

## **POTTON TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held on  
Tuesday 5th March 2024 at 7.25pm at the Community Centre  
following a meeting of the Planning Committee

**Present:** Councillors Dr C. Craig, Mr J. Day, Mrs L. Fox, Mrs V. Gwilliam, Mr G. Horsfall, Mr A. Inkersole, Mr R. Kett, Mrs C. Leggatt, Mr D. Norman, Mr J. Price Williams (Chairman), and Mr A. Zerny.

**Absent:** Councillors Mr J. Hobbs and Mr A. Macdonald.

**Also present:** Chief Inspector Jim Goldsmith and Inspector Grant Maxted of Bedfordshire Police. The Town Clerk and three members of the public.

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

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mr J. Hobbs.

### **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. Public Participation Session**

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 made a proposal to the town council for Carlton Avison to be made a Freeman of Potton as a recognition of the work he does in the community.

Members discussed the proposal and couldn't think of anyone more deserving.

The Town Clerk advised members that the town council will have to hold an extra-ordinary meeting to consider the proposal.

It was **resolved** for the town council to have a special meeting to consider the proposal for Carlton Avison to be made a Freeman of Potton.

A member of the public asked what the outcome was with regard to reinstating the white lining outside the BP fuel station on Biggleswade Road.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the Town Clerk will be contacting Central Bedfordshire Council Highways to find out whose responsibility it is to reinstate the white lines outside the garage.

The member of the public reminded the town council that the yellow lines opposite the garage are very faded and also need renewing.

Cllr Leggatt advised that she had been given a letter from Clayton's Butchers, proposing an afternoon for the people and businesses of Potton to join them in celebrating their 100th birthday this year and went on to explain their proposed plans.

Members agreed this was a reasonable request from one of the oldest businesses in the town to celebrate their 100th birthday and involve the town as much as possible.

It was **resolved i.** for Clayton's request to be deferred for Events Committee to consider at its next meeting, and **ii.** for the Events Committee to make a recommendation to the Town Council at its next meeting on 7th May.

The Chairman pointed out that it would be Clayton's responsibility to apply for and bear the (not inconsiderable) cost of the road closures, and to liaise with other businesses in the town.

The Chairman advised he was going to alter the order of the agenda to allow the Anti-Social Activity agenda item to be brought forward, and welcomed Chief Inspector Jim Goldsmith and Inspector Grant Maxted to the meeting.

#### **4. Anti-Social Activity (Agenda item 6)**

The Chairman asked Cllr Craig to introduce Chief Inspector Jim Goldsmith and Inspector Grant Maxted of Bedfordshire Police who attended the meeting to discuss anti-social activity in and around Potton.

Cllr Craig explained that Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Bedfordshire Police have put together a PSG (Problem Solving Group) because of the current anti-social behaviour around Potton, and asked Chief Inspector Goldsmith for an update.

Cllr Craig also mentioned that the Community Safety Working Group will be working on an initiative over the coming six months to encourage the public to report incidents to the Police, and any support from the Police and CBC will be appreciated.

Chief Inspector Goldsmith spoke about the Problem Solving Group set up for anti-social activity in Potton, which provides a conduit between Inspector Grant Maxted, Jack Sharp, Potton's local Sergeant with the representatives of Potton Town Council, CBC, and others who are invited to come along to the meeting to comment, which will have an impact on environmental health and everything else.

In April there is a planned event which involves the Police along with CBC and potentially others to do a tour around the outskirts because they know from the last drone footage they have that the fly tipping around in this area which is on private land has got worse, and will be investigating the environmental issues there.

The Chief Inspector then spoke about encouraging residents to report incidents to the Police. He talked specifically about nuisance motorcycles which is a common problem in the Central Bedfordshire area. The Police have only had a total of seven reports of nuisance motorcycles specific to Potton in the last three months. When there are only seven reports coming into Bedfordshire Police it doesn't their radar because there are areas that are reporting that have a lot more issues, so consequently it does not get the attention it may well deserve, but unless they know there is a problem there, they can't do anything about it.

This has been highlighted with a lot of local businesses. Historically, Policing UK several years ago decided that they would not respond quickly to shoplifting. The Bedfordshire Police response was that if the shoplifting amounted to less than £200 they were unlikely to respond, and consequently many shops didn't report it. Levels of shoplifting have gone up as a result of the economic pressures nationally, not just from organised groups but from people that have genuine needs.

The Police are seeing levels of crimes where they really should be called out and they would attend on blue lights, but people are not reporting it. They are trying to get that message out that they want to know about every crime, but without knowing about what crime is happening, they can't then look to find solutions.

A member mentioned that residents have said to her that they don't report crime because they don't feel that they will get a response and there is no follow up, so what is the point in reporting it.

Every call is logged and mapped and intelligence is taken out into the local community teams to look at the longer term problem solving in the community.

A local businessman mentioned an incident of shoplifting during opening hours in his shop. After dialling 999, they were told by the operator after waiting 12 minutes that they didn't have anyone to come out. His business does report all crime, but they never hear anything back. The business owner asked Chief Inspector Goldsmith if he has heard of 'VARS', which is a security system that reads number plates and it has just been installed at one of his other sites. If anyone comes in that has committed a crime [driving away without paying for fuel] at now 5,000 garages across the country, it alarms the screen. It has ANPR and as soon as a car pulls on to the forecourt, the alarm goes off.

Cllr Leggatt mentioned one of the concerns in the town is fear of repercussion if they report crime.

The biggest problem is around the new sentencing guidelines which if it attracts a prison sentence of less than six months they might be walking straight out, which is most shoplifting offences. With prolific offenders Bedfordshire Police try to get a criminal behaviour order in place for them, to ban them from town centres. Prolific offenders can be arrested for breach of the criminal behaviour order which is more powerful than shoplifting.

The Chairman said this works well assuming there is someone to perform the necessary activity to arrest. In Potton the Police could put a criminal behaviour order on those who commit these acts, but there is no one here to do anything about it and they won't be caught.

The police have a very good and very active Central Bedfordshire camera team and they are made aware of anyone on the borders and the police don't have to be present, the camera team capture the evidence for them and the police don't have to arrest at the time they are breaching, they can go and arrest later.

The Chairman made the Chief Inspector aware that Potton does not have CCTV in the town centre.

Chief Inspector Goldsmith mentioned 'shop watch' scheme - which is now live in Shefford and Sandy - and will take that back to the CBC Business Officer (Jackie Blake) to find out what the plans are with regards to a roll out for it to Potton.

Chief Inspector Goldsmith went on to speak about engaging members of the public and the BedsAlert email system. The BedsAlert system is going to be relaunched within the next four to six weeks. What it will enable them to do is build a database of as many people as they can onto the system which will capture contact details, email addresses and whether they have cameras. This will include Ring doorbells.

The system will enable the police to track cameras and send emails out, capture all of the community teams engagements, and also send surveys out asking what people's priorities are.

A member suggested that Bedfordshire Police could have a presence at the Party on Potton Community Day on Saturday 24th August.

Information on registering for BedsAlert will be put through the Police social media channels and community police cars will have the QR codes on them.

The Chairman mentioned that the next town council newsletter will be delivered at the end of May, and if Bedfordshire Police would like to submit an article for that edition, it needs to be submitted in April.

CLlr Craig mentioned that the next Community Safety Working Group is on Wednesday 12th June at 4.30pm at the Community Centre and may be a better time to discuss in detail any activities and updates, which is then reported back to the town council.

The Chief Inspector also mentioned his responsibility for rural crime. The force now has four off-road bikes and five off-road motorcyclists who do not work for community policing. However, the force now has another six riders being trained as a result of funding through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, which will mean there will be a total of eleven riders capable of being deployed by the end of March into April.

Bedfordshire Police are trialling a selector DNA spray which is used specifically for off-road motorcyclists, nuisance scooters and electric bikes.

Other things that have changed recently is the drone technology and drone capability for Bedfordshire following the loss of the helicopter which was based in Henlow. There is currently one drone with the rural crime team and they are trained to use the drone day and night when they are on duty. The force is now buying another four drones.

The Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 was very specific about the power the police has to seize bikes or vehicles if they are causing a nuisance. The force is now starting to use technology (CCTV from Ring doorbells and other areas) to capture images of vehicles to issue Section 59s.

A member asked if the Police drones are clearly marked after having a couple of incidences of nuisance drones last year.

A member mentioned that a representative(s) of the Potton Green Wheel group might wish to join the planned tour of the outskirts of Potton in April with respect to fly tipping.

A member of the public mentioned that he spends a lot of time on his bicycle and is concerned about the amount of times he can smell cannabis from drivers as they pass him. Chief Inspector Goldsmith mentioned any intelligence around this can be used by the force, so if you smell it, and have the registration number report it on the webchat.

The next Priority Setting meeting is on 10th April at Police Headquarters (Kempston) starting from 6pm to 9pm. Unfortunately there was no representation from Potton at the last meeting. There are 54 towns and parishes in the area and around 20 attend. Invitation by email. The meetings are every four months with the opportunity to discuss the issues of your community. Officers give a presentation about what is going on in your area, updating on priorities from the previous three months and then break out into areas to discuss priorities for the next three months with your area officer. The priority set for the area Potton sits in is around anti-social behaviour because only two other people attended from the location. To support the police to get the priorities right for Potton, it would be good to have representation from Potton at the meetings.

The Chairman mentioned that there are WhatsApp groups for reporting flooding and suggested that the police might use WhatsApp in a similar vein. Chief Inspector Goldsmith mentioned that unfortunately the Police are not allowed to use WhatsApp.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Goldsmith and Inspector Maxted for attending the meeting.

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

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 9th January 2024, which had been previously circulated, were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

**6. Minutes of Town Council Committees and groups where a Cllr(s) is(are) appointed by the town council (Agenda item 5)**

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

- Potton Youth Council – 22nd January 2024 – approved.
- Management Committee – 13th February 2024 – approved.
- Planning Committee – 9th January, 30th January, and 13th February 2024 – approved.

**7. Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors**

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

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Wye.

Cllr Zerny reported that the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) 2024/2025 budget had been passed.

There was a post on spending last week with all the checks CBC did at the tail end of last year.

Planning was refused for East of Sutton Road, which is pleasing, but displeased that CBC has allowed construction traffic [for Land South of The Ridgeway development] to have access through The Paddocks.

A member mentioned that she had been asked about the fact that free garden waste collections are being removed. How will the fee be collected from households who wish to continue having garden waste collections, and how will operatives know which households are paying to have their garden waste collected? Also, green food bags will be withdrawn because they are getting caught in machinery. Why, when CBC is trying to save money, are they now proposing to commence free kerbside glass collections in Potton?

Food waste bags: Cllr Zerny advised in terms of bags feeding into machines, we have had some different information from the company that is responsible for this, so we are following up a few further leads there. At the moment they are continuing to send out quite large stocks of bags that they have, so this isn't going to happen immediately. When we have got a clear message from them we will communicate it back to the public as to exactly what will happen. If we do decide not to send out bags, then the public will still be able to use newspaper and potentially, depending what the company come back with, their own bags. At the moment we are waiting for confirmation from them as to what they can split up, i.e. can they split whatever the public put it in from the food waste. When we know we can confirm. We have built it into the budget that we are hoping to make this saving, but in the scheme it is a saving of £70,000 per year, so it is not going to break the bank if we decide to look for a different way of doing it.

Glass waste: the Government have intimated that they will be making all local authorities provide kerbside glass collections commencing in April 2025. Essentially, CBC is budgeting for the extra vehicles, etc required for glass collections this year, but will keep a watchful eye on what happens with regard to the legislation as the year goes on, and towards the end of the year the Government will then be confirming whether they are providing extra funding for local authorities. There is a second reason CBC is not spending the money now, in that if we do spend the money we are less likely to get the Government paying us retrospectively when they pay lots of local authorities to start the scheme. So we are monitoring what the Government does very closely, but I firmly expect the Government to make it an obligation of local authorities from 2025. The cost of collecting glass waste kerbside is significantly lower than garden waste collection.

Garden waste collection: it is accepted that there will be a cost of introducing chargeable garden waste collection, CBC will be providing all the addresses to the waste collection company that have paid for the service. It is not intended to be stickers on bins.

## 8. Finance

### i. **Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st December – 31st December 2023.**

Members proceeded to go through the Bank Reconciliations.

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

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

### iii. **Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st January – 31st January 2024.**

Members proceeded to go through the Bank Reconciliation.

It was **resolved** that the Bank Reconciliation for 1st January – 31st January 2024 be approved.

**iv. To receive an income and expenditure by budget heading report showing progress against the budget 2023/24 at the end of January 2024.**

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 January 2024.

**9. Cemetery Burial Fees**

Members considered the Town Clerk's recommendation to increase the Cemetery burial fees by 10%, the same as the council tax increase.

It was **resolved** to increase the Cemetery burial fees by 10% from 1st April 2024.

**10. Mill Lane Lease**

Members noted that there has not been any progress on the status of the proposed new lease for Mill Lane Recreation Ground.

The Chairman asked if there has been any progress on the replacement cost of play area equipment.

Cllr Gwilliam advised that the town council can apply for S106 monies to replace the play equipment.

The Town Clerk suggested that the play equipment that is coming to the end of its life can be removed, but not replaced (main multi-unit).

The Chairman suggested that the replacement play equipment project should be investigated.

The Town Clerk advised the replacement multi-unit would cost £75,000.

**11. Potton Hall for All**

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

Cllr Gwilliam advised that the Hall for All Steering Group met on 4th March. The most problematic issue at the moment is the drainage which is holding the project up. The drainage design was incorrect and is having to be redesigned at their cost. The scheme involves traversing the Orchard, but the land still hasn't been transferred to the town council. The plan of the drainage scheme has been submitted to CBC, but it also has to be submitted to the LLFA (Lead Local Flood Authorities) which is the local drainage board. Tilia want to see the design and the approval before they allow the town council to cross land that is still technically theirs before it is transferred over to the town council. That situation is hampered by the fact that Tilia has issues with CBC to do with the bridge that is going to be built between the Tall Trees estate and Sheepwalk Close.

Members of the Hall for All Steering Group talked about approaching the Hutchinson Trust for the Hall for All to be able to put drainage down the slope and into the Cricket Club land along the side and into Potton Brook. It is hoped this option might expedite the issue.

Watson & Cox have concerns that they have to work on land that doesn't belong to the town council and there could be repercussions from Tilia.

Watson & Cox are reluctant to sign the letter of intent until those issues are sorted out.

Watson & Cox have still yet to provide an M&E (mechanical and electrical) design for the building, but what they have said is that the original contract sum of £1.66 million is more likely to be £1.7 million because of the cost of the M&E design and scheme is coming in at just a little over £40,000, which eats up the contingency reserves. The Hall for All Charity is being pushed to find some more funding to build up the contingency.

The Town Clerk mentioned two funding schemes with committed spend deadlines of the end of March 2024.

The UK Share Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Until the letter of intent is signed, the Watson & Cox procurement process will not begin. The sum of money from the UKSPF needs to be committed by the end of this financial year.

The two funds need to be committed to spend this financial year and put the funds towards the drainage and other works that need doing up front.

The site will be fenced off week commencing 18th March/25th March.

Tilia has requested a meeting at Hutchinson Rise to discuss traffic and construction vehicles and how any damage might be rectified prior to the adoption process taking place.

The Chairman asked Cllr Zerny to contact the LLFA to ask them to respond.

The Chairman mentioned that with respect to the bridge being built between the Tall Trees estate and Sheepwalk Close, any damage to land should be reinstated whether Tilia or the town council own the land.

## **12. Potton Consolidated Charity – Community Agent**

Members were asked to consider whether to add additional funds to the 2025/26 budget for the Community Agent to increase provision.

The Chairman suggested that if the town council increases the provision to increase the number of hours, Potton Consolidated Charity should match fund.

It was **resolved** to ask Cllr Hobbs for a detailed proposal of what is required, and this needs to include what any additional monies will pay for.

## **13. Disabled Toilet for Community Centre**

Members were asked if they would consider converting the Community Centre ladies toilets into a disabled toilet.

A member mentioned that it would mean that ladies would only have one toilet.

The Town Clerk mentioned that he was advised that the ladies toilet used to only have one toilet, and was later converted to have two toilets.

A member suggested changing the toilet (gents and ladies) facilities to have one disabled toilet and one unisex toilet.

The Chairman asked members if the town council wishes to spend public funds on the Community Centre converting toilets, when the town council will have a new facility (Hall for All) in the future.

It was **resolved** not to convert the Community Centre ladies toilets into a disabled toilet.

#### **14. Councillor Surgeries**

Members noted the councillor surgery dates and the councillors who have volunteered to attend.

Cllr Day volunteered to join Cllr Hobbs at the surgery on Saturday 15th June.

The Chairman asked for a volunteer to join Cllr Craig at the surgery at the POP Community Day on Saturday 24th August.

#### **15. EV Charging Bays – Market Square**

Members noted the correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council with regard to the EV Charging Bays on the Market Square.

CBC Ward Cllr Tracey Wye provided the following update on the EV Charging Bays on the Market Square in advance of the meeting.

*The latest news regarding improved signage is CBC has had a quote and agreed work to add “only” to the two EV-only bays. There will also be stickers going on the back of the charging points facing the bays which will read “EV Only” or “Mixed Use Parking Bays” to provide a bit more information to drivers.*

*CBC is waiting for a date from the contractors, which is expected either late this week or early next week, so there is enough time to give Highways notice to put barriers out the night before to block off the spaces.*

*Once that date is agreed, we will get notice from CBC.*

#### **16. Dog Waste**

Members noted the concerns raised about the amount of dog waste around the Potton Green Wheel route at the PGW meeting on Wednesday 24th January.

The dog population of Potton is increasing and the amount of dog waste appearing on paths is increasing and people seem to have a problem disposing of the dog waste correctly. There is a case for educating people on what the law is and what they should do (this was covered in the Community Safety article in the February edition of the newsletter), but there is also a case for additional dog waste bins subject to the contract and being able to pay for the collection, etc. The dog waste bins would need to be sited out towards the ends of the wheel spokes, but in a place where the contractor could access to empty them.

The Chairman asked how many dog waste bins would be required and where they should be located in order for the town council to consider the cost and benefit.

It was suggested that the Potton Green Wheel group should consider this and report back.

The Chairman mentioned that the dog waste problems occur at certain times of the year, particularly during winter and school holidays.

A member mentioned that she is still waiting to find out if a bin to be installed on Biggleswade Road. There is a bin by the Royal Oak and one by the entrance to Pegnut Wood, but residents would like a waste bin to be located by the roundabout at the Tall Trees junction.

It was suggested that there should be an educational article in the next edition of the newsletter about litter and encouraging people to take their litter home.

It is acceptable to put bagged dog waste in litter bins if a dog waste bin is not available.

It was suggested that an additional dog waste bin should be installed at the bottom of the hill by Dirok on Old Bedford Road.

It was **resolved** for the Potton Green Wheel group to produce a list of priority locations for dog waste bins.

**17. 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 by 9am on Monday 29th April 2024.

**18. To note the date of the next meeting**

Members noted that the Annual Town Council meeting will be on Tuesday 7th May 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 9.10 pm.

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.