



# POTTON TOWN COUNCIL

## Newsletter Summer 2013



Incorporating Annual Report  
2012-2013

# POTTON TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013

## **Mr Alan Leggatt Town Council Chairman gave the following speech at the Annual Town Meeting April 2013.**

The year 2012 / 2013 has been another challenging year for your Town Council but there was much to celebrate, it being the year of the Olympics, the Queen's diamond jubilee and the biennial Party on Potton.

A letter of thanks was received from Her Majesty in response to the congratulations sent on behalf of the town in recognition of her sixty years of loyal service to the country. To mark the occasion the Town Council commissioned a bronze plaque which is now fixed to the Clock House east wall. Our thanks go to ward Councillor Doreen Gurney who finally persuaded Central Bedfordshire Council to waive the planning and licence fees for this. A row of trees has also been planted alongside the millennium path and a walnut tree was donated and planted by the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire – Mr Jack Sapsworth in the Henry Smith Playing Field.

In June, D H Barfords, chartered surveyors and planning consultants acting on behalf of landowners for the proposed development east of Biggleswade Road presented a conceptual plan of the scheme. It will comprise around 150 houses, a light industrial area and space for a potential community hall and an amenity area. The Council is monitoring this proposal very closely to ensure the best possible outcome for Potton. Meetings have also been held with the Hall for All committee in order to identify ways in which the Council may be able to assist and support the hall project.

The town plan committees have continued to be active. The Seasonal Markets have been successfully run on a quarterly basis and attendance levels remain high even in March this year when the event was hit by the severe weather.

The environmental group carried out further growth clearance by the brook in the Henry Smith Playing Field in order to provide a better environment for wildlife. Swift boxes have been fitted around the eaves of the Clock House. We are working with Sustrans to establish a Potton to Sandy cycle route via the RSPB.

The Youth Club was officially opened at the pavilion, Mill Lane on 28th June with three years funding having been generously donated by Potton Consolidated Charities to pay for professional staff and equipment. The club is well attended every Thursday with 75 twelve to eighteen year olds now on roll.

The new adult gym and children's play area were opened in the summer and have proved to be highly popular. An opening ceremony was held in October, the ribbon being cut by Charles Belcher, the chairman of Potton Consolidated Charities which kindly donated the money. Unfortunately some of the play equipment is suffering repeated vandalism and extra police presence has been requested to identify the culprits.

We would ask members of the public to be particularly vigilant and report any incidents to the police.

Traffic and parking is still a contentious issue in the town and together with the ward councillors the Council make frequent representations to Central Bedfordshire Council, Highways. We are hopeful that we will see some action in the not too distant future.

Of course the hot topic this year was the Central Bedfordshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan which came to our attention in late January. Central Bedfordshire Council was looking for 35 possible sites of which 12 were proposed in the Potton ward and neighbouring villages of Sutton, Everton and Dunton. The Town Council immediately engaged an independent planning consultant to advise how we could best respond to these proposals. A public meeting was held in February at which more than 240 residents attended. The overwhelming concern was the disproportionate number of sites proposed in the area. Following a meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Central Bedfordshire Council on 28th February, a short list was approved. This now includes one site in Potton ward and another just over the boundary between Dunton and Biggleswade. We still consider both these sites to be unsuitable for Gypsies and Travellers and we continue the fight.

Monthly surgeries were held in the Library on Saturday mornings. Different councillors attend the surgeries where the public can come along to ask questions or seek advice.

Regular meetings of the council's sub-committees took place throughout the year. These comprise Playing Fields and Allotments committee, Planning, Burials and Buildings and Facilities. My thanks go to the respective Chairmen who have the responsibility for running these meetings. They are respectively: Angus MacDonald, John Lewis, Paul Rogers and Andy Hopkins.

My thanks also go to Peter Langridge who chairs the Finance Committee which alternates fortnightly with the town council meetings.

My thanks go to Val our clerk and assistant Sarah who keep us in order and provides us with the expertise and advice we need to function and also to her entire staff who do such an excellent job of maintaining our facilities. These include the cemetery, the Community Centre and Mill Lane Pavilion halls, the public toilets, the bus shelter the many other general maintenance activities around the town.

The next year will be equally challenging. It did not get off to the best of starts when an error at Central Bedfordshire Council resulted in an incorrect Potton precept charge in council tax bills. Although the monetary sum involved was not significant it would have been nice if Central Bedfordshire Council had explained to ratepayers that it was its mistake rather than leave the impression that Potton Town Council had demanded a 9% increase.

Potton Town Council will continue to serve the residents of Potton to the best of its ability.

## POTTON TOWN COUNCIL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2012-2013

<b>Cumulative Fund Balance</b>	31.3.2013
Balance brought forward	141812
Add Total Income	213710
Less Total Expenditure	208993
	<b>146529</b>

## CASH RECONCILIATION AS AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON 31.3.13

	Premier Interest Account	12093
	Current Account	136066
		148159
	Less cheques drawn but not debited to bank account at close of business on 31.3.13	1630.56
ADD	DEBTORS	2712.76
LESS	CREDITORS	3252.69
	<b>TRUE FUND BALANCE</b>	<b>145988.51</b>
	<b>Additional investment fund</b>	
	COIF Fund	891

### **Borrowings:**

At the close of business at 31st March, 2012 there were no outstanding loans to the Council.

### **Debts Outstanding 2012/2013**

At 31st March, 2013 there were debts of 2712.76 outstanding.

### **Capital Reserves:**

The Town Council had 41229.14 Capital Reserves at 31st March, 2013

### **S137 Payments:**

The Limit of spending under S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 for this Council to 31st March, 2013 was 26146.00

Payments made under LGA 1972 Section 137	
Royal British Legion	85.00
Nest Boxes	125.00
St John's Moggerhanger	155.05
Payments made under LGA 1972 S145	
Potton Music Festival	200.00
Potton Show	100.00

**Total** **665.05**

## Balance sheet as at 31st March 2013

	Actual at 31.3.13	
	£	
COIF Fund	891	
Long Term Debtors		
<b>LONG TERM ASSETS</b>		<b>891</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	2712.76	
Payments in advance	0	
<b>Cash in Hand</b>		
Current acc	12093.38	
Deposit acc	136066.00	
Total Current Assets		150872.14
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Creditors	3252.69	
Uncleared cheques	1630.56	
Total current liabilities		4883.25
<b>Represented by:</b>		
<b>Fund Balance</b>		<b>145988.89</b>

### Ward Councillor Mrs D. Gurney gave the following report:-

Funding for improvements at the Black Cat junction on the A1 is in place and the 1st phase will begin soon. The improvements will bring benefit to local business and create more jobs.

I have received complaints from local shop keepers who had been asked by an enforcement officer to remove shop blinds. I have contacted Central Bedfordshire Council with regard to this issue.

I will once again oppose the implication of site 58, the Heath at the Full Central Bedfordshire Council meeting. I am unable to believe the stupidity of the choice of this site. I fear that all the points that I and Mr Zerny had put to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been overlooked.

There is opposition to site 58 from the local travellers who fear disruption. 20 years ago the size of the Common Road Site in Potton was reduced.

## Alistair Burt MP...

I am delighted to make a small contribution to the Potton newsletter. I thought as I had visited the East of England Air Ambulance in Cambridge on a recent Friday afternoon, a service that provides an exceptional service to our region, it provided a good reminder of some of the issues of transport and development which I know concern residents of Potton greatly. As an MP covering an area of some 270 square miles and 64 villages and towns, I am mindful of always working with others to help create balance across NE Beds when it comes to these issues.

The queues of traffic stretching away from roundabouts, and the string of lorries and cars following in single file along the non dualled section of the route demonstrated the pressure on our road system that leads to frustrated drivers finding rat runs through the villages of Beds and Cambs.

The efforts of Cllr Doreen Gurney to highlight this has led to the work soon to be done at Black Cat. I think we all know this should not be the end, but the beginning of a longer term plan to relieve congestion and free up the road system.

Inevitably this leads to pressure for new development, as it becomes more attractive to find new homes for people close to good train and car links, particularly as the regional economy continues to strengthen. Our area fits such a description and the balance between the need for homes or conservation is hard to find.

Such decisions are not easy so I appreciate hugely the work of your Town Council and your Central Beds Councillors Adam Zerny and Doreen Gurney, in tackling them. I will continue to work with them as we try to maintain Potton's rather special balance as an attractive place to live, which also makes its contribution to a thriving and growing region.

**Alistair Burt MP**

## SKATE PARK NEWS



The Town Council has decided to set aside money each year to work toward building a new skate park. The Town Council is keen to hear the views of young people as to a possible design. The Council is considering the idea of building the new park in the Mill Lane Recreation Field. Please contact the Clerk with your thoughts. In the meantime repairs are continuing at the Skate Park in the Henry Smith Playing Field.

## FRONT COVER WILD FLOWERS IN THE POTTON AREA

The photographs of cowslips, bluebells and orchids were all taken in the Potton area during our very late spring in May.

### **Mr Adam Zerny Ward Councillor gave the following speech at the Annual Town Meeting April 2013.**

The Central Beds Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision Plan is the biggest local issue of the last six months; the initial longlist of sites - with nine of the 35 in Potton ward and a further four just outside - has been a major concern.

I opposed any new sites in the ward and take no solace in seeing only one go forward to the final stage which will result in a plan going before full council on 18th April.

A site just outside the ward, on the road to Biggleswade from Dunton has also been selected. Equally unsuitable, this site is on a fast road, far from the amenities the government's guidelines suggest new sites should be in reach of.

I have raised a number of concerns over the process conducted by Central Beds, particularly the failure to consult with the public over proposed sites during the planning process. After it has been approved is too late.

On a more positive note, I have, in conjunction with my fellow ward councillor, been heavily involved in the implementation of a new Local Area Transport Plan which will, over the next two years, bring real time bus information displays to Potton, Wrestlingworth and Dunton allowing people to see when the next bus is due. A 20mph zone for Potton will also be brought in over the next few years although I will keep pressure on the council to find funding for the necessary enforcement measures which will make this more effective.

I spent a great deal of time negotiating with Central Beds last September, after the council, in their infinite wisdom, decided to cut school bus services for children attending Stratton or Sandy Upper. I'm pleased to say they eventually saw sense and resolved the matter. The moment that summed it up for me was when a resident of Sheepwalk Close informed me he'd had his cheque for bus transport returned because he had overpaid by 10 pence, The cost of the stamp to send it back must have been three times this amount.

Shortly afterwards I appeared at a Question Time session at Sandy Upper where the transport issues were raised. It was a real pleasure to see young adults so keen to become involved in the democratic process.

Parking on the Biggleswade Road, Blackbird Street junction has been a real blight in recent months. I've spent a lot of time with the Highways department pushing this issue and am hoping to have it resolved in the coming months. Delays have been caused by the relevant portfolio holder being unable to make a number of traffic management meetings. The wheels move slowly at Central Beds.

After concerns raised by a number of residents over salt bins, I was involved in negotiations with Highways to provide new bins to Judith Gardens, Market Square and Downside Gardens last winter although I pay tribute to Potton Town Council member Lynda Walton who should take most of the credit for the latter.

I have continued efforts to have the council do something about the problem of empty houses in Potton.

I have also been involved in keeping pressure on Central Beds to keep Potton Library open given so many other local authorities are cutting these facilities. I see the new facilities as a signal this is not likely to happen but I am concerned the labour-saving devices may lead to proposed staff cuts.

I have been impressed by the actions of the committee set-up to push for a new Community Hall on the proposed Biggleswade Road housing development. If we have to endure such a large new estate, I will be pushing Potton to receive the benefits.

Over recent weeks I have had long conversations with Central Beds over the errors they have caused with local Council Tax issues. Their errors rather than by Potton Town Council's.

I've spent a lot of time making Highways aware they need to put more time and effort into their planning for road closure given the extra use of Bull Street during the recent Sun Street building work. Particular concerns have been expressed over HGVs and cars driving at speed, the wrong way up this narrow street.

I have played an active role in Potton community life and have attended town markets, Party on Potton, Widdershins Theatre, Jubilee celebrations have sponsored the Music Festival and Potton United FC, and have also run in the Potton 5K race.

It's been a privilege to represent Potton over the last year and I hope to do so for many years yet.

## **POTTON TOWN PLAN:**

### **Mr Ian Clements the Town Plan Chairman gave the following speech at the Annual Town Meeting April 2013.**

This is my first annual Town Plan report having taken over the role in January this year.

The Town Plan is a document that lays down the aspirations of the population of Potton. Ideas that come from the residents to enhance the lives of the residents. The Plan is split into committees who guide and facilitate these ideas through to fruition. This is what has been achieved in the last 12 months.

#### **Shopping Committee**

The aim is to encourage people to the town to shop. To make it a place that people want to spend time in and to that end the Market Square saw some major changes a few years ago. Along with these aesthetic changes, The Shopping Committee created the Four Seasons Market held quarterly, roughly in line with the change of season. Since the first one in 2009 they have seen the market grow significantly and have built on the success by attracting new stallholders selling a wide range of high quality produce. Almost all the stallholders return to the next market keen to retain their pitch. The Market is also a great place to meet up with friends and neighbours in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Many local groups like Party on Potton, The Scouts, The Hall For All and The Potton

Ladies Group advertise their events at the market keeping the momentum of activities going throughout the year. It is through the efforts of the Shopping Committee that Potton has gained and retained the status of a Fairtrade Town.

It is without doubt that the seasonal market has the potential of being bigger and better and to that end The Committee will be advertising the market to a much wider group of new visitors. They will continually review events and stalls to ensure that they provide a good experience and appeal to shoppers and they will improve 'market research' to ensure that the market continues to appeal to customers, and complement the locally established shops. The committee has also resolved to ensure that Potton retains its Fairtrade status for the foreseeable future.

### **Environment Committee**

Most people are interested in their own environment and we all like to see Potton looking pretty, but sometimes The Council just does not have the resources to attend to the little things that make the difference. This is where the Environment Committee excels. A couple of years ago they planted dozens of daffodil bulbs in the verges and it's a delight to see them burst into life in the spring. In the last 12 months they organised two conservation volunteering sessions clearing scrub along Potton Brook in Henry Smith Playing Field to help improve the habitat for water voles. The committee has held meetings with Internal Drainage Board and the Wildlife Trust to plan the dredging and clearance of rubbish from the Potton Brook. This should have taken place some months ago but the wet weather meant it was not possible as water levels remained high throughout the summer. The committee has just finalized a 'Walks Around Potton' leaflet to be delivered to every household in Potton.

One of the biggest projects that this committee is involved in is the Potton to Sandy cycle-way. For a few years now they have been working hard to establish a route and to obtain funding. The committee has resolved to continue to negotiate with Charitable Organisations, Local and National Government Departments to obtain the necessary resources to see this project through to a successful conclusion. The committee will be working with local youth groups to clear litter from our parks and public areas as well as more scrub clearance from around the brook. It is also their intention to place pressure on CBC to provide more dog waste bins especially to the east side of Potton.

### **Community Safety Committee**

Originally set up to promote Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and link them to a common 'web' the committee never really got established. The aim this year is to promote the need for a coordinated Watch Scheme to prevent any increase in burglaries and petty crime. To ensure our streets remain safe, and to show opportunist thieves that Potton is not a place for them. The committee has resolved to liaise with local police patrols, attend meetings with them and attend training courses organized by them. We would encourage any member of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme or anyone who would like to set one up, to contact the committee through the Town Clerk.

## **OTHER NEWS FROM THE TOWN PLAN**

Volunteers are urgently needed to carry on the good work of the Town Plan Leisure Committee. Please contact the Clerk if you can help.

## PICK UP AFTER YOUR POOCH

Central Bedfordshire Council are asking dog owners to be responsible and bag and bin their dogs' waste to keep the area clean and healthy.

Not only is dog mess a nasty business, it also poses serious health risks. It can carry roundworm - containing the parasite *Toxocara canis* which can cause blindness, epilepsy, asthma and infections. So it's vital to reduce dog fouling to protect others and particularly children.

Keep Britain Tidy's latest report (2010) suggested that the UK dog population was estimated to be 8 million, with dogs producing approximately 1,000 tonnes of excrement each day.

Failing to clean up after your dog when in a public space is an offence and you could face a £75 Fixed Penalty Notice or a court imposed fine of up to £1,000. The Council is stepping up its efforts to tackle the problem and Dog Wardens are actively patrolling the area and can issue on-the-spot fines to owners for dog-fouling offences.

Councillor Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities, said: "Dog fouling is anti-social behaviour which we take extremely seriously. We know that it is a matter of concern to lots of local residents too because they have been letting us know. Unfortunately the problem lies with a selfish minority of people who don't take the legal responsibility of dog ownership seriously enough.

"We're working hard to ensure that Central Bedfordshire continues to be a great place to live and work and have upped the Dog Warden patrols and made sure that there are around 625 easy to find dog waste bins around the area. We would encourage anyone who witnesses an incident of dog fouling to report it immediately by emailing Customer Services or by calling 0300 300 8302."

So if you're walking your dog please take a doggy bag, pick up after and use the dog waste bins provided. Remember you can also use the normal litter bins if there are none nearby, or alternatively bag it and bin it at home - there are no excuses! To report a dog fouling incident or to suggest a location for a dog waste bin please email customer services on or visit the Council's website for further details. You can also call 0300 300 8302.



## REPORTING PROBLEMS

The Town Council looks after the Cemetery, the Allotments, the Henry Smith Playground, the Mill Lane Playground, the Recreation Fields, the Public Conveniences, the Brook End Car Park, the Pavilion and the Community Centre. For problems or enquiries about these facilities please contact the Clerk at the Town Council Office, Brook End. **01767 260086** [pottoncouncil@btconnect.com](mailto:pottoncouncil@btconnect.com)

A large number of highways and other problems are currently being reported to the Clerk which the Town Council has no power to overcome.

If your problem is about refuse collection, environmental issues, recycling, or street cleaning please contact:-

**Central Bedfordshire Council 0300 300 8000**  
[customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

If your problem is about safety on the roads, pot holes, problems with the pavements or hedge cutting please contact:-

**Central Bedfordshire Council Highways 0300 300 8000**  
[highways@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Town Council Information

Town Council Office, The Community Centre, Brook End, Potton SG19 2QS

Town Clerk Valerie Moles  
Telephone 01767 260086  
Email [pottoncouncil@btconnect.com](mailto:pottoncouncil@btconnect.com)  
Web site [www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk)

### Office opening hours:

Monday	9am	to 12.30am
Tuesday	9am	to 12.30pm
Wednesday	Closed	
Thursday	9am	to 12.30pm - 2pm to 4pm
Friday	Closed	

## Potton Town Councillors

Ruth Burmo	260712	Peter Langridge	260362	Paul Rogers	260977
Ian Clements	262430	Alan Leggatt	260001	Lynda Walton	261726
Mr Andy Gibb	260067	Anita Lewis	260726	Rex Whitfield	262246
Andy Hopkins	262672	John Lewis	260726	Adam Zerny	261319
Eric Jakes M.B.E.	260779	Angus Macdonald	262006		

Mr A. Leggatt is Chairman of the Town Council

Mr A. Hopkins is Vice Chairman of the Town Council

Mr P. Langridge is Chairman of the Finance Committee

Chairman of the Buildings and Facilities Committee to be arranged

Mr A. Macdonald is Chairman of the Playing Fields, Allotments and Burials Committee

Mr J. Lewis is Chairman of Planning Committee

Mr I. Clements is Chairman of the Town Plan

The Town Council meets on the first Tuesday of every month except August. Meetings are usually held in the main hall at the **Community Centre**, Brook End, starting at 7pm.

## Other Council Representatives for Potton

### Central Bedfordshire Councillors

Doreen Gurney 680395 doreen.gurney@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk  
Adam Zerny 261319 adamzerny@hotmail.co.uk

## Council Web Site

## Contacts Information Page

If you are a manager or secretary for a local organisation please have a look at the page on the Potton Council website and let me know if there are any changes I need to make to the published details for your organisation. [www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk) The original page was produced from the Town Guide and was collated a few years ago now. If you would like the details of your community group to be placed on the site please let me know. Val Moles, Clerk.

## HALL HIRE - AVAILABILITY AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AND THE PAVILION

There is a large 14 x 3.5 metre hall at the Community Centre in Brook End with a kitchen. There is also a carpeted upstairs hall 5 meters square with kitchen facilities. The upper hall is suited to smaller meetings and group events.

**There are a number of vacant sessions during the day time and at weekends at the Community Centre,** give Mrs Williamson a call to see if either of the halls would be suitable for your group or function. The centre is near to Potton Market Square for the bus route and shopping and a car park is very nearby.

The Pavilion at Mill Lane has a large 9 metre square hall and kitchen and there are facilities for people with disabilities. The floor may not be suitable for dance groups. This hall has some space for weekend functions.

**Please contact Mrs Sarah Williamson to check on availability and make a booking 01767 260086**

## Hourly Charges for Use of Town Council Facilities Community Centre, Brook End, Potton as at 1st September 2012

	Up to 5pm Weekdays	5pm to 10.30pm Weekdays	Weekends/ Bank Holidays
Main Hall	£7.00	£9.00	£11.00
Upper Hall	£4.50	£6.00	£7.00

### Mill Lane Pavilion, Mill Lane, Potton

	Up to 5pm Weekdays	5pm to 10.30pm Weekdays	Weekends/ Bank Holidays
Pavilion	£8.00	£11.00	£15.00

**To check availability please contact Bookings Clerk Mrs S Williamson 01767 260086**

### Potton Library Opening Hours

Monday	2pm to 6pm	
Wednesday	2pm to 6pm	
Friday	10am to 1pm	2pm to 6pm
Saturday	10am to 1pm	

- Free Wireless Internet transmitting 24-7
- Daily and weekly newspapers are available
- The librarian, Gillian, will be happy to answer any queries on 0300 300 8063