

POTTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held on
Tuesday 7th January 2025 at 7.20pm at the Community Centre
following a meeting of the Planning Committee

Present: Councillors Dr C. Craig, Mr J. Day, Mrs E. Horsfall (Minute 4. onwards), Mr G. Horsfall, Mr A. Inkersole, Mr R. Kett, Mrs C. Leggatt, Mr A. Macdonald, Mr D. Norman, Mr J. Price Williams (Chairman) and Mr A. Zerny.

Absent: Councillors Mrs V. Gwilliam and Mr J. Hobbs

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Formal apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Gwilliam and Hobbs. Also CBC Ward Cllr Ms T. Wye.

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. 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 Mrs Emma Horsfall as a councillor of Potton Town Council.

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

4. 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 mentioned that she has received numerous complaints from members of the public about the recent road closure signage which has been confusing; the signage was not clear about where the closure was and the signs were displayed as far away as Sandy. The signage on the A1 mentioned that the closure was on Sun Street, Potton. The [emergency] closure was for UK Power Networks who employ a contractor to put out signage.

It was suggested to give feedback to UK Power Networks and their contractor and Streetworks (Central Bedfordshire Council). The Town Clerk advised Streetworks that UK Power Networks had completed works a day early [6th January], but the signage was still in place.

A member mentioned that he had reported two damaged road signs on Sun Street on FixMyStreet in August 2023. Central Bedfordshire Council advised they had been out to make them safe, but the signs have never been reinstated.

A member mentioned the [very large] pot holes on Old Bedford Road, and said he will report it, but will not expect anything to be done having been told by Cllr Zerny that CBC has no money available. Old Bedford Road remains unadopted and CBC does not take responsibility for the top 150 yards [in front of houses] at the Newtown end of Old Bedford Road. More recently there has been some fly tipping on the corner of Old Bedford Road and Newtown.

It was **resolved** to officially make Cllrs Zerny and Wye aware of the potholes on Old Bedford Road.

5. Minutes of Potton Town Council

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 5th November and 3rd December 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

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

- Planning Committee – 19th November and 3rd December – approved.
- Environment Committee – 19th November 2024 – approved.
- Potton Youth Council – 25th November 2024 – approved.
- Events Committee – 26th November 2024 – approved.

7. Councillor Surgeries

Members note the written report from Cllr Norman following the councillor surgery which took place on Saturday 14th December.

Members were reminded that anyone who would like to volunteer for a councillor surgery should please contact the Clerical Assistant.

Cllr Craig volunteered for the councillor surgery on Saturday 15th March.

As neither of the CBC Ward Cllrs were present, the Chairman altered the order of the agenda items.

8. Land South of The Ridgeway, Potton SG19 2PS – Allotment Provision (Agenda item 9)

Members noted correspondence from a Central Bedfordshire Planning Officer, which had been considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting earlier this evening, with respect to the allotment provision of circa 27 plots on the Tilia Homes development, on land South of The Ridgeway, Potton. The town council has been asked if it would like to adopt and take up the ongoing management of the allotments, which would otherwise fall to the Council's Leisure Team as per the Unilateral Undertaking.

The current town council allotment land on Everton Road is owned by the Diocese of St Albans. If the Diocese decided they wish to sell the land for building, the allotment provision would cease.

The Chairman's recommendation is for the town council to adopt and manage the allotment provision on Tilia's 'Brook Gardens' development.

A member asked if the town council would own the allotment land?

The Town Clerk advised that it wasn't clear who would own the land, so would ask the CBC officer to confirm that the land would be owned by the town council as a result of adopting and managing the allotments.

It was suggested that the allotment site should be serviced (water/track etc) and secured with fencing/gate before the town council takes ownership.

It was **resolved** to approve the adoption and ongoing management of the allotment provision on the Brook Gardens development, subject to the land becoming a town council asset and the site having services (water/track) and security (fencing/gate) before the town council takes ownership.

9. A00501 Royston Street, Potton – Disabled Parking Bay (Agenda item 10)

Members considered the scheme that Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) are consulting on to add a disabled parking bay on Royston Street.

It was **resolved** to approve the installation of an additional disabled parking bay in the layby in Royston Street, subject to the existing and additional bays being marked adjacently.

10. Reports from Central Bedfordshire Councillors (Agenda item 8)

Cllr Wye was not in attendance.

Cllr Zerny advised that he has been working on Central Bedfordshire Council's budget and devolution.

11. Central Bedfordshire Local Plan – Call for Sites

[Cllr Macdonald advised that, as he had a prejudicial interest with regard to this item, he would take no part in the discussion.]

Members considered the correspondence from CBC with respect to identifying greenfield sites in the town, and the areas suggested by the Chairman.

The Chairman said that the town council has to be realistic and accept that there will be further development in the town, so sensible sites need to be identified and then Potton residents should be consulted.

Cllr Inkersole mentioned that the Neighbourhood Plan Sub-Committee has been looking at what can be done to update to the current [Potton] Neighbourhood Plan which runs to 2035, and identified the need for more town centre parking and light industrial units. There are greenfield sites that could be put forward to address those needs within the existing 2035 Neighbourhood Plan timescale, but this is not contributing to the new [CBC] Local Plan. Cllr Inkersole was concerned that any greenfield sites submitted to support Potton's light industrial need will get confused with the longer term housing target.

Land earmarked for light industrial development is adjacent to the Hall for All. In addition, the former haulage yard on Sandy Road, and land West of the Cemetery may be suitable locations for light industrial development.

It was clarified that the Call for Sites is for a whole range of development including housing and light industrial.

Cllr Zerny advised that the [Potton] Neighbourhood Plan is valid for five years whereby it holds 'planning weight', and the plan is at least already three to four years old; with the new [CBC] Local Plan being adopted in 2028, Cllr Zerny recommended producing a new Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Inkersole advised that town council can make amendments/clarifications to the [Neighbourhood] plan, and as long the policies are not changed, the plan can be readopted, and will be valid and hold planning weight again for another five years.

Cllr Zerny suggested that if the [new or updated] Potton Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted and accepted by the local authority, then they have endorsed the new sites that are in there.

Cllr Zerny's advice was for the town council not to feel obliged to offer assistance in volunteering any new sites, as there will be enough big sites put forward by landowners and developers anyway.

It was proposed to respond to the Call for Sites suggesting that the two sites that have already been put into planning (the carehome/housing on land adjacent to the Hall for All, and housing on the former haulage yard on Sandy Road) should be both developed as light industrial sites.

It was **resolved** to respond to the Call for Sites suggesting that the two sites that have already been put into planning (the carehome/housing on land adjacent to the Hall for All, and housing on the former haulage yard on Sandy Road) should be both developed as light industrial sites.

The Town Clerk mentioned that there is a need for various infrastructure in the town, not just housing. There has been very little infrastructure added in the last ten years. Infrastructure is included in the current Call for Sites.

There is green space available on CBC land between St Mary's Church and Bury Hill. It is on an annual lease (from Michaelmas to Michaelmas) and is currently farmed. It would require twelve months' notice and compensation to be paid to the adjacent land owner for their barns.

Further discussion ensued with regards to identifying sites within the town for green space and car parking.

It was suggested that the town council should investigate the cost to have Brook End car park managed by someone and have a two hour limit on parking.

It was suggested to commit to the next Neighbourhood Plan that an aspiration of the town council is to move the doctors surgery to a far more suitable location and to garner support for it.

12. Potton Hall for All

The Chairman gave an update on the current progress of the Hall for All.

The electric meter was installed on 2nd January 2025, and the hall now has power.

Some complaints have been received that the floodlighting is very bright, but the timers have now been adjusted so that they turn off at 9pm.

There was already a four week delay (a week's delay due to bad weather and three week delay due to rescheduling because of the bad weather) and now there is a delay of several weeks delay because of the power cable and meter installation.

Telecoms has yet to be installed, however the Hall for All Steering Group will consider using mobile telecoms for the time being (using 5G).

It is expected to have a practical completion by the end of March (handing over the responsibility of the building to the Hall for All trustees from the contractor), with a projected 'soft' opening date around Easter (April 2025). The Chairman's Community Celebration has been scheduled for Monday 28th April.

The Town Clerk advised that the lease agreement has yet to be finalised and the heads of terms need to be sorted out.

13. Party on Potton

Members noted the letter of thanks from the Chairman of Party on Potton.

14. Finance

i. 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) following receipt of a request for funding from the Potton Good Neighbour Scheme.

It was noted that the budget remaining in GPC is £2,250.

Members noted that £500 was awarded to the Potton Good Neighbour Scheme in May 2024, and the Town Clerk's recommendation to delay sending funds until April 2025 so that only one award is made per financial year.

It was **resolved** to award £500 of GPC monies to the Potton Good Neighbour Scheme in April 2025.

ii. Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st October – 31st October 2024.

Members proceeded to go through the Bank Reconciliations.

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

iii. To receive an income and expenditure by budget heading report showing progress against the budget 2024/2025 at the end of October 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 October 2024.

iv. **Verify Bank Reconciliations against statement 1st November – 30th November 2024.**

Members proceeded to go through the Bank Reconciliation.

It was **resolved** that the Bank Reconciliation for 1st November – 30th November 2024 be approved.

v. **To receive an income and expenditure by budget heading report showing progress against the budget 2024/2025 at the end of November 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 30th November 2024.

vi. **To receive the interim internal audit report for the year 2024/2025.**

Members noted the internal auditor's report for the year 2024/2025.

It was **resolved** to accept the internal auditor's report for the year 2024/2025.

vii. **Current Earmarked Reserves (EMR)**

Members noted the list of the current EMR.

viii. **Budget and Precept**

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

Members noted that at the town council meeting on 5th November 2024 it was resolved (ii) that the Town Clerk prepares a draft budget based on an increase in council tax of 2.5%, 5% and 7.5%.

It was also noted that on 28th November 2024, the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) published its Local Government Finance November Policy Statement and that the key element for Potton Town Council is that there is no council tax referendum principles for parish and town councils in 2025/26.

Members noted the General Reserve.

It was **resolved** to approve the transfer a total of £72,000 from the General Reserve to Ear Marked Reserves as recommended by the Town Clerk.

Amount	Project
£22,500	Mill Lane Play Area, Replacement of Multi-units*
£17,500	Cemetery, Resurfacing of tarmac near War Memorial and Chapel
£10,000	Skatepark, Replacement Saving+
£10,000	Outdoor Sport Equipment, Youth Age Range
£5,000	Basketball / Netball – Henry Smith Playing Fields
£5,000	Potton Fest, 2025 Event
£2,000	Laptops, current laptops 4 years old
£72,000	Total

* Potton Consolidated Charity have agreed to match fund a contribution of up to £22,500.
+ Sport England on awarding the grant in 2017, required the town council to save for a replacement (Funds saved were used to reduce size of the loan for the Potton Hall for All).

Members proceeded to go through the second draft budget, which is based on an increase of 5% in Band D.

The Town Clerk has advised that due to increased costs, a 2.5% increase will result in cuts to the second draft budget having to be made, a 5% increase will result in not be able to restart in saving for several items, and a 7.5% increase will result in the restart of saving for items which have been previously removed from the budget.

It was noted that one of the key cost increases in 2025/26 is as a result of the changes in National Insurance and the requirements around employment.

It was **resolved** to set the town council budget for 2025/2026 with £486,996 income, £486,996 expenditure and to meet this to increase the precept by 9.2% to £443,611 and the Band D council tax increases by 7.5% from £175.23 to £188.37 per year.

15. Items for the next meeting agenda

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

It was **resolved** to add an agenda item for the future management of Brook End Car Park to the next meeting agenda.

16. Date of the next meeting

Members noted that an Extra-ordinary meeting of the Town Council will take place on Wednesday 15th January 2025 at 7pm in Mill Lane Pavilion to meeting Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, John Tizard.

The date of the next full meeting of the town council is on Tuesday 4th March 2025, following a meeting of the Planning Committee at 7pm in the Community Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed: Date:
Chairman

Mission Statement

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