

## Full Town Council

**Present:** Cllrs Slade (Chair), Banks, Chapman, Collins, Cooper-Marsh, Dundas-Todorov, Dunford, Goodman, Hitchin, Macnab-Grieve, Maslen, Pitt, Simonis, and S Smith, and Terry

**Absent:** Cllrs Crompton, Johnson, Kumar, J Smith,

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

**Minutes** of the meeting of St Neots Town Council held on **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024** at **7.15pm** in the Eaton's Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

### Public Participation

There was one member of the public present.

### ACTIONS

#### 133 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Bolanz, Crompton, Kumar, Johnson, Mascarenhas and J Smith

Admin

#### 134 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Pitt declared an interest in agenda items 12 and 16 as a Huntingdonshire District Council Cabinet Member and would not take part in agenda item 16 which related to the Priory Centre Lease.

Cllrs Banks, Chapman, Slade, and Terry declared an interest in agenda items 12 and 16 as elected Members of Huntingdonshire District Council, but not members of the cabinet or decision making.

#### 135 Council Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024 as a true and accurate record.

#### 136 County and District Councillor Reports

Cambridgeshire County Councillor G Seef addressed the committee and reported that;

Local M.P Ian Sollom is supporting the County Council's proposals on requirements for eateries to clearly advertise allergens in their menus. It is hoped there will be a change in regulations to support this and there is support across different political parties.

The LHI scheme for Crosshall Road was intended to be delivered in February 2026, however there was currently an additional consultation with local residents on double



yellow lines to be added into the scheme. A contractor has not been appointed yet, but this will be progressed at the start of 2025.

The Hinchingsbrooke Hospital refurbishment is still due to go ahead, and a scheme is currently being developed.

*Cllr Macnab-Grieve joined the meeting at 7:25pm*

A Member raised a question about sc106 funds that had been identified as needing to be paid. Cllr Seeff reported that investigations were ongoing.

### **Committee Minutes**

**137** Members received and noted minutes of the Extraordinary Planning Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**138** Members received and noted minutes of the Promotion & Events Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**139** Members received and noted minutes of the Environment and Emergency Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Members received and considered a recommendation from the committee on the adoption of the draft Community Emergency Plan.

**140** **RESOLVED** that St Neots Town Council adopts the draft Community Emergency Plan.

**141** Members received and noted minutes of the Operations & Amenities Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**142** Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**143** Members received and noted minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Members considered recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee as follows;

**144** **RESOLVED** that the Council increase cemetery fees by 5% for the 2025-26 financial year.

**145** **RESOLVED** that the Council do not increase allotment rents for the 2025-26 financial year following the large percentage increase in the current financial year.

- 146 **RESOLVED** that the Council do not increase farm and craft market pitch fees for the 2025-26 financial year.
- 147 **RESOLVED** that the Council do not increase Eatons Community Centre Hall hire charges for the 2025-26 financial year.
- 148 **RESOLVED** event fees and charges as proposed and to delegate that officers use their discretion for pitch fees at Council events. This was to reflect the varied events that the council puts on.
- 149 **RESOLVED** that the Council approve an overspend in the planting budget of £6,076 resulting from the change to sourcing plants externally.
- 150 **RESOLVED** the Council adopt the St Neots Lawn Cemetery Regulations subject to amending that the former resident fee level will be applied if the deceased lived within St Neots within the previous 5 years, rather than 3 years as currently stated.
- 151 **RESOLVED** the Council adopt the St Neots Old & New, Eynesbury, and Eaton Socon Cemetery Regulations subject to amending that the former resident fee level will be applied if the deceased lived within St Neots within the previous 5 years, rather than 3 years as currently stated.

**152 Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan**

Members received and considered a report on work undertaken by the Local Plan Consultation Working Group. Cllr S Smith introduced the matter and the work of the Working Group. There are different stages of the Local Plan consultation, with the current consultation stage.

**RESOLVED** that the Council accepts the recommended responses from the Local Plan Working Group on Local Land Availability Assessments for Little Paxton 1 and Little Paxton 2 and submits those responses to Huntingdonshire District Council's local plan consultation.

**RESOLVED** that the Council accepts the recommended responses from the Local Plan Working Group on the Further Issues and Options document consultation and submits those responses to Huntingdonshire District Council's local plan consultation.

Members noted that the Local Plan Working Group would be considering designated green spaces and how to identify and submit these for consideration as part of the process. The Working Group would report back to the next meeting of the Full Council.

### 153 Internal Audit Report

Members received and noted the results of an internal audit inspection carried out in October 2024. It was noted that there were no recommended actions from the Internal Auditor.

**RESOLVED** to accept the October 2024 internal audit report's findings.

### Communications Received

- 154 Members received and considered information from East West Rail Consultation and **RESOLVED** to establish a Working Group to consider the consultation and make recommendations to the Town Council. Working Group Members agreed as: *Cllrs Pitt, Dunford, Maslen and S Smith*.

- 155 Members received and considered a government consultation on enabling remote meetings and proxy voting for Local Authorities. **RESOLVED** to establish a Working Group to consider the consultation and recommend responses to the Town Council at its December 2024 meeting. Working Group Members agreed as: *Cllrs Chapman, Cooper-Marsh, Goodman, S Smith and Simonis*

- 156 Members received and noted an invitation for Members to attend Cambridgeshire County Council's 2025-26 budget and strategy briefing.

- 157 Members received and noted information on the next round of A428 Legacy Funding.

### 158 Appointment of a Representative to an Outside Body

**RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Kumar as a representative to the Wintringham Residents Association and to appoint Cllr Pitt as representative if Cllr Kumar was unable to take up the position, or a second representative would be welcomed.

### 159 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Maslen reported that ESCA held its AGM 3 weeks ago and that many of the individuals forming the management structure have resigned. Cllr Maslen explained more members were needed to help the organisation to continue.

### 160 Project Summary Report

Members received and noted a project summary report from the Project Delivery Manager. It was highlighted that there were no major issues with the projects in the report and updates on each would continue to be brought to committees.

### 161 Priory Centre Building Development Group

Members received information which had been shared with the Priory Centre Building Development Group on the status of the redevelopment project. A video from HDC's

appointed architect had been circulated to Members ahead of the meeting. HDC Cllr S Wakeford was present to take Members questions

Members raised a number of queries about specifics within the project design, including;

Whether the stage was suitable for ballet performances – The PDM commented that it would be as the size was similar to the current stage size.

Whether solar panels were still included – It was confirmed the plans show solar panels as included.

Whether there is now floor seating as well as retractable stall seating – It was explained there was always to be an element of floor seating which was necessary to get required capacity levels.

Members spoke in favor of the amended design and materials which were to be used for the external of the building. The Council's PDM reminded Members that images are indicative and colours of bricks may appear different to the images.

Members discussed the energy solution for the building, with the following key points arising:-

- Members noted that the project now intended to deliver a mixed gas and electric energy solution due to the high costs of delivering air source heat pumps, which require a sub-station to be built.
- A Member commented that they were pleased to see that the project would include the installation of the infrastructure for air source heat pumps, or another energy solution which would allow the Council to continue to investigate and invest in a better long-term option.
- A Member queried whether water turbines would be an option to consider. It was explained that a feasibility report on the use of water, such as a water source pump was being undertaken and would help inform a long-term energy solution that could potentially benefit a number of publicly owned buildings in the Priory Centre area.

HDC Cllr Wakeford spoke on the additional costs required to deliver a heat pump system, which were not affordable in the existing project budgets due to the need to increase electricity capacity through a sub-station. However, the District Council was actively looking into alternative medium to long-term solutions such as a water source heat pump which was a long process involving consultation with the EA. The feasibility work was progressing well and this long-term solution is something the District Council will continue to develop with the Town Council.

Cllr Wakeford spoke on the Town Council's contribution to the scheme and the lease negotiations, stating that HDC did see these as two separate matters with the Council needing to decide if it wanted to invest Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is



intended for improving and providing community facilities into the project. Whether the Town Council invest money or not a lease would still need to be agreed.

#### 162 Mayoral Engagements

Members received and noted a list of upcoming Mayoral engagements to be attended by the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor.

#### 163 Date of Next Meeting

Members received and noted that the date of the next Full Council meeting would be 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 7:15pm.

#### 164 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.

#### 165 Priory Centre Lease

Members received and considered draft Heads of Terms from HDC on a new lease for the Priory Centre. It was noted that for works to take place the Town Council needed to surrender its current leases.

*Cllr Pitt left the meeting at 8:18pm.*

HDC Cllr Wakeford was invited to address the Council, where he spoke on the funding from the Council and agreeing lease terms as two separate matters, with the premise of the process being delivering a new, quality community venue for the town.

Members commented that there is a dependency between the two things.

A Member spoke on the history of the leases currently in place and commented that the Town Council should seek professional advice on the value of those leases.

Key areas that were highlighted that needed addressing were;

- The value of current leases versus what is proposed.
- The term of any lease
- Termination of lease compensation and the values of this based on funding sources which would contribute towards the project.
- The removal of shared operational risk between the council's through a contribution to any deficit by HDC.

Cllr Wakeford provided a breakdown of where budget for the project was coming from.



*Cllr Wakeford left the meeting at 8:43pm.*

**RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk engage a commercial negotiator to quantify the value of the leases/assets on behalf of the Council, with consideration given to lease length, funding sources, use and termination compensation percentages.

#### **166 Purchase of Asset**

Members received a verbal update from the Town Clerk on the progress of the purchase of an asset through the Government's Community Ownership Fund. The Town Clerk explained delays in completing the purchase had arisen following restrictions on use of the building coming to light. It was confirmed that an indemnity insurance had been agreed to cover any risks associated with one of the restrictions and the other, which could potentially be lifted would need to be considered and addressed by the Council at a future date depending on final plans for use of the building.

The Chairperson advised Members that a briefing pack would be put together for Members information.