



POTTON
TOWN COUNCIL

News

February 2024 Edition

www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk



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Chairman's message

Hello and welcome to the February 2024 edition of the Town Council quarterly newsletter.

Since the last edition of the newsletter, we have had **Potton's Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade**, and I was delighted to see so many residents attend. The Tommies were out on parade again around Potton at the Old Railway Station, Potton Primary School, St Mary's Church, the War Memorial and in the Market Square including Tysoe's excellent window display!



Photograph © Matthew Ayres



Left to Right: **Deputy Lieutenant Chris Kilroy MBE** and **Town Council Chairman Cllr Jonathan Price Williams**

Photograph © Chris Miles

Thank you Andy

I would like to thank Andy Gibb for his tenure of over 10 years as a councillor of Potton Town Council. Andy resigned in the Autumn and his contribution to various environmental projects, which include Potton to Sandy Cycleway, The Living Churchyard, Potton Community Orchard to name a few since 2011 will be sorely missed.



Welcome councillors

A warm welcome to our two new councillors, Cllrs Guy Horsfall and Robert Kett who were both recently co-opted to the Town Council. See pages 8 and 9 for more information on Guy and Robert. The Town Council still has two councillor vacancies to fill, and more information on how to apply is on page 6.

What a wonderful Christmas!

Christmas is over and it was a success and enjoyed by all those who came along to the **Big Switch-on**. The weather was kind in that it stayed dry albeit chilly, but there were plenty of opportunities to warm up with food or a cup of something warming. The success is due to all the volunteers who give up their time to put up the lights around the square and support

the activities on the day. So, three cheers and many thanks to all of Santa's helpers, capably organised by the Christmas Lights Sub-committee, who beavered away to make it a success and we wait in anticipation to see what they come up with this year. Many also donated and here I must thank those local businesses who did so; Deepdale Trees, Clayton's Butchers and Potton Food Store.



Council Tax

As we all know, the price of everything has gone up, and this is the case for the Town Council as well. Last year we decided not to increase the Council Tax, but this year we've no choice, so we've carefully considered what we need, want and can do, but have come to the conclusion we're going to have to increase the Council Tax by 10%. This may seem a lot, but is in fact 31 pence per week for a band D property, which is nominal compared to the rise that CBC are likely to be levying.

See page 10 for more information.

Party on Potton!

What have we all got to look forward to this year you may ask? Well, it's **"Party on Potton"** year so remember to put a note in your diary for this year's Big Weekend from **Friday 23rd to Monday 26th August**. It's always a good event enjoyed by many, some 5,000-ish folk in all attended various events at the 2022 Big Weekend. In these economically challenging times, it is a good way of families having some fun in the Summer. There will be more information in forthcoming editions of the Town Council newsletter in advance of the Big Weekend and on the POP website <http://www.partyonpotton.org.uk/>.



Millennium Path - Your views

Some time back we asked for your views on the Millennium Path, and its replacement was what people wanted. After the successful works on the Horse Brook, I'm pleased to be able to tell you that the path is now scheduled to be replaced as part of the ongoing Henry Smith Playing Fields improvement works, and weather permitting it should be complete by late Spring. This does mean that again for a period during Spring there will be some disruption in the playing fields, but please bear with us as the gain will be worth it leaving us with a path that should last for many years to come and be far more friendly for all users.

Find out more on page 12.

Potton Hall for All

Construction of the Hall for All will be starting soon, once some minor planning conditions have been satisfied. Hopefully it will be underway by the time you read this. It will be an asset to the town once complete and up and running allowing many more activities to happen in walking distance of all Potton residents. If anyone has suggestions of activities or events they would like to see, please tell the Hall for All or one of your councillors, remember it's your facility once built. The plan is to have a formal opening next Winter.

See page 20 for more information.



Elections in 2024

The elections for the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner take place on **2nd May 2024**, and it's likely we will all have our chance to go to the polls and elect the next national government later this year, and I strongly encourage you to do so if you're eligible. You need to make sure if you've moved to the area, just turned 18, or just haven't voted before, that you are on the electoral register. Further information is to be found here <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

Antisocial behaviour

Again, it is with regret that I note there have been some incidences of antisocial behaviour some involving the use of catapults. Please be assured that this sort of incident is taken very seriously by Bedfordshire Police, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and the Town Council.



Do report incidents of such behaviour to the Police on 101 and please also make the Town Council aware.

Four Seasons Market



Sat 16th March

9am - 1pm



For more information visit pottontowncouncil.co.uk/four-seasons-market

And finally ...

I am holding a Community Celebration on **Monday 26th February** at Potton Primary School. The details are being finalised and more detailed information will be posted to the Town Council's website and social media as it becomes available.

I hope you enjoy this edition.

Jonathan

Cllr Jonathan Price Williams

Vacancy for Potton Town Councillors

An opportunity to be part of your community

A candidate for the Town Council is qualified if at the time of nomination, they are:

1. a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any member state of the EU
2. at least 18 years of age
3. meet at least one of the following four qualifications:
 - Is on the list of electors for the town or during the last twelve months you:
 - occupied land or property in Potton as owner or tenant.
 - had your principal place of work here.
 - lived in, or within three miles of Potton.

A Town Councillor is unpaid and gives their time for free to the community on a voluntary basis.

Any interested parties must make an application in writing to the Town Clerk, Mr Jonathan Whitehurst at Potton Town Council, The Community Centre, Brook End, Potton, Bedfordshire SG19 2QS **by 9am on Thursday 29th February 2024** and include the following information:

1. reason for wishing to be a Councillor;
2. previous Community/Council work;
3. other skills you can bring to the Council.

For further information please refer to the town council's Co-option procedure in the 'Our Council', 'Policies' section of the website.

Please note it is a condition of a Councillor that a means of contact by telephone and/or email will be public information.

If you require any additional information, please contact the Town Clerk either by email or phone.

Email: pottoncouncil@btconnect.com
Phone: 01767 260086

Applications will be considered at the Town Council meeting on **Tuesday 5th March 2024** following the Planning Committee meeting starting at 7pm.

Town Council Information

For enquiries regarding the following: Cemetery, Allotments, Henry Smith Playground, Mill Lane Playground, Recreation Fields, Public Conveniences, Brook End Car Park, Mill Lane Pavilion and Community Centre, or if you wish to contact a member of staff please email pottoncouncil@btconnect.com or call **01767 260086** and leave a message.

You can find lots of information on the Town Council website:
www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk or [@PottonTownCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/PottonTownCouncil) or [@pottoncouncil](https://www.instagram.com/pottoncouncil)

Town Council Meetings

Dates of Town Council meetings starting at 7pm. Visit www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk/agendaminutes/ for more information.

Tuesday 5th March 2024
Tuesday 7th May 2024

Councillor Surgeries

Held outside the Library or inside the Library if bad weather.

Saturday 16th March 2024
Cllrs Angus Macdonald and Dan Norman (10am-12pm)

Town Councillors

Charles Craig	260047	Robert Kett	261658
John Day	07986 124440	Carol Leggatt	260001
Leane Fox	07806 593650	Angus Macdonald	262006
Vicki Gwilliam	07958 981602	Dan Norman	260643
John Hobbs	260710	Jonathan Price Williams	07981 350359
Guy Horsfall	07957 319520	Adam Zerny	261319
Andrew Inkersole	261966		

For more details on each of the councillors, please visit www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk/who-we-are

Central Bedfordshire Councillors

Tracey Wye	0300 300 8528	Adam Zerny	0300 300 8540
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Get your local news into the Town Council Newsletter

If you would like information to be included in our next newsletter, please email: pottoncouncil@btconnect.com

Please be aware that the Town Council reserves the right not to include articles and images. Potton Town Council, The Community Centre, Brook End, Potton SG19 2QS

Please recycle this newsletter
when you've finished reading it by putting it in your green recycling bin.

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Cllr Guy Horsfall

I moved to Potton in 2004 with my wife and two young children, before that we lived in Welwyn Garden City.

Both children have left home since graduating from university. We've been involved in many aspects of Potton life over the years, with Rainbows, Brownies, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts all featuring at various points in my children's upbringing. We had an allotment for a few years too.

I work for a fibre optical infrastructure provider, based in Milton Keynes. My wife and I also own and run the Potton Brewing Company. The brewery is deepening our social and commercial links in the town.

As I have more free time than I used to, and having enjoyed living in Potton for over 19 years and seen it change dramatically in that time, I put myself forward to be a town councillor so that I can contribute more to the community. I am really looking forward to being able to work with the other councillors, and residents, to enhance and maintain the town and the community we are all a part of.



Guy Horsfall

Cllr Guy Horsfall

General Assistant Vacancy

We are looking to appoint an enthusiastic and reliable General Assistant to carry out caretaking, maintenance and ground-keeping activities.

The position is initially for 15 hours per week and overtime for additional hours (times to be confirmed – NJC Scale Point 4 currently £12.01 per hour) and is an ideal opportunity for a responsible person, who has pride in their work, a conscientious attitude towards work duties, is able to maintain a high standard of work and would like to work for the local community.

You can contact the town council for an application pack or download it <https://www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk/vacancies/>. Please note CV's will not be accepted.

Completed applications should be returned to Jonathan **Whitehurst, The Town Clerk at Potton Town Council, The Community Centre, Brook End, Potton SG19 2QS** or pottoncouncil@btconnect.com.

Closing Date: Applications will be considered on receipt and interviews conducted accordingly. The vacancy will close on appointment of a suitable candidate.

Cllr Robert Kett

I am originally from Norfolk but my wife and I settled in Potton in 2006, following my career as an army officer.

During my time in the Army I truly saw much of the world from Europe, to Australia, the USA and the Far East. I also saw operational service in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq and Africa.

Upon retirement in 2008, I started work as a civilian with the United Nations (UN) in New York and Norway, but mostly in Africa with two peacekeeping missions. The work within the UN was very rewarding, assisting displaced people in Liberia and South Sudan and ensuring they were protected and able to live peacefully. I was also heavily involved in peace negotiations between rival factions. After some eight years I became fully retired and returned home to join my wife in Potton.

Once settled again, I started work with the RSPB as an unpaid volunteer, helping on the visitor interface side of things and later as a Roving Ranger, patrolling the RSPB Reserve. This has proved to be a worthy and enjoyable occupation that allows me to be close to nature and the environment and in turn assisting a worthy charity.

Having settled after two very full and rewarding careers, I felt that I now had some time and experience to devote to assisting others. I decided to become a councillor in order that I might give back a little. To that end I have participated in the Potton neighbourhood Planning Group, I helped draft the Potton Green



Infrastructure Plan and I am currently a member of the Potton Green Wheel planning team. I am hoping to further my interests in nature and environmental matters where I can within Potton Town Council.

I am looking forward to working alongside the other councillors to help make Potton a better place for all to live.

Robert Kett

Cllr Robert Kett



Town Council Budget

The Town Council is funded through a small portion of the Council Tax known as a precept and by income it generates.

On Tuesday 9th January 2024 Potton Town Council held a meeting of the full Town Council, where the 2024-25 budget and precept was set. It was voted to increase the council tax by 10%, to ensure a fiscally responsible budget. Potton Town Council increased Band D by £1.33 per month or £15.93 per year.

At the time of going to press Central Bedfordshire Council is proposing to increase their part of the council tax as follows: Band D - £6.94 per month or £83.28 per year.

The town council does not receive any funding from central government, and following the decision not to increase the council tax in 2023-24 it has been affected by rising energy costs, inflation and salary cost increases. We are committed to maintaining our existing services to support Potton residents.

The total Council tax bill in Potton will provide for Central Bedfordshire Council, Potton Town Council, Bedfordshire Police and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Town Council Budget
£451,358
Council Tax Income
£406,358
Raised Income
£45,000

Where we spend your money

The town council spends your money to provide various community services and awards grants to other organisations so that they can provide services to the community. Below are a few examples of where we spend your money...



Your local environment

Millennium Path

Following responses received in favour of replacing and levelling the path the town council has gone out to tender for the procurement of civil engineering works for the removal of the existing footpath and installation of a new wider footpath including 64 bi-directional solar powered road studs. The town council at their meeting on the 9th January 2024 awarded the contract to carry out the work. The work will be completed before the end of May 2024 and we apologise for any inconvenience caused whilst the works are being undertaken.



© Matthew Ayres

Grass Cutting

The town council arranges for grass cutting to be undertaken in various parts of the town and this includes Henry Smith Playing Fields, Mill Lane Recreation Ground, St Mary's Churchyard, Potton Cemetery, Allotments and Highway Verges.

The town council went out to tender for grass cutting for 2024. Following the recommendation from the Environment Committee the town council awarded the contract to Reynolds Landscaping who also undertook the grass cutting in 2023.



Henry Smith Playing Fields



Tall Trees Open Space

The town council are continuing to press Tilia Homes for completion of defects at the Tall Trees public open space. It is exploring alternative options with Tilia, such as Tilia paying the town council to undertake completion of the work. Once these issues are resolved, the overall responsibility of the site can be handed over to the town council for management and maintenance. Until then, any issues with the open space will remain the responsibility of Tilia Homes. Once handed over, we can arrange for the installation of the long-planned sculptures for the site.

Tall Trees Sculpture Project

Paul Pibworth local artist, sculptor and journeyman has been progressing with producing the Shire Horse sculpture for Tall Trees public open space. Paul previously produced the Spread Your Wings sculpture, which takes the form of a swallow in flight and is located in Henry Smith Playing Fields. Once the land transfer has taken place, the Shire Horse and the Apple sculpture will be installed in the Tall Trees open space. Work to the sculptures, which can only be undertaken once both sculptures are in place, will then be completed.





Help clean up our streets

Join the Great British Spring Clean



SATURDAY 9TH MARCH 2024

FROM 10AM-2PM

The Community Centre, Brook End, Potton SG19 2QS

#GBSpringClean

Potton Spring Litter Pick and Footpath Gardening Session

The Spring litter pick is scheduled to take place on **Saturday 9th March 2024 between 10am and 2pm**. Volunteers will meet as usual at the old telephone exchange next to the Community Centre in Brook End between 10am and 2pm. All litter pickers, rubbish bags, hi-vis vests and route to follow will be provided. Please bring your own gloves.

Meanwhile on **Sunday 10th March 2024 from 10am**, we will also be holding a Spring gardening session at the Meeting Lane community garden from 10am. Everyone is welcome to come along and help. If you are doing so, please remember to bring with you garden gloves, and other suitable garden tools such as forks, spades, hoe, and secateurs or loppers for any pruning of plants that may be required.



We look forward to seeing you there!

Rights of Way Volunteers

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has established a network of volunteers to support maintenance of the Right of Way network across the region and would like to try and put together a group in Potton.

They are looking for enthusiastic and motivated groups of people, who make use of the rights of way network, to help keep the paths tidy and safe to use. Ideally, each parish has a group of volunteers with whom CBC work and support. The work tasks are mainly 'hands on' with volunteers using hand tools. Training is also available through

LANTRA courses to use brush cutters and hedge cutters for larger maintenance issues, if required.

Contractors undertake much of the work and volunteer groups are required to help with gateways, bridges, and interim tidy ups along the paths. As well as maintenance volunteers, there are also volunteers that survey and report issues.

In addition to training, equipment and PPE will be supplied to support the work. They would liaise with their Rights of Way Officer, who will help them identify which paths need attention.



If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the town council on **01767 260086** or email **pottoncouncil@btconnect.com** by **Monday 18th March 2024**.

D-Day remembered

In 2024 the UK will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings on 6th June 1944 with a series of major commemorations and events across the UK and in France.



Also known as D-Day, the historic operation saw the Allied Forces mount a large-scale invasion of Nazi-occupied France that ultimately tipped the course of the Second World War in the Allies' favour.

Potton will play its part in commemorating D-Day with the following;

- **8am The Proclamation in the Market Square by the Town Crier**
- **9.15pm Lighting of the Beacon in Henry Smith Playing Fields**
- **9.15pm International Tribute in Henry Smith Playing Fields**



Potton Community Agent



Supporting the over 60's in Potton
Tel Andrea 07590 359630 (working Weds & Thurs only)
Email **andream@bedsrcc.org.uk**

Tablet Training on Wednesdays 10am to 12pm and Friendship Group on Thursdays 10am to 12pm both in the Community Centre, Brook End, Potton.

For more information on what Andrea can help you with visit **<https://bedsrcc.org.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/village-community-agents/>**

Kindly funded by Potton Consolidated Charity with support from Potton Town Council.

Community Safety

Author: Cllr Charles Craig



Calling all (responsible) dog owners:

I heard of a horrendous incident that caused great distress and discomfort to one of our residents recently. This young person is a manual wheelchair user out by herself. Unfortunately, despite routinely keeping a lookout while out and about, a wheel on the chair ran through some dog poo and, as you can imagine, made a terrible mess on her chair and hands. As, at the time, she was taking the opportunity of a gap in the rainfall to get out for some fresh air and exercise, she had not brought her usual materials to get the mess off. **THIS SIMPLY SHOULD NOT BE HAPPENING.** Fortunately, a passing (responsible) dog walker was armed with suitable materials to help.

During these dark nights, dog walkers should be taking their dogs for walks on leads; they should have a torch, poo-bags (sufficient to be sure of having at least 2 bags when they return home) and tissue in case of a particularly messy 'jobbie'. Of course, any dog walker seen leaving their dog's poo is subject to social displeasure, as well as a fine.

There has been a noticeable increase in uncollected dog poo around our pathways.

It would help considerably if dog owners collected additional dog poo – particularly if there is some nearby your own dog's doings! Other residents could also make use of the dog bags provided if necessary. However, the primary responsibility is with the dog owner (obviously).

All residents can also help to keep Potton looking good by not dropping litter – which often can be dangerous to pets and our wild animals – as well as lifting carelessly discarded litter and putting it in a bin. You can also join in the organised litter picks (next on Saturday 9th March 2024).



Engine Idling

If you drive a vehicle, one way you can save money on fuel – as well as helping improve air quality – is to be aware of engine idling. This is where your engine's running, but you aren't going anywhere. Perhaps you're picking up a child from school or waiting outside a shop while your partner pops in to buy something.

Central Bedfordshire Council has recently conducted a digital campaign about engine idling that was viewed over half a million times – if you live in the area, you may have seen one of our adverts.

Whilst your engine is running, your exhaust is pumping out up to 100 balloons'-worth of harmful gases every minute, and when you're stationary, those gases hang around your car to be breathed in by you, your passengers, and those nearby. Poor air quality has a number of impacts on health and particularly affects the young, the old and the vulnerable. You're also wasting fuel without moving. Unnecessary engine idling is an offence under the Road Traffic Act, and could earn you a fine in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

So here's how you can help save yourself money as well as helping to improve air quality.

You can use your car's stop-start technology, if it has it – modern cars are designed to cut off the engine to save fuel. Research has shown that for most cars, if you are going to be stationary for more than 10 seconds, it will take less fuel to restart the engine than to keep it running. If you don't have this technology, just consider switching off when you're going to be stationary for a while – every minute counts.

For more information about Central Bedfordshire Council's engine idling campaign please go to our website using the QR code below.

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/214/engine_idling/1511/engine_idling



Every minute counts



Central Bedfordshire

Every minute you leave your engine running while you wait causes more harm, especially to children

Your meeting. Your town.



Annual Town Meeting Tuesday 16th April at 7pm

The Annual Town Meeting will be held by Potton Town Council at the Community Centre, Brook End on **Tuesday 16th April at 7pm**. It is a chance for residents to talk to their town council about issues of concern in Potton.

Chairman, Cllr Jonathan Price Williams, will speak about what has been achieved in the year, what is planned for the future and answer questions.



Members of the public may address the meeting and raise any issues they feel should be considered in the future. If you wish to participate, please contact the Town Clerk at **pottoncouncil@btconnect.com** by 9am on Monday 15th April giving your name and address.

So come along, meet the people who represent your views and tell them how well you think they are doing and what you feel should be their next priority.

This is **your meeting** about **your town**. Please join us!

Planning Obligations - Healthcare

A planning obligation (Section 106)

is a legal agreement between the planning authority (Central Bedfordshire Council), the developer and other interested parties. By law they must be:

- **necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms**
- **directly related to the development**
- **fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development**

Each Section 106 (S106) Agreement will state how to spend contributions. Where a specific purpose has been written into the agreement, the contribution must legally be used for that purpose only. If the obligation involves a financial contribution, this can only fund capital investment and should be spent within an agreed timeframe. Any unspent money after this time is returned to the developer.

CBC on their website on 17th January 2024 advise in the S106 Potton report, (agreements signed between 01/01/2000 and 27/04/2023), Healthcare has been allocated £310,489.36 of which £224,244.02 is available to be spent now.

The town council has been in contact with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board who are the Spending approval body for S106 Healthcare in Potton, to ask them what project(s) are planned and how these projects will assist the patients in Potton.

SECTION 106

The Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board have responded with the following;

'We can confirm there is currently no live project underway with Greensands Surgery in Potton at the moment. We periodically review S106 that is available to health, we've made the practice aware of the S106 that is available and will work with them to come up with plans for how it can best be used to benefit their patients.'

Central
Bedfordshire





Potton Hall for All

Registered Charity number 1158751

We are pleased to update you that since the last newsletter Central Bedfordshire Council has agreed to release the Section 106 monies to Potton Town Council for use in the project.

In addition, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have confirmed that Potton Town Council can take out a loan. The grants that have been awarded to the charity have all now been received. This means that the main build is fully funded.

Preparation for hall build is moving into its final stage with work to discharge planning conditions before work commences on site this Spring. Final scrutiny of the build contract is underway and we expect to have this signed in the next few weeks.



Potton Hall for All charity and Friends of Potton Hall for All have held a number of additional fundraising events including an hilarious Halloween themed Murder Mystery Dinner staged by Potton Playhouse. This event also benefitted Potton Scout Group. Local band Drunk and Disorderly kindly offered to play at our New Year's Eve bash which was thoroughly enjoyed by all!

Both events were a sell out and raised much needed funds which will be used for additional costs that arise during the preparation phase plus the items which are not included in the cost plan e.g. equipment. Our next fundraiser will be a stall at the Spring Four Seasons Market, where we will be able to update you further on progress.

If you would like to get involved in the project, volunteers are always welcome. Whether it is fundraising, running an event or using your professional experience to help the project. Get in touch either via the Potton Town Council office or via Potton Hall for All website www.pottonhallforall.org.uk

Potton Library

A community hub and resource offering a local and sustainable way of learning and reading

Borrowing

- A great selection of books for children and adults.
- Free requests
- 500 / 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles
- Automatic email reminders
- From 1st January 2024, there are no fines on children's books that are overdue

The Library Online & APP

- The Bedfordshire Libraries APP is free to download. Browse, request & renew, and a digital form of your library card
- Free eBooks, audio books magazines, & newspapers from Libby, Borrowbox, and PressReader
- Britannica Library – age-related facts for homework



For Children

- Crafts and Lego both available Saturdays 1pm - 3.30pm
- Crafts, activities and competitions during all school holidays
- A Story & Rhyme time Saturday mornings on selected dates

I.T.

- Free P.C. use
- Facilities to print onto A4, & to Photocopy.
- WIFI - search for 'CBC_PUBLIC'

Volunteers

The library welcomes volunteers to its team of regular helpers. We recruit Duke of Edinburgh and young volunteers in the summer holidays to assist with our Summer Reading Challenge.

Opening Times

Tuesday	9:00am - 1.00pm
Wednesday	2:00pm - 6.00pm
Thursday	9:00am - 1.00pm
Friday	9:00am - 1.00pm
	2:00pm - 6.00pm
Saturday	9.00am - 4:00pm

Telephone 0300 3008063

Website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/libraries

Working within the Community

- The library welcomes new members to all its groups
- The library hosts a light walking group Tuesdays at 10am
- Knitting group meets fortnightly – bring your own project, or knit squares for community projects
- Wellness colouring and puzzles for adults Wednesdays 2pm - 3.15pm during term time
- A monthly poetry group
- The library is hosting Caroline, of Potton Gardeners for organised monthly dates from March 2024
- Further details & news is on our noticeboard.
- We receive small numbers of donations of good quality, new books, puzzles and wool, but due to our small size, please discuss with staff beforehand
- Community booksale



News from The Benefice



We continue with our normal pattern of services, to be found in our weekly, Benefice - wide, free, weekly newsletter, *The Link*.

You can be added to the list of Link readers by contacting sundaylink@blunham.com. Meanwhile, in the run up to Easter we shall be running six, weekly, sessions, under the Start! banner, which will last about an hour to help everybody explore their faith. Please visit our website pottonparishchurch.org.uk for details.

Our Open the Book Team visited Potton PS in November, to read and perform to the children and we are thrilled that our monthly Family and Friends service continues to provide such a wide variety of activities. Friends and Family are held on the first Sunday of every month except for August and January.

We launched our new, free, venture called The Link Cafe in September, holding get togethers from 10am to 1pm on the last Saturday of the month. It has been a joy to see so many people supporting it. Following its success we shall be continuing the Cafe through 2024.

We have two external concerts planned in St Mary's, this year, when we stage The Passion on 23rd March and a gala evening of Gilbert and Sullivan songs on 19th October. Please note the dates in your diary and support these events.

Our magnificent Events Team have great plans for 2024 and these are posted regularly on our website pottonparishchurch.org.uk/ (Calendar), [Twitter@StMarysPotton](https://twitter.com/StMarysPotton).

We are here for you.

Need support? Please contact alex.wheatley.lector@gmail.com or call **01767 764062**. Please also remember you do not need to be a church goer to ask for any help.

We ask that you please keep the troubled areas of the world in your prayers.

Veg Box Donation Scheme (VBDS)

Author: Sharon Mey

In January, gyms bring out dusty equipment ... and pack it away in February when the resolutions fade! As important as it is to look forward, it's equally important to look back.

2023 was a good year for VBDS:

- registration as a charity with the Charity Commission;
- veg box deliveries slowly grew to a new record in December;
- increased funding and donations, including from the National Lottery Fund;
- volunteer numbers grew and first staff member appointed;
- recipe cards added to veg boxes;

But most of all we continued doing what we do best – delivering fresh, healthy veg boxes to those in need in our community.

In *Hit the Ground Kneeling: Seeing leadership differently* by Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, he recommends, when 'tasks become ends in themselves rather than steps towards the goals and desires that used to motivate us', taking regular time-outs to reorient ourselves with our 'first love'. The beginnings of VBDS date back to a passion for vegetable gardening and healthy eating, and a desire to share the excess at the allotment with those in need in our community - our 'first love'. The vision was ignited by an ancient, biblical and lost custom of gleaning: not reaping the corners of a field, and not going over the field again after the first harvest, to allow the 'poor and foreigners' to collect what was left behind.

We had ourselves experienced difficult times financially and understood the despair, helplessness and embarrassment, and the kindness of those who helped us.

Thanks to the generosity of the Potton Allotment gardeners, support from Andrea MacAdam at BedsRCC and Cllr Tracey Wye, and financial support from Potton Consolidated Charity, we delivered our first veg boxes in Potton in June 2020. And as the saying goes, 'the rest is history'. In 2023 we delivered 1,500 veg boxes, benefiting 4,000 individuals in Potton, Biggleswade, Sandy and surrounds.



'Beginnings', Andrea MacAdam, BedsRCC and Sharon Mey, VBDS



You can help too! Check us out at www.vbds.org.uk, www.facebook.com/vegboxdonations/, or email hello@vbds.org.uk for more info.

Vacancies for Potton Youth Councillors

We believe that young people are the future of our communities and we feel it is important that we as a town council invest in them. Potton Town Council supports Potton Youth Council in achieving the following objectives:

- To develop a culture of participation in the democratic process and to develop an awareness of citizenship.
- Be empowered to take decisions and actions to improve the community they live in.
- Form partnerships with local and national organisations.
- Promote respect for each other and the community.
- Encourage all young people to have a voice and believe their views are valued.

If you would like to be a part of this exciting adventure you must fulfil the following criteria:

- Potton resident and/or attend a school and/or organisation in Potton.
- School Year 5-13.
- Have consent from a parent or guardian.
- Commit to attending meetings.

If you can satisfy all of the criteria and are interested, please complete the application form along with the parent/guardian consent form, which you can download from: <https://www.pottontowncouncil.co.uk/vacancies/>

Please send the completed form to:

Mrs Claire Massey, Clerical Assistant, Potton Town Council, The Community Centre, Brook End, Potton, Bedfordshire SG19 2QS

or email to: pottoncounciladmin@btconnect.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

Potton Youth Council

Hello! My name is Max, and I am writing for Potton Youth Council for this edition.

The Youth Council works on so many projects, and would love those of you reading to join, or implore your kids to do so! In 2023 we were involved in planning projects for young people in the community, such as the new youth shelter at Henry Smith Playing Fields.

We also do fundraising throughout the year, and last year we raised nearly £400 for Cancer Research UK. This year our chosen charity is Dementia UK.

Please consider joining; a fresh face is always welcomed and valued. There is more information above about how you can apply to become a Youth Councillor.

We look forward to hearing from you!



Left to right: **Carly, Milly, Vanessa Eggerdon (representing Cancer Research UK), Sam, Evie and Max**

