

## **POTTON TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held on  
Tuesday 27th June 2023 at 7pm at the Community Centre  
following a meeting of the Planning Committee

**Present:** Councillors Dr C. Craig, Mrs L. Fox, Mr A. Gibb, Mrs V. Gwilliam, Mrs C. Leggatt, Mr A. Macdonald, Mr D. Norman, Mr J. Price Williams (Chairman) and Mr A. Zerny.

**Absent:** Councillors Mr J. Day, Mr J. Hobbs and Mr A. Inkersole.

**Also present:** The Town Clerk and one member of the public.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mr J. Day, Mr J. Hobbs and Mr A. Inkersole.

### **2. Declaration of Interest**

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

### **3. Potton Hall for All (Agenda item 12)**

The Chairman altered the order of the agenda.

The Chairman asked Cllr Gwilliam, Chairman of the Potton Hall for All Steering Group, to give an update on Potton Hall for All.

Members noted the minutes from the meeting of the Potton Hall for All Steering Group which took place on Wednesday 21st June 2023.

Cllr Gwilliam advised that the planning application has been submitted. The earliest decision date was Thursday 22nd June, but it now more likely going to be the end of the first week of July.

The planning officers do require more details of the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) [for the new design], which Phill Banks is following up with Watson & Cox.

Watson & Cox have been instructed to go on to the next phase of the cost, so an exact cost should be received soon. At the moment the plan says September, but the Steering Group is pushing for sooner. The cost for Watson & Cox to go on to phase two of the works is currently estimated at £56,000. This is not an additional cost, it is part of the overall project cost. With the phasing of payments, Watson & Cox will invoice for the next phase.

Cllr Gwilliam proposed that the town council votes to draw upon the ear marked reserves (EMR) for the £56,000, and the Hall for All will contribute £15,000 towards that cost.

It was confirmed that there is a face-to-face meeting with Potton Hall for All Steering Group and Watson & Cox at the Community Centre on Tuesday 4th July, to discuss progress and what the programme is likely to be. The deadline to submit costs and plans to Central Bedfordshire Council for release of the S106 monies is August.

It was mentioned that the Town Clerk suggested that Watson & Cox phase their charges to the town council for completed works. This will be discussed with Watson & Cox at the meeting on 4th July.

Q: A member asked if there has already been an FRA?

A: An FRA was carried out, but the consultation response was that the planning officer wants an update to the FRA.

Q: What was the previous FRA?

A: The original FRA was for a larger building into a storage facility to then run off into drainage. The exact drainage run off was never completely identified, but the aim was originally to take it by pipe down to the [Potton] Brook. However, this now needs to change. Clearly, if the flood risk and flood design is changed, there is the option of using more environmental methods as has been suggested by Cllr Day, such as a swale and run it down through the Community Orchard.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gwilliam for the update.

It was **resolved** that the town council spends £56,000 to carry out phase two of the works.

#### **4. Public Participation Session (Agenda item 3)**

The Chairman asked if members of the public had any questions and if members had any questions from the public for the town council.

A member of the public contacted the town council with regards to the works carried out on Henry Smith Playing Fields (HSPF), in particular the drainage issues on the field since the dredging of the Horse Brook has been completed and the amount of debris in the form of bricks, lumps of concrete, large stones and sections of clay draining pipes.

It was mentioned that some levelling has already been carried out. The Town Clerk advised that he has organised for contractor (Mr Cutmore) to carry out further levelling and to potentially use up the majority of the soil pile. It was mentioned that the town council is not aware that the contractor that carried out the dredging work damaged any field drains.

The Town Clerk mentioned that the dredging to the Horse Brook has potentially increased the water table and therefore the possibility of flooding to the field.

A member suggested that it would not be a good use of public funds to level to the field only to damage it again during any further works in HSPF, e.g. to replace/repair the Millennium Path.

It was **resolved** for the Town Clerk to respond to the member of the public.

#### **5. Minutes of Potton Town Council (Agenda item 4)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th May 2023, which had been previously circulated, were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

#### **6. Minutes of Annual Town Meeting (Agenda item 5)**

Members noted the minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on 18th April 2023.

**7. Minutes of Town Council Committees and groups where a Cllr(s) is(are) appointed by the town council (Agenda item 6)**

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

- Planning Committee – 9th May 2023 and 23rd May 2023 – approved.
- Potton Youth Council – 22nd May 2023 – approved.
- Events Committee – 7th June 2023 – approved.
- Environmental Committee – 13th June 2023 – approved.

A member raised a question about the minutes of the Environmental Committee held on 13th June and the reluctance to have to deal with certain areas of infrastructure (agenda item 4).

It was suggested that a reasonable way forward would be to say that infrastructure under construction as a project would fall under the Management Committee's responsibility, but once the project is complete and is part of for example the Green Wheel, it then becomes the Environmental Committee's responsibility.

The Town Clerk mentioned that the deadline to receive comments from all Environmental Committee members with respect to its Terms of Reference was 27th June. No comments had been submitted by members.

It was **resolved** for the Chairman of the Environmental Committee to update the Terms of Reference to include the amendment with respect to the Committee's infrastructure responsibilities.

A member raised a concern regarding the resolution to recommend the option for a sum from Tilia Homes for the Town Council to complete final remedial works to replant trees, hedge (parts that have perished) and shrubs in Tall Trees Public Open Space. (agenda item 14).

Q: Will the sum from Tilia Homes be large enough to be able to replace trees, shrubs and hedge plants that don't survive?

A: The sum proposed from Tilia Homes will contain enough contingency (approx. £12,000 to £15,000), and Potton Community Orchard volunteers and Hall for All Committee will water to keep plants alive.

**8. Meeting Schedule (Agenda item 7)**

At the meeting of the town council on 9th May 2023, it was resolved for the Town Clerk to amend the draft meeting schedule to include the Events Committee meeting dates.

Members were asked to confirm arrangements.

It was **resolved** to accept the proposed meeting schedule.

**9. Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (Agenda item 8)**

The Chairman invited reports from Potton's Central Bedfordshire Councillors.

Cllr Zerny gave apologies for Cllr Wye.

Cllr Zerny advised that most of his efforts in the past month have been concentrated on CBC since becoming Leader of the Council.

A member mentioned red signage on roads around Potton, which is for the replacement of overhead lines.

A member mentioned he had sent an email to Cllr Zerny with regards to flights going over Potton that were a little bit late and a bit low, and was uncertain where to complain to. Cllr Zerny advised to send the complaint by email. The member confirmed he had sent an email but had not received a response. The Chairman asked for the email to be copied to the Town Clerk.

A member asked about maintenance of verges on bridleways – in particular Old Bedford Road - which is only cut twice a year. It was suggested that the town council could take over the cutting regime from CBC for a sum.

The Town Clerk advised that he was aware that some parish councils that have been maintaining their highway verges have asked CBC to maintain it again because it is costing too much (contractors are increasing their prices). Very little funding is received from CBC for the town council to maintain its highway verges and it will cost more if the town council maintains more areas.

Cllr Zerny advised that Cllr Wye attended the Traffic Management meeting about the HGV ban in Potton. This has now been onto the next stage which will require a report to be written.

The Town Clerk mentioned that neighbouring counties/local authorities will need to be consulted.

## **10. Finance (Agenda item 9)**

### **i. To receive a report from the internal auditor's for the year 2022/23.**

Members noted the Internal Audit took place on 12th May 2023.

The council went through the internal auditor's report for the year 2022/23.

It was **resolved** to approve the final internal audit report including implanting any recommendations for the financial year 2022/23.

### **ii. To approve the accounts for the year 2022/23.**

The council went through the accounts for the year 2022/23.

A member enquired as to whether the town council is receiving better interest on its savings. The Town Clerk confirmed the town council is getting better interest but it is taken up by increased costs.

It was **resolved** to approve the draft unaudited accounts for the financial year 2022/23.

### **iii. To approve the annual return comprising the statement of accounts and the governance statement for the year 2022/23.**

The council went through the annual return comprising the statement of accounts and the governance statement for the year 2022/23.

It was **resolved** to approve the Annual Return for the financial year 2022/23 comprising the internal audit section, section 1 annual governance statement, section 2 accounting statement and to ask the Chairman and Town Clerk to sign the return and submit it to the External Auditor with any necessary additional papers.

**iv. Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st April – 30th April 2023.**

Members proceed to go through the Bank Reconciliations.

It was **resolved** that the Bank Reconciliation for 1st April – 30th April 2023 be approved.

**v. To receive an income and expenditure by budget heading report showing progress against the budget 2023/24 at the end of April 2023.**

Members proceeded to go through the detailed statement of income and expenditure against budget.

It was **resolved** to approve the detailed statement of income and expenditure against budget for the period to 30th April 2023.

**vi. Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st May – 31st May 2023.**

Members proceed to go through the Bank Reconciliation.

It was **resolved** that the Bank Reconciliation for 1st May – 31st May 2023 be approved.

**vii. To receive an income and expenditure by budget heading report showing progress against the budget 2023/24 at the end of May 2023.**

Members proceeded to go through the detailed statement of income and expenditure against budget.

It was **resolved** to approve the detailed statement of income and expenditure against budget for the period to 31st May 2023.

**viii. Grant funding from the General Power of Competence**

Members were asked to consider if they wish to make a donation from the General Power of Competence (GPC) for Potton Show following receipt of an application for funding from the Potton Show Committee for their event on 9th and 10th September 2023.

It was noted that the town council did not receive a request for a donation for the 2022 show, £150 was awarded to Potton Show Committee for the 2021 show in January 2022 and the GPC budget is currently £6,000 with £0 spend so far.

It was **resolved i.** to award £150 to Potton Show for the 2023 show, and **ii.** to keep the GPC budget at £6,000.

**11. Councillor Surgeries (Agenda item 10)**

- i. Cllr Gwilliam reported that the councillor surgery on Saturday 17th June was quiet, but there was an incidence of shoplifting at Tesco's. Our community police officer was in the town and able to obtain some CCTV footage of the offence. There hasn't been any feedback yet on the outcome. Other Potton businesses have mentioned incidences of shoplifting, but not reported them to the police. Cllr Gwilliam encouraged the business owners to report the offences to the police. A member suggested contacting the CBC Community Safety Team and Traveller Liaison Officer about the incidents.

A resident of Nursery Close has requested that double yellow lines are installed at the junction of Nursery Close and Sandy Road. Apparently a lot of childminder pick ups happen and parents parking dangerously on the corner at the junction.

PC Dave Lace is talking to Sandy Town Council and is championing Potton Youth Council. It was suggested to reach out to Sandy Town Council about our experiences of running our Youth Council so far.

It was observed that the Summer Four Seasons Market was very quiet.

A member asked if the costs are covered by the market. The Orchard stall took a record amount and sold a lot of stock. The biggest cost is staff time since the town council took over organising the market five or six years ago after volunteers decided not to run it.

A member received a comment from a member of the public that the market appears to have the atmosphere of a charity shop with five or six stalls all selling things for different charities. The market has lost the bread stall. The Town Clerk mentioned that there aren't that many charity stalls. There is a good mix of stalls. There are more charity stalls at the Winter/Christmas markets, which is to be expected at that time of year. The Hearts for Moggerhanger charity stall hasn't been recently, but took over a large area of the market and raised a great deal of funds for the charity.

It was suggested that the Events Committee should consider the Four Seasons Market and propose charges. Current charges are £15 for a pitch, £20 with electric. There are approx. 18 pitches, two are taken by the Town Council and Youth Council and Party on Potton/Potton Brewery can take up to two pitches depending on whether they bring their small or large gazebo.

- ii. Members noted the date of the planned councillor surgery on Saturday 16th September. Cllr Gwilliam had volunteered for this surgery, but is no longer available.
- iii. Members were asked to consider if they would like to set dates and volunteer for surgeries in July, August and October.

Cllr Leggatt volunteered for the October surgery, but not the same weekend as the Litter Pick (Saturday 14th October).

Cllr Fox volunteered for the September surgery.

Cllr Norman volunteered for the August surgery.

The Town Clerk requested Cllrs advise dates and times as soon as possible so that the information can be included in the July newsletter.

It was suggested that surgeries don't have to be on Saturdays. Cllr Leggatt had a successful surgery with the Friendship Group, which is held on a Thursday morning.

The surgery at the Four Seasons Markets are held for two hours, but all other surgeries can be held for an hour.

A member asked if staff can help to set up if a surgery is held on a week day.

## **12. Mill Lane Recreation Ground (Agenda item 11)**

Members noted the report from Cllr Gwilliam following a meeting with the Chairman of Potton Consolidated Charity (PCC), Charles Belcher, the Clerk of PCC, Dean Howard, and the Town Clerk which took place on Tuesday 20th June.

The meeting was to discuss the lease and the [insurance] charge of £1,411.72.

The lease in its current form will be allowed to expire at the end of its term in September 2024. The issues PCC is having with solicitors are with regard to the fact that the PCC is becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which is the corporate form of Business for Charities regulated by the Charities Commission which means it has similar liabilities to that of a limited company. It is a very slow process.

PCC has been advised by the Charities Commission they are not compliant with best practice and that they should recover all costs that they have to expend on Mill Lane Recreation Ground.

Cllr Gwilliam suggested to PCC that she would propose that the town council pay the insurance charge as invoiced, but that the money should be returned to the town council by the PCC. The response was non-committal. The Town Clerk raised a query at the meeting with PCC, that if they return the amount to the town council, we may not get the donation to Christmas lights. It was pointed out that the town council permit PCC to use town council facilities free of charge each year even though town council operates at a loss in supporting them. The future lease will require the town council to pay the annual insurance charge. Will the town council start to charge PCC for use of its buildings?

Q: A member asked what the costs are to town council?

A: The Town Clerk advised that currently the town council pays £25 for insurance annually. In 2020, Mill Lane Recreation Ground including the Pavilion cost the town council £47,000. In 2021, it cost £42,000 and last year it cost £37,000. Some income is received from the football association for a lot of the maintenance of the football pitches. We generate very little income from the building even though we keep our rates low; if we increase them we will lose the hirers. What the town council charges is similar to what others charge in the town.

It was suggested to not renew the lease or manage the facility. By the time the lease will be renewed, the Hall for All will be being constructed and the town council will be maximising revenue from that to make sure it is successful. The play equipment at Mill Lane Recreation Ground is coming to the end of its life and there is an expectation from the PCC for the town council to maintain and replace.

If the town council does not renew the lease, the Tennis Club and History Society would have to deal with PCC.

The town council needs to decide what is best for the town – providing Mill Lane Recreation Ground as an asset for the town or looking at getting value for money elsewhere? It would be an easy decision to make if we knew where we were with the Hall [for All], etc.

The Town Clerk asked PCC [at the meeting on 20th June] how much they would sell Mill Lane Recreation Ground for?

It was **resolved i.** that the town council will pay £25 for insurance as per the current signed lease, and **ii.** to offer to work with PCC in the interests of the town in how the new lease is developed.

**13. Items for the next meeting agenda**

Members were asked to consider items for the next meeting agenda.

The Chairman asked members to email any items for the next meeting agenda to the Town Clerk.

**14. To arrange a date of the next meeting**

It was **resolved** that the date of the next meeting will be on Tuesday 5th September following a meeting of the Planning Committee which starts at 7pm in the Community Centre.

Cllr Norman gave his apologies for the meeting on 5th September.

**15. Confidential Commercial Matter**

Councillor Jonathan Price Williams (Chairman) passed the following motion: That, in pursuance of the confidential matters concerning a commercial issue, members of the press and public were asked to withdraw from the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.10pm.

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.