

POTTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held on
Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7.10pm at the Community Centre
following a meeting of the Planning Committee

Present: Councillors Dr C. Craig, Mr J. Day, Mrs V. Gwilliam, Mr G. Horsfall (Item 4 onwards), Mr A. Inkersole, Mr R. Kett, Mrs C. Leggatt, Mr A. Macdonald, and Mr J. Price Williams (Chairman).

Absent: Councillors Mrs L. Fox, Mr J. Hobbs, Mr D. Norman and Mr A. Zerny.

Also present: The Town Clerk and three members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs L. Fox, Mr J. Hobbs and Mr D. Norman.

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.

Cllr Gwilliam advised that she is a member of the Party on Potton Committee and will abstain from voting on agenda item 8.8.

3. Co-option of a Town Councillor

Members were asked to consider an application from an elector to join Potton Town Council.

It was **resolved** to elect Mr Guy Horsfall as a councillor of Potton Town Council.

The Chairman invited Cllr Horsfall to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and join the meeting.

4. Millennium Footpath Tender (Agenda item 8.6)

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders to enable agenda item 8.6 to be brought forward so a member of the public could speak.

The member of public who wished to speak mentioned that she plays wheelchair basketball at Comberton Village College Sports Hall, but has nowhere local to practice. It was suggested that it could be a possibility to practice in the Hall for All. The Town Clerk mentioned that 3x3 basketball is played in the Commonwealth Games; which is a variation of basketball played three-a-side, with one backboard and in a half-court setup. The member of public asked if the Hall for All will be wheelchair accessible, which the Chairman confirmed it will be. The member of public was asked to feedback possible use of the Hall for All to the Town Clerk.

The Town Council put out a tender to replace the Millennium Path from the Henry Smith Playing Fields (HSPF) entrance through to The Church Causeway.

Members noted that six tenders had been submitted and an initial assessment of the tender submissions had been carried out.

The member of the public wanted to mention that she uses the current Millennium Path to get from home into town. The surface causes a lot of vibration through her wheelchair which raises her pain levels considerably. There are lots of pot holes and the width and camber is awkward for wheelchair use. It will be helpful for wheelchair users for the new path to be wider, as flat as possible with a non-slip surface.

A member asked if any remedial works could be done to make the path safe.

The Chairman asked how quickly the contractor could start the works.

The Town Clerk advised the tender stipulated that works should commence immediately after the Easter holiday, to benefit from better weather, with works to be completed within five to six weeks. The works could potentially start earlier.

Members proceeded to check Contractor A's tender submission which had the highest score.

Members had several concerns with Contractor A's submission, and these included;

1. Contractor A had not made an appointment to attend a site visit to meet with a representative of the Employer, a Condition of Tender point (s) *The Tenderer must make an appointment to attend a site visit to meet with a representative of Employer and measurements of works must be taken at this point in order to provide quotes. The measurement of work confirmed on the quote shall be deemed as correct and not subject to adjustment when work commences.*
2. Contractor A's reference which had been requested had not been submitted. A reference is required to demonstrate experience, sufficient capability to perform the contract.

It was noted that the council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or indeed any tender, quote or estimate.

It was **resolved** that Contractor A's tender submission is disqualified for the two reasons mentioned above.

Members proceeded to check Contractor D's submission. It was noted that Contractor D had made an appointment to meet with a representative of the Employer and measurements of works were undertaken.

It was **resolved i.** to award the contract to Contractor D for £83,467.30, and **ii.** for works to commence as soon as possible.

It was mentioned that by awarding the contract to Contractor D, it will show support to a local contractor, as the town council has previously received complaints about not supporting local contractors.

It was mentioned that the work needs to be completed by August Bank Holiday weekend in time for the Party on Potton Big Weekend.

The Town Clerk advised that the tender stipulated that the works must be completed by the end of May 2024.

5. Public Participation Session (Agenda Item 4)

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 mentioned that there are not any pathways in the play area at HSPF, which makes it very difficult for wheelchair access, and asked if the Hall for All will have an accessible play area. The entrances from Brook End into the HSPF are not accessible for wheelchair users.

A member mentioned that the play area in Wingfield Drive is accessible, with rubberised surface and a concrete path all the way round.

A member was asked by a resident of Gamlingay to raise the issue around the confusion about which parking bays can be used if you don't have an electrical vehicle.

It was **resolved** for the Town Clerk to ask Central Bedfordshire Council to mark the dedicated EV charging bays with the additional word 'ONLY' to try to avoid the confusion caused to people parking in the Square.

6. Minutes of Potton Town Council (Agenda Item 5)

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 7th November and 28th November 2023, which had been previously circulated, were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

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:

- Potton Youth Council – 13th November 2023 – approved.
- Management Committee – 28th November 2023 – approved.
- Environment Committee – 19th December 2023 – approved.
- Planning Committee – 7th and 28th November, 19th December 2023 – approved.

8. Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (Agenda Item 7)

Central Bedfordshire Councillors Wye and Zerny were not in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Wye.

9. Party on Potton request for funding (Agenda Item 8.8)

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders to enable agenda item 8.8 to be brought forward so a member of the public could speak

Members were asked to consider a request for funding from Party on Potton (POP) for the Big Weekend 2024.

The Chairman of POP, Mr West was present at the meeting. The POP Committee is seeking continued support from the town council for Party on Potton. The principal of POP has always been 'free for all' for the events of the day, no charge and bringing the community together. For 2024, what with cost escalation, cost of living, and inflation there is nearly a 20% increase in costs on a like-for-like basis. The POP Committee is trying to mitigate this as much as possible.

Members noted the information provided by Mr West, including a Profit & Loss in terms of what the forecast profit and loss will be and what the forecast incomes with different forecasts based on differing attendance levels.

The current POP bank balance is £36,835.37, but by the Big Weekend it is expected to be £37,000 with £20,000 ring fenced for the next committee. The majority of costs will happen over the weekend and post weekend. The estimated budget to put on the event is £88,226, a 23% increase on 2022. The cost for infrastructure (all backed up by verbal or written quotations) is:

- £32,000 (marquee, chiller vans, lighting, generators). Plant equipment previously provided by Deepdale Trees etc and not now available to POP, will need to be hired in.
- £4,500 for the brochure and marketing.
- £20,000 for stock, food and beverage (beer kegs, meat from Clayton's etc)
- £12,000 for entertainment (the Big Band, the Comedy Night, other bands etc)
- £8,000 for daytime activities.
- £2,800 for sundries.
- £2,500 contingency.

With the income forecast of £87,000 (holding back the £20,000 for the next committee), the predictions are based on the best case scenario that the event will be well attended all day every day:

- £40,000 income on the bar, food and beverages.
- £25,000 on tickets, assuming every evening sells out and prices are increased from £15 to £18 per ticket (approximately 20% price escalation).
- £5,000 from sponsors (from Potton Town Council, etc)
- £17,000 from POP's account.

The income forecast is not without risk (bad weather, poor footfall etc), and the worst case income is £22,000 left. If the £20,000 contingency pot is used, POP is not leaving a legacy for the next committee.

POP is looking for sponsorship from Potton Town Council and local businesses (e.g. Breedon's, Brogan's), but also the loan of plant equipment, etc to help reduce costs. If the event enjoys the best case scenario, the POP Committee could potentially refund any contribution awarded.

The Chairman suggested that there could be scope to insure POP against making big losses (highly inclement weather, total washout, etc).

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council made an award of £9,000 towards the 2022 Big Weekend (paid over two financial years), and previously provided free hall hire for Potton Playhouse practice sessions in advance of their performance at the POP Big Weekend.

A member mentioned that the Central Bedfordshire Council Community Safety Team and Bedfordshire Police were in attendance at the 2022 Big Weekend and were amazed at the footfall. It was suggested that they could be approached for sponsorship.

A member proposed that the £9,000 awarded by the town council to the POP Big Weekend is matched for 2024.

A member mentioned that it is not the job of the town council to co-fund the event, so is the amount being requested required as an 'insurance' if required.

Members suggested that it is important that the town council backs an event for the good of the community. The town council helps to fund other community events.

The footfall for the 2022 Big Weekend was approximately 5,500 (1,200 per day).

There is no other event like the Big Weekend.

It was **resolved** that £9,000 is awarded to the Party On Potton 2024 Big Weekend via the General Power of Competence with £5,400 in this financial year and £3,600 in the next financial year.

10. Finance (Agenda Item 8)

1. Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st October – 31st October 2023.

Members proceeded to go through the Bank Reconciliations.

A member asked if the town council is still expecting the £5,000 Football Association grant.

The Town Clerk advised that the FA grant is not expected, but the town council is not spending money on the football ground. The town council spends money on fertiliser, seed and top dressing, but only if income is received.

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

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

3. Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st November – 30th November 2023.

Members proceeded to go through the Bank Reconciliation.

A member mentioned the list of un-presented cheques some of them dated some time ago.

The Town Clerk advised that a lot of the 'old' cheques have been cancelled, some of them re-issued (if for example they have been lost), and banked since.

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

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

5. To receive the interim internal audit report for the year 2023/2024.

Members noted the internal auditor's report for the year 2023/2024.

Members noted the £34 variance in town council's favour.

It was **resolved** to accept the internal auditor's report for the year 2023/2024.

6. Millennium Footpath Tender

It was resolved earlier in the meeting (agenda item 4) to award the contract to Contractor D.

Members noted that the town council included £20,000 in this year's budget (2023/24) for the Millennium Path and a further £95,000 in Ear Marked Reserves for the Millennium Path (a total budget of £115,000). The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) advised that it would be wise to allow some monies for a contingency and then once the project has been completed, additional monies could potentially be reallocated to either the General Reserve or another project.

Members noted the RFO's suggestion for the reallocation of funds to an Ear Marked Reserve to save towards the cost for an extension to the Millennium Path to the skatepark and/or between the Outdoor Gym and the Table Tennis Table to Brook End.

Members noted that there is a surplus of £29,000 which would allow for an extension to the Millennium Path (standard width path, no lights).

A members asked if the Millennium Path extension could include the gate entrance from Brook End (nearest to Royston Street). The RFO advised that there would be enough money to include all three entrances, but it was suggested that it could be added to the list of future projects.

It was **resolved** that the Town Clerk investigates the possibility of extending the Millennium Path into the play area.

7. Potton Hall for All draft business plan

Members noted the draft business plan prepared by the Town Clerk for Potton Hall for All, which has been considered by member of the Potton Hall for All Steering Group.

A member asked when is the proposed opening of the Potton Hall for All?

It was suggested that the Hall could be opened by Christmas 2024.

The initial plan was suggesting the building would make a loss in the first year and a profit in the second year. The £40,000 should be in the 2025/26 budget.

The RFO advised that the £40,000 is in the 2024/25 draft budget.

A member asked if the expected revenue of £94,000 is comparable to other community buildings (for example Gamlingay Eco Hub).

It was **resolved** to accept the Potton Hall for All draft business plan for the time being, however the plan is organic and will need to be updated as more informed data becomes available.

The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for his efforts in producing a comprehensive draft plan with some support from the Hall for All Trustees.

8. Party on Potton request for funding

Item considered in minute 9.

9. Forward Gamlingay! Request for funding

Members were asked to consider a request for funding from Forward Gamlingay! Youth Club for 2024/25.

It was noted that the Town Council part funded the cost of Forward Gamlingay! in the financial year 2023/24, and that its contribution was £3,500, whilst Gamlingay Parish Council's contribution was £7,000.

The Town Clerk advised that £3,500 has been included in the draft budget 2024/25.

It was noted that the list of youths names and addresses was included with the request for funding which is a potential safeguarding and GDPR issue. The information provided suggested that the list should be completed by a parent and signed, but it was completed by the same person and was not signed by parents.

It was noted that the accounts shows that Forward Gamlingay! has £53,000 in its bank account and members questioned why the Youth Club is looking for funding.

It was pointed out that if the funds have been mostly funded by Gamlingay Parish Council and/or Gamlingay tax payers, they cannot be expected to fund Potton children attending.

It was suggested to award £3,500 to Forward Gamlingay! from the 2024/25 budget, and review it again in a year's time and try to encourage a Potton youth club to start in the Potton Hall for All.

It was clarified that 34 young people from Potton attend Forward Gamlingay!, so it would be good to encourage those youths and a few more to attend a Potton youth club at Potton Hall for All.

The Chairman suggested that this [setting up a Potton Youth Club] could be a challenge for Potton Youth Council.

It was **resolved** to include £3,500 in the draft budget for Forward Gamlingay! for the financial year 2024/25.

10. Mill Lane Lease

Members were asked to consider whether the lease for Mill Lane should be renewed. The lease expires in September 2024.

Members noted the correspondence from the Clerk to the Potton Consolidated Charity (PCC) Trustees, and the information provided by the Town Clerk.

The PCC doesn't have the ability to run the recreation ground and pavilion. The only option available to them is to sell the land. There has been previous interest from a developer, but declined because they didn't want to lose a community asset or have another 50/60 houses built on the edge of town.

It was proposed to extend the lease until September 2025, thinking carefully about what the town council spends on the facility during that time in terms of play equipment, trees, surfaces. This will buy the PCC time to consider what they will do (for example bringing in a management company).

The PCC has agreed at a recent meeting to award the town council £2,000 for the Christmas Lights.

If the PCC bears the cost of the maintaining the Recreation Ground and replacing play equipment etc., then other investment in the town will slide.

It was suggested that the town council extends the lease for a further 12 months or on a rolling annual basis until the council has a viable hall.

The lease is a repair and maintenance lease. It was suggested that the town council goes through the proposed new lease with the PCC.

It was suggested that the Neighbourhood Plan should consider a vision of the evolution of the Mill Lane Recreation Ground.

It was recommended to accept the rent charge (£1,400) and renew the lease on a rolling 12 month contract until at least September 2025, to give the PCC plenty of time to start looking at options.

It was **resolved** to accept the rent charge (£1,400) and renew the lease on a rolling 12 month contract until at least September 2025, to give the PCC plenty of time to start looking at options.

11. Current Earmarked Reserves (EMR)

Members noted the list of the current EMR.

12. Budget and Precept

Members noted the report from the Responsible Financial Officer with regards to the budget.

Members noted the General Reserve.

Members proceeded to go through the draft budget, which included the budget notes for each code.

It was **resolved** to set the town council budget for 2024/2025 with £451,358 income, £451,358 expenditure and to meet this to increase the precept by 10.2% to £406,358 and the Band D council tax increases by 10% from £159.30 to £175.23 per year.

11. Councillor Surgeries (Agenda Item 9)

Members noted the report from Cllrs Gwilliam and Leggatt for the Councillor Surgery on Saturday 9th December.

A resident had asked about progress with regard to the proposed HGV ban in Potton.

The Chairman proposed that the issue be brought back to the attention of the ward councillors as the A428 works and associated traffic routing provisions may have some impact.

12. Potton Hall for All (Agenda Item 10)

The Chairman invited Cllr Gwilliam to give an update on the current progress on the Hall for All.

Cllr Gwilliam advised that they are no further forward with regard to signing the contract, the principal reason being that the Potton Hall for All Trustees have asked various questions relating to the datasheet which contains employers requirement provided by Watson & Cox. Cllr Gwilliam is satisfied that Watson & Cox will have included everything that is needed as a bare minimum as per what they have costed. The Potton Hall for All Charity has asked questions based on what has come back from Building Control in terms of what the name of the building and road will be. So the current situation is that the contract cannot be finalised and signed.

It was proposed for the Trustees to submit their final comments by 19th January 2024 with the stipulation that there are no increases in costs.

It was **resolved** for the Trustees to submit their final comments by 19th January 2024 with the stipulation that there are no increases in costs.

13. Potton Green Wheel and Myers Road area issues (Agenda Item 11)

Members noted correspondence from Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charities (Beds RCC), on behalf of Potton Green Wheel Development Group, in relation to issues affecting the delivery of the Potton Green Wheel in the vicinity of Myers Road.

It was **resolved i.** to defer to the next Community Safety Working Group meeting, and **ii.** for Cllr Craig to forward a copy of the Beds RCC correspondence to Bedfordshire Police.

14. Parking issues on Everton Road (Agenda Item 12)

Members noted the information with regard to the parking issues on Everton Road.

It was proposed that the Community Safety Working Group should communicate the issue with Bedfordshire Police.

It was suggested that the Youth Council can raise the issues with the representatives from CBC Community Safety Team and Bedfordshire Police who will be attending the next Potton Youth Council meeting on Monday 22nd January.

Potton Primary School has sent letters to parents asking them not to park illegally.

There has been a suggestion for the School to organise a 'walking bus' from Mill Lane car park.

15. Magpas Air Ambulance (Agenda Item 13)
Members noted correspondence from Magpas Air Ambulance.

16. Senbotex Ltd textile recycling banks (Agenda Item 14)
Members noted the correspondence from Senbotex Ltd.

Members were asked to consider if they wish to host a textile recycling bank in Potton.

Potton Community Fire Station already has a textile bank.

It was **resolved** to not proceed with hosting a textile recycling bank in Potton.

17. Items for the next meeting agenda (Agenda Item 15)
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 by 9am on Monday 26th February 2024.

18. To arrange a date of the next meeting (Agenda Item 16)
It was **resolved** that the date of the next meeting will be on Tuesday 5th March 2024 following a meeting of the Planning Committee which starts at 7pm in the Community Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.30pm.

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.