

Annual Town Council Meeting

Present: Cllrs Simonis (Chair) Banks, Bolanz, Chapman, Collins, Cooper-Marsh, Dundas-Todorov, Goodman, Hitchin, Macnab-Grieve, Mascarenhas, Maslen, Pitt, Smith and Terry.
Absent: Cllrs Dunford, Johnson, Kumar and Slade
In attendance: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and RFO

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of St Neots Town Council held on **30th April 2024** at **7.15pm** in the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots, PE19 2BH.

Public Participation

There were approximately 120 members of the public present.

ACTIONS

199 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Dunford, Johnson, Kumar and Slade.

Admin

200 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Pitt declared an interest in agenda item 12, Priory Centre Redevelopment investment, as a Member of Huntingdonshire District Council's cabinet.

Cllrs Pitt, Terry and Banks declared an interest in the agenda item 7, St Neots Skate Park, as members of Huntingdonshire District Council as the skatepark was District Council asset.

201 Council Minutes

Members resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting of 26th March 2024 subject to amending that a Councillor listed as present was no longer a sitting councillor.

202 National Highways – Eaton Socon Noise Barrier

Members received information on a National Highways project to install a noise barrier along the A1 at Eaton Socon.

The sound barrier will be located at Duloe Road southbound and along Bushmead road, along the embankment to join the existing barrier. The barrier, which will be metal will be 3m high and then join the existing 2m high barrier. Spaces will be kept for planting and to support wildlife.

The scheme will be communicated to residents through letter drops, emails and websites. Representatives will also be attending local events, such as farm and craft markets to engage with residents.

The Chairperson brought forward agenda item 7 – Revamp the Ramp CIC

203 Revamp the Ramp – Ramp Refurbishment Project Funding

Members received and considered a status report from the Town Clerk and recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee in relation to a funding request from Revamp the Ramp CIC on a project to enhance the St Neots Skatepark.

The Deputy Chair of the Finance and Governance committee introduced the Committee's recommendation that funding of £25,210.88 be awarded towards the project to enhance St Neots skatepark. The importance of the skatepark facility was emphasised.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council approve the recommendation of the Finance and Governance Committee.

A Member asked about the impact of flooding. It was explained that the ramps and the proposed works were designed to account for flooding.

RESOLVED that St Neots Town Council grant a further £25,210.88 in grant funding to Revamp the Ramp CIC towards delivering the St Neots Skatepark ramp enhancement project, totalling £50,210.88 in Town Council funding. That the funding awarded comes from the Council's CIL reserves.

Cllr Pitt, Terry and Banks abstained from voting.

204 Reports from District and County Councillors

Cllr Ferguson (CCC/HDC) reported;

A new officer in charge of County Highways and Environment has been appointed. Cllr Ferguson had taken the officer to key points in St Neots, including Little Paxton bridge where he had explained residents' concerns over the bridge, flooding and the work of Waterside Energy which was impacted by the bridge's height. A joined-up approach to find a combined solution to these matters is needed and a debate on the Little Paxton bridge is likely to go to County Council following the submission of a petition.

There had been a meeting with residents to discuss issues surrounding The Nags Head which was being used as temporary accommodation by the Council. A multi-agency task force is to be established to help address issues of anti-social behaviour while ensure safeguarding of tenants. It was confirmed that the Community Safety Officer would be involved in the task force.

Cllr Seeff (CCC) reported;

Three projects had been successful in securing County Council community asset improvement funds, this included the Town Council's Changing Places project.

At this stage there were no further updated on some Sc106 funding due to be provided to St Neots for educational use.

A motion would be going to the County Council to support a national campaign on allergens information for non-packaged foods in restaurants. This would involve taking action to ensure all our food outlets abide by the law and to raise awareness across Cambridgeshire.

Cllr Jennings (HDC) reported;

Work to improve footpaths in Riverside Park were due to start in May and be finished by the end of summer 2024.

Community grants were to become available for groups to put on activities that help support Huntingdonshire's Place Strategy. This was part of celebrating 50 years of Huntingdonshire District Council.

Hydro treated vegetable oil used by HDC to power vehicles is to be shared with the police and fire service on a trial basis. This will be from a filling station located at Eaton House.

The Chairperson thanked the County and District Councillors for their reports.

Committee minutes

Members received and noted the draft minutes of meetings of the following committees and sub-committees and (if applicable) approved recommendations therein which did not arise elsewhere;

- 205 i) Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee held on 9th April 2024 and 23rd April 2024.
- 206 ii) Members received and noted minutes of the Promotion and Events Committee held on 2nd April 2024.
- 207 iii) Members received and noted minutes of the Operations and Amenities Committee meeting held on 16th April 2024.
- 208 iv) Members received and noted minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on 23rd April 2024.

The Council considered and resolved the following recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee;

- 209 **RESOLVED** that the Council adopt the proposed Council Risk Assessment for 2024/25.
- 210 **RESOLVED** that the Council re-adopt the Council's Investment Strategy with an updated yield figure.
- 211 **RESOLVED** that the Council progress with tarmac surfacing of the access track, car parking area and pedestrian walkway at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub and that Company B is approved as the preferred contractor at a cost of £73,000.00 allocated from the Council's Community Building Earmarked Reserve (EMR).

Cllr Goodman abstained

- 212 **RESOLVED** that £3,000 earmarked from the AFD 2023 budget is used to facilitate raising awareness of HM Armed Forces services and the 80th anniversary of D-Day by using a large screen to show videos, information, and interviews throughout the event. That the recommendation is subject to further information on the details of the proposed videos and their production coming forward.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the proposed video will be made by Serious about St Neots in partnership with the AFD Committee. The video will be played at key intervals in the day. It will focus on interviews and sharing information on military presence, support and activities available in the town.

- 213 Cllr Cooper-Marsh introduced the following recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee.

RECOMMEND that the Council adopt the draft Grant Aid Policy subject to increasing the level of small grant applications to £2,000 and making editorial amendments on the eligibility of applications where funding is received from government bodies.

Members highlighted Key changes within the policy, including;

- The introduction of two grant schemes with separate application forms for small and large grants.
- Limits on how often organisations can apply for funding, particularly for large grants.
- That funding will not be provided for the purpose of fundraising and that applications should be made for projects funds were being raised for.
- The Council still had an option for organisations to sit within the Council's annual budget cycle if the Council wish to acknowledge there will be annual funding awards.

Proposed and seconded to adopt the amended grant application scheme.

There was a recognition that there might be a transition period for the implementation of the policy, in particular to support funding applications that were due to come forward in June.

An amendment was proposed and accepted that the Grant Sub-Committee be given the discretion to allow for a transition year.

RESOLVED that the Council accept the grant scheme policy, subject to an amendment whereby discretion is afforded to the Grants Subcommittee to allow for a transition year for applicants who may be considered for revenue funding as part of the budget-setting process.

214 Youth Worker Updates

The Council received and noted a report from St Neots Town Council's Engagement and Participation Youth Worker on projects undertaken over the last quarter.

Members expressed thanks to the Council's Youth Worker on the work that has been carried out and the positive impacts projects it is having. It was also commented that the Council had received positive feedback on its approach to employing a Youth Worker and providing such a valuable service to the town, which was not common to the town and parish sector.

The Council asked that their thanks and congratulations be recorded for the work the Youth Council had undertaken to date.

215 Projects Status Summary

The Council received and noted a summary of key Council projects at the end of the Council year as presented by the Town Clerk. Project updates were given on the following key projects, it was noted that smaller projects and actions which sit under committees had not been included.

- **Steve Van De Kerkhove Community Hub**
Improvement of access and former St Johns Building.
- **Moore's Walk Garden**
Enhancements and improvements to HDC owned site.
- **Heritage Purchase**
Pursuing the potential purchase of a heritage asset for which grant funding has been awarded.
- **Changing Places Riverside Toilets**
Refurbishment of the Riverside toilets.
- **Priory Centre Refurbishment**
Considering potential funding contribution to the redevelopment of the priory centre as a high quality community asset.
- **Public Art Project**
Developing a town centre art installation through grant funding.
- **St Neots Skatepark**

Funding enhancement works to the St Neots Skatepark

- **Splash Park**

Considering funding provision to a splash park in St Neots.

A summary of information shared is attached to these minutes.

216 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Full Council meeting will be 8th May 2024 which will be the Annual Council Meeting at which the appointment of the Council Chairperson for the 2024-25 civic year will be made.

Members noted that appointment to committees, election of committee chairpersons and appointments to representatives on outside bodies will take place at the scheduled meeting of the full council on 28th May 2024.

217 Committee In Private Session

RESOLVED that 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 disclosure to the public would be likely to give an advantage to a person entering into, or seeking to enter into, a contract with an authority in respect of property, goods or services, whether the advantage would arise as against the authority or as against other such persons.

It is, therefore, **RESOLVED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded on the basis that information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings is exempt.

218 Priory Centre Refurbishment

Cllr Pitt left the meeting at 21:02

- Members received and considered a report from the Town Clerk on the Priory Centre redevelopment project and a recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee that should the Council be minded providing funding to the project that this is allocated from the Council's CIL reserve.
- Members considered whether the Town Council would consider providing funding to the Priory Centre refurbishment project budget in principle. Additional funding would help the design team to work to a level at which Town Council priorities for the building could be better delivered and ensure a high-quality outcome for the community.

It was noted that at this stage any potential funding would provide a budget for designs to be delivered within. The Council would need to make a final decision on committing funding following a tender process and the outcome of costs arising from that process.

Members commented on the importance of supporting the project to ensure that it was properly delivered, and this was the opportunity to do that, providing a facility for the public for the next 20 years.

Members commented on the necessity of ensuring that should the council invest any funds acceptable lease terms were agreed. This must ensure that any contribution from the Council is recognised in the relationship the leases set out between the two parties. It was agreed any funding would be subject to negotiations of final acceptable lease terms.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Council was not being asked to commit funding at this stage, but to advise the District Council on whether it would be minded investing in the building to allow the design team clarity on the budget in which the project should be delivered.

RESOLVED that the Council instructs the Clerk to write a letter of intent to support the Priory Centre refurbishment project by providing funding up to an agreed level. The commitment of any funding would be subject to confirmation of lease arrangements and confirmed costs arising from the tender. That any funding would be allocated from the Council's CIL reserves and would be subject to regular scheduled meetings of the Building Development Group to participate in the ongoing design process and discussions on final designs for tender within the limitations of budgets.