

Full Town Council

Present: Cllrs Slade (Chair), Bolanz, Chapman, Cooper-Marsh, Crompton, Dundas-Todorov, Dunford, Goodman, Hitchin, Pitt, Simonis, and S Smith

Absent: Cllrs Banks, Collins, Johnson, Kumar, Macnab-Grieve, Mascarenhas, Maslen, J Smith, and Terry

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

Minutes of the meeting of St Neots Town Council held on **Tuesday 29th October 2024** at **7.15pm** in the Eaton's Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

Public Participation

There were eight members of the public present.

A Member addressed the Council on agenda item 6, the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan consultation. The resident spoke with relation to recommended responses to three sites, St Neots Site 1, Little Paxton Site 1 and Little Paxton Site 2.

The resident expressed agreement with the recommended response for St Neots Site 1, supporting designating the site as green space as an extension of Priory Park. The resident asked that the Council consider adding further comments on the unsuitability of the site for residential development.

The resident expressed agreement with the recommended response for Little Paxton Site 2, asking that the Council consider adding additional comments around the impact on infrastructure.

The resident stated disagreement with the recommended response to Little Paxton Site 1, asking that the Council consider objecting to development on the site and provided an outline of his reasoning.

ACTIONS

117 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Collins, Mascarenhas, Maslen, Terry

Admin

118 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Pitt declared an interest in Agenda item 8 Local plan as a cabinet member at HDC who would be considering the local plan in that context.

119 Council Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting of 24th September 2024 as a true and accurate record.



County and District Councillor Reports

Huntingdonshire District Councillor Cllr Jennings addressed the Council, key items reported were as follows;

- The next stage of ‘biodiversity for all’ work will see improvements to Priory Park, including restoration of the pond. The opportunity to visit the site with officers had been shared with Town Councillors.
- HDC had completed the Changing Places project at Riverside, which was a positive project.
- HDC took part in the LGA peer challenge which provided recommendations which are being reviewed.
- The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has been operating in Eynesbury and has so far resulted in 5 incidents being report to the police. The PSPO will continue until July 2028 and will continue to be monitored.

A Member raised question on the number of notice boards which had old information on them in Priory Park and that it would be good to have these updated. It was commented that these are jointly managed by HDC and the Friends of Priory Park.

Cambridgeshire County Council Cllr Seeff addressed the Council; key items reported were as follows;

- Policing in Cambridgeshire is under resourced in Cambridgeshire. The newly elected government is allocating funds to police and an argument is being put to the government to make a case for increased funding for Cambridgeshire.
- Advice is being sought on the safety of lithium batteries and whether if imported into the country they are tested. This is a growing problem due to increased use of lithium batteries, particularly with electric scooters.
- The Council is progressing a motion that information on allergies contained on non-prepacked food become common place and that every eatery should provide such information easily to its customers. Bohemia restaurant in St Neots is acting as a ‘role model’, displaying an allergen board. The County Council are asking for this to be law.
- Sc106 funds investigation still ongoing to ensure all funds have been allocated correctly.

HDC Cllr Chapman addressed the Council, stating that a motion was on an HDC agenda on whether to sign a petition asking the government to reconsider a motion on the removal of winter fuel allowance. The motion was defeated. The Council is going to promote ways people can apply for pension credit.

HDC Cllr Pitt addressed the Council, stating that the deadline for applying for pension credit is 21st December 2024.

Committee Minutes

- 120 i) Members received and noted minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee held on 24th September 2024.
- 121 ii) Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee held on 1st October 2024.
- 122 iii) Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee held on 15th October 2024.
- 123 iv) Members received and noted minutes of the Operations & Amenities Committee held on 15th October 2024.

A Member raised a query around wording in the minutes for the meeting. It was explained by the Chairperson that the correctness of the minutes must be considered by the next Operations and Amenities Committee meeting in November.

- 124 v) Members received and noted minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 22nd October 2024.

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

The Chairperson introduced recommendation that the Town Council adopt a new procedure for considering funding applications for external events which fall outside the Council's Grant Aid Scheme. It was explained that the new criteria meant no organisation could apply for funding over more than £2,000 in consecutive years but that the Council recognised there were potentially annual community events it would like to support. The proposed process allows for such funding requests to be considered as part of the budget setting process by first going to the Promotion and Events Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee as budget line items.

The procedure set out will be as follows;

- In August the organisers of any annual community events who have been recipients of Council grant funding in a previous year but are no longer eligible will be invited to put forward a request to the Promotion and Events Committee.
- The Promotion and Events Committee will consider any requests/applications at a meeting in September.
- The Promotion and Events Committee will make recommendations to the Finance and Governance Committee on awarding funding to an event as part of the Council's next year's budget.



- The Finance and Governance Committee will consider the recommendations of the Promotions and Events Committee in the context of the wider budget and make a recommendation on any funding to the Full Council as part of the overall budget setting.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED that the Council approves the procedure recommend to the committee for the consideration of grant funding for annual events which exceed £2,000 and are not eligible for funding under the Council's Grant Aid policy.

The Chairperson introduced a recommendation on specific criteria that would need to be met for any event funding to be considered.

RESOLVED that the Council approve the draft criteria that must be met for the awarding of funding for an event as follows;

- 1) To be considered for funding events will need to be based in St Neots and the Council will give extra weighting to events open to all residents.
- 2) If events are not free but subsidised, then the Council will need to consider the cost of the subsidy per attendee as part of its decision making.
- 3) The organisers/organisations of the events should preferably be St Neots based.
- 4) An organisation will need to be able to evidence a proven track record of delivering events.
- 5) Any organisation who has not applied for grant funding for an event before can apply for funding through the Council's small grant aid scheme.
- 6) Each organisation will be expected to market the event to get a wider audience and provide detailed feedback on the event.

RESOLVED that to facilitate the Operations Team's efficient and flexible delivery of services the Council purchase an Avant-AV 760I and suitable attachments at a cost of £60,627 from the Council's General Reserve.

125 Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan

- i) Members received and noted a report on work undertaken by the Local Plan Consultation Working Group.

Cllr S Smith introduced the item and explained the work of the Local Plan Working Group. There are different stages, current consultation stage. Resolved to consider and bring forward commended responses.

It was explained that the Working Group have initially focused on reviewing and bringing forward recommended responses to the Land Availability Assessments. As part of the previous call for sites stage of the Local Plan 369 sites were submitted across the district for a range of uses. Each site was



assessed by the submitter and the District Council. The Working Group has recommended responses to those assessments.

- ii) Members received and considered recommendations from the 'Local Plan Consultation Working Group' on Council responses to the Land Availability Assessments consultation, which responds to specific sites submitted as part of the Local Plan's 'Call for Sites'.

Members agreed on the importance of designating open green spaces and the process for which this might be able to be progressed.

RESOLVED that the Council submits the recommended responses to the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan's land availability and sustainability assessments for St Neots and Abbotsley Sites as recommended by the Local Plan Consultation Working Group as appended to these minutes.

RESOLVED that the Local Plan Working Group further considers responses to Little Paxton Sites 1 and 2 and the proposed amendments raised by a member of the public, bringing back recommended responses to the November 2024 Full Council meeting.

126 Projects Status Summary

Members received and considered a report from the Project Delivery Manager (PDM) on ongoing projects.

Members noted that the Changing Places toilet project had been completed since the last meeting of the Full Council.

The PDM reported that museum roof repairs were ongoing because of additional challenges and weather delaying work. A lot of problematic areas had been addressed and

The PDM reported that a structural engineers report had been received for the repair work needed to St Mary's, St Neots Church wall and this would allow him to establish indicative costs and potential options around implementing and phasing.

The Chairperson highlighted that the Moores Walk Garden, Skatepark refurbishment and Changing Places projects were good examples of how different authorities can work together.

The following points were raised by Members;

- 1) Town Council website – A Member queried the process for bringing forward a refreshed website and the need to ensure Councillors are making decisions on the new site, not just being consulted. The PDM outlined the procedure stating that feedback from the website consultation is being reviewed, with a scope



and brief to be set up. This will be brought to the Promotion and Events Committee for consideration, who will be involved in decision making and recommendations to Council on the new website.

- 2) The Jubilee Garden Mosaic is continuing to be damaged and there needs to be action taken to help protect it. The Town Clerk reported that the Operations Manager was seeking quotes for recommended actions to be considered by the upcoming Operations and Amenities Committee meeting.
- 3) Priory Centre – A proposed lease with HDC for the new Priory Centre is awaited. A Member commented that it was essential a lease was agreed before the Council dedicated funds towards the refurbishment of the centre. The importance of the lease and having this in place had been raised with HDC.
- 4) Splashpark – Vesting Declaration complete, a member commented that the indemnity assurance set out as part of agreeing the Vesting Declaration was not mentioned in the report. The Clerk confirmed that the indemnity was agreed between the solicitors as part of agreeing the Vesting Declaration.
- 5) Flood Awareness Campaign – What will be the approach to the Council distributing sandbags? It was explained this was not a Town Council duty for which it had resource available and that a draft Emergency Action Plan would be coming to the next Council meeting for consideration.

127 External Audit Report

Members received and noted 2023-2024 financial year's external audit report. It was noted that there were no recommendations or actions arising from the external audit. Members thanked the RFO for their work.

RESOLVED that the Council accepts the outcome report for the external audit for the 2023/2024 financial year and note that there are no recommended actions.

128 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Goodman reported that quarterly meetings between the Hunts Volunteer Forum and Town Council representatives. These now took place over zoom and were attended by Cllr Goodman and Macnab-Grieve.

129 Mayoral Engagements

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

130 Date of Next Meeting

Members received and noted that the date of the next Full Council meeting would be 26th November 2024 at 7:15pm.

131 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.

132 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 matter was still progressing with the sellers and Councillor's solicitors and was hoped to move to completion in the coming week.