

POTTON TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held on
Tuesday 9th May 2023 at 7pm at the Community Centre

Present: Councillors Dr C. Craig, Mr A. Gibb, Mrs V. Gwilliam, Mr J. Hobbs (Chairman of Item 1), Mr A. Inkersole, Mr A. Macdonald, Mr D. Norman, Mr J. Price Williams (Chairman of Item 2 onwards) and Mr A. Zerny.

Absent: Councillors Mr J. Day, Mrs L. Fox and Mrs C. Leggatt.

Also present: CBC Cllr Ms T. Wye and the Town Clerk.

1. Election of Chairman

Cllr Hobbs invited nominations for the position of Chairman of Potton Town Council.

It was **resolved** that Cllr Jonathan Price Williams be appointed as Chairman of Potton Town Council.

Cllr Price Williams signed the declaration of acceptance of office and took the chair.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mr J. Day, Mrs L. Fox and Mrs C. Leggatt.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of Potton Town Council.

It was **resolved** that Cllr Vicki Gwilliam be appointed as Vice-Chairman of Potton Town Council.

Cllr Gwilliam signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

4. Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Members noted Standing Order 5ki. In an election year, delivery by the Chairman of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date.

The Chairman invited members who had not made their Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the meeting to make their declaration at the meeting.

The Town Clerk was asked to remind those members who were absent to make arrangements to make their declarations as soon as possible.

The Chairman also reminded members to complete their expenses declarations.

5. Declaration of Interest

Councillors were reminded that they should declare an interest in any matter of personal or prejudicial interest to be discussed at the meeting.

Members noted that declaring their registerable interests is a mandatory legal requirement within 28 days of taking up office and that all Town Councillors are required to submit a new declaration of interest form from 5th May onwards, including those who are returning members. The Town Clerk advised councillors that the deadline would be 2nd or 3rd June.

It was noted that Central Bedfordshire Council provides the following online e-form: <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/xfp/form/490>

6. Public Participation Session

The Chairman noted there were no members of the public present, but asked members if there were any questions the public had brought to them.

It was noted that the Coronation event had received positive feedback on Facebook.

The question was raised again about opening the Public Toilets on a Sunday. It was noted that the cost of opening the Public Toilets on a Sunday was being investigated so that the information could be fed back to the full council to decide if this was a feasible proposition.

The Town Clerk was asked to set aside the amount of £1,411.72 for the rent for Mill Lane from next financial year (2024/2025). This amount will cover the insurance Potton Consolidated Charity (PCC) pays for the Pavilion. It was mentioned to perhaps look for a contribution from Potton Tennis Club. The Town Clerk said it would be interesting to see if the Town Council then wishes to start charging PCC for the use of its buildings for PCC meetings as well as for Tablet Training and Friendship Group sessions.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th March 2023, which had been previously circulated, were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

8. Town Council Committees

Town Council accepted and adopted the following minutes and all recommendations contained from the Town Council Committee:

Planning Committee – 7th March 2023, 4th April 2023, 18th April 2023 and 25th April 2023.

Environmental Committee – 14th March 2023

Management Committee – 25th April 2023

9. Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors

The Chairman invited Cllr Wye to give a report.

Cllr Wye advised that a meeting had been arranged for Thursday 11th May with a CBC Highways Officer regarding the wall and verge outside the car showroom at 1 King Street. It is believed that Potton Vets are now the landowner. The Chairman suggested that the CBC Highways Officer could be asked if the verges could be turned into parking bays if they could be reclaimed, which could replace the two parking spaces on the Market Square permanently reserved for Electric Vehicles.

Cllr Zerny reported that the Heavy Goods Vehicle petition has passed the number of people required (close to 800 signatures). This will now go to a Traffic Management meeting, possibly in June but this is to be confirmed.

10. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities

It was noted that the schemes of delegation for the committees, sub-committees and staff will be taken to the committees, sub-committees for recommendation to Town Council.

It was proposed that the sub-committees for Christmas Lights, Commemorations and Celebrations is turned into an Events Committee.

11. Review of the terms of reference for committees

It was noted that the terms of reference for committees will be taken to the committees for recommendation to Town Council.

12. Appointment of members to existing committees

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Environmental, Management and Planning Committees.

It was **resolved** to appoint the Chairman to the following committees:

- Environmental – Cllr Gibb
- Management – Cllr Gwilliam
- Planning – Cllr Norman

The Chairman invited members to join the Environmental, Management and Planning Committees.

It was **resolved** to appoint members to committees as follows:

- **Environmental** – Cllrs Craig, Day, Fox and Gibb
- **Management** – Cllrs Craig, Gibb, Gwilliam, Hobbs, Inkersole, Leggatt, Macdonald, Norman and Price Williams
- **Planning** – Cllrs Craig, Day, Hobbs, Macdonald, Norman and Price Williams

13. Appointment of any new committees

It was suggested that the sub-committees for Christmas Lights, Commemorations and Celebrations is turned into an Events Committee.

It was **resolved** that the sub-committees for Christmas Lights, Commemorations and Celebrations is turned into an Events Committee.

The Chairman invited a nomination for the position of Chairman for the Events Committee.

It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Leggatt as Chairman of the Events Committee.

The Chairman invited members to join the Events Committee.

It was **resolved** to appoint the following members to the Events Committee: Cllrs Craig, Gwilliam, Leggatt and Macdonald.

Cllr Gibb requested the order of the agenda be suspended to give an update on 1 King Street, which had been discussed in item 9 Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors by Cllr Wye.

14. Item not on the agenda – 1 King Street

Cllr Gibb advised that Potton Vets are currently renting 1 King Street and are looking to purchase 1 King Street to relocate the practice.

15. Review and adoption of appropriate Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (Agenda item 14)

An amendment to item 12 of the Standing Orders was requested.

It was **resolved (i)** that draft minutes of meetings are served to members present at the meeting for them to review and agree. Amendments should be received by the Town Clerk within 48 hours from when the draft minutes are served to the members of that meeting. Any amendments received will be sent to the Chairman of that meeting to decide if the amendments should be agreed. If the amendments are agreed, the amendments will be made. If Chairman does not agree, the draft minutes will remain the same. The draft minutes will then be served to all members for review. Amendments should again be received by the Town Clerk within 48 hours of the draft minutes being served. **(ii)** that the Standing Orders with the above amendment are adopted.

An amendment to item 4.1 of the Financial Regulations was requested.

It was **resolved (i)** a duly delegated committee of the council can spend up the amount in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure. **(ii)** that the Financial Regulations with the above amendment are adopted.

16. Review of inventory of land and assets including buildings and office equipment (Agenda item 15)

The Council noted the Council Deeds which had been placed on the table at the meeting.

It was **resolved** to approve the asset register.

It was mentioned that the town council gazebo needs to be replaced.

It was **resolved** that the purchase of a new gazebo be considered at the next Events Committee meeting for them to put forward a recommendation to the Town Council.

17. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks (Agenda item 16)

The Town Clerk advised that this matter is outstanding and will be organised, but has not been confirmed yet as the quotation for the policy, which starts on 1st June, has not yet arrived.

18. Review of the council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies (Agenda item 17)

Members noted the subscriptions which have been provided for in the 2023/24 budget.

It was **resolved** to approve the council's and staff subscriptions to other bodies.

19. Review of the council's complaints procedure (Agenda item 18)

It was **resolved** to approve the Council's current Complaints policy.

20. Requests for information (Agenda item 19)

It was **resolved** to approve the council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

21. Review of the council's policy for dealing with the press/media (Agenda item 20)

It was **resolved** to confirm approval of the council's current policy (Media Communications Protocol which was adopted in July 2014) for dealing with the press/media.

Members discussed how the Town Council uses Facebook.

It was **resolved** that the Media Communications Protocol be reviewed by the Management Committee at its next meeting.

22. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the full council and committees up to and including the next annual meeting of full council (Agenda item 21)

Members discussed the draft meeting schedule.

The Town Clerk advised that the draft meeting schedule should be amended to include the Events Committee meeting dates.

It was **resolved i.** for the Town Clerk to amend the draft meeting schedule to include the Events Committee meeting dates. **ii.** for the amended draft meeting schedule to be emailed to members for review and comment within 48 hours.

23. Potton Federation (Agenda item 22)

Cllr Inkersole shared information about proposed changes at Potton Federation.

Central Bedfordshire Council has launched the Schools for the Future Programme with the objective of changing the county from a three-tier to a two-tier system. Potton has already taken the lead because we have already lost years 7 and 8.

Currently the three schools on Potton site are: Potton Lower School (local authority foundation school), Potton Middle School (local authority community school, and Potton Pre-School (charity run school for under 5s).

From September 2023 onwards, the lower and middle schools will be combined to form Potton Primary School which is a year ahead of other Central Beds schools. The schools will be in the Biggleswade cluster. Potton Primary School will be classified as a foundation school, without a foundation. It will still be under local authority control. Potton Lower School will change its name to Potton Primary School, but Potton Middle School will be closed as a legal entity with all the staff and assets transferred into the new school.

There is a program of building works planned for the Summer holidays, mostly in the middle school to achieve the adjustments, which is funded through the Schools for the future project. Monies may or may not come via Section 106.

The works will allow for a three form entry which should be enough to cope with the future expansion of the town. There will be a single school uniform, which will be blue and a new school logo.

The Chairman asked if members had any questions for Cllr Inkersole.

Q. A member asked if all of the assets to be transferred to the new Primary School include the land?

A. The governing body and the headteacher are taking the strong view that all of the land is necessary for the new school. However, this is not yet confirmed.

Q. A member asked if the uniform could be unbranded to allow parents to buy generic, supermarket blue uniform?

A. The uniform does not have to be branded.

Q. A member asked if the expansion of the school has been assessed alongside the Neighbourhood Plan in terms of what that future expansion might be?

A. It is considered that everything that has so far been approved in line with the Neighbourhood Plan.

A member remarked that The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan can always trump the Potton Neighbourhood Plan, so Central Bedfordshire can change that if they can make a justification for it.

Q. Can the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) trump the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan?

A. Yes.

A member remarked that The NPPF is about the actual developments themselves and what they look like, as opposed to being anything that is intended to govern planning numbers.

The NPPF determines how things are built, not where they are built.

The school has to justify the building stock, which is bigger than required; the justification is that there will more people coming through the system in the fullness of time.

A member mentioned the Community Energy discussions. This is already under consideration as part of the Community Energy Working Group.

Q. Will the catchment area change?

A. No; the only slight difference is that Potton Primary is deemed to be the Biggleswade cluster. It is not yet clear what difference this will make. Currently Potton pupils tend to go to a two-tier secondary school (e.g. Sandy or another school out of county) as currently the Biggleswade schools have not changed to the two-tier system.

24. Councillors Surgery Dates (Agenda item 23)

Members discussed about the quarterly Councillor Surgery which usually take place once a quarter on a Saturday 10am-12 noon in or outside the Library and any additional surgeries on a day convenient to a town councillor(s).

Members were asked to volunteer for 17th June and 16th September and suggest dates, times and locations for other surgeries.

Cllrs Gibb and Gwilliam volunteered for 17th June.

Cllrs Craig and Gwilliam volunteered for 16th September.

Cllr Gwilliam advised she would welcome someone else volunteering to attend one of the Councillor Surgeries instead of her.

25. Finance (Agenda item 24)

i. **To note the list of payments**

Members proceeded to go through the list of payments.

It was **resolved** that the payments from 1st to 31st March 2023 be approved.

ii. **To receive an income and expenditure by budget heading report showing progress against the budget 2022/23 at the end of March 2023**

Members proceeded to go through the income and expenditure against budget for the period to 31st March 2023.

It was **resolved** to approve the detailed statement of income and expenditure against budget.

iii. **Balance Sheet**

Members noted the balance sheet for the period to 31st March 2023.

iv. **The General Power of Competence**

Members noted the Government included a "general power of competence" in the Localism Act 2011 (Part 1, Chapter 1, ss 1-8). It was brought into force by SI (Statutory Instrument) 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 in April 2012. "The Government's intention in providing eligible parish councils with the general power of competency is to better enable them to take on their enhanced role and allow them to do things they have previously been unable to do under existing powers".

Members noted the three conditions for eligibility are set out in the Statutory Instrument as follows:

1. Resolution: the council must resolve at a meeting that it meets the criteria for eligibility relating to the electoral mandate and relevant training of the clerk.
2. Electoral mandate: at the time the resolution is passed, at least two thirds of the council must hold office as a result of being declared elected (i.e. not co-opted).
3. Qualified clerk: At the time that the resolution is passed, the clerk must hold a recognised professional qualification Certificate in Local Council Administration, AND pass the 2012 CiLCA module relating to the general power of competence (If CiLCA pre 2012).

Potton Town Council satisfies all the conditions as:

- It has 12 out of 15 councillors elected.
- The Clerk of the Council holds both the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and has passed the CiLCA module on the general power of competence.

The Town Council **resolved** from 9th May 2023, until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council, that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, to adopt the General Power of Competence.

26. To arrange the date for Councillor’s Inspection Tour (Agenda item 25)
Members were asked to consider a date for the Councillor’s Inspection Tour.

It was suggested that the Councillor’s Inspection Tour takes place after the Planning Committee on 23rd May 2023.

It was **resolved** that the Councillor’s Inspection Tour takes place after the Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday 23rd May at 6.30pm in the Cemetery Chapel.

Cllr Macdonald gave his apologies for the Planning Committee meeting and the Councillor’s Inspection Tour.

27. To arrange a date of the next meeting (Agenda item 26)

It was **resolved** that the date of the next meeting will be on Tuesday 27th June following a meeting of the Planning Committee at 7pm in the Community Centre.

28. Item not on the agenda – Market Stalls

A member asked what the town council is going to do with the four market stalls that are no longer used at the Four Seasons Markets.

It was **resolved** to consider what to do with the market stalls at the next Events Committee meeting.

29. Confidential – Staffing Matter (Agenda item 27)

The Chairman passed the following motion:

That, in pursuance of the confidential matters concerning a staffing matter, the Town Clerk was asked to withdraw from the meeting.

The council members were apprised of the discussions held by the Employment sub-committee.

It was **resolved** that all the recommendations from the Employment sub-committee were approved.

The Town Clerk was invited back in to the meeting, informed of the outcome and instructed to implement the decisions.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Signed: Date:
Chairman

Mission Statement

The aim of Potton Town Council is to serve the people of this town to the best of its ability.