

POTTON ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held at Mill Lane Pavilion, Potton, 7pm,
Tuesday 8th March 2016

PRESENT: Mr P. Langridge Chairman of Potton Town Council, Councillors Mr R. Harris, Mr J. Hobbs, Mr L. Ivall, Mr A. Leggatt, Mr R. Whitfield, Town and Ward Councillor Mr A. Zerny, Sgt G. Kidd, PCSO A. Jeeves, Mrs D Gurney Ward Councillor, Mrs C. Smart, Executive Head Teacher Potton Federation, Mrs A. Adnitt, Chair of Governors Potton Federation, 1 member of the public and the Town Clerk (15 people in total present).

The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked for their attendance.

The Chairman advised that agenda item 7 To receive the Annual Report of the Potton Federation would be taken before agenda item 4 To receive a report from the Chairman of Potton Town Council.

1. MINUTES:

The Chairman asked if the minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting could be accepted.

The Minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting, held on 14th April 2015, which had been circulated, were signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mr D. Ellison, Mr G. Emery, Mr A. Gibb, Mr J. Lean and Mr A. Macdonald.

3. REPORT FROM POLICE:

Cllr Langridge introduced Police Sgt G. Kidd.

Sgt Kidd, gave the following report:-

Sgt G. Kidd went through the Potton Annual Police Report for the year 19th February 2015 to 18th February 2016.

Sgt Kidd advised that included in the report was crime statistics from 2005 – 2016. The total of all recorded crime in Potton in 2015/16 is 163.

Sgt Kidd reported that the number of solved crimes for 2015/16 was 23, he then went through the breakdown of recorded crime and detections.

Sgt Kidd reported that Criminal Damage – To Vehicles increased from 11 to 37, 16 cars were damaged in King Street and 2 people are on Police Bail and 8 cars were damaged in Everton Road during the period July – September 2015.

Cllr Zerny arrived.

Sgt Kidd went through Crime by Area (Crime Rates per 1000 population) and advised that Potton is lower than all the other areas in all sections other than Criminal Damage.

Bedfordshire Police are currently undergoing a restructuring process which has impacted on the Local Community Engagement Team in particular. By the end of March 2016 the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) remaining

at Biggleswade Police Station will be significantly reduced. In the coming months there are plans to replace some of these officers with Police Constables who together with the remaining PCSO's will form a Problem Solving Community Engagement Team continuing with lead responsibilities in amongst other things, problem solving, anti-social behaviour and disputes.

This will mean that with immediate effect the ability to prepare monthly Police Crime Reports will cease as will the ad hoc attendance at Parish and Town Council meetings. All our Parish and Town Councils across the entire North Central Bedfordshire area, which includes in excess of 50 Parish and Town Councils have been informed and are aware of where Crime figures can be obtained online.

Bedfordshire Police and our team in particular appreciate the voluntary work carried out by our partners in the various Watch Schemes across the county. Central Bedfordshire and specifically the North of Central Bedfordshire have shown the way in relation to Watch Schemes where we have numerous Speed Watch, Street Watch and Neighbourhood Watch schemes. I would like to offer my thanks to those volunteers within Potton.

The recent changes within Bedfordshire Police does not mean an end to community engagement, on the contrary it will mean more time being spent with the most vulnerable members of our community who require more of our time.

Finally, I would like to thank Potton Town Council for their continued support throughout the last twelve months.

Cllr Langridge thanked Sgt Gary Kidd.

4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC FOR THE POLICE:

The Chairman asked if the public had any questions.

No questions from the public.

Cllr Langridge thanked Police Sgt G. Kidd and PCSO Ann Jeeves for attending.

Police Sgt G. Kidd and PCSO Ann Jeeves left the meeting.

5. REPORT FROM POTTON FEDERATION:

Cllr Langridge introduced Mrs Cathy Smart Executive Head Teacher of Potton Federation.

Mrs Cathy Smart, gave the following report:- Potton Lower School, Burgoyne Middle School, and The Potton Federation

Potton Lower School and Burgoyne Middle School were united on 1st September 2015 to form The Potton Federation. The Federation has one Executive Headteacher, Cathy Smart, and one Governing Body, across the two schools. There was a consultation period during the Spring/Summer terms in 2015, and all parents were supportive of the proposed changes.

There are many advantages to this new arrangement, but a smooth and seamless transition from Year 4 to Year 5 is the key factor for the children. This move has enabled us to access considerable savings by employing key staff to

work across both schools, for example the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher, and the Business Manager.

The Lower School children now attend assemblies, attend sports fixtures, and use the newly fitted ICT suite, at the Middle School. We may merge/rebrand the two schools under one new name within the next year or two, which will hopefully enable us to create a through-school from ages 4-13, and ensure that we maintain pupil numbers.

Both schools are currently graded as Good by Ofsted; the Lower School are overdue an inspection, as re-inspection was expected from Summer 2015. The Middle School will be due for re-inspection from June 2016; due to a two year decline in Year 6 standards, we are expecting to receive an Ofsted visit quite promptly.

Pupil Numbers

The Lower School currently has 247 children on roll of a possible 300, and the Middle School has 207 children on roll of a possible 360. The Lower School has not had more than 260 pupils in recent years. The Middle School has declined from 360 down to 207 over recent years as more parents move their children over to the Cambridge two-tier schooling system to access what they believe to be more effective secondary education for their children.

This year we have been advised that the Middle School will have an intake number of 75 pupils, which is the highest we have had for a long time. We hope that confidence in the school is increasing under the new leadership of the Executive Headteacher and the Governing Body. At the Lower School, 94% of pupils come from Potton itself, and at the Middle School the figure is 86%.

Both schools have good attendance at 96%-97%, however there is always room for improvement. Over the last year, we have issued a number of fines to parents for poor attendance following the government's guidance.

School Development

At the Middle School we completed the ICT room upgrade with the valued support of a Potton Charity's additional grant. In addition to remodelling the suite, other work has taken place around the school; we have not installed air conditioning in the upstairs classrooms, modernised the Art/DT room, and redecorated and purchased new furniture for two existing classrooms.

At the Lower School we used the Potton Charity's Grant towards the building of a Sensory Garden in the courtyard at the centre of the school. We hope that this will be completed this Spring.

This year's grant will be used to purchase library books at the Middle School, and as of yet has not been allocated to a specific project at the Lower School. We continue to use the Hardship Fund monies received from the Charity to support the education of our less well-off families by paying their contributions towards educational visits, residential trips, after school care club, or purchasing uniform for them. We are truly grateful for the grants that we receive and the ongoing support of the charity.

Partnerships

One of our most successful partnerships is with the pre-schools; both Potton Pre-School and Woodentops Pre-School are regular visitors to the Lower School. The

communication between the pre-school staff and the teachers enables a very smooth transition for the children into full time education.

Potton Pre- School now operates the wrap around care facility 'The Nest', which continues to operate from 8.00a.m., and until 6.00 p.m.

We continue to offer the facilities of both schools to the local community, the school grounds are used by Potton Colts on Saturdays and the school hall is used by the Brownies, Guides, Shannon and Phoenix Singers, Karate, Slimming World, and the Vineyard.

We are very pleased to report that the school is supported very well by the parents, our PTA, and the local community. We often approach local businesses to assist us, and always find them ready and willing to support the school. We are very lucky to have this level of support from the local community in the ongoing life of the school.

We are very confident in the schools' ability to continue to meet the needs of the children in this town, ensuring that they enjoy and achieve at school, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Cllr Langridge thanked Mrs Cathy Smart.

Mrs C. Smart, Executive Head Teacher Potton Federation, Mrs A. Adnitt, Chair of Governors Potton Federation left the meeting.

**6. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TOWN COUNCIL:
Mr Peter Langridge, Chairman of the Town Council gave the following report:-**

Good evening citizens of Potton. Welcome to the 2016 annual town meeting.

As has been the case for some years now the town council has been very busy on your behalf.

It would take too long to cover all that has transpired over the last year so I will try to give you a brief resume of it all.

First a mention that this year we lost a major figure from the town when Peter Hutchison OBE passed away. I do not think that should go by without an acknowledgment of his contribution to this town. To some of the newer residents it will mean little but the older residents will understand his commitment to the town and the football club.

To start, there has been a steady increase in the population which has brought its own set of circumstances and a resultant increase in workload. Because of the increase in the workload the council resolved to move to 2 full meetings a month and consider an increase in office space and an additional staff member to cover the full week.

A review was undertaken of the property that the town council is responsible for and its assets. The lease from CBC on the community centre requires regular maintenance and decoration, similarly the pavilion at Mill Lane leased from the Potton Charities. Due to the condition of the community centre the windows had

to be replaced and we had the heating updated which necessitated repainting. The well-used skate park in HSPF is in desperate need of refurbishment. The enclosed churchyard at St. Mary's is our responsibility. It has been recently surveyed and needs a fair amount of work to make certain parts safe and a clean-up.

So, in efforts to keep the people informed on the activities and future plans of the town council we have held regular open house surgeries on a Saturday morning once a month in the library, and this will continue. The town council newsletter is produced quarterly and delivered to every household in Potton, and we have relaunched our council website. In addition to these the council office is open at various times for you to make contact or contact a councillor direct. At this time I would remind everyone that the current council was elected in May 2015 and the next election for full council will be in 2019. I would encourage anyone who has an interest in our town to consider standing at the next opportunity.

We have responded to the wishes of the town over the past year by:

- Fitting new gates at Mill Lane to stop the late night nuisance noise and damage.
- Setting up a responsible dog owners committee to allow dog walkers and sports to share the facilities.
- Removed the dangerous low branch in HSPF.
- Used the tree branch to create some modern art as a reminder.

We also considered CCTV for parts of the town and a memorial garden to commemorate those who have fallen in defence of our country.

The town council has supported the Christmas Lights, the Hall for All and fitted a defibrillator on the library's wall for the benefit of all in need.

Later this year will be the Party on Potton during the August bank weekend and on 21st. April we will be lighting a beacon to celebrate the queen's 90th. Birthday along with many other parishes around the country.

As a council we have submitted a bid to CBC for match funding under the Market Town regeneration Fund to revitalise the town and are currently awaiting a response to our bid.

The bad news is (and there is always bad news) we are in the 21st. Century and we all have to be self-sustaining.

During the year we have had both internal and independent audits of our finances and proved to be sound and solvent. However to maintain our current situation regarding our responsibilities, without looking to the future, and projects we would like to undertake on your behalf, costs us more each year. With ever increasing costs of obligatory inspections on the play equipment and outdoor gym, replacing parts of the skate park and any future projects our only way to raise funds is through our precept for the council tax. Unfortunately we have had to increase this again this year with no help from CBC.

A snapshot of our situation could be shown in the grass cutting around the town. We pay a contractor to cut the road verges on behalf of CBC. CBC only pay the town council approximately 20% of the costs and we have to fund the rest. You could say then don't cut the verges but when they are overgrown and unsightly

who do you think is blamed? Cut them less often you say and when they are cut the resultant long cuttings are all over the road. Refer to previous comment.

To finish I would just like to say thank you to all those who have supported me during my time as chairman over the past year.

Councillors who have taken on roles and projects for the town, the clerk and his staff. So in conclusion I could not finish without saying a big thank you to the Potton Charities for their help and support throughout the year. Without that we would be in far worse situation.

7. ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL:

The audited accounts for the year ending 31st March 2015 had been made available and were noted.

8. ACCOUNTS OF POTTON CONSOLIDATED CHARITY:

The accounts of Potton Consolidated Charity for year ending 31st March 2015 had been made available and were noted.

9. POTTON TOWN PLAN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

Cllr Langridge introduced Mr John Hobbs Potton Town Plan Chairman and member of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Potton Town Plan Chairman Mr John Hobbs gave the following report:-

Following my appointment as chairman of the Town Plan last May, this is my report for the progress on the action plans up to 2015-16:

A Traffic, Parking and Transport

Councillor Zerny, in his capacity as our councillor for Central Bedfordshire, regularly reports any issues that we have regarding traffic matters in Potton. We are currently in negotiation with CBC to facilitate traffic calming measures on the main routes into town. The Town Council have different views than those of CBC on where the allocation of £50,000 should be spent and this debate is still ongoing. There has been a reduction to 20mph in key areas of the town together with restrictions to 40mph on main roads into Potton.

The Neighbourhood Speed Watch team led by Councillor Ellison has been proactive throughout the year, monitoring and reporting any incidents of speeding in the town.

Car parking remains an issue, and the Council have liaised with residents in an attempt to address this. We have included an extension of the car park in our Market Town Regeneration Fund application.

B Housing and Development

As you will be aware, Phase 1 of the development on the Biggleswade Road has begun and the Town Council has worked closely with CBC and the developers on this project. The town has secured a site for a Community Hall as part of this development together with substantial funds towards the cost of building a facility that will provide indoor sports, a wedding venue, a base for the History Society, meeting rooms for clubs and societies as well as a base for performing arts. Particular thanks to Councillor Emery for his liaison work with the developers.

With regards to future developments, the Town Council have successfully applied for the Potton Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area, where the residents can have a say in where and how the area should be developed, both in regards to housing, retail and employment. In addition, the residents will also be able to say what support services are required eg transport and roads.

C Sports, Leisure and Facilities

This year, an inspection of the Skate Park was carried out and as a result structural repairs have been carried out. However, the condition of the Skate Park is such that it will soon need to be replaced at a cost of between £80,000 and £200,000. This will obviously be a challenge to fund.

As previously mentioned, the provision of a large multi-use hall is making good progress by the Hall for All group chaired by Councillor Emery. Potton Cricket Club have also successfully built a new pavilion at the Hutchinson Hollow.

D Young People

Apart from the continuation of provision of a youth club, there has been no progress with the action plan and so this will be a priority for 2016-17. I will therefore be seeking support from the younger residents to take this forward.

E Shopping

The seasonal market continues to operate successfully and I'd like to record my thanks to Jenny Ream for organising this. It has become a very popular event in Potton.

Councillors Gibb has worked with the businesses in the town to submit a bid to the Market Town Regeneration Fund. This bid was well received and hopefully we will get funds to make improvements to some or all of those sought.

F Environment

Following a town council meeting attended by a number of dog owners, a Responsible Dog Ownership Sub-Committee was formed and is chaired by Lisa Howard. This group met in November and January to discuss the dog fouling issues and are planning to meet again in April.

Good progress is being made on the Potton to Sandy cycle route. Councillor Gibb has led a team to develop this, liaising successfully with the RSPB and CBC to facilitate the route. Some funding for this cycle route has been provided by CBC and we have also included this in our Market Town Regeneration Fund bid. Work is planned to hopefully start work on the Potton end of the route.

The Environmental Group will also be carrying out some work on the carrot wash in Henry Smith Playing Fields on 13 March.

G Community Safety

The Town Council have had a meeting with the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss policing in Potton within the very tight budget for policing in the county. Needless to say, much of the budget is used policing the bigger towns in Bedfordshire but we were assured that Potton will not be neglected.

For 2016-17 I will be looking for people to join these various groups to take the Town Plan to its conclusion in 2019 and to start the Neighbourhood Plan. Please contact me or the clerk if interested.

Cllr Langridge thanked Mr John Hobbs.

10. REPORT FROM HALL FOR ALL:

Cllr Langridge asked if anyone would give Mr Emery's report.

Mr Hobbs volunteered to give Mr Emery's report.

In the absence of Mr Geoff Emery, Mr John Hobbs gave the following report from Mr Emery:-

In January 1994, Potton Town Council arranged for a committee to be formed to explore the construction and operation of a multi-purpose hall. The committee identified that it would be impossible to raise enough money both to buy the site and to pay for the build, so the committee concentrated on opportunities to obtain land at no or little cost. Seven opportunities were considered in the years up to 2001, but all proved unviable for a variety of reasons.

In 2011 Central Bedfordshire allocated the Land East of the Biggleswade Road as a major housing development site. As part of the Outline Planning permission, there was provision for a community building and 0.52 hectares of land. The site is to be fully serviced by the Developers, and under section 106 is to receive a cash injection of around £680,000 towards a community building.

In February 2012 a Steering Committee was formed to work on achieving the Hall and has been working hard on raising money to pay for the design costs to develop the plans, consult with stakeholders and potential users, as well as liaise with Central Bedfordshire Council's planning department.

Since our report last year Potton Hall for All has:

- Met twice with existing clubs, local residents and potential users to discuss building usage to further inform design of the building in order to prepare for planning permission. In July the Design Sub Committee was able to present an updated design concept for final instruction for Architect to RIBA stage 1-2.
- The original steering committee wound up at its AGM in March 2015 and a new Support Committee was formed to support the Charity. Cllr John Hobbs joined the Support Committee. Liz Smith joined the Potton Hall for All charity as a Trustee.
- The Hall project was accepted by the BIG Lottery funded Village SOS Programme which provides help with action planning through Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity. This was to review our fundraising plans for the design phase and help support work on the Business Plan in preparation of it being shared with Central Beds Council. Once the Business Plan is accepted by CBC this will enable the charity to be the named lead body for the S106 monies allocated to a community building and we hope also for the land transfer.
- In preparation for going to planning permission the Town Council agreed to submit the planning application on behalf of the group (when it is ready). This Town Council is in support of this project but cannot financially support it,

therefore this is one way that it can support the project at no extra cost to the people of Potton. The design will have to go to a pre-app meeting with the planning department before it goes for full planning.

- Fundraising continues to be a challenge for the design phase with a number of applications being made which did not succeed. A number of them have resulted in a much higher public profile for the project and the offer of three new volunteers.
- Community fundraising has seen the Hall for All combine forces with the Cricket Club to run the May Day Fete, appear at Potton Show and sell cakes at the Potton Apple Day. We are currently working on a new fundraising calendar of events as well as asking local businesses for help and apply to more Trusts.

We need your help

The AGM for the Charity is Monday 14th March 7.30pm at Community Centre. Following main business there will be an open Q&A session, refreshments and chance to review the latest plans.

In order to make this project a success we need the continued support of the Town Council and the people of Potton. In particular we need more volunteers to join the Support Committee. All skills are welcome but in particular those who can do community fundraising, business planning and communications. Volunteers do not have to become Trustees of the charity.

If you can't join the team of volunteers then sign up to our Facebook page or for our email newsletters (sign up list at the door).

And finally a big thank you to everyone who has helped in anyway last year!

Cllr Langridge thanked Mr John Hobbs.

11. REPORTS FROM CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL:

Cllr Langridge introduced CBC Ward Councillor Mrs D. Gurney.

Mrs D. Gurney gave the following report:-

Planning – New Local Plan.

20mph Speed Limit.

Cycleway – Sandy to Potton.

Common Road – 2 pitches have been rebuilt, which took 4 building companies as 3 companies walked off the site.

NHS Bedford Hospital – South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT).

Retention of NHS Biggleswade Hospital, query on who owns property and land.

Investigation into a Nursing Home for 24hr care in Potton is still ongoing.

Flytipping is a continuous problem.

Cllr Langridge thanked Mrs D. Gurney.

12. REPORTS FROM CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL:

Cllr Langridge introduced CBC Ward Councillor Mr A. Zerny.

Mr A. Zerny gave the following report:-

Highways

- Phase 2 - 20mph zone.
- Deepdale Speed.
- King Street parking.

Kier Homes

- Biggleswade Road development have got Kier Homes to agree to install a footpath from the development to The Hollow.
- Retention of majority of hedgerows for bat population.
- Horne Lane residents are concerned about the recent planning application, have spoken to Kier Homes.

Thanks to town cllrs for work they have carried out in the last year.

Planning

- Local Plan
- Call for Sites

Thanks for all efforts put in.

Cllr Langridge thanked Mr A. Zerny.

13. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC:

The Chairman asked if the public had any questions.

No questions from the public.

As no questions the Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

SignedChairman Dated