

Operations & Amenities Committee

To: Committee Members

Cllrs Goodman (Chairperson) Banks, Bolanz, Chapman, Collins, Cooper-Marsh, Dunford, Hitchin, Johnson & Maslen

Copies: County Councillors (not a Town Councillor) – S Ferguson, K Prentice, G Seeff & S Taylor
District Councillors (not a Town Councillor) – L Davenport-Ray, S Ferguson, A Jennings, M Pickering, I Taylor, S Taylor & G Welton
Town Councillors (not a member of this committee)
Local Press, Town Council Website & Noticeboard

Agenda for the meeting of the **Operations & Amenities committee** to be held on **16th April 2024** at **7.15pm** in the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots, PE19 2BH.

Please be aware that meetings may be recorded and made available to the public. Your participation in the meeting indicates your consent to being included in these recordings.

Public Participation

There will be a 10-minute session before the meeting to allow any resident to address the committee on any matter appearing on the agenda for this meeting.

Members of the Operations & Amenities committee are hereby summoned to attend this meeting to consider the following business.

C Robson
Town Clerk

1. Apologies for absence

To receive and accept Councillor's apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of interest

To receive from Councillors declarations as to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and/or Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests along with the nature of those interests in relation to any agenda item.

3. Minutes

Members to approve the minutes of the Operations and Amenities Committee held on 13th February 2024 as a true and accurate record.

Attachment 1

4. Action List

To receive a summary and status of ongoing actions and resolutions.

Attachment 2



- 5. Crosshall Road Local Highway Improvement Proposal 2024-25**
To receive and note a status report on the proposed Crosshall Road LHI proposal following the closure of public consultation. Attachment 3
- 6. Solar Panels – Gate Lodge, St Neots Old Cemetery**
To receive and consider recommendations on proposed installation of solar panels on the Gate Lodge located in the Old Cemetery, St Neots. Attachment 4
- 7. Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub**
To receive and consider further information and a recommendation on the proposed surfacing of the entrance track and pathway at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub, Eynesbury. Attachment 5
- 8. Autumn Planting**
To note the estimated cost of autumn planting that will be ordered from the agreed spring planting provider and reductions made. Attachment 6
- 9. Operations Depot**
To receive and note an outline of the status of the Operations Depot and future provision. Attachment 7
- 10. Health and Safety Inspections**
To note that annual health and safety inspections and risk assessments have been undertaken for all Council owned buildings Attachment 8
- 11. Lime Tree, Eynesbury Village Green**
To receive a report from the Operations Manager on the appointed tree surgeon's recommendation to remove a lime tree at Eynesbury Village Green due to a cavity going through to the base of the tree.
- 12. Date of next meeting**
To note that the date of the next Operations and Amenities committee meeting will be 21st May 2024.

C Robson
Town Clerk

Operations & Amenities Committee

Present: Cllrs Goodman (Chairperson), Banks, Bolanz, Chapman, Collins, Cooper-Marsh, Dunford, Hitchin, Johnson and Maslen.

In attendance: Town Clerk, Operations Manager

Absent:

Minutes of the meeting of the **Operations & Amenities committee** held on **Tuesday 12th March** at **7.30pm** in the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots, PE19 2BH.

Public Participation

There was one member of the public present.

097 Apologies for Absence

There were none.

ACTIONS

Admin

098 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

099 Minutes

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Operations and Amenities Committee held on 13th February 2024 as a true and accurate record.

Admin

100 Action list

Members received the committee action list. The following points were raised;

Autumn Planting – The Council will need to agree its autumn planting order in April. The Operations Team have previously put forward suggestions on ways to reduce planting costs. Any changes were previously deferred. It was agreed that Councillors would be invited to attend a site meeting with the Operations Team to look at key areas where changes or reductions to flower beds could be made.

Cllrs Dunford, Goodmand, Johnson and Chapman expressed an interested in attending.

Brickhills Inclusive Play and Play Park Strategy – It was agreed a meeting of the Play Park Working Group would be held to bring back recommendations on how to progress the inclusive play see-saw at Brickhills, wider play ambitions, a new Eaton Ford park and funding. The Clerk had not received a further update on a dropped kerb at Brickhills and would raise this again with the HDC open spaces team.



LHI and Speed Indicator Signs – A Councillors asked that Members who wish to join the Working Group let the Clerk know, as at present there were only two members.

101 Highways Issue Petition

Members received a petition on highway improvements in the area of Queens Garden and Eaton Socon Pre-School. The petition had been deferred from the previous committee meeting as no one was able to attend the Committee meeting to speak on behalf of the petition.

The Town Clerk informed the committee that due to illness a representative to speak on the petition was not available to attend.

Members expressed support for the matters outlined in the petition but felt that they needed to hear more from the petitioners to understand the issues and proposed measures.

The Clerk reminded the committee that while the Highways LHI scheme provided an avenue for the Town Council to put forward highway improvements it was restricted to one application per ward. The Council do not know what other highways issues might be brought to the Council agendas between now and the opening of the LHI scheme and as such the Committee should not commit to supporting an LHI bid until it is in a position to evaluate all potential bids for the Eatons Ward. The concerns should first be addressed to the Highway Authority through the relevant County Councillor. Cllr G Seeff was aware of the petition.

A Member suggested that the matter should be deferred again.

The Chairperson suggested that the Clerk and Chairperson invite representatives of the petitioner and Cllr G Seeff to a site meeting to learn more about the issues which were being raised.

It was commented that any meeting should include ward representatives, who deal with LHI discussions that may come through from residents. It was suggested the petitioner be encouraged to contact Highway Officers to ask their opinion on what measures might be suitable and potential costs.

RESOLVED to defer further consideration of the petition and the issues set out within it to the next meeting of the committee. That a site meeting is arranged between representatives of the petitioner, the Chairperson of the Operations & Amenities committee, Town Council Ward Members and County Councillor Seeff.



102 Local Highway Improvement (LHI) Bid 2023/24 – Eynesbury Ward

Members received and noted a consultation letter which was due to be circulated to properties around the Luke Street area where the proposed one-way system would be implemented. The Clerk informed the Committee that the letter drop would include St Mary Street properties and that the Highway Officer had confirmed they were in communication with the caravan site. The Clerk would contact the school to make sure they were aware and ask that they are included in the letter drop, which they could in turn share with parents.

103 Moores Walk Communal Space

The Clerk provided an update to Councillors, confirming quotes had been received and issued to HDC for consideration. HDC have agreed to the proposed work and costs provided. The quotes received were within the available budget from HDC and once approval of a particular quote had been made the Clerk would issue a PO and look to engage a preferred contractor.

It was confirmed the existing benches would be refurbished and the bin would be a heritage style bin.

It was noted that planting didn't include sensory plants. The Clerk commented that this could be picked up as part of the project delivery.

Jet washing of the site was not included in the quoted works. This is something the Operations Team could look at, but it was noted due to the location of the garden it could be difficult.

Thanks were expressed to the resident who had put themselves forward as part of the Working Group.

104 Museum Building Works

Members received and considered a draft tender document for works to St Neots Museum building, which were highlighted through a historic building survey. The Clerk explained he would continue to work with the museum to liaise with them closer on the process.

It was suggested that an amendment is made to emphasise the tenderers should provide a full breakdown of project costs for each area of work to allow for potential phasing and better evaluation.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Council approve the Museum Repair Work tender and that the Clerk initiate the tender process subject to further liaising with the museum trustees.



105 Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub

Members received and considered a report from the Operations Manager on surfacing of the access track and parking area at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub. The report recommended that self-binding gravel be no longer considered as a surface solution for further investigation. This was due to the lack of guarantees that would be provided by the supplier and the contractor.

Officers had also been asked to look at costings for a resin surface option. The costs on this were had not been received, but the Senior Maintenance Technician commented that they believed the costs would be considerably more expensive than a tarmac solution and would not offer the same level of surfacing as tarmac.

Members discussed the surfacing, with some commenting that for longevity and cost tarmac would form the better solution, but that it was important to have the most sustainable solution. A Member commented that a tarmac solution would fit with the existing tarmac paths in the cemeteries.

A Member commented that the Committee needs to understand the pros and cons of tarmac and resin and how drainage will be dealt with.

It was noted that even with a preferred tarmac solution new quotes would need to be brought forward due to the time that has passed since the initial quote.

RESOLVED that the Operations Manager obtain three quotes for tarmac surfacing of the entrance track, parking area and pedestrian path at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub. That companies quoting are also asked to provide a price for a resin surface.

106 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Operations and Amenities Committee would be at 7:15pm on 16th April 2024.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL ACTION LIST 2023/24

The following Action List summarises outstanding resolutions and activities that are ongoing from the last Council and the current Council. The Town Clerk would like to continue to develop the Action List into a Committee Action Plan which sets out the project/improvement works the committee will be carrying out each year.

OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE					
Minute	Project	Objective	STATUS	Responsibility	Timescales
2023/24 Activities					
Highways					
035/36 – 23-34	LHI Applications 2023/24	To submit LHI Applications for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crosshall Road, • Luke Street • Hogsden Leys 	2023-24 successful applications are due to be consulted on by CCC. Committee previously noted information provided by CCC and noted the consultation process to be undertaken by the Highway Authority. Crosshall Rd consultation has been completed – report on agenda.	1) Highways Authority	Highways consultations to take place in 4 th Qrt of 2023/24
075-23-24	LHI Applications 2024/25	To agree the 2024/25 LHI submissions and instruct the Clerk to make the applications ahead of the 12 th of January deadline	The Committee previously considered and agreed recommendations from the Working Group on the four applications the Council would submit for the 2024/25 bidding round. This recommendation was agreed by the Full Council and applications were submitted.	1) Working Group 2) Ops & Amenities 3) Town Clerk	Outcome of applications due 2 nd Qrt of 2024/25
	Eaton Socon Highways Petition	To establish a meeting between Ward Members, CCC Ward Cllr and representatives of the petitioner to better understand concerns.	School (petitioner) approach to agree a date for site meeting. Requested that this take place after school Easter holidays. At the time off issuing the agenda the school was still on Easter break and a date was to be confirmed.	1) Town Clerk 2) Ward Members	April/May 2024

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ATTACHMENT 2

Environment					
018-22-23	Queen's Jubilee Tree Planting	Apply for 5 trees from Queens Jubilee. Liaise with CCC on permissions for species & planting.	Cllrs Chapman progressing discussions on the proposed trees and were to report back to the Council accordingly. Funds available for purchase of trees.	1) Cllrs Chapman 2) Ops Manager	Planting to be done in partnership with HDC in Autumn planting season. Trees pre-ordered.
034-23-24	Tree Survey Work	All town council owned and maintained trees to be surveyed and a report issued advising recommended work	Tree inspection and quote for work approved. Relevant approvals sought from HDC (with refusal for work on one tree). Works are ongoing during the current cutting season and an update will be brought forward once work is complete. SNTC team have completed all in-house works.	1) Ops Manager 2) Contractor	Work Progressing
Play, Sport and Wellbeing					
050-23-24	Inclusive Play Parks	Improving accessibility of SNTC Play Parks via installing wheelchair accessible play equipment at Brickhills/Henbrook Play Area.	Works for the main installation have now been completed. An inclusive seesaw is still to be commissioned and installed, along with seeking improvements to the adjacent parking area from HDC. Awaiting further updates from HDC. – No update at time of meeting.	1) Working Group 2) Ops Manager 3) Town Clerk	HDC investigating installation of a dropped kerb
050 – 23-24	Play Park Strategy	Undertake a play park review and bring forward a draft strategy document on management and investment in play areas.	Play Park assessment completed, and results considered by the Committee. Priorities for the Play Park strategy agreed. An engagement survey is to be undertaken, the results of which will help inform and develop the final strategy document. Newly formed working group to meet and bring forward recommendations on next steps.	1) Town Clerk 2) Ops Manager 3) O&A Committee 4) Working Group	1 st Qrt 2024/25
Building Maintenance/Management					
065-22-23	Public Toilets	Schedule and undertaking of repair work required for public toilets Lease renewal with HDC	Operations Manager to look at bringing forward repair work to the public toilets in the Council's ownership of management. Riverside toilet project resulting in hold in renewing leases and progressing works until project is completed. HDC covering Tebbutts Road vandalism repair costs.	1) Working Group 2) Ops Manager 3) Contractor 4) Contractor	1 st Qrt 2024/25

AGENDA ITEM 4

ATTACHMENT 2

104-23-24	Museum Building Survey	Undertake a survey of the museum building to establish condition and required works.	Initial historic building condition survey completed. Due to difficulties in establishing costs and phasing options the Council agreed to issue a tender for a preferred partner. Clerk in discussion with Museum trustee and tender will be issued within the next two weeks.	1) Town Clerk 2) Museum Trustees	May 2024
047-23-24	HDC Moores Walk Land	Town Clerk to investigate options for improving community land owned by HDC in front of the United Reform Church.	Confirmed that HDC have a £20k budget to undertake works to improve the community space. SNTC to lead on works agreed by a Working Group. HDC have approved plans and a preferred quotation. Funds to be transferred to SNTC and work contracted as soon as received.	1) Town Clerk 2) HDC Parks and Open Spaces 3) Operations Manager	May 2024
105-23-24	SVDK Eynesbury Community Hub	Deferred agreement on improved access until further comments put forward by Members and amended quotes sought.	Amended quotations were sought for tarmac and resin solutions. New quotations are included in the agenda pack for this meeting for Members consideration.	1) Ops Manager	On Agenda
Legal					
065-22-23	Public Toilet Leases	To negotiate and renew leases with HDC for public toilets at Riverside and Tebbutts Road	10-year leases for the public toilets have expired. HDC have agreed to continue the lease on a rolling basis while the project to refurbish toilet at Riverside is progressed.	1) Town Clerk 2) HDC	On hold until Riverside project completed
Strategy					
065-23-24	Depot Provision	To review and bring forward potential options on future provision of the Council depot based on current and future needs.	The lease for the depot building requires renewing in October 2024. Additional revenue funds have been allowed in the 2024/25 budget to increase depot capacity. Options to be reviewed and brought forward to the committee.	1) Town Clerk 2) Operations Manager	On Agenda
094-23-24	Cemetery Land	To review and bring forward a report on the lifespan of St Neots Cemeteries and consider options for addressing future need.	The likely life span of the Council's cemeteries means that the Council needs to start thinking about future burial provision and whether it looks at acquiring more land for the purpose of cemeteries. Officers working on review of land/sites.	1) Town Clerk 2) Operations Manager 3) Senior Administrator	Ongoing

O&A = Operation and Amenities Committee **Ops Manager** = Ian Webb, Operations Manager **Clerk** = Chris Robson, Town Clerk **Wrk Grp** = Working Group

ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Committee:	OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES
Date:	16th APRIL 2024
Title:	CROSSHALL ROAD – PROPOSED LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME
Contact Officer:	TOWN CLERK

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Highways Authorities consultation on proposed highway improvements to Crosshall Road following a Local Highways Improvement bid by the Town Council.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Committee note the update provided in this report.

3. Background

3.1 In January 2023 the Council submitted an LHI bid for traffic calming measures on Crosshall Road, Eaton Ford, St Neots. The bid, which was a non-complex application, was successful in moving to the design and consultation stage of the process.

3.2 In September 2023 the committee received and considered the proposed designs for traffic calming measures, which speed cushions and double yellow lines. The Committee provided comments on the scheme.

3.3 The Highways Authority then ran an informal and formal public consultation on the proposed scheme.

3.4 The Highways Officer leading the proposal/scheme has now provided an update on the consultation process.

4. Information

4.1 Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) Highway Officer has provided the following update on the Crosshall Road LHI process;

- Approximately 40 responses were received to the formal and informal consultation
- The informal consultation was a letter that was sent to residents as well as the responses generated by the magazine article and social media.
- The formal consultation was the publication of the notice advertising the intention to install speed cushions and double yellow lines.
- At least one response requires further discussion with the resident's representative as it is requesting the relocation of a set of speed cushions.
- The responses are a mixture of positive and negative, as well as comments and observations.
- As there have been objections to the proposed scheme there will need to be a delegated decision taken by Cambridgeshire County Council's Traffic Manager and the Ward County Councillor.

4.2 The next step in the process will be a written report from the Policy and Regulation Team outlining the background to the scheme and summarising the objections to the scheme and the level of support demonstrated for it.

- 4.3 Officer responses to the objections will then be compiled and included the in the report.
- 4.4 A meeting will be set where the Ward County Councillor and Traffic Manager will consider and discuss the report and then take a decision as to whether or not it should go ahead.
- 4.5 It is anticipated that the meeting would take place towards the end of April subject to the availability of those involved.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Town Council has a revenue budget of £20,000 for the current financial year.
- 5.2 The Town Council has an earmarked reserve of £81,154 for Highways Improvements.
- 5.3 The Luke Street scheme has been estimated to cost £59,632.54, with the cost to SNTC at £34,632.54.

6. Legal Powers

- 6.1 The action undertaken is covered by the Localism Act 2011, s.1 the General Power of Competence, for which St Neots Town Council is eligible and is a power of first resort allowing the Council to do anything an individual can do.

ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Committee:	OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES
Date:	16th APRIL 2024
Title:	SOLAR PANELS – GATE LODGE, ST NEOTS OLD CEMETERY
Contact Officer:	TOWN CLERK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek a recommendation from the Committee on the installation of solar panels on the Gate Lodge building in St Neots Old Cemetery and a recommended arrangement with the tenant on cost and contribution towards the cost of the panels.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee recommend that the Council install solar panels on the Gate Lodge, St Neots Old Cemetery.
- 2.2 That the Committee recommend that quote B is selected as the preferred quotation based on the Environmental Project Officer's view that they provided the most thorough site visit and quotation, and that the Finance and Governance Committee consider project funding.
- 2.3 That the Committee express a preference for reviewing and renewing a 10 year lease with the tenant and factoring in contributions to allow the Council to achieve payback of the PV panels over a period that provides security to both parties. That the Clerk be instructed to negotiate a renewed lease to be brought back to the committee for approval.

3. Background

- 3.1 St Neots Town Council is the owner of the Gate Lodge, which is situated in the St Neots old cemetery. The lodge is rented to Kingfishers undertakers, who use the lodge as an office and mortuary for their business. There is a lease in place with the tenant which runs until June 2027.
- 3.2 The tenant is a St Neots based business who have indicated that they would wish to remain in the building in the long term, subject to leases.
- 3.3 The Environment and Emergency Committee previously considered a request from the tenants to explore options to install solar panels on the building. The building is very inefficient in terms of energy as highlighted by the buildings EPC. It was also highlighted that the Council has a legal duty as a landlord to bring the building from an EPC F rating to an E and above. Solar panels can help achieve this.
- 3.4 The Committee were supportive of exploring installing PV panels, which would help meet the Council's wider ambitions of working to move its estate to renewable energy and reach carbon net-zero. The Committee asked that the Environmental Project Officer move forward with investigations and options, with this going to the Operations and Amenities Committee, who have oversight over the Council's buildings, for consideration.

4. Solar PV Panels Quotations

4.1 The location of the Gate Lodge is shown in the image later in this report.

4.2 The Environmental Project Officer has obtained four quotes for the installation of solar panels on the Gate Lodge building, these are detailed below. Costs exclude VAT.

COMPANY A			
Type of Quote	Virtual		
Solar PV Panels	JA Solar 405W	Number of panels	12
Inverter	Solaredge 368W inverter	Battery	SolarEdge Energy Bank 10kWh
Cost (£)	20,985		
EV Charger	Zappi 7kW EV		
EV Charger Cost (£)	2,070.00	Proposed funded by tenant	

COMPANY B			
Type of Quote	Detailed site visit (internal and external)		
Solar PV Panels	Longhi HiMo6 Explorer 435W panels	Number of panels	12
Inverter	Huawei 3680W inverter	Battery	Huawei LUNA 10kWh
Cost (£)	13,163		
EV Charger	7kWh EV Charger		
EV Charger Cost (£)	1,400.00	Proposed funded by tenant	

COMPANY C			
Type of Quote	Virtual		
Solar PV Panels	JA Solar 430W	Number of panels	12
Inverter	Growatt New Energy 3600W inverter	Battery	Growatt New Energy 6.5kWh
Cost (£)	16,081.00		
EV Charger	Did not quote		
EV Charger Cost (£)	N/A		

COMPANY D			
Type of Quote	Basic site visit (external only)		
Solar PV Panels	Canadian Solar 410W	Number of panels	18
Inverter	Solis inverter	Battery	3.2kWh Battery
Cost (£)	12,000		
EV Charger	11kWh EV Charger		
EV Charger Cost (£)	1,500	Proposed funded by tenant	

4.3 Each company has quoted different energy savings and payback period for the panels based on figures they have chosen to use.

Average Estimated Payback	9 years
Median Expected Generation	4,821 kWh
Median expected annual electricity bill savings	£1,765

4.4 The recommended company’s generation, savings and payback period have been quoted at;

Expected Payback Period	12 years
Expected Generation	4,025kWh
Expected annual electricity bill savings	£1,052

Your Year 1 savings and benefits

We have assigned your occupancy usage to being at your property for the majority of the day.

Self Consumption	3,393 kWh
Export	632 kWh
Self Consumption	45%
Annual electric spend before Solar	£2,325.00
Annual Savings with Solar	£1,051.83
Smart Export Guarantee Income	£50.56
Expected Net electric spend after Solar	£1222.61
Grid independence without battery	26%

5. TENANT AGREEMENT

5.1 If the Council agrees to install solar pv panels on the Gate Lodge building it will not automatically receive a direct gain from the panels, as savings in electricity use which result in the payback period will be received by the tenant who is responsible for building utilities. As the tenant is a commercial entity the Council should be careful about indirectly subsidising the business through the installation of panels for which the tenant would receive a financial benefit, while the Council would not.

5.2 The installation of panels does contribute towards the Council’s wider environmental aims for its estate and working with the tenant to agree financial contributions to towards the panel will help achieve benefits for both parties.

5.3 The Council should consider the following points;

- If the Council fund the cost of installing the panels it will not receive the savings which result from the installation, therefore there will not be a payback for the panels.

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- If the Council fund the installation of the panels it should look to reach an agreement with the tenant on payments which will help give a payback period. This would provide benefits to both parties.
- If the tenant were to fund the installation of the panels they would receive the benefit of savings made. However, this is a large capital outlay without security over any investment due to the length of the lease.
- If the tenant funded the capital purchase of the panels they would not be the property of the Council, however if the tenancy was not to be renewed at any point the panels would remain with the building benefiting the Council and any future tenant.
- The tenant has a short period left on its current lease so may be unlikely to agree to a financial commitment without security over a longer period of time.

5.4 The committee is asked to consider and provide comment on the proposal to install solar panels, which originated from a request by the tenant and possible basis for any arrangement to reach an agreement between parties.

5.5 It is proposed that as a way forward the council could consider reviewing and renewing the lease for the building early, if the tenant was willing. Renewing a long-term lease would provide the tenant with security for any investment and give the Town Council the opportunity to review terms and include increased payments over a period which would allow for partial payback of the panels on an annual basis.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The installation of PV solar panels would help the Council work towards its carbon neutral ambitions for the wider council estate (not just those buildings the Council operates)

6.2 The Council has a legal responsibility to improve the EPC rating of the Gate Lodge and the installation of panels was included as a recommendation in the last EPC certificate for the building. The panels would therefore help increase the EPC rating.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Council has a Community Building Works revenue budget of £49,490 available for the current financial year. The Council also has a community buildings earmarked reserve of £156,537. However, the Gate Lodge is not used by the Council as a community building and is leased to a business, therefore these budgets would not apply to this project.

7.2 The Council has a Carbon Neutral project revenue budget of £10,000 for the current financial year and a earmarked reserve of £20,500 which could be used to fund the project. However, this would use a sizable amount of the funding set aside for progressing carbon neutral projects.

7.3 The Council could consider using its general reserves to cover the costs of the project.

7.4 The Council currently receives an annual rent of £8,500 for the property.



ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Committee	OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE
Date:	16 APRIL 2024
Title:	STEVE VAN DE KERKHOVE COMMUNITY HUB ACCESS SURFACING
Contact Officer:	OPERATIONS MANAGER

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with updated quotations for re-surfacing the access track and car park area at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Eynesbury Community Hub.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee recommends tarmac surfacing of the access track, car parking area and pedestrian walkway at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Hub. The environmental challenges with a tarmac solution are acknowledged, but due to the accessibility requirements a more environmentally friendly solution such as gravel is not a feasible option.
- 2.2 That the Committee recommends to the Finance and Governance Committee that Company B be approved as the preferred contractor for the work at a cost of £73,000.00.

3. Background

- 3.1 As Members are aware the Council owns both the former Red Cross building and the former St Johns Building. The former Red Cross building was renamed to the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Building, and it was agreed that both buildings would form the 'Steve Van de Kerkhove Eynesbury Community Hub'.
- 3.2 Both buildings are to be put to community use, with the former St Johns Building supporting regular hirers of the Priory Centre by acting as a hireable space during the Priory Centres closure. The building will be managed, including bookings through the Priory Centre team during the works to redevelop the Priory Centre.
- 3.3 The building is now in a usable condition for hirers, however the General Manager of the Priory and Eatons Centres raised concerns over access to the building, which is down an uneven and unsurfaced track. The Eynesbury Hub will be acting as a community space for a wide range of activities. Users will cover all age ranges and there are concerns that the state of the track is unsafe for older users or those with mobility challenges. As such, the General Manager has asked that the Council look to undertake work to improve access.
- 3.5 Costs for resurfacing the track, car park area and a walkway with either tarmac or self-binding gravel were brought to the committee. The committee asked that a further cost was obtained for a combination of the self-binding gravel for the road/path and tarmac for the car park.
- 3.4 Use of self-binding gravel was ruled out due to lack of guarantees by the manufacturer and contractor, it was also not seen as suitable for use by vehicles.
- 3.5 The committee asked that further quotes are brought forward for a resin solution as well as a tarmac solution.

4. Information

4.1 The Operations Manager has sought the following quotes for tarmac and resin surfacing solutions.

COMPANY A			
TARMAC		RESIN	
COST	£81,450.00 (+VAT)	COST	£104,980.00 (+ VAT)
SPEC	Supply materials and hand lay car park/road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700sqm • Excavate 250mm • 410 ton muck away • 165 ton ype one stone • 350 concrete edgings (inc concrete) • 100 ton 20mm binder • 70 ton 10mm surface course • 20 days labour • Removal of muck from site 	SPEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700sqm • Excavate 250mm • 410 ton muck away • 165 ton type one stone • 350 concrete edgings (includes concrete) • 126 ton 14mm open graded • 20mm of resin bound • 20 days Labour • Removal of muck from sit Service includes team of operatives, full kit, and machinery. Plant and regulating an additional cost.

COMPANY B			
TARMAC		RESIN	
COST	£73,000.00 (+VAT)	COST	£114,980.00 (+ VAT)
SPEC	Supply materials and hand lay car park/road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700sqm • Excavate 250mm • 410 ton muck away • 150mm type one stone • 60mm tarmac base course • 40mm surface course • Concrete edgings (inc concrete) • Removal of muck from site 	SPEC	Resin entire area including car park and footway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700sqm • Excavate 250mm • 410 ton muck away • 150mm type one stone • 80mm 14mm open graded tarmac • 20mm resin bound • Concrete edgings around perimeter • Removal of muck from site

A further two companies engaged failed to submit quotations.

5. Options Appraisal

51. Officers are recommending that if the Council wishes to progress with surfacing the track and parking area of the Steve Van de Kerkhove Eynesbury Community Hub then this should be with tarmac rather the resin. The below table summarises the two options;

<p>TARMAC</p>	<p>Positives</p> <p>Lower cost.</p> <p>Relatively easy to install and maintain.</p> <p>Resistant to harsh weather conditions, making them an ideal option for outdoor areas that experience extreme temperatures or heavy rainfall.</p> <p>Suitable for all vehicle types and pedestrians.</p> <p>Meets the varied and level of activity anticipated for the site (inc. Council work vehicles).</p>	<p>Negatives</p> <p>Susceptible to cracking over time due to wear and tear from heavy traffic.</p> <p>Non-permeable (unless specifically using permeable asphalt), meaning surface water runoff is increased, as well as puddling and ice in winter.</p> <p>Becomes very hot to touch and can melt in summer.</p> <p>Tarmac is not considered eco-friendly as it is made from non-renewable resources like crude oil.</p>
<p>RESIN</p>	<p>Positives</p> <p>It's resistant to cracks, UV rays, and frost.</p> <p>Permeable, reducing water runoff and puddling (and thus icing in winter).</p> <p>Resin is more environmentally friendly as it is often made from recycled materials and requires less energy to create and install compared to traditional surfacing.</p> <p>Low maintenance.</p>	<p>Negatives</p> <p>Higher cost.</p> <p>Intended for driveways rather than higher activity access and parking as will be the case here.</p> <p>Durability: suitable for moderate to low traffic volumes. While they can withstand regular residential traffic, including multiple vehicles, they may not be as well-suited for heavy traffic or constant heavy vehicle use</p> <p>Lengthy installation - The process involves several steps and typically takes several days, as it needs to cure before it can be used.</p> <p>Should any damage occur to the surface, it can be difficult to repair as it needs to be completely replaced.</p> <p>Resin contains polyurethane, which is derived from crude oil, making it less environmentally friendly than other options (i.e. gravel)</p>

6. Environmental Considerations

6.1 Both resin and tarmac surfacing comes with environmental concerns regarding their raw materials:

- They contain components derived from crude oil, a non-renewable resource which causes considerable harm to the environment at both the point of extraction and later use.
- Resin surfaces do increasingly contain recycled materials, giving new life to items which would otherwise end up in landfill. Some tarmac contains recycled asphalt, but this differs between suppliers.
- Alternative surfaces, such as gravel (from sustainable sources), would be preferred from an environmental viewpoint but are acknowledged to be less suitable in terms of accessibility. The use

of concrete alongside the proposed surfaces is also harmful, with the cement industry responsible for 8% of global CO2 emissions.

- 6.2 Aside from emissions, the biggest environmental impact of any form of hard surface relates to its permeability, or lack of. Standing water and surface runoff from non-permeable surfaces contribute significantly to urban flooding. Whilst the area being considered for resurfacing is relatively small, it is pertinent to consider the impact of increased water flow on the surrounding area. It is likely that any water will run off into the brook and the Old Cemetery. The size of the area means direct runoff will likely be limited, so impact downstream should also be limited, but an accumulation of small-scale non-permeable surfaces ultimately results in large-scale runoff and larger impacts downstream. Resin-bound surfacing is permeable whereas standard tarmac is not (although permeable tarmac is a possibility, depending on the contractor), making resin much more effective in reducing runoff. Adding a soakaway would also help to reduce the impact of this.
- 6.3 A further environmental implication of resurfacing with hard substrates is the increased localised temperature. Impermeable surfaces reduce evaporation from underground aquifers on hot days, meaning the localised cooling effect of water vapour is lost. Additionally, black, and other dark-coloured, surfaces are known to emit heat radiation, thus again impacting on the localised temperature.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Council has a £50,000 building and major repairs budget for the current financial year and an Ear marked reserve of £156,537 for Community Buildings. These budgets are intended to cover all buildings in the Council's ownership and projects that arise to improve the facilities, including initiatives such as solar panels (the Eatons Centre panels were funded from the Community Buildings funds).
- 7.2 The General Manager of the Priory and Eatons Centres has stressed the importance of improving the surfacing to support use of the building by community groups as a result of the Priory Centre temporary closure. Current bookings for the building over a 12 month period from August are estimated at approximately £20,000.

8. Legal Powers

- 8.1 The action undertaken is covered by the Localism Act 2011, s.1 the General Power of Competence, for which St Neots Town Council is eligible and is a power of first resort allowing the Council to do anything an individual can do.

ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Committee	OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES
Date:	16th APRIL 2024
Title:	PLANTING PROVISION
Contact Officer:	TOWN CLERK / OPERATIONS MANAGER

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide members with information on the autumn 2024 planting following the need to look for alternative planting provision due to the sale of greenhouses currently used by the town council for growing bedding and basket plants.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Committee notes the update provided on Autumn 2024 planting which will be purchased from the supplier providing spring 2024 planting as previously agreed.

2.2 That the Committee approves the recommended reductions in hanging and barrier baskets as previously approved for spring planting.

2.3 That the committee notes that spring 2025 planting will need to come from the 2024/25 revenue budget resulting in an overspend in the budget. Options on Spring 2025 planting will be brought to the Committee.

3. Background

3.1 The Council had rented green houses to grow its own bedding, planter, and basket display flowers for a number of years. The arrangement has worked well and due to the rental level of the greenhouses has allowed the Council to deliver flower planting displays at a relatively consistent cost lower than outsourcing display provision to an external grower/nursery.

3.2 The land and greenhouses used by the Council has been sold and it was previously advised that it is no longer possible to deliver planting displays by growing our own flowers. This was a quickly developing situation that occurred after the Council had set its 2024/25 budget.

3.3 As there were no obvious local solutions for alternative greenhouse rental that would provide a solution in a timescale that would allow for planting to be grown for 2024 the Council agreed to purchase plants from a supplier, with the Operations team designing and planting displays.

3.4 The Spring 2024 planting is due to go in, but autumn planting must now be ordered to ensure provision is ready as needed.

3.5 In 2023 the Council planted 36 flower beds (mixture of annual and perennial) and 109 hanging baskets. This was reduced for 2024 spring planting to account for the Market Square, High Street and Priory Centre projects which would prevent some hanging/barrier baskets being displayed.

3.6 As spring planting is only now due to be delivered and planted, it has not been possible to review the provider.

4. Information

- 4.1 The number of bedding plants needed for autumn is the same as spring and anticipated costs for planting are based on the spring 2024 costs. However, there is a reduction in the variety of plants used in autumn displays.
- 4.3 The estimated autumn 2024 costs are based on Spring 2024 confirmed costs. Cost includes supply and delivery.

Autumn Bedding Plants		
Species	Quantity in Beds	Estimated Cost (£)
TBC	10,700	6,800**
*Species for autumn plants are more limited and will include polyanthus and types of wallflowers.		
** Based on previous spring costs and an allowance for reduction due to cheaper variety.		

Hanging Basket and Planters					
	Location	2023 Provision	2024 Reduced Provision	Est. Cost (£)	Comment
Amberol cup-and-saucer self watering baskets (20" diameter)	High Street Market Sq Town bridge	50	30	750.00	Recommended to reduce provision due to ongoing Market Square works
Similar half-baskets for bolting around lampposts	Eaton Socon Roundabout	24	24	336.00	Recommended to continue with usual provision
16" wire baskets	Library	15	15	450.00	Recommended to continue with usual provision
20 x railing troughs (4ft long x 12" wide, each with two liner troughs)	Barriers on High Street Railings	20	0	-	Recommended to reduce provision due to High Street works and potential removal of barriers
16" wire baskets	Priory Centre	25	0	-	Recommended to reduce provision to Priory Centre works and closure
Total				£1,536.00	

Total estimated cost of bedding and hanging baskets for autumn 2024	£8,336.00
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- 4.4 For information, bedding plants required are based on the following number of beds.

	Current Total Beds	Current Annual Beds
Cambridge Street	6	3
Crosshall Road	3	2

Eaton Ford Green	4	3
Eaton Socon Green	3	3
Eaton Socon Church	1	1
Eynesbury Green	3	3
Lawn Cemetery	5	4
New Cemetery	2	2
Priory Centre	2	2
Tan Yard	2	2
Total	31	25

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The Council has the following revenue budgets for the current financial year and the 2024/25 financial year;

	2023/24 Budget	Remaining Budget
Planting	£10,000	£10,000
Glasshouse Rental	£2,000	£2,000
Total	£12,000	£12,000

The above budgets were set based on continuing to rent and grow flowers under the same arrangements that have been in place. This was the understanding at the time the Council set its budget.

5.2 The autumn 2024 planting will be within the budget available. However, due to the difference in costs between purchasing and growing the plants the autumn planting will use a significant amount of the 2024/25 planting budget and the Committee will need to further consider options for spring 2025 planting later in the year, which would likely result in an overspend.

6. Reducing Planting

6.1 The Council is reducing some planting because of High Street, Market Square and Priory Centre works. However, the costs do not include further reducing bedding plants currently.

6.2 Reducing bedding plants in favour of more permanent planting forms part of the draft Climate Action Plan and the Environmental Project Officer will be asked to bring this forward for detailed consideration. As well as providing some environmental benefits, reduced annual planting would also lower costs.

6.3 A reduction in annual planting would have the following environmental benefits for the Council;

- **Water Conservation:** Maintaining flower bedding plants requires significant amounts of water. Although the Council uses water from the river to maintain its plants, a reduction in watering and transporting the bowser will have benefits.
- **Natural Carbon Sequestration:** While flowers and plants absorb carbon dioxide during photosynthesis, the overall impact on carbon sequestration may be limited. In some cases, landscaping practices that

involve planting more trees or shrubs can be more effective in capturing and storing carbon over the long term.

- **Transportation Emissions:** Flower bedding plants need to be transported to their planting locations, contributing to carbon emissions. By reducing the number of plants, the council can lower those emissions.
- **Promoting Biodiversity:** Instead of traditional flower bedding, many councils opt for planting more permanent displays. These alternatives can support local biodiversity, reduce the need for intensive maintenance, and enhance ecosystem services.

7. Legal Powers

- 7.1 The action undertaken is covered by the Localism Act 2011, s.1 the General Power of Competence, for which St Neots Town Council is eligible and is a power of first resort allowing the Council to do anything an individual can do.

ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Committee:	OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES
Date:	16th APRIL 2024
Title:	OPERATIONS DEPOT – STATUS REPORT
Contact Officer:	TOWN CLERK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the status of the Operations Depot following the Council’s resolution to budget additional funding to allow for potential increased capacity in 2024/25.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee note the update provided in this report and that the Town Clerk and Operations Manager continue to review potential opportunities as they arise, with a focus on additional smaller options which would provide some increased capacity.

3. Background


- 3.1 The committee previously considered pressure on the space available in the operations depot. While Members acknowledged that the preferred long-term solution would be for the Council to move away from renting a depot to owning its own building, which could possibly include space for a works yard and greenhouse, it was clear this wouldn’t be a short to medium term solution given pressure on finding available land.
- 3.2 The Council resolved to budget a £40,000 revenue budget for the existing depot rental, the lease or which comes up for renewal in October 2024.
- 3.3 The Council resolved to budget a further £20,000 to allow for options on increasing capacity in the short to medium term, either by renting a larger depot or an additional smaller space to assist with storage and operations.
- 3.4 The Operations Manager and Town Clerk were asked to review rental options and report back to the committee. This report focuses on rental of current spaces available and the challenges and limitations in securing suitable alternative provision.

4. Information

- 4.1 The Council currently rents a depot building which is 5,243 sq ft. The building, which is rented from Huntingdonshire District Council is located at Levellers Road, Eynesbury.
- 4.2 At present, there is no clear option which would provide an alternative rental depot which officers increased space within the available budget. While the Operations Manager will continue to monitor opportunities and the Clerk with liaise with the District Council, a more likely short/medium-term solution may be renewing the rental of the current depot and renting an additional smaller unit to help address capacity issues.

4.3 The following example properties are based on those currently on the market for rent in St Neots. These are provided to give Councillors information on challenges in finding alternative rental provision of a larger unit based on current availability.

Example Property 1					
Location	Eynesbury – Levellers Lane	Size	5,243 Sq Ft	Rent	£33,000
Positives			Negatives		
<p>Neighbouring property to current rental.</p> <p>Good location.</p> <p>As an individual unit it is within budget.</p> <p>Includes office space, kitchen and toilets.</p> <p>If taken as an additional unit to expand the existing neighbouring rental the adjoining wall could be knocked through to create a larger depot.</p>			<p>As a stand-alone property does not offer any additional space or improvements to current arrangements.</p> <p>Only works as an option to expand capacity if it were to be taken alongside the existing depot.</p> <p>If taken as an additional unit it would double the size of the depot, which may be more space than can be justified based on present need.</p> <p>As an additional unit it is out of budget, particularly when doubling business rates is taken into account.</p> <p>Additional/adjoining building it would create increased security risks by increased doors/windows entry points.</p>		
					

Example Property 2					
Location	Eaton Socon - Little End Road	Size	8,795 Sq Ft	Rent	£47,500
Positives			Negatives		
<p>Within available budget.</p> <p>Provides increased space of approx. 3,550 which could be justified.</p> <p>Good level of parking and outside space.</p> <p>Good location.</p>			<p>Not designed as an operational depot and is intended as a warehouse.</p> <p>Does not include office, break, kitchen and rest room space required.</p> <p>Although it provides increased capacity, it does not provide usable outdoor/yard space.</p>		
					

Example Property 3					
Location	Eaton Socon - Little End Road	Size	9,258 Sq Ft	Rent	£75,000
Positives			Negatives		
<p>Provides increased space of approx. 3,550 which could be justified.</p> <p>Good level of parking and outside space.</p> <p>Access to external yard space.</p> <p>Good location.</p> <p>Includes office space, kitchen, break and restroom facilities required.</p>			<p>Exceeds budget.</p> <p>Level of additional capacity and high cost may be difficult to justify.</p> <p>Although it provides increased capacity, it does not provide usable outdoor/yard space.</p> <p>Yard access is shared and not secure.</p>		



Example Property 4					
Location	Eaton Socon – Howard Road	Size	11,625 Sq Ft	Rent	£85,000
Positives			Negatives		
<p>Provides increased space of approx. 6,382 which could be justified.</p> <p>Good level of parking and outside space.</p> <p>Good location.</p> <p>Includes office space, kitchen, break and restroom facilities required. Approx. 3,875 sq ft of offices and reception areas.</p>			<p>Exceeds budget and additional service charges would be payable.</p> <p>Large warehouse with larger than required office space.</p> <p>Not possible to justify such a large (more than double) increase in space/capacity on a short/medium term basis.</p> <p>Size of office and reception areas not justifiable.</p>		



Example Property 5					
Location	Eynesbury – Levellers Lane	Size	5,164 Sq Ft	Rent	£34,500
Positives			Negatives		
Good location. As an individual unit it is within budget. Includes office space, kitchen and toilets.			Offers no increased capacity or benefits. Higher rent than current unit for same floor space.		
 A photograph of a modern industrial building with a grey corrugated metal upper section and brick lower section. A sign on the building reads 'PHOTOFABRICATION Composite Chemical Etching, Plating tel: 01480 226699 www.photolab.co.uk Unit 9'. Two cars are parked in front, and a blue bin is visible on the left.					

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Town Council has a revenue budget of £40,000 for the current financial year for the rent and business rates of the operational depot at Levellers Lane. This budget allows for an anticipated rent increase for the depot when the lease comes up for renewal in October 2024.
- 5.2 The Town Council has budgeted a further £20,000 towards additional operational depot space. This gives a total available budget of £60,000 for rent and rate of depot space.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that renewing the contract for the current depot will result in a new rent of up to £33,000 based on neighbouring like-for-like properties. Business rates for the depot will then need be accommodated from the remaining budget.

6. Legal Powers

- 6.1 The action undertaken is covered by the Localism Act 2011, s.1 the General Power of Competence, for which St Neots Town Council is eligible and is a power of first resort allowing the Council to do anything an individual can do.

ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Committee: OPERATIONS AND AMENITIES
Date: 16th APRIL 2024
Title: HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSESSMENTS – COUNCIL PROPERTIES
Contact Officer: TOWN CLERK

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide Members with confirmation that the Council has met health and safety requirements for Council owned and/or managed buildings via completion of risk inspections by the Council’s health and safety advisor.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee notes that the Council has met health and safety requirements for Council operated buildings through professional inspection.
- 2.2 That feedback from the reports did not highlight any areas of high concern, but that a report will be issued to officers and any areas of note will be reported to the committee.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has a professional external personnel and health and safety adviser in place to ensure the Council meets its requirements as an employer and operator of public buildings. This includes professional fire risk assessments and Electrical Installation Certificate assessments.
- 3.2 In the same way the annual inspections of play equipment and any arising issues are reported to Council, confirmation on inspections of buildings should also be reported.
- 3.3 The Council has a responsibility to ensure it is meeting health and safety standards for all buildings it operates, both for employees, councillors, public and other visitors.

4. Information

4.1 Independent inspections have been undertaken of the following Council buildings;

Priory Centre and Council Offices
No immediate concerns. Following formal report any areas of note will be reported to the committee.

Operations Depot
No immediate concerns. Following formal report any areas of note will be reported to the committee.

Eatons Centre
No immediate concerns. Following formal report any areas of note will be reported to the committee.

Steve Van de Kerkhove Eynesbury Community Hub (Former SJA)
No immediate concerns. Following formal report any areas of note will be reported to the committee.

Steve Van de Kerkhove Eynesbury Community Hub (Former Red Cross)

No immediate concerns. Following formal report any areas of note will be reported to the committee. Elements of tenant responsibility to be discussed/built into proposed long term lease request for consideration by the next meeting of the Ops Committee.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council maintains revenue budgets for the maintenance and repair of its buildings. Any costs arising from the inspections and resulting report will be accommodated within budgets provided.

6. Legal Powers

- 6.1 The action undertaken is covered by the Localism Act 2011, s.1 the General Power of Competence, for which St Neots Town Council is eligible and is a power of first resort allowing the Council to do anything an individual can do.