barter due to concerns over the density and size of proposed dwellings. The Chairperson commented that they would be happy to provide members with more information if they wished.

- 101 vii) Members received and noted minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

*Members considered and resolved the following recommendations from the Finance & Governance Committee;*

- 102 **RESOLVED** to approve expenditure of £5,353.96 in earmarked election reserves towards the £13,353.96 cost of a St Neots Town Council by-election held on 2 May 2024. The remainder will be paid from the current year's election expenses budget.



- 103 **RESOLVED** the Council approve over expenditure of the Christmas Lights Capital budget (240 4508) of £1,503.10 to allow enabling works for an additional 10 streetlight Christmas decorations. That the overspend is offset against underspend in the Christmas Lights lease budget (240 4507).
- 104 **RESOLVED** that the Council release £9,990.00 in funding from the earmarked reserve for Community Buildings to complete the replacement of the rear felted flat roof (Job 4), including removal and disposal of 3nos redundant A/C plants and relocation of 8nos working A/C plants with replacement of the pipework.
- 105 **RESOLVED** that the Council approve expenditure of up to £2,000.00 from General Reserves to appoint a professional consultant (Structural Engineer) to renew the recommendations of previous Structural Survey and provide the design drawings for the wall rebuild/repair.
- 106 **RESOLVED** the Council approve the disposal of two parklets previously located on the Market Square that have reached the end of their economic life and that they be removed from the asset register.

107 **Members Motion**

Members received and considered a motion from Cllr R Slade that the Council commission a marketing agency to rebrand and promote the Priory Centre.

Members discussed the motion at length, with a member commenting that the basis of the motion was good, and it was important that the new facility be properly marketed and promoted. However, the process should look beyond creating a venue for hire and build in venue identity, which internal and interior design decisions would be impacted by, along with venue name, logo and branding.

A Member expressed support but stated that the process needs to be led by the Priory Centre General Manager, who is responsible for that vision and making the centre work. Another Member highlighted the General Managers ambition to make the venue an inclusive community space that offers something for everyone.

A Member stated the need to ensure the terms of the lease and more detailed figures on potential Town Council contributions were agreed before funding was invested.

A Member queried funding beyond the two-year period for ongoing marketing and that net revenue figures would be needed to define marketing investment. It was explained by the proposer of the motion that the two-year funding was intended to establish identity, branding, website and marketing and for this to 'bed in' for a period and establish itself. Future Council's would need to consider future revenue budgets. The proposal is to take us from where we are, through to establishing and promoting a new venue identity and marketing strategy that allows for continuation as business as usual from that point.



The motion was proposed and seconded as written.

A Member stated that in their view there was an order in which the process should be taken, and the council should avoid prejudging a decision around a lease, and while they were confident lease term would be agreed they spoke against engaging a marketing company until it was in place.

Members commented that a tendering process would take time. The Clerk confirmed that a tender would need to be properly advertised on the government contract finder website. It commented that the tender process and lease processes could be progressed simultaneously. Another Member commented that the risks were low and that the benefit of progressing with the venue identity, branding and marketing

It was proposed that the motion be amended that a tender process be completed but not contracted until a lease is agreed and estimated contribution understood.

The proposer did not accept the amendment.

The amendment was seconded.

The Chairperson called for a vote on the amendment. The amendment failed.

The Chairperson called for a vote on the proposed motion.

**RESOLVED** that St Neots Town Council budget £70,000 from General Reserves to run a tendering process commissioning a marketing agency to undertake a two-year initiative to rebrand and promote the refurbished Priory Centre.

## **108 Projects Status Summary**

The Council's Project Delivery Manager (PDM) introduced and took the Council through a report summarising the status of key projects.

Members thanked the PDM for the report and stated it was good to see the information and projects laid out in this way.

*The report is attached to these minutes for reference.*

## **109 Youth Work Summary**

Members received and noted a report from the Council's Engagement and Participation Youth Worker outlining projects and activities that had been undertaken over the last year. The report set out the numbers of children engaged, areas covered, funding secured and ongoing sessions.

Members expressed their thanks for both the report and all the work that had been undertaken by the Youth Worker, it was all very positive and a lot had been achieved in one year.



## 110 Annual Report

Members deferred consideration of a draft Annual Report following an update from the Town Clerk that it was not yet at a stage to include on the agenda. The Clerk would circulate the report in-between this meeting and the next Full Council meeting.

## 111 Huntingdonshire District Council Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Cllr Pitt declared an interest as a Member of Huntingdonshire District Council's Cabinet.

Members received and noted communication from Huntingdonshire District Council on the new process for Community Infrastructure Levy funding applications.

It was noted that the Town and Parish Council forum in October would include a session on the CIL application process and members were encouraged to attend. The Council has been given advance notice for the next application window and should start working towards any applications it might wish to make.

## 112 Correspondence

Members received and noted the following correspondence;

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Bus Franchising Consultation
- Cople Neighbourhood Development Plan

Members did not feel a formal response was needed.

## 113 Reports from Outside Bodies

There were none.

## 114 Date of Next Meeting

Members received and noted that the date of the next Full Council meeting would be 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at 7:15pm.

## 115 Private Session

**RESOLVED** In terms of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment or contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RESOLVED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

## 116 Community Ownership Fund Heritage Asset Purchase

The Town Clerk provided Members with an update on progress in purchasing an asset for which the Council is receiving funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities



and Local Government. This funding was from the Community Ownership Fund. The Town Clerk explained that as part of receiving the grant funding the MHCLG was seeking a resolution from the Council that it had in place the required level of match funding needed.

**RESOLVED** that the council holds the required level of match funding of the Community Ownership Fund Project costs of £87,500 of the Community Ownership Fund project costs.