

### **Full Town Council**

**To:** All Town Councillors

**Copies:** County Councillors – Ferguson, Prentice, Seef & S Taylor

District Councillors – Ferguson, Davenport-Ray, Jennings, Pickering, I Taylor &

S Taylor

**Town Councillors** – not a member of this committee **Local Press, Town Council Website & Noticeboard** 

**Agenda** for the meeting of the **Town Council** to be held on **Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025** at **7.15pm** in the Eatons Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

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 Full Town Council are hereby summoned to attend this meeting to consider the following business.

Town Clerk

#### 1 Apologies for Absence

To receive and note councillor's apologies.

#### 2 Declarations of Interest

To receive from councillor's 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 of this meeting.

#### 3 Minutes

Members to approve the following minutes as a true and accurate record: Annual Council Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

Attachment 1

#### 4 County and District Councillor Reports

To receive verbal updates or reports from County and District Councillors on matters of significance to St Neots.



#### Committee Minutes

To receive and note draft minutes of meetings of the following committees and sub-committees and (if applicable) to approve recommendations therein which do not arise elsewhere;

i) Planning Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Attachment 2

ii) Promotion & Events Committee held on 1st April 2025

Attachment 3

iii) Planning Committee held on 8th April 2025

Attachment 4

iv) Operations & Amenities Committee held on 8th April 2025

Attachment 5

v) Planning Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

Attachment 6

vi) Finance & Governance Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

Attachment 7

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council installs solar panels at the St Neots Museum building and that the Council funds the cost of the panels and battery. That company B's quotation is recommended as the preferred company at a cost of £10,509.18 and the Council allocates £10,509.18 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work.

Attachment 8

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council progress the installation of the new heating system at Gate Lodge as recommended in the Energise Audits. That Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £5,783.50 and the Council allocates £5,783.50 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work.

Attachment 9

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council progresses with the installation of the new heating system at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Building as recommended in the Energise Audits. That Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £4,071.00 and the Council allocates £4,071.00 from the Community Building earmarked reserve. That the replacement of electric heaters with air-conditioning units at Gate Lodge this is conditional to reagreeing/negotiate the lease for the building.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council progresses the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump at the Eatons Community Centre with Company A agreed as the preferred contractor at an estimated cost of £23,634.54. That the Council allocates up to £25,000.00 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work. That officers work with the appointment company to submit a planning application for the installation of a heat pump.

Attachment 10



**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council re-adopts the Council Financial Risk Assessment as reviewed by the Finance and Governance Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025.

Attachment 11

#### 6 St Neots Neighbourhood Development Plan

To receive and consider a report and recommendation from the Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group

Attachment 12

#### 7 Market Square Staging

To receive and consider a report and recommendations from Huntingdonshire District Council regarding a proposed Market Square stage, along with a covering report from the Town Clerk outlining options for the Town Council's consideration and response.

Attachment 13

#### 8 Priory Centre Redevelopment

To receive and note a status report from the Project Delivery Manager on the redevelopment work for the Priory Centre.

Attachment 14

#### 9 Projects Status Summary

To receive and note a project status reports.

Attachment 15

#### 10 Internal Audit

i) To receive and accept the 2024-25 second interim internal audit report following an inspection in March 2025.

Attachment 16

ii) To receive and note an action list in response to recommendations arising from the internal audit report and to note the request from the Finance and Governance Committee that an update is brought to the committee meeting of 13 May 2025.

Attachment 17

#### 11 Communications

To receive and note the following communications received;

i) Huntingdonshire District Council – CIL Funding Round June 2025.

Attachment 18

#### 12 Reports from Outside Bodies

To receive verbal reports from Members who act as Council representatives on outside bodies.

#### 13 Mayoral Engagements

To receive and note a list of upcoming Mayoral engagements to be attended by the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor.

- 2 May 1st St Neots Scouts Beer Festival
- 3-6 May St Neots to St Neot charity cycle
- 8 May VE-Day 80 Beacon lighting
- 20 May Annual Town Meeting



Town Clerk - Chris Robson Town Mayor - Cllr Richard Slade

- 24-25 May Market Square launch weekend
- 25 May Beating the Bounds walk with St Neots History Society

#### 14 Date of Next Meeting

To note the date of the next Full Council meeting will be 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025, which will be the Annual Council Meeting.

#### 15 Committee In Private Session

RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment or contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

#### 16 Priory Centre Lease

To receive and note an update from the Town Clerk on the completion of the 90-year lease with Huntingdonshire District Council for the Priory Centre.

ATTACHMENT 1 T: 01480 388911 E: enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk W: www.stneots-tc

Town Clerk - Chris Robson Town Mayor - Cllr Richard Slade

### **Full Town Council**

Present: Cllrs Simonis (Chair), Banks, Bolanz, Chapman, Cooper-Marsh, Dunford, Dundas-

Todorov, Goodman, Hitchin, Macnab-Grieve, Mascarenhas, Pitt, Slade, , S Smith and

Terry

Absent: Cllrs Collins, Crompton, Maslen, Johnson, Kumar, Simonis, J Smith

In attendance: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Project Delivery Manager

Minutes of the meeting of St Neots Town Council held on Tuesday 25th March 2025 at 7.15pm in the Eaton's Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### **Public Participation**

There were two members of the public present.

**ACTIONS** 

#### 244 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Collins and Simonis.

Admin

#### **Declarations of Interest** 245

No declarations of interest were made.

#### 246 Council Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025 as a true and accurate record.

#### 247 County and District Councillor Reports

Members received verbal updates or reports from County and District Councillors on matters of significance to St Neots.

- Cllr Pitt (HDC) provided an update regarding the proposed Market Square stage, advising that HDC is preparing a report to share with the Town Council following the consultation that was carried out. A Member raised concerns about the reported funding from the Combined Authority and questioned if this would be better spent towards the Priory Centre. The Chair noted the Council would wait for the HDC report before further comment.
- Primary School Capacity Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray (HDC) Cllr Davenport-Ray presented data from the 2021 census, explaining that while birth rates are growing in St Neots East, they are declining in other areas of the town. This means the infrastructure (schools) are not necessarily located in the areas where most need is. In two years, primary schools are projected to have more places than needed. Schools such as St Mary's may become unsustainable, while newer schools in the east are reaching capacity.

APPROVED - Pending Page 1 of 6



It was questioned whether a new primary school at Loves Farm 2 is necessary given the level of capacity anticipated there, suggesting Section 106 agreements related to new provision in this area might need revisiting.

A Member asked if reputation influenced school choice; Cllr Davenport-Ray noted this is a factor but not the main issue—declining birth rates are the core concern.

#### **Committee Minutes**

- 248 i) Members received and noted minutes of the Environment & Emergency Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025.
- 249 ii) Members received and noted minutes of the Planning Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025.
- 250 iii) Members received and noted minutes of the Operations & Amenities Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025.
- 251 iv) Members received and noted minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025.
- 252 v) Members received and noted minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025
  - Members received and considered recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee, resolving as follows:
- **253 RESOLVED** to approve additional funds of up to £3,000 (including contingency) to replace the 2010 Ford Ranger and 2013 Nissan Navara with two new PHEV Ford Transit Custom.
- **RESOLVED** that the Council replace PVC doors at the Council depot with steel doors and that Company B's quote is selected at a cost of £5,231.63. That the Operations Manager further investigate options to increase security of the roller shutter door.
- 255 RESOLVED that up to £3,950 in funding is allocated to appoint the preferred professional Neighbourhood Planning consultant to undertake stage 1 Neighbourhood Plan review work, which will include research site visits, workshops, reporting and recommendations to set the scope of the brief and focus of the review and renewed plan, including project timescales.
- **RESOLVED** that the Council approves funding of up to £250,000 from the General Reserve to rebuild the perimeter wall at St Mary's Parish Church, St Neots as required from the architectural and structural engineer reports obtained.

APPROVED – Pending



# **257 RESOLVED** that unspent budget at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 in the following budget codes is transferred to an earmarked reserve for future use;

105 – 4146 Equipment and Furniture (office)

105 – 4365 Carbon Neutral Budget

201 – 4116 War Memorials

210 – 4100 Play Repair Maintenance

210 – 4107 Tree Maintenance

230 – 4118 Gate Lodge Expenses

230 – 4127 Ex-serviceman's Club

230 – 4119 The Cage/Lock Up

301 – 4105 Bus Shelters

301 – 4123 Highways Improvements

### 258 Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group

Members received and considered proposed terms of reference for the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

Cllr S Smith, Chair of the working group advised the Council the last meeting of the group focused on the technical process of reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan. The appointed preferred contractor, working at risk had provided extensive information, particularly about development plans around the west of St Neots, including Bedfordshire plans. A Member inquired about redefining the town plan boundary, which Cllr Smith confirmed as a complex process but consideration of this would form part of the stage 1 work.

**RESOVED** that the Council adopt the Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Plan Working group as presented.

#### 259 Priory Centre Building Development Group

Members reviewed and considered a report on the continuation of the Priory Centre Building Development Group (BDC).

The Council reviewed the membership and continuation of the BDG. This group was initially set up to work with HDC (Huntingdonshire District Council) and their contractors on the redevelopment project. As the project progresses to a more physical delivery phase the role of the group may change, and Town Council officers would like to focus the purpose of the group on internal collaboration and direct input on various aspects of redevelopment as it progresses, including design choices and marketing.

The BDG will work with officers and bring forward any required recommendations on marketing, operational matters, and the physical development of the Priory Centre.

APPROVED – Pending Page 3 of 6



This shift reflects the project's transition from planning to active construction and operational setup.

**RESOLVED** that the Building Development Group continue as an internal Town Council Working Group comprised of town councillors and officers, with current membership continuing.

**RESOLVED** that the Project Development Manager (PDM) will facilitate the Building Development Group as part of the overall project management of the Priory Centre Redevelopment on the Town Council's part of the Project and the different areas that includes.

Any Member who did not wish to continue to be on the Working Group was asked to advise the Clerk directly.

#### 260 Priory Centre Redevelopment Project

Members received an update report from Town Council officers on the Priory Centre redevelopment project and lease. The Project Delivery Manager outlined progress and upcoming steps in the project, which has reached a critical phase with onsite work due to start following detailed preconstruction activities. A preconstruction meeting was set to be held with contractors to ensure all preparations are in place.

It was noted that the onsite set up will start in April 2025 with work set to commence in May and that the last remaining planning condition had been resolved.

Members welcomed the start of site works and commented on the need to ensure timely communication and public information throughout the building process.

Members noted the report.

#### 261 Annual Town Meeting

Members received and considered a proposal on the date and format of the Annual Town Meeting and Annual Council Meeting. The Town Clerk explained that it had not been possible to find a suitably alternative location to the Priory Centre to hold the Annual Town Meeting and Annual Council Meeting on the same evening. This was due to the space needed to accommodate a quick turnaround/set up for the two meetings.

**RESOLVED** that the Annual Council Meeting is held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at the Eatons Centre in line with the proposed schedule of meetings for the 2025-26 Council year.

Members noted that the Annual Town Meeting, which is not a Council meeting would be held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and that details on location and time would be confirmed and shared with Members.

APPROVED – Pending

**Town Clerk** – Chris Robson **Town Mayor** – Cllr Richard Slade



#### 262 Calendar of Meetings

Members received and considered a proposed calendar of meetings for the 2025-26 Council year. A Member raised a query about amending the meeting dates for the Environment and Emergency Committee and Promotion and Events Committee to increase the number of meetings held during the year.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2025-26 Council year subject to moving the Environment and Emergency Committee meeting scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and adding an additional Environment and Emergency Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

#### 263 **Projects Status Summary**

The Project Delivery Manager presented summary reports on each of the following projects;

- Museum Building Repairs
- New Council Website
- St Neots Parish Church Wall
- Jubilee Garden Mosaic Repair and Remedials
- New Play Park Provision in Eaton Ford
- Oast Building Redevelopment (Pre-Construction)
- Transition of Ops Fleet and Machinery to EV
- Biodiversity at the Old Cemetery
- Retrofitting of SNTC Buildings (quick wins and enabling)

A Member questioned the Oast Building timescales, saying that it could be a good idea to have a charitable or community organisation using the building while plans were developed. The PDM commented that the building is not suitable for use in its current state and that recommendations would be brought forward for some works to the building in the short to medium term, which were both required and would not impact on any future refurbishment or use. I.e external repair and maintenance works to the cone.

Members received and noted the project status report.

#### 264 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

Cllr Chapman raised issues regarding HDC's attendance at Common Rights Proprietors meetings and was seeking clarity on the position of their Common Rights ownership.

#### 265 Mayoral Engagements

Members received and noted the following list of upcoming Mayoral engagements to be attended by the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor.

- 28 March BBC Any Questions radio show
- 4 April Hunchback of Notre Dame by VAMPS

APPROVED - Pending Page 5 of 6



**Town Clerk** – Chris Robson **Town Mayor** – Cllr Richard Slade

- 5 April St Neots Choral Society (Stainer's Crucifixion)
- 6 April Leicestershire Sportive (72M training ride St Neots to St Neot)
- 6 April Chaii Hub second birthday party
- 7 April Citizenship Ceremony at New Shire Hall
- 28 April Hunts Forum retirement event

#### 266 Date of Next Meeting

Members received and noted that the date of the next Full Council meeting would be 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 7:15pm.

#### 267 Committee In Private Session

**RECOMMENDED** In terms of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment or contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

#### 268 Priory Centre Marketing

Members received a report from the Project Delivery Manager and the outcome of a tendering exercise for the appointment of a contractor to develop and deliver branding and marketing work for the redeveloped Priory Centre.

The marketing tender process involved a thorough review of 23 bids. After online presentations and in-person meetings, 6bythree Digital Ltd was chosen as the preferred contractor.

**RESOLVED** that the Council note the information provided and agree on the appointment of 6bythree Digital Ltd as a contractor for tendered Priory Centre marketing work.

The first creative workshop is scheduled to engage stakeholders and gather their input on the marketing strategy. This workshop will involve activities to capture ideas, opinions, and aspirations for the Priory Centre. The Building Development Group (BDG) will play a key role in the marketing strategy, providing insights and feedback throughout the process. Members were encouraged to participate in the upcoming creative workshop and to engage stakeholders in shaping the marketing plan.

APPROVED – Pending



St Neots Town Council, Steve Van De Kerkhove Community Centre, Cemetery Rd, St Neots, PE19 2BX

T: 01480 388911 E: <a href="mailto:enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk">enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk</a> W: <a href="mailto:www.stneots-tc.gov.uk">www.stneots-tc.gov.uk</a>

Town Clerk - Chris Robson Town Mayor - Cllr Richard Slade

## **Planning Committee**

Present: Committee Members

Cllrs Slade (Chairperson), Dunford, Hitchin, Maslen and Terry

**Absent:** Cllrs Collins, Cooper-Marsh, and Pitt

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Senior Administration Assistant

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning committee held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 6.15pm in the Eatons Community Centre, 18 The Maltings, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### 125 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Collins, Cooper-Marsh, and Pitt.

#### 126 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

#### 127 Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the amended minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

Admin

#### 128 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present. A Member informed the committee that he had received written and verbal complaints from residents in relation to the proposed base station installation at Tebbutts Road car park as part of a mobile phone mast proposal. It was noted that the matter, which was on the agenda is not a planning permission matter, but the Council were being asked for comment as part of a consultation by the company. Members agreed to consider residents communications further when considering the matter.

#### 129 Schedule of Current Planning Applications

The Committee considered the schedule of current planning applications, and the recommendations made by the committee are appended to these minutes.

#### 130 Pavement Licence Application

Members considered the Huntingdonshire District Council Consultation for a Pavement Licence Application for Shake Hut in St Neots. Member expressed some concern over the positioning of some of the proposed tables on the High Street. Members noted that the Town Council could submit comments on the application.

**RESOLVED** to submit comments to the Planning Authority that the Council is concerned about the number of tables on the High Street and whether there is sufficient space for tables to be placed while maintaining sufficient highway space for pedestrians.

Approved – 8 April 2025 Page **1** of **2** 



#### 131 Proposed Base Station Installation at Tebbutts Road Car Park

The Committee considered the proposal from Cornerstone with regards to a proposed base station installation at Tebbutts Road Car Park, Tebbutts Road, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 1BG (NGR: 518527, 260487).

Members expressed concern regarding the location of the proposed works, particularly their proximity to residences above Huntingdon Street retail units, along with the proposed removal of hedges and bushes which was contrary to the Town Council's environmental objectives.

It was agreed that the Committee object to the proposal and submit comments to the applicant. Members noted objections received from residents and agreed that these would be included in the Town Council's response to the consultation.

#### 132 Development Management Committee

The Chair informed members that there were no applications for St Neots at the DMC meeting held on  $17^{th}$  March 2025.

An application was deferred due to its location near a chicken farm and the lack of an environmental impact report. The application was not related to St Neots.

#### 133 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Planning Committee meeting would be 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

Committee Chair

Approved – 8 April 2025 Page **2** of **2** 



No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes

The f	The following application/s are for listed building consent							
S1	24/01497/FUL	Twigden	OBJECT	The Council has reviewed the				
	24/01498/LBC	7 - 9 Market Square, St Neots	02520.	planning proposal documents,				
	24,01430,150	Change of Use, and partial		including consultee comments				
		demolition of former Public House		submitted by Historic Buildings &				
		to 9 residential units		Places (HB&P), and shares their				
		to 3 residential dilits		concerns. In particular, the Council				
				are concerned about the impact of				
				creating flats in the front historic				
				18th and 19th-century core of the				
				listed buildings. Reference is made				
				to Chapter 16 of the National				
				Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)				
				(2024), which emphasises the				
				importance of preserving heritage				
				assets.				
				Policy Considerations				
				Huntingdonshire District Council				
			Local Plan The proposal does not align with					
				the Huntingdonshire District				
				Council Local Plan, in particular:				
				8.39: The purpose of this				
				policy is to ensure that				
				development proposals				
				protect and conserve the				
				district's heritage assets				
				and where possible				
				enhance them and their				
				settings.				
				Policy LP 34: Heritage				
				Assets and their Settings;				
				Conversion, Alteration, or				
				Other Works to a Heritage				
				Asset; Conservation Areas				
				and Archaeology.				
				St Neots Neighbourhood Plan				
				The proposal is inconsistent with				
				the following policies:				
				Policy SS1: Proposals				
				involving alterations to				
				listed buildings or those				
				contributing to the conservation area's				
				character should retain				
				existing facades where				
				appropriate. Residential				
				use above ground floor				
				level is acceptable only if it				
				does not result in the loss				
				of an existing town centre				
				use.				
	annlication documents and con	1						



SNTC Decision	Notes
SNTC Decision	Policy SS2: The re-use of historic buildings within the Town Centre for town centre uses is supported. Any alterations must be sympathetic to the building's historic and architectural significance. Policy PT2: Development proposals, including residential conversions, must provide adequate parking to meet the needs of residents and visitors.  Key Concerns  1. Loss of Retail Space: The proposed change of use from retail to residential in a prime retail location on Market Square is concerning. This shift will contribute to the erosion of retail units in the Town Centre, negatively impacting its vitality.  2. Lack of Parking: The development does not provide sufficient parking, which may lead to increased pressure on existing parking facilities.  3. Overdevelopment: The proposed nine dwellings constitute an overdevelopment of the site, potentially leading to substandard living conditions and a negative impact on the listed building and conservation area.  Whilst the Council is not opposed to residential development on the site it believes the development of the site and the impact of the loss



No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
	1	· .		
				The Council would prefer to see a
				revised proposal to better align
				with local and national planning
				policies, ensuring a balanced
				approach that safeguards the
				town's heritage while supporting
				sustainable development. This
				would include a reduction in the
				number of dwellings to provide
				better quality and size of
				accommodation along with the
				retention of retail units on the
				ground floor.
		are in a conservation area		
<b>S2</b>	25/00405/TREE	Sandra Mobbs - HML	SUPPORT	Subject to the approval of HDC
		(hmlgroup.com)		arboricultural officer.
		1 Garden Court Cemetery Road,		
		St Neots		
		4m reduction to ash and adjacent		
		oak tree. Preventative		
		maintenance given their		
		proximity to the Garden Court		
		building.		
<b>S3</b>	24/02354/TREE	Mobbs	SUPPORT	Subject to the approval of HDC
		Garden Court Cemetery Road, St	DT Abstained	d arboricultural officer.
		Neots		
		T1 Sycamore - fell		
		Works to Protected Tree		
<b>S4</b>	25/00434/HHFUL	Mr Aaron Murray	SUPPORT	Satisfactory proposal in terms of
		116 St Neots Road,		scale and pattern of development.
		Eaton Ford, St Neots, PE19 7AL		Will have no negative impact on
		Proposed conversion of existing		wider landscape character of the
		garage along with single storey		area.
		rear extension to rear and		
		erection of single pitched open		
		fronted/sided structure to rear		
<b>S5</b>	25/00443/\$73	Mr Andrew Brown	SUPPORT	The proposal will enhance the
		Malden House, Bedford Street,		character of the conservation area.
		St Neots		Will have no negative impact on
		Variation of condition 2 (Plans) of		wider landscape character of the
		24/00636/FUL - Renewal of		area.
		windows, change of material		
		from aluminium to uPVC.		
<b>S6</b>	25/00439/\$73	Mr Andrew Brown	SUPPORT	The proposal will enhance the
		Maddison House, Bedford Street		character of the conservation area.
		St Neots		Will have no negative impact on
		Variation of condition 2 (Plans) to		wider landscape character of the
		change the windows for		area.
		24/00637/FUL		



No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes		
S7	25/00454/HHFUL	Mr & Mrs Fisher 26 Beauchamp Close, Eaton Socon, St Neots Proposed two storey side/rear extension and ground floor front extension	SUPPORT RS Abstained	Satisfactory proposal in in terms of scale and pattern. Will have no negative impact on wider landscape character of the area.		
S8	24/01541/FUL	Land Between Manor Grove And Cromwell Road Eynesbury Works to public footpaths 2 and 23 through the site and creation of a bituminous bridleway with soft landscaping	SUPPORT	In keeping with the locality. Satisfactory proposal in in terms of scale and pattern.		
<b>S9</b>	24/01539/REM	DLP Planning Ltd Land Adjacent And Including 2 Cromwell Road Eynesbury Reserved Matters Application relating to the details of the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of 20/00896/OUT for no. 83 dwellings.	Deferred	Officers waiting for the requested clarification from HDC Case Officer regarding a query for this and application 24/02385/REM.		
<b>S10</b>	24/02385/REM	Land Adjacent And Including 2 Cromwell Road Eynesbury Reserved matters including appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale for 80no. dwellings.	Deferred	Officers waiting for the requested clarification from HDC Case Officer regarding a query for this and application 24/01539/REM.		

Chairperson

T: 01480 388911 E: enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk

**ATTACHMENT 3** 

Town Clerk - Chris Robson Town Mayor - Cllr Richard Slade



### **Promotion & Events Committee**

**Committee Members** Present:

Cllrs Dundas-Todorov (Chairperson), Banks, Bolanz, Cooper-Marsh, Hitchin, Macnab-

Grieve, Maslen and Johnson (Deputy Chairperson)

Absent: Cllrs Cooper-Marsh In Attendance: Deputy Town Clerk

Minutes of the meeting of the Promotion & Events committee held on Tuesday 1st April 2025 at 7.15pm in the Eatons Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### **Public Participation**

Three members of the public were in attendance, two of whom were traders at the Farm and Craft Market. One trader addressed the committee during the public session, requesting that consideration be given to allowing certain traditional farmers' stalls to conclude trading at 1:00 PM. While acknowledging the benefits of extending the market's operating hours to 2:00 PM—particularly for food and craft stallholders—they advised that such an extension is not practical for some traditional farming operations.

#### 046 Apologies for Absence

**ACTIONS** 

There were no apologies received.

#### 047 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Bolanz declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 (ii) and would abstain from voting on any recommendations.

#### 048 Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Promotion and Events committee meeting held on 4th February 2025.

#### 049 Farm & Craft Market

#### Farm & Craft Market trading hours

Members received and considered a report from Officers regarding a proposal to amend the trading hours of the St Neots Farm and Craft Market. A survey was conducted to gather feedback from both market traders and the public concerning the current trading times. Most responses indicated support for extending the market's closing time. However, Members also acknowledged and supported concerns raised by some traditional farmers' traders, who expressed that trading beyond 1:00 PM would not be practical for their operations.

**RESOLVED** that the trading hours for the St Neots Farm and Craft Market are amended to operate from 09:00 hrs to 14:00 hrs, if it is feasible to allow up to four traders to safely exit the market site at 13:00 hrs

APPROVED - pending Page 1 of 2



#### II. Farm & Craft Market management

Members received and considered a report from Officers on a recommendation to engage a Market Co-ordinator. With the recent growth of the St Neots Farm & Craft Market, a dedicated on-site representative is needed to oversee site layout, liaise with traders and the public, conduct health and safety checks, and manage potential risks.

**RESOLVED** that it is recommended to the Personnel Committee to consider the appointment of a Market Co-ordinator on a permanent contract.

#### 050 Action List

Members received and noted the action list.

### 051 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted the date of the next committee meeting as 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 at 7.15pm.

**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON** 

APPROVED – pending Page 2 of 2



St Neots Town Council, Steve Van De Kerkhove Community Centre, Cemetery Rd, St Neots, PE19 2BX

T: 01480 388911 E: <a href="mailto:enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk">enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk</a> W: <a href="mailto:www.stneots-tc.gov.uk">www.stneots-tc.gov.uk</a>

Town Clerk – Chris Robson Town Mayor – Cllr Richard Slade

## **Planning Committee**

Present: Committee Members

Cllrs Slade (Chairperson), Collins, Dunford, Hitchin, Maslen and Kumar

**Absent:** Cllrs Cooper-Marsh, Pitt and Terry In Attendance: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning committee held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 6.15pm in the Eatons Community Centre, 18 The Maltings, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### 134 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Cooper-Marsh, and Pitt.

135 It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED to co-opt Cllr Kumar to the Committee for the meeting of Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

#### 136 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

#### 137 Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the amended minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on  $25^{th}$  March 2025.

Admin

#### 138 Public Participation

There was one member of the public present.

The resident addressed the Council on application S3 25/00596/FUL - Adjacent 31 Luke Street Eynesbury, erection of four dwellings and associated works, as the agent for the application.

It was noted that planning applications for the site had been brought to the committee in the past. The current application sees a reduction in the number of proposed dwellings to four. This is a result of feedback from planning officers, changes in the market and requirements for bio-diversity net-gain. The speaker addressed previous concerns raised around traffic generation, advising that the site has lawful planning use for commercial purposes and that access had been checked with the Highway Authority prior to submitting the application. Existing access road is to be retained and reused. It was commented that the design of the site will be around a central courtyard, with traditional brick and local tile construction methods recognising the heritage of the area.

A member raised a question about an 'off shoot' area of land and whether this would be retained as a garden for one of the properties. It was confirmed that it would be, rather than a shared or communal space.

A Member raised a question around garage space and parking. It was confirmed that the dwellings had parking allocated to within the development and a

Approved – pending Page 1 of 2





central courtyard which would also allow for undesignated parking. Cycle sheds are also included within the development.

Members moved to debate the application as part of the schedule of plans.

#### 139 Schedule of Current Planning Applications

The Committee considered the schedule of current planning applications, and the recommendations made by the committee are appended to these minutes.

#### 140 Development Management Committee

The Chair informed members that there would be two applications at the next DMC meeting related to St Neots. The first would be the design code for Wintringham. The second application is on the Great North Road for a new dwelling (App: 24/02228/FUL). The Town Council supported the application, the Local Planning Authority Planning officers have recommended refusal due to the heritage value of the original manor house, with the proposed development impacting the whole of the area. Members discussed the officer's recommendation, the site and the Committee's submission.

**RESOLVED** that the committee withdraw its comment of support for application 24/02228/FUL based on the recommendations of the Planning Officer and responses from consultees which were not available at the time the Committee considered the application.

#### 141 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Planning Committee meeting would be 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

**Committee Chair** 

Approved – pending Page 2 of 2



No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes

The fo	ollowing application/s a	are for listed building consent		
Th a f	llouing andication!	ve in a concession and		
		are in a conservation area	CURRORT	Fite in with the level street seems
<b>S1</b>	25/00539/HHFUL	Mr & Mrs Johnnie Howman 10 Pope Road Eynesbury St Neots Erection of single storey flat roof extension to the rear and demolition of existing garage.	SUPPORT	Fits in with the local street scene. We consider the proposal would assimilate itself to the existing part of the town.
<b>S2</b>	25/00614/HHFUL	Joanne Leadbeater 21 St Neots Road Eaton Ford St Neots Two storey side extension and alterations to the ground floor layout	SUPPORT	Satisfactory proposal in terms of scale and pattern of development. The proposal will enhance the character of the conservation area.
S3	25/00596/FUL	AWJ Usher & Sons Ltd Land Adjacent 31 Luke Street Eynesbury Erection of four dwellings and associated works	SUPPORT	In keeping with locality.  Minimum impact on neighbours.
S4	25/00134/HHFUL	Ann Chamberlain	SUPPORT	Makes efficient use of the site.
	20,0020 1,11111 02	44 Lannesbury Crescent St Neots PE19 6AF Installation of air source heat pump		Within a sustainable location.
S5	25/00502/HHFUL	Mr & Mrs Pullen 22 Masefield Avenue Eaton Ford St Neots Single storey rear extension and associated internal alterations including part garage conversion	SUPPORT	Will have no negative impact on the wider landscape character of the area.  Makes efficient use of the site.
S6	25/00537/HHFUL	Todor Todorov  1 Dixy Close St Neots PE19 6BA  Proposed roof dormer rear and rooflights to front	SUPPORT	Improves the property.  Makes efficient use of its site.
<b>S7</b>	25/00584/HHFUL	Tommy Brennan 5 Wordsworth Avenue Eaton Ford St Neots PE19 7RA Two storey front extension	SUPPORT	Improves the property.  Makes efficient use of its site.
S8	25/00572/HHFUL	Mr Steve Orr 15 Duloe Road Eaton Socon St Neots Front extension and replacement of bungalow roof to provide first floor accommodation.	SUPPORT	Improves the property.  No negative impact on the wider landscape character of the area.
<b>S9</b>	25/00559/HHFUL	Mr & Mrs Andy Wells 96 Longsands Road St Neots PE19 1TW	SUPPORT	In keeping with locality.



## Schedule of Planning Applications –8<sup>th</sup> April 2025

No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
S10	25/00606/HHFUL	Erection of single storey extension to the front/side of dwelling.  Mr Patel 20 Beatty Road Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 8PT Single storey rear extension	SUPPORT	Will have no negative impact on the wider landscape character of the area.  Improves the property.  Makes efficient use of the site.

Chairperson



ATTACHMENT 5

Town Clerk - Chris Robson Town Mayor - Cllr Richard Slade

## **Operations & Amenities Committee**

Present: Cllrs Goodman (Chairperson), Chapman, Collins, Dunford, Hitchin, Johnson and

Maslen

Town Clerk, Operations Manager In attendance:

Absent: Cllr Bolanz, Cooper-Marsh

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations & Amenities committee held on Tuesday 8th April 2025 at 7.15pm in the Eaton's Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### **Public Participation**

AGENDA ITEM 5

There was one member of the public present.

**ACTIONS** 

#### **Apologies for Absence** 123

Apologies were noted from Cllr Cooper-Marsh.

Admin

#### 124 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

#### 125 Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Operations and Amenities Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 as a true and accurate record.

#### 126 Action list

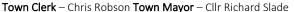
Members received the committee action list.

Members noted that the following actions had been completed;

- Museum roof and air conditioning unit repairs had been completed.
- Cleaning of War Memorials.
- Purchase of replacement operational vehicles with plug-in hybrid alternative.

Members noted that the museum building will be monitored over the coming months to assess the impact of recent repairs before considering any further work, to ensure that the most appropriate and cost-effective issues and solutions are identified and addressed.

Page **1** of **5** Approved -pending





St Neots

i) Members received and considered a report from the Town Clerk, along with feedback from the recent Luke Street Local Highway Improvement (LHI) proposal consultation, provided by the Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Officer.

Members discussed the process for the Local Highways Initiative (LHI) bid, noting that once submitted, it would be reviewed by County Highways in consultation with the County Councillor for the area. With the upcoming County Council election, it was acknowledged that a new councillor could take a different view, potentially affecting the outcome of the bid. Some members suggested pursuing a less contentious option (Option 1), which focused solely on signage, although it would not fully address local congestion issues. Due to a low public response to consultations and the need for clearer input from the County Council, it was proposed and seconded to defer a final decision until after the election. However, some members raised concerns about the impact of further delays on project delivery.

**RESOLVED** to defer making a recommendation on how to proceed with the Luke Street and surrounding roads Local Highways Improvement bid until after the Cambridgeshire County Council elections and confirmation of the elected Ward Member who would work with Highway Officers to approve any scheme.

ii) Members received and noted that a LHI bid for St Neots East and Gransden ward had been re-submitted to focus on a non-complex bid for a streetlight to improve safety in the vicinity of the Loves Farmhouse entrance. This had been identified by the Loves Farm Community Association as a priority matter which was more likely to get support through the LHI process.

#### Tree complaint 128

considered Members received and correspondence and supporting documentation from an agent acting on behalf of a resident, requesting the removal of a mature oak tree located on St Neots Town Council-owned land at Saxon Gate open space. The request was made on the basis of reported structural damage to a nearby property caused by the tree's roots.

Members noted that the Operations Manager had requested quotes for the removal of the tree, but these had not yet been received. Due to the size of the tree the cost may be considerable.

Approved -pending Page **2** of **5** 



Members expressed their support for the removal of the tree on the grounds that the reports provided suggested damage was being caused to the property. Members commented that, while no formal liability currently exists, the tree's proximity to residential properties and the risk of future claims due to damage of foundations justified removal. Members agreed that awareness of potential risk now places a responsibility on the Council to act.

Members noted that a planning application would be required for the removal of the tree.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council agree to remove Oak tree T002 on the grounds the damage is being caused to the foundations of a neighbouring property (SNTC tree reference T030)

An amendment was proposed that the council will commit to planting replacement trees in a suitable nearby location as part of its ongoing environmental responsibility. The amendment was accepted.

**RESOLVED** that the Council agree to remove an Oak tree at Saxon Gate open space (T030) for which evidence has been provided that the roots of the tree are causing damage to the foundations of a residential property.

#### 129 Solar Panels for St Neots Museum and Gate Lodge

Members received and considered recommendations from the Environment and Emergency Committee on the installation of solar panels on council owned buildings, along with a report and quotes from the Environmental Project Officer.

Members firstly debated installing panels at the museum building, which is owned by the Council and leased and operated by the Museum Trustees.

a) Committee members expressed strong support for installing solar panels on the rear roof of the St. Neots Museum, viewing it as an obvious and worthwhile investment. The museum is a non-commercial, communityfocused institution that already receives council funding, making it distinct from other properties under council ownership. A Member commented that since the council is already funding some repair and maintenance, court room electricity and grants for an event, the benefits of energy savings from the solar panels could reduce financial pressures and result in less funding requests to the Council. There was a brief discussion around battery storage—some councillors suggested the museum might struggle to fund this and proposed the council could consider covering it as well. However, the Town Clerk commented that the museum is open to the potential of contributing to the battery cost and could grant support for that. Planning concerns were also raised due to the museum's location in a conservation area, but reassurance was given that panels would be placed at the rear of the building and not visible from the High Street.

Approved –pending Page 3 of 5



**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** to the Finance and Governance Committee that the Council installs solar panels at the St Neots Museum building and that the Council funds the cost of the panels and battery.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that company B's quotation is recommended as the preferred company at a cost of £10,509.18.

Members moved to debate the proposed installation of solar panels on the Gate Lodge building, which is owned by the Council and leased to a commercial organisation.

b) The proposal to install solar panels on Gate Lodge was debated. While council members supported the installation of panels on the building in principle, concerns were raised about using public funds to install infrastructure that would primarily benefit a private tenant. Several members argued that doing so could set a precedent for other commercial tenants expecting similar support. Others highlighted the environmental benefits and the Council's adopted Climate Action Plan which included actions on installing PV panels on buildings within the Council's estate, helping reach net-zero ambitions. Alternative funding models were suggested, such as increasing rent to recoup costs or offering an interestfree loan as part of a new lease agreement. It was noted that the current lease has a short period remaining, and any investment should be tied to renegotiating a longer lease. Councillors acknowledged that the building must eventually meet energy efficiency regulations, but consensus formed around the need to avoid direct taxpayer subsidy. It was proposed and seconded to recommend that the Council does not proceed with the installation of solar panels at this point but offers to negotiate an early renewal of the lease and explores the installation of solar panels through those negotiations.

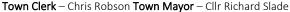
**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council does not proceed with the installation of solar panels on the Gate Lodge at this time but instead offers to enter into early lease renewal discussions with the tenant. These discussions should explore options to encourage the installation of solar panels—such as an interest-free loan or revised rent terms—to ensure any investment is recouped by the Council.

#### 130 Heating Systems for Gate Lodge and SVDK Building A (Man Cave)

Members received and considered a report and estimated quotes from the Environmental Project Officer on the installation of new heating systems at:

- Gate Lodge
- SVDK Building A (Man Cave)

Approved –pending Page 4 of 5



Members discussed the report and the Council's responsibility as landlord for both buildings. The recommendations for the replacement of the heating systems resulted from energy efficiency audits of Council owned buildings which were undertaken and considered by the Environment and Emergency Committee.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** to the Finance and Governance Committee that the Council moves forward with the installation of the recommended new heating system at Gate Lodge and that Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £5,783.50.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council moves forward with the installation of the recommended new heating system at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Building and that Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £4,071.00

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the replacement of electric heaters with air-conditioning units at Gate Lodge this is conditional to reagreeing/negotiate the lease for the building.

A Member expressed concerns around the insulation of the Steve Van de Kerkhove building and asked that options be investigated on how this might be improved.

#### 131 CCTV Data

Members received and considered CCTV data from Huntingdonshire District Council for February 2025. Members asked that a list of cameras covered by the Council's CCTV agreement with HDC, for which the Council is paying are included with the next data report. Members commented that they would like to see how many incidents the cameras funded were picking up.

#### 132 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Operations and Amenities Committee would be on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 7.15pm.

**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON** 

Approved –pending Page 5 of 5



St Neots Town Council, Steve Van De Kerkhove Community Centre, Cemetery Rd, St Neots, PE19 2BX

T: 01480 388911 E: <a href="mailto:enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk">enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk</a> W: <a href="mailto:www.stneots-tc.gov.uk">www.stneots-tc.gov.uk</a>

Town Clerk – Chris Robson Town Mayor – Cllr Richard Slade

## **Planning Committee**

Present: Committee Members

Cllrs Slade (Chairperson), Collins, Cooper-Marsh, Hitchin, Maslen, and Pitt

Absent: Cllrs Terry and Dunford In Attendance: Deputy Town Clerk

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning committee held on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 at 6.15pm in the Eatons Community Centre, 18 The Maltings, Eaton Socon, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### 142 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Terry and Dunford

#### 143 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Pitt declared a pecuniary interest in planning application 25/0629/HHFUL.

#### 144 Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the amended minutes of the Planning Committee Admin meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

#### 145 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

#### 146 Schedule of Current Planning Applications

The Committee considered the schedule of current planning applications, and the recommendations made by the committee are appended to these minutes.

#### 147 Proposed Disabled Persons Parking Bay

Members considered a proposal from Cambridgeshire County Council for a disabled persons parking bay at Kings Road, Eaton Socon.

Concerns were raised at the proximity of parking bay to the service access for waste disposal of neighbouring buildings. It was felt that relocating the disabled parking bay further west towards the rear of the garage block would negate this. Members requested that Officers feedback their comments to Cambridgeshire County Council.

#### 148 Development Management Committee

It was noted that Cllrs Pitt and Slade were not present for the two St Neots applications and that the committee agreed with HDC officer recommendations to reject applications.

#### 149 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next Planning Committee meeting would be 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

Committee Chair

Clerk

Approved – pending Page **1** of **1** 



## SNTC Planning Responses - 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes

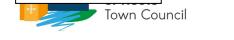
The f	The following application/s are for listed building consent							
	у при							
The f	following application/s	are in a conservation area						
<b>S1</b>	25/00632/HHFUL	Martin & Natalie Yateman	Support	The proposal will enhance the				
		12A Avenue Road St Neots PE19		character of the conservation area				
		1U						
		Proposed replacement of existing						
		conservatory roof and frames						
<b>S2</b>	25/00233/FUL	Mr & Mrs Stevens	Support	Minimum impact on neighbours				
		10A Cambridge Street St Neots	(Cllr Slade					
		PE19 1JL	abstained)					
		Erection of external staircase						
<b>S3</b>	25/00629/HHFUL	Lianne Snow	Support	In keeping with locality				
		21 Belland Hill St Neots PE19 6AJ	(Cllr Pitt					
		Proposed loft conversion with	abstained)					
		rear dormer and skylight to front						
		aspect						
<b>S4</b>	25/00642/HHFUL	Mr Nyasha Sagwete	Support	We consider that the proposal				
		62 Queensway St Neots PE19 1EL		would assimilate itself to the				
		Erection of timber storage shed		existing part of the town				

Chairperson

T: 01480 388911 E: enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.u



Town Clerk - Chris Robson Town Mayor - Cllr Richard Slade



**AGENDA ITEM 5** 

### Finance & Governance Committee

**Present**: Cllrs Chapman (Deputy Chair), Collins, Cooper-Marsh (Chair), Goodman, Hitchin, and Pitt.

**Absent:** Cllrs Banks, Kumar and Maslen

In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Governance committee held on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 at 7.15pm in the Eaton's Centre, The Maltings, St Neots, PE19 8ES.

#### **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

**ACTIONS** 

#### 140 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Banks and Maslen.

Admin

#### 141 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

#### 142 Minutes

- i) **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025 which were previously deferred as a true and accurate record with an amendment to include the wording "subject to the renewal of the building lease" under item 121.
- ii) **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025 as a true and accurate record.

#### 143 Payments

Members received and noted payments for February 2025.

#### 144 Solar Panels for St Neots Museum

Members received and considered a recommendation and preferred quotation from the Operations and Amenities Committee on the installation of Solar Panels at St Neots Museum.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council installs solar panels at the St Neots Museum building and that the Council funds the cost of the panels and battery.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that company B's quotation is recommended as the preferred company at a cost of £10,509.18.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council allocates £10,509.18 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the installation of solar panels and a battery at St Neots Museum.

APPROVED – pending Page 1 of 4





#### 145 Heating Systems for Gate Lodge and SVDK Building A (Man Cave)

Members received and considered recommendations and preferred quotations from the Operations and Amenities Committee on the installation of new heating systems at:

- i) Gate Lodge
- ii) SVDK Building A (Man Cave)

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council moves forward with the installation of the recommended new heating system at Gate lodge and that Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £5,783.50.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council moves forward with the installation of the recommended new heating system at the Steve van de Kerkhove Community Building and that Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of  $\pm 4,071.00$ 

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the allocation of £9,854.50 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve which was established to help manage maintenance and investment in Town Council owned buildings.

#### 146 Air Source Heat Pump at Eatons Community Centre

Members received and considered a recommendation, with an accompanying report and quotes/estimates from the Environmental Project Officer on the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump at Eatons Community Centre.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council progresses the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump at the Eatons Community Centre with Company A agreed as the preferred contractor at an estimated cost of £23,634.54. That the Council allocates up to £25,000.00 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work. That officers work with the appointment company to submit a planning application for the installation of a heat pump.

#### 147 Internal Audit Report

- i) Members received and noted the 2024-25 second interim internal audit report following an inspection in March 2025.
- ii) Members received and considered an action list in response to recommendations arising from the internal audit report. Members reviewed the comments/responses to the actions, referring to the Priory Centre website which was referenced in the internal audit recommendations.
  - Members noted the actions list and **RESOLVED** that the General Manager for the Priory and Eatons Centres provides an update on the recommendations raised by the auditors and the completion of associated actions at the next committee meeting.
- iii) Members received and considered a report from the Responsible Financial Officer on the independence and scope of the Internal Auditor.

APPROVED – pending Page 2 of 4



**RESOLVED** that the Council agrees to continue the engagement of Auditing Solutions Ltd for a further year (2025/2026) to provide internal audit services for St Neots Town Council. That the company's engagement continues on a rolling annual basis following the 3-year initial agreement which expired on 31st March 2025.

#### 148 Council Risk Assessment

Members received, considered and recommended for approval the Council risk assessment. Members discussed staff data protection training and Cyber Security for Councillors, agreeing to discuss these matters further with the Town Clerk and return to them in due course.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council re-adopts the Council Financial Risk Assessment as reviewed by the Finance and Governance Committee on 22nd April 2025.

#### 149 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the date of the next scheduled Finance and Governance Committee meeting would be 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 7:15pm.

#### 150 Confidential

**RESOLVED** that in terms of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

#### 151 Operations Depot Lease

Members received and authorised the Town Clerk to sign Heads of Terms from Huntingdonshire District Council for a renewed lease for the Operations Depot located at 12 Levellers Lane, Eynesbury.

**RESOLVED** to authorise the Town Clerk to sign the Heads of Terms from Huntingdonshire District Council and to negotiate a renewed lease for the Operations Depot located at 12 Levellers Lane, Eynesbury.

#### 152 Gate Lodge Lease Renewal

Members received and considered a recommendation from the Operations and Amenities Committee to offer early lease negotiations with a commercial tenant, as part of exploring the installation of solar panels on the building.

**RESOLVED** that the Council does not proceed with the installation of solar panels on the Gate Lodge building at this time but instead offers to enter into early lease renewal discussions with the tenant. These discussions should explore options to encourage the installation of solar panels with revised rent terms to ensure any investment is recouped by the Council.

**RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk be authorised to hold initial discussions with the tenant and report back to this Committee.

APPROVED – pending Page 3 of 4



#### 153 Trade Debtors

Members received and considered a report and recommendation from the Responsible Financial Officer on irrecoverable debtors.

**RESOLVED** that the Council write off the irrecoverable depts as listed in Appendix A. **RESOLVED** that the Council write off the irrecoverable debts as listed in Appendix B.

**RESOLVED** that the Council defer write off of the outstanding credit payments as listed in Appendix B.

**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON** 



#### ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: SOLAR PANELS FOR ST NEOTS MUSEUM

Author: TOWN CLERK

Contact Officer: ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICER

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To receive and consider a recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee on the installation of Solar Panels and a battery at the St Neots Museum building and to consider and recommend a quotation to the Council.

1.2 To provide the Council with the recommendations and background that arose from the Environment and Emergency Committee and Finance and Governance Committee.

#### 2. Recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee

2.1 That the Council installs solar panels at the St Neots Museum building and that the Council funds the cost of the panels and battery. That company B's quotation is recommended as the preferred company at a cost of £10,509.18 and the Council allocates £10,509.18 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work.

#### 3. Background

- 4.1 The Environment & Emergency Committee engaged a professional energy audit of Council buildings, which brought forward recommendations on energy efficiencies. If implemented, these would support the Council's net-zero carbon ambitions. The Committee reviewed these audit reports—which are available for all Members—and subsequently recommended the installation of solar panels at the Museum to the Operations and Amenities Committee.
- 4.2 At the January meeting of the Environment and Emergency Committee it was resolved that the Environmental Project Officer would source quotes for installing solar panels on both the St Neots Museum and Gate Lodge, with quotes for batteries and an EV charger (Gate Lodge only) to also be obtained on the basis that these would be optional for purchase by the tenants. The basis of this was that the tenants would benefit from the monthly savings and energy storage a battery offered, which the Council as building owner would not.
- 4.3 Solar panels have been recommended for both buildings within the energy audit reports and contribute to the Council's carbon net zero commitments. Retrofitting our buildings has been identified in the Council's Climate Action Plan as a key objective in achieving our targets, and solar panels on these two buildings look set to reduce emissions by 2tCO2e.
- 4.4 At the April meeting of the Operations and Amenities Committee, it was resolved that the Council progress with the installation of solar panels at the Museum, but with the amendment that the Council would cover the costs of both the panels and the battery. The committee felt that Council funding the battery may help reduce future

financial and maintenance requests from the Museum by offering operational savings through energy cost reductions.

4.5 The Finance and Governance Committee considered the information set out in this report in making the recommendation set out in **section 2**.

#### 4. Information Supporting Recommendations

Three estimated quotes were obtained for the museum (see below). Company B is the recommended preferred quote for the works due to value for money combined with the contractor's professionalism. Whilst Company C has quoted lower prices for the project, concerns were raised about their limited assessment of the properties and thus the risk of costs rising exponentially.

5.2	SOLAR PANELS - ST NEOTS MUSEUM								
	Company	Site vist?	Cost*	Spec	Output	Cost of battery*	Battery size	Estimated payback	Total Cost
	A	Yes - detailed	£10,980.00	15 x 445W Trina Vertex panels	6.67kWp	£4,637.00	9.2kWh	~10 years	£15,617.00
	В	Yes - detailed	£6,220.84	13x 500W Eurener Nexa panels	6.5kWp	£4,288.34	10kWh	8 years	£10,509.18
	С	Yes - basic	£4.234.00	8x 450W DMEGC Solar Infinity RT panels	3.6kWp	£1,701.00	5.18kWh	7-8 years	£5,935.00

<sup>\*</sup>Costs are exclusive of VAT

#### 5. Financial Implications

- 6.1 If the recommended contractor is used, there would be a total estimated cost of £10,509.18 to the Council.
- The Council has an earmarked reserve for Community Buildings Maintenance of approximately £163,347. This is separate to the earmarked reserve for the acquisition of buildings/land. Funds from this EMR were previously used to install solar panels at the Eatons Centre.

#### 6. Policy

- 7.1 The recommendations set out in this report meet the following agreed actions/policies as set out in the Council's adopted Climate Action Plan;
  - Section 1.2 ('Our Buildings') Action 1.2.1

#### 7. Legal References

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

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: HEATING SYSTEMS FOR GATE LODGE AND STEVE VAN DE KERKHOVE

**COMMUNITY CENTRE** 

Author: TOWN CLERK

Contact Officer: ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICER

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide the Council with recommendations from the Environment and Emergency, Operations and Amenities, and Finance and Governance Committee on the installation of new heating systems at Gate Lodge and the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Centre.

1.2 To seek approval from Full Council for the installation of new heating systems at Gate Lodge and the Steve Van De Kerkhove Community Centre (Building A – "Man Cave") and to approve associated unbudgeted expenditure from the Council's earmarked reserves.

#### 2. Recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee

- 2.1 The Finance and Governance Committee recommends to the Full Council:
  - 2.1.1 That the Council progress the installation of the recommended new heating system at Gate Lodge as recommended in the Energize Audits. That Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £5,783.50 and the Council allocates £5,783.50 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work.
  - 2.1.2 That the Council progresses with the installation of the new heating system at the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Building as recommended in the Energize Audits. That Company C is selected as the preferred quotation at a cost of £4,071.00 and the Council allocates £4,071.00 from the Community Building earmarked reserve. That the replacement of electric heaters with air-conditioning units at Gate Lodge this is conditional to reagreeing/negotiate the lease for the building.

### 3. Background

3.1 The Environment and Emergency Committee appointed an external professional to undertake an energy audit of the Council's owned buildings. This forms part of the working towards the Council's net-zero ambitions and achieving actions set out in the adopted Climate Action Plan.

3.2 At the January 2025 meeting of the Environment and Emergency Committee the recommendations arising from the building audits were considered, including recommendations for the Steve Van de Kerkhove Community Building and the Gate Lodge.

- 3.3 Improving the heating systems was recommended for both buildings and the Committee resolved that the Environmental Project Officer would source quotes for installing new heating systems (AC heat pump units) in both Gate Lodge and Steve Van De Kerkhove Building A (Man Cave).
- 3.4 AC heat pump units have been recommended for both buildings within the energy audit reports and contribute to the Council's carbon net zero commitments. Retrofitting our buildings has been identified as a key objective in achieving our targets, and AC heat pump units in these two buildings look set to reduce emissions by 1tCO2e.
- 3.5 At the April meeting of the Operations and Amenities Committee the committee considered the recommendation from the Environment and Emergency Committee and resolved to recommend that the Council progress with the installation of new heating systems (AC heat pump units) at both buildings as set out in section 2 of this report.
- 3.5 At the April meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee the committee considered the costs of the proposed works and available Council funds, making the recommendations as set out in section 2.

#### 4. Information Supporting Recommendations

- 4.1 The following information was considered by the Operations and Amenities Committee and the Finance and Governance Committee when making their recommendations.
- The current heating systems (electric wall heaters) are not only inefficient, and thus electricity-intensive, but they fail to appropriately heat the buildings. Tenants at both buildings have complained that their buildings are too cold in the winter. At least one heater in SVDK Building A (Mans Cave) has failed and requires replacing.
- 4.2 A/C heat pump units are recommended as replacements to the electric wall heaters due to greater energy efficiency, and greater effectiveness in heat distribution. They have the added benefit of being able to provide cooling in hot temperatures if required, though the tenants have not highlighted this as a specific need.
- 4.3 Three estimated quotes were obtained for both properties (see below). Company C is recommended by the Operations and Amenities Committee as the preferred contractor for the work due to value for money combined with the contractor's professionalism, as advised by the Environmental Project Officer. Whilst Company A has quoted lower prices for both projects, concerns were raised about their limited assessment of the properties and thus the risk of costs rising exponentially.

HEATING S	SYSTEM - GATE	LODGE				
Company	Site vist?	Cost*	Spec - internal units	Total size	External unit details	Estimated payback**
A	Yes - basic	£5,214.60	3x Fujitsu Aseh 12/9kmcg AC units	9.5kW	2x external units	3.3 years
В	Yes - detailed	£5,930.00	3x Mitsubishi inverter heat pump AC units	Unknown	2x external units	3.7 years
С	Yes -detailed	£5,783.50	3x Mitsubishi Electric Split AC units	9.5kW	3x external units	3.6 years
HEATING S	SYSTEM - SVDK	BUILDING A (N	(AN CAVE)			
Company		Cost*	Spec - internal units	Total size	External unit details	Estimated payback**
Α	Yes - basic	£2,488.70	1x Fujitsu AOYG36KMTA unit	10kW	Unknown	8.3 years
В	Yes - detailed	£5,480.00	3x(?) Mitsubishi inverter heat pump AC units	Unknown	2x external units	18.3 years
С	Yes -detailed	£4,071.00	2x Mitsubishi Electric Split AC units	7kW	2x external units	13.6 years

<sup>\*</sup>Costs are exclusive of VAT

# 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The total estimated cost for the heating systems would be £9,845.50.
- 5.2 The Council has an earmarked reserve (EMR) for Community Buildings Maintenance of approximately £163,347.
- 5.3 There would be an additional cost for submitting planning applications to Huntingdonshire District Council due to both buildings being in a Conservation area and requiring more than one external unit which means the works fall outside of permitted development. The cost of this has not yet been established. This cost can be allocated from the Council's professional fees revenue budget.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Payback is estimated using the calculation Payback Period = (Initial Investment- Incentives) / Annual Savings, where 'Annual Savings' data has been taken from the Energise reports.

# 6. Policy

6.1 The recommendations set out in this report meet the following agreed actions/policies as set out in the Council's adopted Climate Action Plan;

• Section 1.2 ('Our Buildings') – Action 1.2.1

# 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

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP AT EATONS COMMUNITY CENTRE

Contact Officer: ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICER

# 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To receive and consider a recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee on the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump at Eatons Community Centre

1.2 To seek approval from the Full Council on progressing with a planning application for the project and allocating up to £25,000 in funding from the Community Building earmarked reserve.

#### 2. Recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee

2.1 That the Council progresses the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump at the Eatons Community Centre with Company A agreed as the preferred contractor at an estimated cost of £23,634.54. That the Council allocates up to £25,000.00 from the Community Buildings earmarked reserve for the work. That officers work with the appointment company to submit a planning application for the installation of a heat pump.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 At the January meeting of the Environment and Emergency Committee it was resolved that the Council progresses transitioning the Eatons Community Centre heating to an air source heat pump. This recommendation followed the review and consideration of clear recommendations set out in the independent Energize Building Audits that were carried out. The action recommended to the Operations and Amenities Committee would address issues with the current Eatons heating system and improve efficiencies helping to reach net-zero ambitions.
- 3.2 At the January meeting of the Operations and Amenities Committee it was agreed to progress with an air-source heat pump and resolved that the Council prioritise replacing the bio-mass boiler at the Eatons Community Centre with an air source heat pump or alternative cleaner heating system. The Committee asked that costs and quotes be brought to the Finance and Governance Committee for consideration and recommendation to Council.
- 3.3 The recent Energise assessment of the Eatons Community Centre recommended that, for energy efficiency and carbon reduction purposes, an Air Source Heat Pump be installed to replace the biomass boiler. Alternative options to a heat source pump, with estimates, were considered by the Operations and Amenities Committee but were not recommended due to feasibility and efficiency/cost (electric and gas alternatives).
- 3.4 At the April meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee the costs and recommended preferred contractor for the project were considered, along with the Council's available funds to support the project. Following consideration by the committee it was resolved to make the recommendation set out in section 2 of this report to consideration for the Council.

- 4. Information Supporting Recommendations
- 4.1 The following information was considered by the Operations and Amenities and Finance and Governance Committee when making their recommendations.
- The biomass boiler at the Eatons Centre has repeatedly broken down since installation, requiring expensive repairs. It reportedly barely worked over the beginning part of winter 2024/25, even with repairs, and the Centre has been having to use energy-intensive space heaters to try to warm the rooms for visitors.
- 4.3 The Council has incurred regular maintenance and repair costs over the years the biomass boiler has been operational, costs from the end of December 2022 until the end of December 2024 were £5,979.98. However, this did include annual service costs.
- 4.3 The recent Energise assessment of the Eatons Community Centre recommended that, for energy efficiency and carbon reduction purposes, an Air Source Heat Pump be installed to replace the biomass boiler.
- 4.4 Four estimated quotes were obtained for this project (see below). Company A is recommended as being the preferred contractor for the works due to value for money combined with the contractor's professionalism. Whilst Company C has quoted lower prices for the project, concerns were raised about their limited assessment of the property and thus the risk of costs rising exponentially. Company D has declined to provide a quote without first completing a design at a cost of £3,306.25 which will not be refunded if the Council chooses to move forward with a different contractor.

4.5

AIR SOUR				
Company	Site visit?	Cost*	Spec	Total output
A	Yes - detailed	£23,634.54	3x Mitsubishi Ecodan Ultra Quiet R32 11.2kW Heat Pump	33.6kW
В	Yes - detailed	£24,700.00	2x Stiebel Eltron WPL Plus 26	28kW
С	No	£18,970.07	Clivet edge evo monobloc 22kw heat pump	22kW
D	Yes - detailed	£3,306.25 (design only)	Not specified	Not specified

<sup>\*</sup>Costs are exclusive of VAT

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 If the recommended contractor is used, there would be a total estimated cost of £23,634.54 to the Council.
- 5.2 There would be an additional cost for submitting planning applications to Huntingdonshire District Council due to both buildings being in a Conservation area and requiring more than one external unit which means the works fall outside of permitted development.

# 6. Policy

6.1 The recommendations set out in this report meet the following agreed actions/policies as set out in the Council's adopted Climate Action Plan;

• Section 1.2 ('Our Buildings') – Action 1.2.1

# 7. Legal References

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.





t: 01480 388911

e: enquiries@stneots-tc.gov.uk

w: <u>www.stneots-tc.gov.uk</u> a: The Priory, St Neots, PE19 2BH

# RISK ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW OF INTERNAL CONTROLS

Approved – 30 April 2024 To be Reviewed 22 April 2025

Area	Risk	Responsible Officer	Actions to Minimise Risk/Internal Controls	Likelihood	Impact
Assets	Protection of physical assets	Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk and RFO  Centres and Operations Managers	<ul> <li>Adequate insurance Regular health and safety reviews and audits</li> <li>Adequate door security system</li> <li>Alarm systems in place</li> <li>CCTV installed in agreed buildings (Offices, New Street and Depot)</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
	Failure to maintain record of council assets	RFO	<ul> <li>Maintenance of an asset register to ensure that all requisitions / disposals are accurately and promptly recorded</li> <li>Carry out periodical inventory checks</li> </ul>	LOW	MEDIUM
Investments	Failure to retain long term investments and to comply with investment guidance for local government bodies	RFO	<ul> <li>Developing an Annual Investment Strategy to ensure that the Council has assessed the risk of committing funds to long term investments and properly planned to comply with legislative requirements</li> <li>Reviewing the Investment Strategy annually</li> <li>Seeking independent advice if long-term investment in assets is to be considered</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
Finance	Failure to comply with HMRC Regulations	RFO	<ul> <li>Maintenance of comprehensive records of all calculations on income tax, national insurance deducted from pay</li> <li>Submit monthly returns to HMRC</li> <li>Make prompt payment of all liabilities due</li> <li>Ensure that all input tax and output tax is properly recorded</li> <li>Complete and submit VAT claims promptly and on a regular basis.</li> <li>Reconcile claims to accounting program</li> <li>Correct treatment of payments and services provided by contractors and ensure these are not falling within the scope of PAYE</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
	Poor financial management	Town Clerk  Town Clerk and RFO	<ul> <li>Define responsibility through appointment of Responsible Finance Officer</li> <li>Ensure appropriate standing orders and financial regulations are in place, which are subject to periodic review</li> <li>Implement effective independent internal audit</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH

Area	Risk	Responsible Officer	Actions to Minimise Risk/Internal Controls	Likelihood	Impact
			Arrange for regular financial reports to committees/council     Annual review of contracts and insurance cover		
	Failure to set a precept within sound budgeting arrangements	RFO	<ul> <li>Ensure that presentation to committees/ council follows an agreed timetable</li> <li>Ensure that precept is set as a result of a full report detailing requirements of forthcoming year for all managers</li> <li>Review all charges made by the Council</li> <li>Review adequacy of all balances and reserves</li> <li>Ensure that effective budget monitoring is in place throughout the year</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
	Failure to maintain adequate reserves	RFO	<ul> <li>Ensure that earmarked reserves are realistic and approved by the Council</li> <li>General reserves are risk-assessed and approved annually by the Council</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
	Failure to maintain an effective payments scheme	RFO	<ul> <li>All payments to be supported by authorised invoice/voucher</li> <li>All detail to be checked and payment entered onto the accounting program</li> <li>At least two people are involved in each electronic payment</li> <li>All payments to be noted by Council and recorded in Minutes</li> <li>All cheques to be signed by one authorised signature for less than £1,000 and two signatures required for expenditure over £1,000</li> <li>All expenditure to be the subject of budgetary control</li> <li>Ensure that all grant applications are complete and fully supported prior to submission to committee/council</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
	Loss of money through theft/misappropriati on	RFO	Determine responsibility for all cash at all sources     Ensure that invoices/receipts are issued for all income	LOW	HIGH

Area	Risk	Responsible Officer	Actions to Minimise Risk/Internal Controls	Likelihood	Impact
			<ul> <li>Ensure that secure arrangements are in place for prompt recording and banking of all cash received</li> <li>Ensure regular bank reconciliation is carried out</li> <li>Arrange regular report to Council</li> <li>Ensure that the Council holds adequate fidelity guarantee insurance</li> </ul>		
	Failure to maintain adequate internal controls	RFO	<ul> <li>Take all reasonable steps to ensure that there are no matters of non-compliance with laws and regulations</li> <li>Maintain throughout the year an adequate system of internal control</li> <li>Appropriate action on a matter raised in an Internal Audit Report</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
Liability	Risk to third party, property or individuals	RFO and Department Managers	<ul> <li>Ensure that appropriate insurance cover / policy is in force</li> <li>Open spaces and trees are being checked regularly</li> <li>Investigations are being carried out when damage reported</li> <li>Risk assessment done on each individual event such as Christmas Lights</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
	Liability as consequences of asset ownership (especially burial ground, playgrounds, trees)	Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk and Operations Manager	<ul> <li>Ensure that appropriate insurance cover and policies are in place</li> <li>Regular checks of playgrounds and tree surveys</li> <li>Risk assessment and regular checks carried out by ROSPA and tree surgeon</li> <li>Staff training for playgrounds and trees inspection</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
Legal Liability	Incurring expenditure without proper legal authority	Town Clerk	<ul> <li>Ensure that legal position on any new proposal is being clarified and legal advice sought where necessary</li> <li>Detailed information in Agendas and properly record expenditure in Minutes</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH
Employer Liability	Compliance with Employment Law	Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk	<ul> <li>Membership of various national and regional bodies</li> <li>Ensure that legal position is being clarified and legal advice sought where necessary</li> </ul>	LOW	HIGH

Area	Risk	Responsible Officer	Actions to Minimise Risk/Internal Controls	Likelihood	Impact
			- Ensure that appropriate insurance cover is in place		
	Safety of Staff and Visitors	All Managers	Regular health and safety reviews and audits are being carried out	LOW	HIGH
	Data Protection	Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk	<ul> <li>Training provided for staff</li> <li>Regular reviews and audits are being carried out</li> <li>Actions taken to address audit points</li> </ul>	MEDIUM	HIGH
IT	Cyber Security	Town Clerk	The Clerk with support from the external IT Company will ensure all measures are in place and that regular reviews are being carried out.	LOW	HIGH

#### ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Author: TOWN CLERK

Contact Officer: TOWN CLERK

# 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide the Council with an update from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group regarding the review and renewal process for the St Neots Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1.2 To provide a recommendation on the next steps in the process and seek a Council decision on the proposed Plan area. A resolution on the preferred approach will allow the project to move forward to the next stage and begin the necessary external engagement.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group recommend that;
  - 2.1.1 The Council invite Staploe, Little Paxton, Great Paxton, Wyboston etc, Hail Weston, Abbotsley PCs to consider being included in a redesignation of a neighbourhood area to include land in their parishes to enable a multi-parish plan to comprise policy throughout the area.
  - 2.1.2 That the Council invites Huntingdonshire District Council, Bedford Borough Council and representatives from each of the parishes referred to above to consider and debate the options, opportunities and challenges of a muti-parish plan.

# 3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 28 January 2025, the Full Council resolved to make the review and renewal of the St Neots Neighbourhood Development Plan one of its key strategic priorities over the following 16 months. To progress this work, a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was established to lead the review process and to bring forward recommendations to the Town Council.
- 3.2 On 25 March 2025, the Full Council approved the Terms of Reference for the Working Group and resolved to allocate up to £3,950 in funding to appoint a preferred Neighbourhood Planning consultant. The consultant was commissioned to undertake Stage 1 of the review, including

research, site visits, workshops, and the preparation of a report with recommendations to help define the scope, focus, and timescales for the renewed plan.

- 3.3 The Working Group held an initial meeting and strategic discussion with the appointed consultant, during which key developments, challenges, pressures, and opportunities in and around St Neots were identified and reviewed. Following this session, the consultant undertook a more detailed analysis and produced a written advice note outlining three strategic options and recommended next steps for the Working Group's consideration.
- 3.4 At a meeting of the Working Group held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 Members considered the advice note, options and next steps agreeing the recommendation to Council as set out in section 2 of this report.

### 4 Information Supporting Recommendations

- 4.1 A copy of the advice note considered by the Working Group, which forms the basis of the recommendation in Section 2, is attached to this report as Appendix A.
- 4.2 The first key decision required to progress the review and renewal of the Neighbourhood Plan is for the Council to agree the plan boundary. Currently, the plan boundary aligns with the St Neots parish boundary, but this is not a fixed requirement. There is scope to expand the boundary to include neighbouring parishes, should those parishes wish to participate.

The appended advice note outlines three potential options for moving forward, which are summarised below:

Option 1 - Stay Wit	Option 1 - Stay Within the Current Town Boundary (Engage Neighbours Informally)				
What it involves:	Proceed with the neighbourhood plan using the existing St Neots town				
	boundary as the formal plan area, but invite neighbouring parishes (e.g.				
	Little Paxton, Staploe) to participate in scenario planning and wider				
	discussions informally.				
Benefits:	Simpler process — no need to redesignate the neighbourhood area.				
	Faster to initiate.				
Challenges:	No policy coverage can be applied to land outside the current boundary.				
	Limited ability to manage or influence development pressures in adjacent				
	areas which will impact on St Neots and its infrastructure.				

Option 2 - Aligned	Option 2 - Aligned Timetables with Neighbouring Plans			
What it involves:	As in Option 1, keep the current town boundary, but formally request neighbouring parishes (e.g. Staploe, Little Paxton) to consider aligning the timetables of their own neighbourhood plan projects with SNNP2.			
Benefits:	Greater coordination between separate plans.			

	Helps shape cross-boundary issues through synchronised consultation and engagement.
Challenges:	Still no direct policy control over land outside St Neots.
	Relies on different parishes with varying resources, priorities and timescales to keep pace with each other.

Option 3 - Redesign	Option 3 - Redesignate the Neighbourhood Area as a Multi-Parish Plan ("St Neots Plus")					
What it involves:	Invite neighbouring parishes (e.g. Staploe, Little Paxton, Hail Weston, Great Paxton, Abbotsley, Wyboston) to formally join a new multi-parish neighbourhood plan covering a wider area beyond the town boundary.					
Benefits:	Allows the plan to include policy for key strategic sites and rural land around the town.  Stronger influence on the direction and quality of future growth.  Enables protective designations like Local Green Space or Landscape Gaps in adjoining areas.					
Challenges:	More complex governance and coordination required. Requires a formal area re-designation process and agreement from neighbouring parishes and LPAs.					

- 4.3 The Working Group is recommending that the Council explore interest in Option 3, a redesignation of the neighbourhood area with neighbouring parishes. In the Working Group's view if Option 3 could be achieved this would allow the Plan to:
  - Include policy coverage for land beyond the town boundary which may be directly affected by future growth.
  - Engage more meaningfully with adjoining communities and stakeholders whose areas will be impacted by infrastructure, housing and employment proposals.
  - Influence development at a strategic level through coordinated, community-led planning across a functional geography.
  - Enable the inclusion of essential protective designations (e.g. Local Green Spaces, Landscape Gaps, Key Views) in areas adjacent to the town—tools that cannot legally be applied outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- 4.4 It is acknowledged that a multi-parish approach adds some administrative complexity, but it can also offer strategic benefits for the wider area, including:

• A better platform for managing and mitigating growth pressures across the direct area.

- A stronger basis for collaborative governance and stakeholder alignment, particularly with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and Bedford Borough Council (BBC).
- Opportunities to secure external technical support and funding more effectively.
- The advice note emphasises that although such plans are not common, where parishes have good working relationships, they have proven to be highly effective.
- 4.5 If there is interest from neighbouring parishes in Option 3 the practicalities and governance of developing the plan would need to be considered, with recommendations brought back on how this would work. It is important to note that a Plan can only have one 'qualifying body', providing continuity and leadership for the plan process.
- 4.6 If the Council resolve option 3 as its preferred approach the Working Group will organise a meeting with neighbouring parishes and Local Planning Authority to understand interest and opportunities and bring back a report to the Full Council on how to proceed.

# 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council previously agreed to allocate £3,950 from the General Reserve for Stage 1 works. The costs for Stage 2, and the overall project, will depend on the option ultimately agreed by the Council and the final feasible solution identified through liaison with neighbouring parishes. Based on a previous quotation this was estimated at £26,000 to £31,000, hower this might not reflect the complexities of a Plan covering multiple parishes.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Planning Consultant has advised the Council should still be eligible for government funding but details are awaited on the next funding round.

#### 6. Legal Powers

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Section 38A & 38B
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

#### 7. Appendix

Appendix A - SESSION NOTE (FOR PUBLICATION) Project: St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Review

# **APPENDIX A**



# SESSION NOTE (FOR PUBLICATION)

Project: St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Review

Ref: 4025\_009 Date: 16 April 2025

#### SUMMARY OF REVIEW SESSION & ACTION PLAN

# Introduction & Purpose

ONH met with the Project Steering Group (PSG) on 24 March 2025 to review the 'bigger picture' context of the project (SNNP2) before delving into the detail of reviewing each policy of the made neighbourhood plan (SNNP1).

The intention was to help PSG understand its options before committing to the detailed review, especially as one may require the redesignation of the neighbourhood area – that is, a formal change to its boundary – to include land in other adjoining parishes and another may require the co-ordination of SSNP2 with an adjoining neighbourhood plan project already underway at Little Paxton.

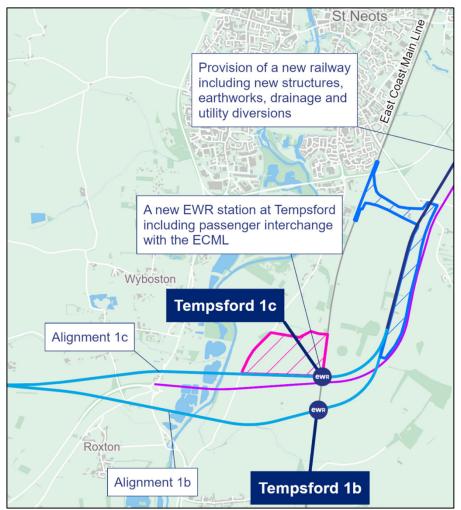
The purpose of this note is to summarise the discussion and to make recommendations for the next steps along with key actions for the PSG to consider.

# **Discussion Key Points**

ONH circulated a slide pack of background information in advance. The slides brought together maps and data covering the St Neots area (in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire) but also that of its hinterland stretching into neighbouring Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

It began with an overview of the national planning picture:

- The December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will result in the local planning authority (LPA) having to plan for at least 1,203 homes/annum (an increase of 22% over the previous method), which it anticipated in last year's Further Issues & Options Local Plan consultation
- The Government has committed to rejuvenating the 'Oxford Cambridge Arc' initiative, including completing the East-West Rail project from Milton Keynes to Cambridge (which includes a new station near Tempsford where it crosses the East Coast Main Line see below)

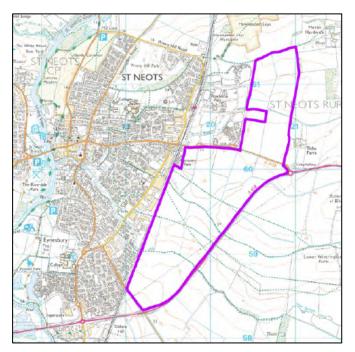


Source: EWR (https://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/public/2024-con-docs-/Maps/EWR-Route-Section-5-A5.jpg)

- The Government also plans to replace county-districts with unitary authorities and to require groups of unitary authorities to bring forward Spatial Development Strategies of strategic level planning policy
- Further changes to the planning system will come about with the implementation of the Levelling Up Act 2023 (especially on Local Plan making) and the enactment of the Planning & Infrastructure Bill
- The combination of these initiatives may make it harder for the LPA to bring forward its new Local Plan in a timely manner

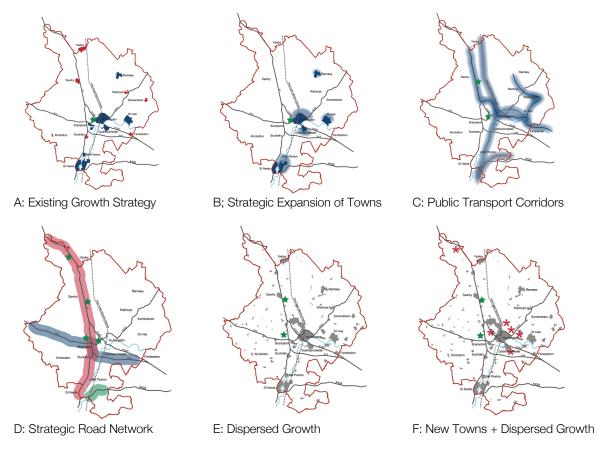
# Then a review of the local picture:

- The LPA has a healthy housing land supply position (approx. 6.5 years at March 2024) but its Local Plan (adopted in 2019) is now over five years old
- Over 2,600 new homes have been built/committed at St Neots and Little Paxton since 2011 another 3,240 are committed at the Wintringham Park and Loves Farm allocated sites alone from 2024 2036 (see below)



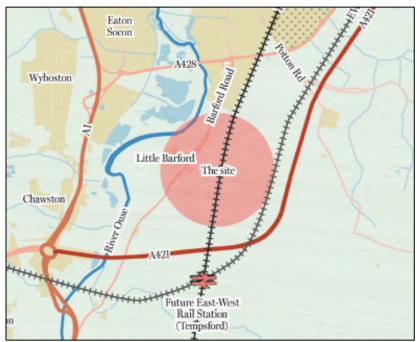
Source: HDC (https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/3872/190516-final-adopted-local-plan-to-2036.pdf)

 The 2024 Local Plan consultation identified six spatial options to meet local housing need (see below) – St Neots was identified as part of four of them (only absent from those that focus on new towns and rural dispersal, neither of which are likely to provide the basis of the eventual strategy



Source: HDC

 The Bedford Local Plan is at examination and proposes a new settlement of approx. 4,000 homes at Little Barford (see below) less than a mile from the southern edge of the town – BBC may not be able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply until the plan is adopted



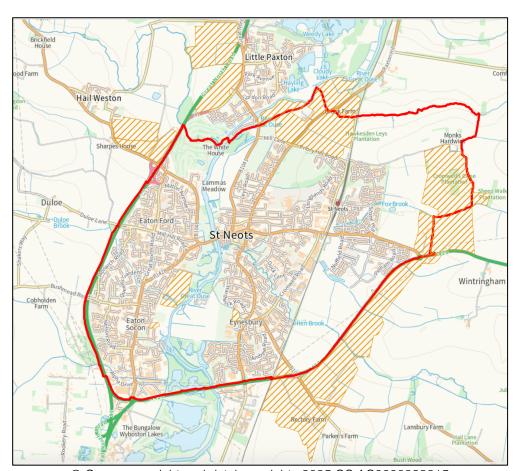
Source: Little Barford Garden Community (https://littlebarfordgardencommunity.co.uk)

 To its immediate south is a proposed new town near the new A421 alignment and ECML/EWR crossing at Tempsford (see below) in Central Beds – it is being promoted for 7,000 homes and may be one of the 12 new towns chosen by the Government for fast tracking through planning



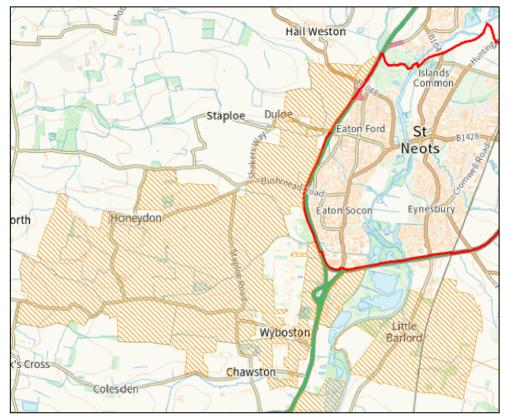
Source: Jas Bhalla Works (https://www.jasbhallaworks.com/work/tempsford-new-market-town)

- The HDC HELAA (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) of 2024 (see below) shows land being made available around all of the town edges with the exception of the land lying north of Priory Hill and east of the ECML – notably north of Priory Hill Road and east of Loves Farm
- It also shows some green spaces within the town boundary at Cow Field (east of Brook Road at Eaton Socon), south of the Pightle (also at Eaton Socon) and the Albert Hall Memorial Field at Eynesbury
- Also within the town boundary is brownfield land at Cambridge Road/Station Road and the triangular field between the ECML, A428 and B1046 south of the last phase of Wintringham Park
- Not all the land lies inside the SNNP boundary, including large parcels around Little Paxton, Hail Weston and along the entire length south east of the A428 and the new EWR/A421 alignment in Abbotsley parish



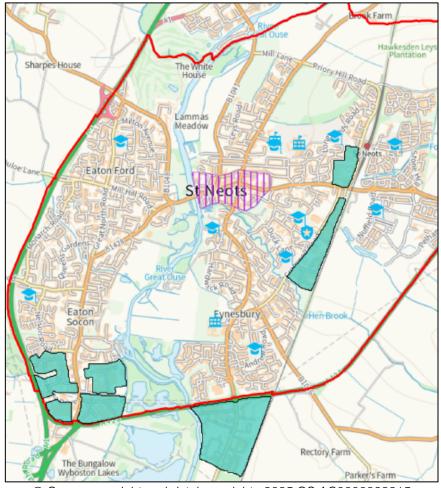
© Crown copyright and database rights 2025 OS AC0000822215

 The Bedford HELAA of May 2022 for its Local Plan (see below) also shows that almost all the land west of the town over the A1 from Hail Weston through Duloe and Wyboston to Chawston has also been submitted for assessment, but culminating only in the proposed Little Barford allocation



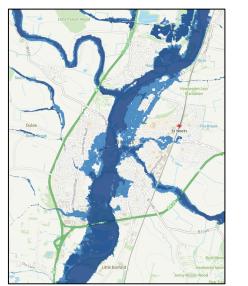
© Crown copyright and database rights 2025 OS AC0000822215

- Although access from the west into the town is not currently straightforward there
  are four roads that run over or under the A1 Kimbolton Road (B645), Duloe
  Lane, Bushmead Road and The Lane that may be capable of improvement for
  all travel modes
- The distribution of existing commercial, social and connectivity infrastructure in the town is uneven although the HDC Sustainability of Settlements Study of 2023 showed there is spare capacity – the town scores the highest of any settlement in the district apart from its access to hospital services
- The uneven distribution of the town's main employment sites around its southern edge and alongside the railway creates traffic congestion at peak hours, as does all the secondary school places lying east of the river – see below



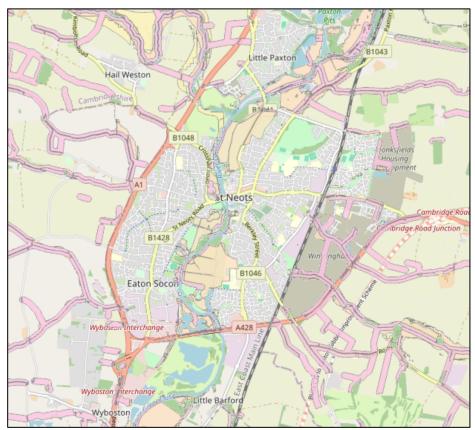
© Crown copyright and database rights 2025 OS AC0000822215

The town is exposed to significant river and surface water flood risks (see below) although there is active flood defence management in place – the 2024 HDC Flood Risk Assessment shows how working with natural processes (e.g. riparian woodland planting – see further below) may help mitigate some of these risks in the longer term





Source: Gov.uk (https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk)

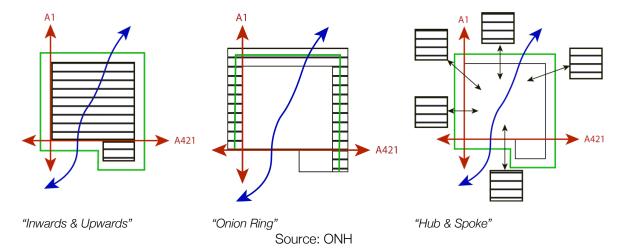


Source: HDC (https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/environmental-issues/flooding/strategic-flood-risk-assessment/)

# Key Issues

- There seems little doubt that the town and its surrounding area will continue to be regarded as a growth point in future strategic plans
- This growth may enhance the town's housing, commercial, social, green, access and cultural infrastructure or it may significantly harm it if not planned comprehensively
- The character and identity of the town and its distinct component parts Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford, Eynesbury and Wintringham Park – as well as of its neighbours, are also a crucial factor in managing change
- Adapting to climate change will become increasingly important as flood events become more frequent and potentially more damaging, and as the town's microclimate for residents and biodiversity value become more challenging
- The growth planned south of the town in particular is of such a potential scale a combined new town nearing the population of St Neots by 2050 – that it may fundamentally shift the geography of the town and its surroundings
- The town, district and county administration boundaries may be unhelpful in this
  exercise if there is not the means of thinking about, let alone planning for, that
  broader area
- There will need to be extensive and meaningful engagement within and beyond the town's population and a variety of land, organisational and other stakeholders to generate, test and debate the inevitable number of alternative futures ('scenarios') around which growth will be shaped and planned
- Those scenarios may comprise a variety of spatial approaches for example growing 'inwards and upwards' using brownfield land, growing outwards ('the next onion ring') and a 'hub and spoke' relationship between a town that stays

its planned size but is surrounded by and connected to new satellite settlements (see below)



- These scenarios may deliver different scales of growth and there may be hybrids depending on the nature of the external drivers of change – each will have its mix of upsides and downsides, which need to be interrogated in much greater depth at the next session
- Although planning in this way would normally fall to an LPA, the administration boundary constraints here will make this difficult as three LPAs are involved, the most important of which (HDC) may not exist in the next couple of years as a result of local government reorganisation

#### Session Outcome

The session ended with a series of questions posed for the next session to answer:

- What would success and failure look like in 2040?
- What are the key decisions that will drive that success?
- What geographical scope does SNNP2 need to have to contribute to making those decisions?
- Where does the present and future LPA fit in?

Of all these questions, it is that relating to the geographic scope that may need answering earlier to inform those invited to participate in the next session. It is known that Little Paxton PC has resolved to commence a neighbourhood plan project but it has not yet applied to HDC to designate its area. Hail Weston, Abbotsley and Great Paxton PCs have not applied for their areas to be designated.

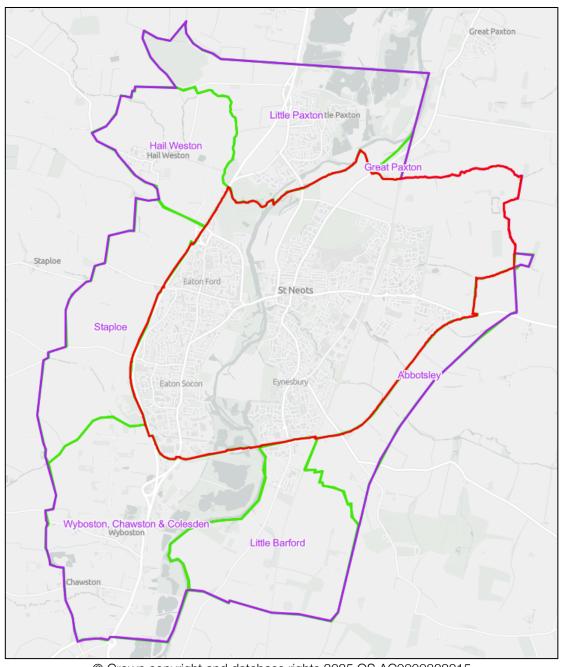
In Bedford, both Staploe and Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden PCs have had their parishes designated. Staploe has reached the informal draft stage and the PC is considering its position in respect of making housing site allocations (per 17.1.25 NPSG minutes). Wyboston does not appear to be actively progressing with their neighbourhood plan. Little Barford parish has not been designated.

In the immediate term a neighbourhood plan may be the only way in which the necessary parties can be brought together to think about the town. The project does not need to be confined in its thinking to the town boundary, although policy will have to be if SNNP2

has the same boundary as SNNP1. The project may be able to work much quicker and be far more effective in engaging with stakeholders, especially the town and village communities.

SNTC has three options in terms of the SNNP2 scope:

- 1. Proceed with the project per the town boundary but carry out the scenario planning work with invitations to the neighbouring parishes to participate
- 2. As 1 above but also request Staploe and Little Paxton PCs to align their neighbourhood plan project timetables to SNNP2 in terms of the key consultation and examination milestones
- 3. Invite Staploe, Little Paxton, Great Paxton, Wyboston etc, Hail Weston, Abbotsley PCs to agree to a redesignation of a neighbourhood area to include land in their parishes (as shown below) to enable a multi-parish plan ('St Neots Plus') to comprise policy throughout the area



© Crown copyright and database rights 2025 OS AC0000822215

These options vary in their project governance and stakeholder engagement but not in their technical complexity. There are few economies of scale in project management or delivery – the town presents a complex challenge in any event as 80%+ of the project area and population.

Multi-parish plans are not common but nor are they rare, succeeding where the constituent towns and parishes have enough in common and healthy working and political relationships. They are especially valuable where a potential town growth strategy extends into an adjoining rural parish, for good reasons, but where the ability of the plan to designate landscape protection policies ('local gaps', 'local green spaces', 'key views') is crucial as a mitigation measure. Such policies cannot be applied outside the plan area unless another plan (e.g. Staploe) does so in a timely fashion.

Terms of reference set out the ways in which the parishes are represented on a project steering group or consultative forum and how the three sign off points (Regulation 14/'Pre-Submission', Regulation 15/'Submission' and examiner's report approval) are arranged. Although all participating parishes would be involved in the plan-making process, SNTC would remain the 'qualifying body' – the organisation officially responsible for preparing the plan under the neighbourhood planning regulations.

It matters not here that some adjoining parishes are not in the same LPA area – one (HDC) simply needs to act as the lead LPA. However, HDC and BBC will be obliged to consult on any area designation application that does not coincide with the SNTC boundary. If the proposed area includes the Little Barford strategic allocation, early discussions with BBC will be important to understand their perspective and to ensure positive co-ordination of that proposal with other development and infrastructure proposals in and around the town. There does not appear to be any obvious reason why HDC or BBC would have concerns about the inclusion of any other parish provided it can be shown that each parish is fully supportive of the proposal and that there will be robust project governance arrangements.

#### Outline Timetable

It is difficult to set out a detailed project plan at this early scoping stage. Once the project scope and governance arrangements have been fixed, the process through the statutory consultation ('Regulation 14' or 'Pre-Submission') stage to submission ('Regulation 15') and examination becomes more predictable. It may be possible to submit the neighbourhood plan by the end of 2026, subject to the area designation being completed in good time.

As noted above the process for re-designating the neighbourhood area, if that becomes necessary, will require HDC (as the 'lead LPA' on behalf of BBC if there are Bedford parishes in the proposed area) to consult for a six week period. It will no doubt require time to prepare for and report on that consultation and to make its final decision, perhaps extending that whole period to 3-4 months.

If early engagement with HDC and BBC indicates they will support the designation with few other likely objectors, then the project may continue through its next stage rather than await the formal designation decision. In any event, even if it is decided that a multiparish plan is not needed, the scoping, scenario planning and community engagement work would still better be done by SNTC with its closest neighbours at least, e.g. Little Paxton.

#### Resources

Aside from time needed by the NPWG in monthly meetings to steer the project, some of its members are likely to want to be involved in delivering the follow up actions (when smaller, theme-based 'task teams' are usually set up). The SNTC officer team – project management, planning support, community engagement etc – will also be needed to help.

SNTC may be able to access (free) technical support from the national Neighbourhood Plan Support Programme. A new programme is due to commence on 1 July to extend to 2027/28 but this has not yet been confirmed by MHCLG. Access will be prioritised and limited but this project should benefit from at least one package, which is most likely to be the strategic environmental assessment of the plan, which needs to synchronise with various plan activities.

# **Next Steps**

It is recommended that SNTC:

- 1. Considers this report and requests the correction of any errors or omissions as necessary
- 2. Agrees its preferred option for the SNNP2 scope of the three above before engaging with the LPAs and parishes
- 3. Arranges a conference to bring together HDC, BBC and reps from each of the parishes referred to above to debate the options and SNTC's preferred option
- 4. Proceeds with the chosen option by completing any necessary area designation and project governance and management matters

#### ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: MARKET SQUARE STAGING

Author: TOWN CLERK

Contact Officer: TOWN CLERK

# 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Council with a report and recommendation from Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) on Market Square Staging which follows work, and a public consultation carried out by HDC and its appointed architect in November 2024.
- 1.2 To provide the Council with potential options on how to proceed.
- 1.3 To seek a decision from the Town Council on the options set out and how it wishes to progress.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council consider the report provided by Huntingdonshire District Council and recommendations set out in it.
- 2.2 That the Council consider the options summarised by the Town Council in **section 5** of this report on how the Council could proceed.
- 2.3 That the Council resolves its preferred decision on how it wishes to progress based on the information provided and options suggested by the Town Clerk.

# 3. Background

3.1 Please refer to **Appendix A**, the report from HDC which sets out background to the work undertaken.

During the November 2024 consultation Members queried when information would be coming to the Town Council on the project, which was being led by HDC. Members were advised that a report would be produced and provided to the Town Council for consideration on how it may wish to proceed with proposed staging. This report has now been provided and is appended to this document.

# 4. Huntingdonshire District Council Report

- 4.1 The report provided by HDC (**Appendix A**) summarises the findings of a feasibility study commissioned by the District Council into the potential construction of a permanent performance stage on the west side of St Neots Market Square. The idea originated as a way to enhance the town's public realm and support more regular, lower-cost public events, aligning with the broader town centre improvements and deliverables intended from funding granted.
- 4.2 Architects appointed by HDC developed three design options which were consulted on with the public. These concepts were for permanent staging which incorporated essential features such as integrated lighting and AV systems. The report outlines that the estimated costs for delivering one of these options would be significantly higher than expected—ranging from £406,000 to £478,000. The report suggested public feedback was mixed, with a slight majority in support but notable opposition expressed both formally and informally.
- 4.3 In light of these factors, including cost, planning risks/likelihood, and uncertainties around long-term management, HDC's **recommendation** is not to proceed with a permanent structure. Instead, officers suggest exploring investment in temporary staging and event equipment, which could deliver many of the same benefits with fewer risks and at a lower cost.
- 4.4 A funding extension has been secured for the portion of funds from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to allow time for this alternative to be properly evaluated. HDC remains open to working with the Town Council to identify the best way forward to use available funding to support use of the refurbished Market Square.

# 5. Options on how to Proceed

- 5.1 Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) has completed feasibility work and public consultation on staging options for the Market Square and has now presented its findings and a formal recommendation to the Town Council for consideration. Should the Town Council wish to take forward any option for utilising the available funding, it would need to lead on that process. HDC has confirmed its support for the Town Council in this regard and has stated that alternative uses of the funding as suggested may be explored, provided they continue to support or enhance community use of the Market Square.
- 5.2 To assist Members in their deliberations, the Town Clerk has outlined a range of potential options for consideration.
- 5.3 In reviewing these options, Members should note the following key considerations:

- The funding is restricted to capital expenditure only, in accordance with CPCA criteria.
- The Town Council would be responsible for the ongoing management and maintenance of any solution delivered.
- Most options will involve a long-term operational commitment and associated resource implications for the Town Council.
- HDC will support the Town Council in exploring and developing any of the proposed options.
- The feasibility of specific elements, including planning permission or other statutory approvals, would need to be fully assessed.

#### 5.4 Options for consideration;

# Option 1 - Proceed with Full Permanent Stage

That the Town Council acknowledges the recommendation of the District Council, along with the potential costs and planning challenges of delivering a permanent stage structure but resolves that the Town Council takes forward the delivery and project management of this option to

deliver a permanent stage structure.	leliver a permanent stage structure.					
Benefits	Negatives					
<ul> <li>Maximises long-term functionality for events, including weather protection and integrated AV.</li> <li>Reduces long-term hire/setup costs.</li> <li>Creates a civic focal point and could help redefine the square as a cultural venue.</li> <li>Provides a usable structure which could encourage greater use of the Market Square by orgnaisations/groups external to the Council.</li> <li>Could reduce Town Council involvement in supporting other organisers to run events on the Market Square.</li> <li>Could encourage repeat users who consistency and easy to use setup.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Estimated costs (£406k–£478k) significantly exceed budget.</li> <li>No further funding will be available from HDC or CAPC.</li> <li>The Town Council would have to commit a significant sum of capital funding.</li> <li>Public support is mixed.</li> <li>Requires planning permission and is likely to raise heritage concerns.</li> <li>Might feel too formal or "exclusive" for smaller-scale community use.</li> </ul>					
Rick Review						

- Reputation risk if poorly delivered or underused.
- High capital cost which would place pressure on Council funds.
- Cost overruns or further delays.
- Long-term management, insurance, and maintenance obligations are unresolved.
- Planning permission may be difficult or impossible to obtain.
- Underuse due to high operating demands or setup.

### Option 2 – Do not proceed further with staging or an alternative use for funding

That the Town Council resolves not to pursue, in partnership with HDC, the use of the available funds for a permanent stage or any alternative provision intended to enhance or facilitate events and community use of the Market Square.

provision intended to enhance or facilitate events and community use of the Market Square.				
Benefits	Negatives			
No risk of further capital funding required by the Council.	No further improvements will be made to support community events			
Avoids risks around planning, public perception.	and activities on the Square.			
No requirement for Town Council resource to deliver a	May create frustration from those the engaged in the consultation			
permanent or alternative option on an ongoing basis.	and deliver events/activities.			
	• Lost opportunity to activate the square as a cultural space.			

#### **Risk Review**

- Loss of CPCA funding if an alternative use is not agreed.
- HDC would likely not take forward an alternative project, resulting in a missed opportunity for St Neots.

# Option 3 - Raised Plinth with Temporary Canopy (Hybrid Model)

That the Council indicates a preference to investigate a 'hybrid model' involving the installation of a raised platform or plinth, which could serve as a stage when required through the addition of temporary sides and a roof.

Benefits	Negatives
<ul> <li>Ensures funding is not lost.</li> <li>Lower capital costs to deliver.</li> <li>A permanent plinth/platform increases event-readiness and reduces some setup needs.</li> <li>Retains visual consistency with square's existing design if simplified (potentially in line with planters)</li> <li>Could be more likely to get planning permission</li> <li>Could potentially provide in-built storage solution for temporary</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>May still incur high capital costs.</li> <li>Still requires some storage, setup, and operational oversight, including technical knowledge.</li> <li>The Town Council does not readily have resource available to support regular setup of staging/equipment, or its transport if onsite storage is not an option.</li> <li>May not be fully weatherproof.</li> <li>May lack presence or appeal compared to a purpose-built stage.</li> </ul>
sides/roof and possibly other equipment.	May lack sound and lighting without separate investment.
<ul> <li>Could be used as a performance space without canopy erected.</li> </ul>	- May lack sound and lighting without separate investment.

#### Risk Review

- Work would need to be done on the feasibility of such an option, particularly around planning likelihood and cost.
- Funding available may not be sufficient and the Council may have to commit capital funding to deliver.
- Would most likely still require planning permission due to location in conservation area.
- If poorly executed, could seem like a compromise and not meet expectations.
- Risks of inconsistent user experience depending on resource available.
- Reputational damage if resulting structure is not easy to use and results in low usage over the year.
- Operational responsibility and insurance would still need resolution and may result in increased ongoing costs for the Town Council.
- Further investigation needed over risks and liabilities from having a raised plinth accessible 24/7 (i.e height, requirement for safeguard rails etc)

### Option 4 – Temporary / Moveable Stage and Equipment (PA)

That the Council indicates a preference to focus on identifying a temporary structure solution for storing and deploying modular staging, using the available funds to enable flexible setup for events and activities as required.

#### Benefits

- Ensures funding is not lost.
- Flexibility can be deployed only when needed and at different locations within the square, potentially supporting different types/setups of events.
- Lower capital cost.
- Avoids planning constraints and permanent visual impact.
- Avoids safety/liability risks that may be associated with permanent structure or platform.

#### Negatives

- Requires storage, setup, and operational oversight, including technical knowledge.
- More prone to damage and higher maintenance costs.
- The Town Council does not readily have resource available to support regular setup of staging/equipment for increased events or events external to the Council.
- Set up may be complicated and time consuming.
- The Town Council does not have space available to store equipment.
- May not be fully weatherproof.
- May lack presence or appeal compared to a purpose-built stage.
- Does not create a focal point which could encourage greater use of the square by other groups/organsiations.

#### **Risk Review**

- Risk of damage, loss, or wear and tear associated with temporary setups that are less robust and frequently setup/taken down.
- If storage and transport not properly managed, could reduce usefulness.
- Might not deliver the public realm shift originally intended.
- Will result in significant increased revenue costs for the Council in storing, transporting and setting up equipment.
- Risks of inconsistent user experience depending on resource available.
- Could be underused if logistics prove difficult.
- Limited long-term durability.

# Option 5 – Permanent or Portable PA System with no staging

That the Council indicates its preference to focus on using the available funds to deliver an improved PA system to support events and activities on the Market Square.

on the Market Square.	
Benefits	Negatives
<ul> <li>Ensures funding is not lost.</li> <li>Events/activities that don't require a stage will most likely still require a PA system.</li> <li>Directly address challenges around sound quality for events.</li> <li>Utilising the funding just for this may be able to achieve a better sound/PA outcome.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>May require technical knowledge which is not readily available to the Town Council.</li> <li>Limited benefit without accompanying infrastructure (stage)</li> <li>Would not replace systems Council hires in for large events such as the Xmas Lights Switch-On.</li> </ul>

- Could support a variety of uses from one off event to Farm and Craft Markets.
- Makes use of the Market Square by other groups/organisations running events easier with less set up required and costs, especially for those who do not have access to a PA system.
- Does not address staging issue and will not create a focal point which could encourage greater use of the square by other groups/organisations.
- Users still need to bring or set up own staging.
- Portable systems may vary in sound quality depending on set up.

#### **Risk Review**

- Might not deliver the public realm shift originally intended.
- Permanent systems may require permissions and attract vandalism risk.
- If not used frequently, may not justify cost.
- May incur some additional Council resource in ensuring the Council has technical 'know-how' to operate the system and that it can be made readily available for those delivering events, including those external to the Town Council.
- A 'plug-in and play' system may reduce technical risk.
- There would be ongoing maintenance costs that the Town Council will need to invest in.

# Option 6 – Storage

That the Council indicates its preference to focus on using the available funds to deliver creative on-site storage solutions for equipment that supports, enhances, and facilitates events and activities on the Market Square. This may include a purpose-designed storage unit that also functions as public realm furniture, capable of housing items such as chairs, tables, and a performance gazebo to support smaller or regular events, including the Farmers and Craft Market.

Benefits	Negatives
<ul> <li>Ensures funding is not lost.</li> <li>Would support flexibility for events and public use.</li> <li>Could be used for supporting regular events, such as the Farm and Craft Markets as well as one off events.</li> <li>Enhances useability of square for activities without permanent structures.</li> <li>Reduces transportation and set up resource.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Depending on nature and design may still require planning permissions (especially if it is located on the Square on an ongoing basis)</li> <li>Visually intrusive if not well designed.</li> <li>May be difficult to integrate into public realm design.</li> <li>Doesn't reduce costs of hiring in staging and equipment.</li> </ul>

#### **Risk Review**

- Feasibility and practicalities of designing and delivering such a storage unit would need to be further investigated.
- Difficulties to find a practical solution that fits aesthetically with the public realm.
- Likely to require planning permissions.
- Requires maintenance, insurance, and regular oversight.
- Security risk (e.g. vandalism, theft).

# 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Town Council does not presently have any funding allocated towards the delivery (capital of revenue) of Market Square staging.
- 6.2 It has been confirmed that the HDC CIL funding referred to in the HDC report is allocated to the Priory Centre. This results in £88,500 retained from CPCA which could be used to deliver a preferred option.
- 6.3 The costs of delivering options suggested are not yet known and would depend on further investigation and feasibility.
- 6.4 The Town Council has an earmarked reserve of £15,000 marked 'Bandstand'.

# 7. Legal Powers

7.1 The actions recommended are 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.

# 8. Appendix

Appendix A – Huntingdonshire District Council – Market Square Stage Report and Recommendation.

# **APPENDIX A**

# St Neots Market Square - Permanent Performance Stage



# What are we doing?

The Market Towns Programme team has been collaborating with architects AOC to investigate the feasibility of constructing a permanent performance stage on the west side of St Neots Market Square and develop three costed design concepts for consideration. So far, HDC are only committed to a spend of £21,500 for this commission from a budget allocation of £210,000. This is made up of £110,000 of CPCA (St Neots masterplan phase 1) funding and a notional £100,000 of HDC CIL funding.

# Why are we doing it?

During the process of briefing the administration on the main St Neots Town Centre Improvements scheme and the progression of the scheme into detailed design, we were asked if it would be possible to provide the option of adding a permanent stage into the designs for the project, or as an add-on option separate to but compatible with the main project design.

The potential value of a stage would be to take fuller advantage of the opening up of the public realm by the improvement scheme, reducing the cost and logistical barriers to organising public events on the Market Square. This could increase the quality and quantity of events on the square, cementing its change of purpose from car parking to events, markets and the arts. As well as improving how much the new square was used, this could maximise the draw of residents and visitors to the town centre and its businesses. There would also be potential disadvantages, and these would also need exploring as part of considering any stage option.

# **APPENDIX A**

As the main project was in detailed design, but a stage had not been investigated as part of that process, to create the scope to add one into the main project design at that point would have delayed the start of construction. However, following consultation with the St Neots masterplan phase 1 steering group - which was reconvened specifically to consider proposals for project delivery using unspent funds from the masterplan phase 1 allocation - we committed to commissioning a feasibility study and development of a concept design. This work would take place alongside the main project, to ensure that the idea was investigated and developed without causing delays to the wider works. It would also allow for additional engagement and decision-making processes; in the event this was confirmed as a sufficiently viable and desirable option to merit this.

The St Neots masterplan phase 1 steering group that endorsed the stage (feasibility) project as above was made up of a selection of local stakeholders including residents, Town Councillors, and local business representatives, with HDC taking responsibility for pursuing the project.

Whilst it was agreed that HDC would work with AOC and others to consider the concept and potential to deliver a stage, there remained questions over who would deliver the project, who would be responsible for any ongoing revenue or other implications, and how a democratic decision would best be taken upon whether actually to deliver it, which would need concluding in the event the feasibility work merited pursuing.

# What have we done so far?

AOC have developed three costed concept designs for HDC to consider, based on a list of requirements and desired attributes drawn up in a design workshop conducted in April 2024. This was attended by:

- Charlie Honeywood Project Manager HDC
- Sam Caldbeck Programme Manager HDC
- Jasellia Williams Project Support HDC
- Daniel Crawshaw Project Manager CCC
- Tom Coward Architect AOC
- Dan Wilkins Architect AOC
- Cllr Sam Wakeford Portfolio Holder HDC
- Cllr Ben Pitt HDC and SNTC councillor
- Cllr Rob Simonis SNTC councillor and Mayor of St Neots
- Chris Robson Town Clerk SNTC
- Karen Pollecutt Operations Staff SNTC
- Jacqueline Coleman Operations Staff SNTC

The aim of this workshop was to help AOC understand what any potential stage would be used for and the requirements for the design, which would allow them to develop concept designs. The group was kept deliberately small and focused, but

members were encouraged to reach out for input from others outside of the workshops where appropriate and would add value to the process. Town Council members and staff attended in an advisory capacity with no formal mandate.

A public engagement session took place in July 2024 at a Saturday Farmers Market where responses were largely positive, albeit the sample size was small. The feedback from this session fed into the ongoing design development process. The stage 1 report which captures this feedback can be found here.

A second engagement event took place in November 2024 aimed at sharing the emerging design concepts and gaining feedback on them. This event was on a Thursday market and, recognising that a weekday event may not suit everyone, an online survey was also shared to gather as much feedback as possible. The boards presented during the engagement can be found <a href="https://example.com/here-emails-new-market

The survey closed on 5<sup>th</sup> December and a report was submitted by AOC in February 2025 detailing all work conducted as part of RIBA Stages 0-2 for the stage proposal. The report can be found <a href="https://example.com/here.">here.</a>

## Project timeline

The feasibility and concept design phase of this project took was anticipated to be completed by autumn 2024 to allow further design development to take place into 2025. There was an outside possibility that, if the design process proceeded smoothly and a formal decision was taken to proceed, that a stage could be built during the main Market Square works, however this was never committed to by HDC as there were too many unknowns to do so. Unfortunately, the feasibility and design process took significantly longer than anticipated. The appointed architect, AOC, is also engaged by HDC in the delivery of the Priory Centre project, which is at an advanced stage and soon to commence construction, as well as the development of the Ramsey Great Whyte project. This has meant that AOC's resources were heavily committed to these two schemes, rather than to the stage feasibility project. Whilst this is understandable given the scale and complexity of those two projects in comparison to the relatively simple and low-value Market Square stage feasibility. expectations around likely timescales could perhaps have been managed better. A further delay was built into the decision-making process after the second public engagement event in late 2024 and the subsequent two-week extension of the online survey element in response to public feedback. The volume of responses to the second public engagement event in late 2024, whilst extremely valuable, also necessitated extending the programme due to the time taken by AOC to process the sheer number of responses across the different platforms.

## Project Manager View and Recommendations

Having thoroughly reviewed AOC's final <u>report</u>, despite the extended timeline I am satisfied that the brief was met, the agreed outputs have been delivered, and that we

are in a good position to make an informed decision on whether to proceed with further design development and construction of a stage in the Market Square.

That said, it is my recommendation not to proceed further with this project in the form developed by AOC. The reasons for this are:

- 1. The cost estimates (between £406k-£478k depending on preferred design) at this early stage of design development are significantly higher than anticipated and, in my view, the proposal represents **poor value for money**. Key elements of the project scope, such as the stage size, fixed roof and integration of AV/lighting systems, were agreed to ensure that the stage could offer maximum benefit over the current provision, which is the hiring in of such equipment at a cost which prohibits all but the largest events from doing so. Descoping elements of the scheme such as these could reduce the overall cost but would also reduce the benefits and still require the hire of equipment, therefore would not increase the value of the proposal.
- 2. Public feedback to the proposal has been lukewarm. The results of the public engagement events show a marginal majority in favour of a performance stage; however there were clearly polarised views. We are also well aware of comments and opinions shared by means outside of the face-to-face events and online survey, for instance comments made on social media, albeit this is never expected necessarily to be representative of the wider public view, nor did it necessarily benefit from explanation of the potential benefits. This mixed feedback has also been exemplified by HDC Councillors for St Neots.
- 3. The proposal still faces significant hurdles, including but not limited to heritage and conservation considerations, highways audit, statutory approvals such as planning permission and building regulations noting in particular that it would be challenging to gain planning permission for this site due to the heritage harm that could result from such a structure. Each of these presents a risk which will require further time and money to overcome during stages 3-4, which are yet to be quoted for or tendered. If the proposal had received more public support and could be delivered at a lower cost, I would be inclined to suggest proceeding with further design development and engagement to eliminate these obstacles, however with limited public support and costs far exceeding the currently available budget, the argument to do so is significantly weakened.

In addition to the above, there are further unknowns at the present stage which represent potential impediments to the project. These include:

- Responsibility There would need to be clarity who would be responsible for managing
  and effectively operating the stage area on a day-to-day basis. Things such as cleaning,
  ensuring relevant risk assessments are in place, managing bookings and preventing
  inappropriate or unauthorised use. In essence who would adopt the structure.
- Revenue impacts Linked to the above, there would need to be agreement who would be responsible for any subsequent revenue implications – for example cleaning, repairs and maintenance, power costs.

- Insurance / Anti-social behaviour etc. These will be relevant practical considerations which link to the above points. Despite the ability to embed crime prevention measures within the design, there remains a residual risk, and this may have a direct impact in the ability to gain insurance, but also indirect implications on the reputation of the body responsible for operating and maintaining the stage. Further considerations such as noise and impacts in terms of public protection remain concerns.
- Reputational risk In addition to the mixed feelings identified earlier, the provision of a
  permanent stage also creates a potential reputational risk. Whilst it is hoped that such a
  facility would be well received, there is potential for negative impacts reputationally
  resulting from the design, location, operation, and cost (construction and ongoing) from
  such a proposal.

The above are not exhaustive lists but hopefully provide an indication that this is not a straightforward project to deliver and operate. Whilst it is recognised that there could be benefits arising, and that there are synergies with the Market Square, it is not considered that these benefits would be so significant, or that the stage is so fundamental to the success of the market square, that these would override any residual concerns that would remain.

It is also noted that there are many other examples where Councils (Town and/or District/Borough Councils) have collaborated to provide dismantlable staging that is available for use during specific events or provided on market days (such as linked to Teenage or Christmas Markets) where the opportunity to perform can be encouraged. Albeit this requires some of the same considerations above regarding ownership, storage and construction, and would not reduce the cost and organisational complexity in using a stage as much as a permanent one already in place.

On reflection, the decision to commission an external consultant, AOC, to carry out this exercise for a relatively (in the context of construction design) small amount of money (£21,500) proved to be a sensible move. If we are to proceed with the project we would be doing so from a strong foundation of knowledge and with a clear roadmap for delivery. Alternatively, if we do not proceed with the project beyond this stage, we have the facts to justify that decision and support investigation of other options.

### **Next Steps**

There are alternative options that could be explored, as opposed to simply providing a permanent stage. Officers advise, based on the report received, that it would be preferable to do so.

My suggestion would be to investigate the possibility of investing in equipment that can be used to deliver events on the Market Square, such as a temporary stage, lighting, audio and visual equipment, and/or potentially long-term installation of AV equipment that could complement temporary staging.

This would mitigate a significant issue that currently exists when delivering events on the square of any kind of scale – the costs of hiring in equipment - but without the cost, risk, and future maintenance liability of constructing a permanent stage. Unlike a permanent stage, however, temporary equipment would still require costs upon each use associated with the labour to construct/install and then remove it again, as well as storage. Longer-term installed AV equipment would have some of the same costs/risks/liability of a stage but on a much smaller scale.

Reducing the costs of hiring equipment as above will lower the barriers to more varied and frequent public events on the square, which will still help cement the change of use of the Market Square into a public space that is the cultural and historical heart of the town once more. Naturally and as touched upon, this approach will also require details to be resolved (ownership, storage, safety and insurance to name just a few), but in my view this solution warrants further investigation and discussion with partners.

A change request was submitted to the CPCA Investment Panel to extend the funding into the next financial year, which has since been signed off by their Chief Executive, albeit with the caveat that any investment in permanent stage equipment be thoroughly and carefully assessed before any purchase made. This will allow sufficient time to fully assess the feasibility, costs and benefits of purchasing stage/performance equipment on the basis above, and to understand the practical considerations of deploying it.

If this is not acceptable to the Town Council, and they do not wish to work with HDC on this solution, we remain committed to working with them to find alternative solutions to utilise the existing funding.

This report, and the AOC report which accompanies it, will be shared with the Town Council (through its appropriate officers and committee/s), Executive Councillors, and HDC ward Councillors for St Neots, so that there is an open and clear understanding of the professional opinion and suggested direction of travel.

Charlie Honeywood

Project Manager – Market Towns Programme – HDC

17<sup>th</sup> March 2025

#### ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: PRIORY CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Author PROJECT DELIVERY MANAGER

Contact Officer/s: PROJECT DELIVERY MANAGER, TOWN CLERK

### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide the Town Council with update on the Priory Centre redevelopment project. This report will appear as a standing item on Full Council agendas as the works progress.

#### 2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Council note the information from the officers on Priory Centre redevelopment project progress.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Town Council previously resolved to commit funding of up to £1,950,000.00 from CIL reserves as its contribution towards the construction costs for the redevelopment of the Priory Centre (Full Council Meeting 25/02/2025)
- At a meeting of the Town Council on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Heads of Terms with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) for a single 90-year lease for the redeveloped Priory Centre building and Town Council Offices were agreed and resolved. The terms of the lease do not include break clauses, giving the Council a long-term assurance and confidence on the future use of the building as a community facility and protecting its investment in the venue.
- 3.3 Huntingdonshire District Council project team, Principal Designer (AOC) and Construction Contract Consultant (MEA) were informed about the Council resolution immediately after the Council Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025 in order to proceed with contractual works and preparation for the beginning of construction works.

#### 4. Information Supporting Recommendations

# 4.1. Redevelopment Project status update from Project Delivery Manager:

- 4.1.1. Since previous Council Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2025:
  - a) The pre-start meeting with AOC Architecture (Designer, Principle Designer), MEA (Contract management), HDC, SNTC and SHE French (contractor) took place on April 9<sup>th</sup>:
    - General arrangements
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Reporting
    - Key Dates and etc

# Agreed:

 Monthly progress meetings second Tuesday each month to update on project milestones and progress – general report to the clients (SNTC Full Council)

- Weekly catchups with the clients
- b) Site fenced w/c 14.04.2025 (incl. pontoon). Site prepared for welfare units' delivery and scaffolding installation.
- c) Building has been disconnected from electric and gas supply.
- d) Building handed over to the contractor.
- e) Start of construction works 15.05.2025, contracted completion date 03.09.2026
- f) There is only one planning condition outstanding (landscaping), target to discharge by the end of May 2025. And three conditions require separate applications in a due order: PV, Signage and External Lighting.

### 4.2 Redevelopment Public Communications

4.2.1 The project delivery continues to be a HDC responsibility, however from this point forward, St Neots Town Council will take on the role of providing regular public updates throughout the build process. The Priory Centre page on the Council's website has been updated to serve as the central hub for information, including news updates and project plans. Updates will also be shared via social media through the process, these will be based on the information shared with the Town Council following the progress meetings.

#### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 As noted in section 3.1 the Council has committed £1,950,000 from its CIL Reserves.
- 5.2 There are no financial implications arising from the information or recommendations in this report.

### 6. References and Legal Powers

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

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

Title: FULL COUNCIL PROJECT STATUS OVERVIEW

Author PROJECT DELIVERY MANAGER

Contact Officer/s: PROJECT DELIVERY MANAGER

### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide the Council with a summary for note of the status updates of key projects since the last meeting.

#### 2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Council note the information provided.

## 3. Background

3.1 The purpose of the report is to provide a status update on key live projects with specific project milestones highlighted.

It is acknowledged that there are a lot of other projects and activities which are covered by Council's committees which are not included in this document. These will continue to be reported through their relevant committees and action lists.

All projects and activities which require a Full Council's attention are to be included in the table below and reported on next Full Council meetings together with the updated for all already included into report projects.

#### 4. Information Supporting Recommendations

4.1 The table below provides a project summary of key live projects with actions or progress to note.

### 5. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from the information in this report.

### 6. Supporting Documents

Appendix A – Projects Status Update

Appendix A – Projects Status Update (23.04.2025)

Key\*

Not Started

On Track

At Risk

Overdue

Completed

<sup>\*</sup>Note: Project status shown as on the day of report issue

Project name	MUSEUM BUILDING (COMPLETION)						
				planned		actual	
Project Manager (lead by)	PDM		Completion	Nov 2024			Mar 2025
				(Feb 2024 with additional v	works)	Ongoing with	n added works to scope
			Budget	planned			actual
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC	SNTC		£19,490.00		i	£29,788.32
Project Partners	St Neots Museum		Source of Funds	£10,000.00 - Museum main	tenance	budget	
Project Partners	St Neots Museum	Source of Fund		£19,788.32 - EMR for Comn	nunity Buildings		
Project Description / Outcome	Project Description / Outcomes / Summary		Project Milestones		F	Planned	Status or anticipated
Project Description / Outcome	s / Sulfillially	1 Toject Willestones		СО	mpletion	completion	
Final cost increase happened by	pecause of additional works and	1. Programme and Budget, Phasing		Se	ept 2024	Complete	
damage discovered: to cover t	he materials and labour.	2. Appoint the contractor(s)		Se	ept 2024	Complete	
Major roof works complete. Pa	artial A/C replacement complete as	3. Funding approval		Se	ept 2024	Complete	
recommended by specialists co		4. Start of work within the delegated budget			Se	ept 2024	Complete
		5. Funding approval for additional works		F	eb 2024	Complete	
Roofing contractor is expected to complete remaining small jobs and		6. Completion of roof works			F	eb 2025	Complete
-	handover in a few weeks (if not completed by the council meeting).		7. Snagging and Handover (roof works)			eb 2025	Overdue
			8. Funding approval for A/C replacement			eb 2025	Complete
		9. A/C	. A/C replacement (3 units)		N	1ar 2025	Complete

Project name	ST NEOTS TOWN COUNCIL WEBSITE (COMPLETE)					
				planned	Actua	l /Anticipated
Project Manager (lead by)	E&C Officer, PDM		Completion	March 2025	02	2.04.2025
				planned		actual
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC		Budget	£4,000.00	£2,498.00 (prod £599 (annually f	uction and year 1) from year 2)
Project Partners	n/a	/a		EMR		
Project Description / Outcome	s / Summary	Project	t Milestones		Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion
		1. Project Initiation (incl. requirements) and surveys			Nov 2024	Complete
stneots-tc.gov.uk		2. Appointing contractor			Dec 2024	Complete
New website launched.		3. Site Mapping		Jan 2025	Complete	
	GA connected (over 20 unique visitors per day). Increased amount of enquiries from the public via on-line forms.		gn and Coding		Feb 2025	Complete
•			tent		March 2025	Complete
increased amount of enquiries from the public via on-line forms.		6. Testing			March 2025	Complete
		7. Launch			18.03.2025	03.04.2025

Project name	ST NEOTS PARISH CHURCH WALL (ENABL	ST NEOTS PARISH CHURCH WALL (ENABLING)						
				planned	Actua	Actual /Anticipated		
Project Manager (lead by)	PDM		Completion	February 2026	Oct	ober 2026		
	au Ta		5 1 .	planned		actual		
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC		Budget	£250,000.00				
Project Partners	St Neots Church	Source of Funds		SNCT General Reserve				
Project Description / Outcome	Project Description / Outcomes / Summary		Project Milestones		Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion		
Funding approved by Full Cour	ncil on 25.03.2025. External funding is	1. Project initiation (survey, quotes, budgeting)		Jan 2025	Complete			
unlikely to be arranged due to	the nature of the works.	2. Funding approval		March 2025	Complete			
LPA confirmed the full planning (LBC is not required).	g permission is required for the work	3. Sourcing external funding		April 2025	Complete			
' '	es are working on getting permissions.	4. Rel	4. Relevant permissions		October 2025	Ongoing		
	Due to the time scale for getting the planning permission from LPA, the		5. Appointing the contractor		December 2025	Not started		
project is not possible to be complete in 2025, and to minimise risks of being left unfinished for the winter, it's been decided to move the start		6. Start of works			February 2026	Not started		
of works to the Feb 2026 (subj	of works to the Feb 2026 (subject to the all permissions granted).		mpletion: Snagging	and Handover	October 2026	Not Started		

Project name	JUBILEE GARDEN MOSAIC REPAIR AND REMEDIALS (Stage 2: Artwork Remedials)						
				planned	Actua	Actual /Anticipated	
Project Manager (lead by)	Ops Manager, PDM		Completion	Stage 1: March 2025	Stage 1: COMPL	ETE	
				Stage 2: TBC	Stage 2: TBC		
				planned		actual	
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC		Budget	Stage 1: £9,571.00			
				Stage 2:			
Project Partners	n/a		Source of Funds	General Reserves			
Project Description / Outcome	utcomes / Summary Proje		Project Milestones		Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion	
		1.1. Mosaic inspection. Recommendation for remedials and repairs.		August 2024	Complete		
Stage 1 COMPLETE: Structural	repairs and amendments of the	1.2 Committees and Council Report/Approval on Budget and Scope of Stage 1 Works		December 2024	Complete		
	actors negatively affecting the artwork:	1.3. Appointing the contractor for Stage 1 works		January 2025	Complete		
	essional artist. Meeting with the artist	1.4. Completion of Stage 1		March 2025	Complete		
2		2.1. Committees and Council Report/Approval on Budget and Scope of Stage 2 Works			May 2025	Ongoing	
		2.2. Appointing the artist for Stage 2 works			May-June 2025	Ongoing	
		2.3. Completion of Stage 2			TBC	Not started	

Project name	NEW PLAY PARK PROVISION IN EATON FO	NEW PLAY PARK PROVISION IN EATON FORD					
				planned	Actua	/Anticipated	
Project Manager (lead by)	PDM		Completion	September 2025		n/a	
2	CNTC		5	planned		actual	
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC		Budget	TBC		n/a	
Project Partners	HDC	Source of Funds T		ТВС			
Project Description / Outcome	Project Description / Outcomes / Summary		Project Milestones		Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion	
	on Ford as previously identified as	1. Project Plan and Location/Options proposal/analysis		Jan 2025	Complete		
strategic project:		2. Secure the land			April 2025	Ongoing	
	proved Project Plan and Proposed three smaller inclusive playgrounds		3. Stakeholder Engagement and public consultations		May 2025	Not started	
		4. Des	4. Designs and Specs, Cost and Programme		June 2025	Not started	
<ul> <li>PDM is liaising with the landlord - HDC to secure land provision</li> <li>PDM to prepare concept design proposals, cost estimation and</li> </ul>		5. Final Approvals (Committees and Council)		nittees and Council)	July 2025	Not started	
	<ul> <li>draft programme once land provision agreed by HDC</li> <li>Target to deliver playgrounds in Summer 2025</li> </ul>		6. Construction		August 2025	Not started	
Target to deliver playgrou			ening for public		Sept 2025	Not started	

Project name	OAST BUILDING REDEVELOPMENT (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)					
				planned	Actual /Anticipated	
Project Manager (lead by)	PDM		Completion	Dec 2026		n/a
				planned		actual
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC		Budget	ТВС		n/a
Project Partners	AOC (D), Alan Baxter (H HDC (LPA)	HC), MEA (QS),	Source of Funds	CIL Reserve, External Grant	,	
Project Description / Outcome	s / Summary	Project Milestones			Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion
		1. Feasibility Studies (i	1. Feasibility Studies (incl. Heritage Statement and Cost Estimation)			Ongoing
Pre-construction. Feasibility an	d Design.	2. Stakeholders engagement and Public Consultations			July 2025	Ongoing
into flexible community build	Redevelopment of recently purchased Oast Building into flexible community building based on creative		3. Comparison of the options, pilot programs and conclusion of venue's function			Not Started
workshops outcomes and feasi	•	4. Designs, Budget and Programme			March 2026	Not Started
AOC appointed for the Feasi more likely to continue with th		5. Operational Business plan			April 2026	Not Started
AOC appointed subcontractors		6. Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent			June - July 2026	Not Started
(Alan Baxter Ltd) and Construct	tion Quantity Surveying	7. Secure funding (CIL and External Grants)			June - July 2026	Not Started
and Cost./Contract Manageme	,	8. Construction Contra	actor Tender		Sept 2026	Not Started
First stakeholders workshop person) 09.05.2025	(working group, in	9. Detailed Cost Estima	ation and Value Eng	ineering	Nov 2026	Not Started
. ,	10. Letter of Intent to			or	Dec 2026	Not Started
Pre-construction. Enabling.	Pre-construction. Enabling.  1. Pre-application co		sultations and appro	ovals from LPA	July 2025	Not Started
<ul> <li>Soft Strip</li> <li>Kiln, elevation and Roof Remedials</li> </ul>		2. Soft-Strip and Demo	2. Soft-Strip and Demolition			Not Started
Demolition	'			3. Kiln and Roof Remedials		

Project name	TRANSITION of OPS FLEET AND MACHINE	TRANSITION of OPS FLEET AND MACHINERY TO EV. Stage 1: Trial					
			planned	Actua	l /Anticipated		
Project Manager (lead by)	PDM	Completion	March 2026	М	arch 2026		
(2)			planned		actual		
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC	Budget	£115,000.00	£11	18,000.000		
Project Partners	n/a	Source of Fund	Revenue Budget, EMR for v	ehicles and lawnmowe	ers, General Reserves		
Project Description / Outcome	Project Description / Outcomes / Summary		Project Milestones		Status or anticipated completion		
E&E Committee resolution for	Stage 1 – TRIAI :	Scope of the project, budget		Jan 2025	Complete		
	o oldest diesel vehicles with plug-in	Purchase of Hybrid Vans		Feb 2025	Complete		
hybrid vans (preferal 2. Replacement of one	oly second-hand) ride-on lawn-mower with electric one	Purchase of Electric Ride-on lawn mover		Feb 2025	Complete		
3. Monitoring performa			Installation of the EV Chargers (incl. demand confirmation)		Upon request		
transition to the Carbonate Net-Zero by 2030.		Disposal of replaced v	ehicles	Feb-Mar 2025	April 2025		
			Monitor performance, further recommendations		Ongoing		

Project name	BIODIVERSITY PROJECT AT THE OLD CEM	BIODIVERSITY PROJECT AT THE OLD CEMETERY						
				planned	Actua	l /Anticipated		
Project Manager (lead by)	EPO		Completion	November 2025	Nov	ember 2025		
				planned		actual		
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC		Budget	£5,381.70	£	5,381.70		
Project Partners	HDC	Source of Funds		HDC Biodiversity for All gran				
Project Description / Outcome	Project Description / Outcomes / Summary Pr		ct Milestones		Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion		
Biodiversity for All grant applie for biodiversity improvements	d for and successfully obtained from HDC	-	Request ecology audit of old cemetery and successfully apply for Biodiversity for All grant		Jan 2024	Complete		
Tor bloatversity improvements	at 5t Neots old territery.	Obtair	Obtain relevant permissions from Diocese		Dec 2024	Complete		
Stage 1 – plant new hedgero existing woodland	w and understory cover to complement	HDC to complete Stage 1		Feb 2025	Complete			
	Stage 2 – Overseed an area of amenity grassland with native grass and		HDC to complete Stage 2		Mar 2025	Complete		
wildflower seeds		HDC to	HDC to complete Stage 3		Sept-Nov 2025	Sept-Nov 2025		
Stage 3 – Plant native bulbs for Stage 4 – Purchase wildlife box	· -		EPO and Ops Team to complete – purchases made, installation tbc		Mar-Apr 2025	Ongoing		

Project name	RETROFITTING OF SNTC BUILDINGS – QUICK WINS					
				planned	Actua	I /Anticipated
Project Manager (lead by)	EPO		Completion	Jan 2026		an 2026
				planned		actual
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC	Budget		£5,300		
Project Partners	N/A	Source of Funds		SNTC Community Buildings	Earmarked Reserves	
Project Description / Outcome	s / Summary	Proje	ect Milestones		Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion
progressed at SNTC buildings.	Full Council resolved on 28.01.25 that 'Quick Win' Retrofitting be progressed at SNTC buildings.		Stage 1 – Ops Team have list of works to be completed		Jan 2025	Ongoing
Stage 1 – Ops Team to comple	te works within their capacity	Chara 2 and suitable frame Countries for		m Contractors for		
Stage 2 – Contractors to be completed within remaining but	- Contractors to be sourced for outstanding works, to be		Stage 2 – get quotes from Contractors for outstanding works		Jan 2025	Not Started

Project name	RETROFITTING OF SNTC BUILDINGS - enabling					
			planned	Actua	Actual /Anticipated	
Project Manager (lead by)	EPO	Completion	TBC		TBC	
			planned		actual	
Project Sponsor (Client)	SNTC	Budget	ТВС		TBC	
Project Partners	N/A	Source of Funds	ТВС			
Project Description / Outcome	comes / Summary Project Milestones		s	Planned completion	Status or anticipated completion	
	Environment & Emergency Committee resolved on 14.01.25 that quotes for		Three quotes to be obtained for each project		Completed	
Committee for the following:	tained and taken to the Operations & Amenities	Quotes to be taken to Ops Committee		March 2025	Completed	
a) Air Source Heat Pump Centre	(ASHP) to be installed at the Eatons Community	Quotes to be taken to F&G Committee		April 2025	Completed	
	stalled at Gate Lodge* and the Museum (with al battery/EV charger, which the tenants would	Quotes to be taken to Full Council		April 2025	Ongoing	
pay for) c) AC heating systems to	be installed at Gate Lodge* and Man Cave	Next stages TBC				
*subject to lease re-agreemen	*subject to lease re-agreement					
Ops Committee resolved the above on 08.04.25, excepting they did not recommend for Gate Lodge to have solar panels installed at a cost to SNTC. There may be an opportunity to support the tenant with this project in a different way, via lease re-agreement.  F&G Committee – recommendations on agenda		Next stages TBC				



# **St Neots Town Council**

Internal Audit 2024-25 (2<sup>nd</sup> Interim Report)

20th March 2025

Stephen Christopher

for Auditing Solutions Ltd

# **Background and Scope**

All town and parish councils are required by statute to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control, and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Auditing Solutions Ltd has been appointed to undertake this function on behalf of St Neots Town Council for the 2024-25 financial year.

This report sets out the results of our second interim audit, which was undertaken in March 2025. It updates the findings from the report issued in November 2024, following our first interim audit. Once again, we wish to thank the Town Clerk, the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and other Council staff for providing the information required to enable us to complete our audit.

# **Internal Audit Approach**

In carrying out our internal audit work for the year to date, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Accounting Statements/AGAR. We have employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in a number of key areas in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate, and fit for the purposes intended.

Our audit programme is designed to afford assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner which ensures effective probity of transactions and a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors, or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

# **Overall Conclusion**

On the basis of the programme of work we have undertaken for the year to date, we have concluded that the Council continues to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions are of a high standard and provide an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation.

In the sections below, we have explained the objectives of each area of our audit, summarising the work undertaken to date and our findings. We identified two matters where we consider the internal control arrangements should be improved. These are detailed in the report, together with our recommendations for action. We ask that Members consider the content of this report and respond to our recommendations in due course.

# **Detailed Report**

# Accounting records & Banking arrangements

Our objective is to confirm that the accounting records are accurate and up to date, with no anomalous entries in the cashbooks or financial ledgers, and that appropriate banking arrangements are in place.

The Council maintains its accounting records using the RBS Rialtas Omega accounting software, which is generally acknowledged as a market leader for this tier of local government.

Barclays Bank continues to be used for day-to-day business banking services. As in the previous year, there are three main accounts in use; a Current Account and Business Premium Account (instant access savings account) for the Town Council's main transactions, together with a separate Priory Centre Current Account. The two Town Council accounts are combined into a single cashbook within Omega, in order to reduce the number of data entries and to reflect the fact that Barclays continues to operate an automatic daily transfer between the accounts, to retain a balance of £100,000 in the Current Account.

In addition to the Business Premium Account, all other funds not required for immediate use are held in the Public Sector Deposit Fund of CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

Two further Barclays Bank accounts (current account and savings account) are maintained to hold funds relating to the "Mayor's Charity", which are set aside for charitable donations. These form part of the Council's overall funds for accounting purposes.

In our audit work for the year to date, we have:

- ➤ Checked and agreed the opening trial balance on Omega for 2024-25 to the closing balances on the 2023-24 AGAR and the detailed financial statements;
- ➤ Verified that the financial ledgers remained "in balance" to the date of the latest accounts completed at the time of our second interim audit;
- Confirmed that the accounting code structure remains appropriate to meet the Council's budget reporting and control requirements;
- ➤ Checked the detail in the Omega cashbooks for the three main bank accounts for three sample months (April and September 2024, plus January 2025) by reference to the relevant bank statements:
- ➤ Checked the detail of all transactions in the year to date on the other accounts, again by reference to the relevant bank statements,
- ➤ Checked and agreed the detail on the bank reconciliations produced by the Omega software for all of the accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, confirming that there were no long-standing unpresented cheques or anomalous entries. We also confirmed that a monthly reconciliation is undertaken by the RFO and independently reviewed by the Town Clerk:
- ➤ Confirmed that, on a periodic basis, the bank reconciliations are being verified by a nominated councillor and reported to the Finance & General (F&G) Committee with the reconciliations as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 reported to F&G on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025;

- Noted that the External Auditors issued their 'report and certificate' on the Council's 2023-24 AGAR on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and that there were no matters arising, and
- ➤ Confirmed, by discussion, that appropriate procedures remain in place for backing up financial and other IT systems in use at the Council.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

# Corporate governance

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council or Committee meetings), all meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been, or are being, considered for implementation.

During the course of our audit work, we have confirmed the following:

- ➤ Our review of Council and Committee minutes for the year to date has not identified any issues that we consider might have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability;
- The Council has continued to keep both its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations under regular review. The Standing Orders were re-approved, without amendment, at the Full Council meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024. The Financial Regulations were reviewed and updated by F&G on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and formally approved by the Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024. A further amendment was approved by the Council on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024, to add one additional signatory to the Corporate Barclaycard;
- A wide range of other policies and procedures are in place and are also being reviewed on a regular basis, in accordance with an agreed timetable;
- The RFO has developed detailed Financial Procedures covering all key financial tasks, to underpin the Financial Regulations;
- At its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024, the Council confirmed that it continues to meet the criteria for the General Power of Competence and resolved to adopt those powers, and
- During the summer of 2024, the Council provided the proper opportunity for the exercise of public rights in relation to the 2023-24 accounts, in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

# **Expenditure**

Our objective is to ensure that:

The Council's resources are released in accordance with the approved procedures and budgets;

- All payments are supported by an original trade invoice or other appropriate documentation which confirms the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no invoice is available;
- All discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- An official purchase order has been raised on every occasion when one would be expected (exceptions include ongoing contractual arrangements);
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- ➤ VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

To check compliance with the above criteria, we have reviewed a sample of non-pay related payments up to the middle of February 2025. Our test sample included all payments in excess of £4,000, together with a more random selection of every 45th payment as recorded in the cashbook and a sample of invoices relating to the Priory Centre. The overall value of expenditure in our sample for the year to date totalled approximately £1,178,000. This is considerably higher than in the previous year, as it includes the purchase of the Oast House, for approximately £550,000. There were no matters arising from our review.

Operations staff use a fuel card when purchasing fuel for Council vehicles. As part of our expenditure testing, we reviewed documentation relating to the fuel card payment made on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025. We confirmed that, in both cases, appropriate receipts had been obtained for all of transactions included within the fuel card statement.

The Council makes use of a Corporate Barclaycard, with statements settled in full each month. We reviewed the supporting documentation for the monthly statements to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024, confirming that all payments made were of an appropriate nature and supported by receipts.

As part of our testing of expenditure, we also check, on a sample basis, to confirm that appropriate national requirements and the Council's own Financial Regulations/Standing Orders are followed when entering into contracts that require to be formally tendered. At our second interim visit, we considered the approach taken to the award of the contract for marketing the refurbished Priory Centre. We confirmed that the national regulatory requirements have been followed, with the tender opportunity advertised on the Government's Contracts Finder website (as well as on the Council's own website). We also confirmed with the Town Clerk that a tender evaluation process has now been completed and a report on the outcome is to be taken to the Full Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025, at which the award of the contract will be formally approved.

We confirmed that VAT Returns continue to be submitted quarterly in electronic format, as required by extant legislation, with the detail being reconciled to the Omega financial ledger. At the time of our second interim audit, the submissions for the first three quarters of the financial year had all been submitted and reimbursement received.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

# Assessment and management of Risk

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potentially significant areas of risk of both a financial and health & safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for them to occur.

There is a requirement for the Council to formally review and approve its risk management arrangements during each financial year. We confirmed that this has been done for the current year, with the Council's risk assessment considered by F&G on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 and subsequently approved by the Full Council at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

The Council entered into a three-year agreement with Zurich Municipal for its insurance cover at the start of the 2023-24 financial year, which will run until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. The policy for 2024-25 includes Employer's Liability of £10m, Public Liability of £15m and Fidelity Guarantee of £2m. We note that the policy was amended during the year to include 'vacant property' cover for Oast House. In our view, the level of cover appears adequate for the Council's ongoing needs and level of annual Precept.

As in previous years, a range of health and safety reviews/inspections are being undertaken throughout the year, including annual RoSPA reviews of play equipment by PlaySafety Ltd. We reviewed the summary report issued following the RoSPA play equipment inspections on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and confirmed that no areas of high risk were identified. We noted that the Operations Manager reported the results of these inspections to the Operations & Amenities Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024, outlining the actions being taken by the Council to address the matters raised.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

# **Budget Setting, Budgetary Control and Reserves**

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust procedures in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of Precept to be drawn down from Huntingdonshire District Council, and that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also consider whether the Council retains appropriate funds in earmarked and general reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

At our first interim audit visit we considered the information provided to the Members on progress against the 2024-25 budget. We noted that the F&G Committee received details of financial performance for the first quarter at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024. We also noted that a report on the earmarked reserves was considered at that meeting and a number of recommendations were made to the Council to approve expenditure from those reserves and from the General Reserve, which were subsequently agreed by the Full Council at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024. At our second interim, we confirmed that the above approach has continued throughout the year, with the financial performance and reserves position as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 reported to F&G on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

At our second interim audit, we reviewed the approach taken by the Council to setting its budget and Precept for 2025-26. We confirmed that, as in previous years, the budget process involved detailed consideration by the various committees, in particular F&G, with the Budget and Precept formally approved at the Full Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

The Precept was set at £2,088,330 (£2,008,010 in 2024-25), which, after taking into account the increase in the tax base, is equivalent to an annual increase of 2.6% for a Band D property. We are satisfied that Members were provided with an appropriate level of information on which to base their decision, with comprehensive supporting documentation included in the budget pack produced by the Town Clerk and RFO.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. We will consider the 2024-25 revenue out-turn and end of year reserves position at our final audit.

# **Income**

In addition to its Precept and contributions from developers, through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the Council receives income from a variety of sources. These include hall hire, allotment rents and cemetery charges.

Our objective is to confirm that robust procedures are in place to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified and invoiced (where appropriate), with recovery effected within a reasonable time span.

In the course of our audit work to date, we confirmed the following:

<u>Review of fees and charges</u>: The fees and charges for the current year were approved by the Council as part of the 2024-25 budget-setting process. We have confirmed that a similar approach has been followed for 2025-26, with the fees and charges confirmed at the Full Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

<u>Cemeteries:</u> We reviewed the interment applications and other cemetery related charges for three sample months (1<sup>st</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024), to confirm that all required documentation had been obtained and the invoices subsequently raised were in order and paid promptly. There were no matters arising from our review.

<u>Allotment rents:</u> We confirmed that, with one exception (which is being pursued), the rental payments due in relation to the 2024-25 allotment year have all been received.

<u>Hall hire</u>: Following the temporary closure of the Priory Centre for refurbishment, in July 2024, the Council has offered alternative space for hire on a temporary basis at 5-7 New Street, in addition to the existing premises at the Eatons Centre. At our second interim, we reviewed the computerised diary records held on the Omega bookings system for a sample of one week's hires (w/c 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025) and confirmed that all hirers had been charged the correct fees and that no payments remained outstanding.

<u>Outstanding debtors</u>: We reviewed the aged debtor position for both the Town Council and hall hires as at the date of our second interim audit and confirmed that effective control

arrangements remain in place, with appropriate action being taken in relation to outstanding payments due.

#### **Conclusion**

In general, the controls over income were found to be adequate and to be operating effectively. However, we would draw the following matters to Members' attention.

- (i) As part of the arrangements for the hire of Council facilities, each hirer is sent two copies of the booking confirmation agreement. The agreement sets out the date and time of the booking(s) and the amount to be charged. It also states that the hirer must return one signed copy of the agreement as confirmation that, among other things, they have read and agree to abide by the conditions of the hire provided and that they have read No. 16 of the Terms and Conditions as to the requirements for public liability insurance cover. At the time of our audit, there was no evidence that signed copies of the agreements had been returned or were held by the Council covering any of the bookings in the sample week.
- R1 It is important that all hirers of Council community centre facilities are made fully aware of the terms and conditions relating to their bookings, in particular, their responsibilities regarding public liability insurance cover, and that they return signed copies of each booking confirmation to acknowledge this. The signed copies of the agreements should then be held by the Council (as scanned documents), to confirm that this has been done.
- (ii) From a brief review of the Town Council and Priory Centre websites, it was evident that neither has been fully updated to explain the arrangements for the hire of community centre facilities that have been put in place following the temporary closure of the Priory Centre for refurbishment (in particular, the temporary lease of 5-7 New Street to provide a "mini-Priory Centre" and café facility). We were also unable to locate details of the community centre booking agreements on either website.
- R2 The Town Council and Priory Centre websites should be updated to ensure that they clearly explain the arrangements that are in place for the hire of community centre facilities whilst the Priory Centre refurbishment project is in progress. The websites should also include details of the terms and conditions for the hire of community centre facilities.

# **Petty Cash**

We are required, when completing the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the AGAR, to confirm that there are effective controls over any petty cash accounts operated by the Council. To meet that objective, we check that:

- Any petty cash accounts in operation are managed effectively and that all expenses incurred are appropriately supported by a trade invoice or relevant till receipt;
- > Only low value expenditure is incurred from any petty cash account(s) in use;
- ➤ VAT is identified and coded accordingly to the VAT control account for periodic recovery from HMRC; and
- The physical cash held is periodically reconciled to the supporting records.

Two separate petty cash accounts are held, one for the Town Council and the other for the Priory Centre café (which has been relocated to 5-7 New Street, while the Priory Centre is being refurbished). During the course of our second interim audit, we confirmed that the petty cash recorded on Omega is being reconciled to the underlying accounting records by the Finance team, on a regular basis. We also undertook a physical check of both petty cash floats and found these to be in order, with appropriate receipts for all payments made since the most recent reconciliation.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising from our audit work to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. At our final audit, we will confirm that the correct petty cash balances have been included in the cash and bank figure in the AGAR, Section 2, Box 8.

# Salaries and Wages

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant employment legislation is being adhered to, that the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation are satisfied regarding the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions and that the requirements of the local government pension scheme are met.

The majority of the Council's staff are paid on a monthly basis, although a few staff continue to be paid weekly. The Council has outsourced preparation of the payroll to a local payroll bureau, which provides all relevant documentation.

To meet our audit objective, we undertook the following work:

- ➤ Confirmed that signed contracts of employment are in place for new members of staff appointed in the current financial year, to date;
- ➤ Checked the detail of staff salaries and wages paid in September 2024 (monthly) and week 25 (weekly) respectively, by reference to the RFO's schedule of staff in post and review of the detailed payroll records agreeing the gross salaries or hourly rates paid;
- Checked to ensure that tax and NI deductions have been made applying the appropriate tax code and NI Table, also ensuring that appropriate amounts are paid over to HMRC each month;
- ➤ Checked that the appropriate employee and employer contributions to the pension scheme have been determined and paid over to the Pension Fund Administrators;
- ➤ Checked that the appropriate employee and employer contributions to the pension scheme have been applied in accordance with the current arrangements;
- Reviewed timesheets, where relevant, to confirm the accurate payment of any enhanced hours due to employees and that they had been certified for payment by their section head. and
- Examined the procedures in place for the release of staff salaries and wages by the payroll contractor to individual staff.

The national Local Government Services pay agreement for 2024-25, applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, was not agreed until October 2024. At our second interim audit, we confirmed the accuracy of the calculation of the back-pay and that the correct payments were made to staff in November 2024.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

# **Asset Register**

The reporting arrangements for assets in the AGAR require councils to report the value of each asset at purchase cost or at a suitable proxy where that value is not known, and for community assets to be valued at a nominal £1. The value of individual assets should not change from one year to another, with the only changes being the inclusion of new assets purchased or removal of assets disposed of.

The Council's assets are recorded on the Rialtas Asset Inventory System.

We will review any changes to the asset register for 2024-25 when undertaking our internal audit work in relation to the end of year accounts.

#### **Investments and Loans**

Our objective is to confirm that an appropriate investment strategy is in place, that any funds not required for immediate use, whether temporarily or on a longer-term basis are invested in line with that strategy and that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records. We also confirm that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with the relevant loan agreements.

During the course of our audit work to date, we have confirmed that:

- The Investment Strategy was reviewed and updated at the F&G meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 and approved by Full Council on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024;
- At present, the Council does not hold any long-term accounts. As noted earlier in this report, any surplus funds that are not retained in the Council's main Barclays Deposit Account are held in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, which is an instant access account;
- > The two half-yearly instalment repayments (principal and interest) on the outstanding PWLB loan as recorded in the cash book and financial ledger agree to the third party "demand" notice from the UK Debt Management Office.

#### Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

# Internal Audit 2024/25

Recommendations Arising

Actions Arising from a Review of Action Plan by the Finance and Governance Committee: The Finance and Governance Committee has requested that an update on the actions and responses set out below is provided to the next Finance and Governance Committee to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

# **ACTION PLAN**

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
Review of	Income	
R1	It is important that all hirers of Council community centre facilities are made fully aware of the terms and conditions relating to their	Terms and Conditions last reviewed in 2017.
	bookings, in particular, their responsibilities regarding public liability insurance cover, and that they return signed copies of each booking confirmation to acknowledge this. The signed copies of the	A detailed review is being carried out to include assessment of current T&Cs, other venues and council comparisons and updated in line with industry standards. GM has completed the first draft which will be
	agreements should then be held by the Council (as scanned documents), to confirm that this has been done.	reviewed by the RFO/Town Clerk.
		T&Cs include venue and hirer responsibilities, including insurances.
		Target to be fully updated and published by Mid-May 2025. Booking procedure will be updated and implemented at the same time.
R2	The Town Council and Priory Centre websites should be updated to ensure that they clearly explain the arrangements that are in place	Mostly Completed:
	for the hire of community centre facilities whilst the Priory Centre refurbishment project is in progress. The websites should also include details of the terms and conditions for the hire of	<ul> <li>Second draft of updated website reviewed 14/4/25</li> <li>Details alternative arrangements of facilities for hire during refurbishment.</li> </ul>
	community centre facilities.	<ul> <li>Includes hire rates and how to book / enquire.</li> <li>Includes regular updates during refurbishment.</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Terms and Conditions to be included once completed and approved.</li> </ul>



Outlook

### **CIL Funding round update**

From Implementation < Implementation@huntingdonshire.gov.uk >

Date Thu 4/17/2025 5:13 PM

#### Good afternoon,

We have completed the first CIL funding round using the interim governance agreed at HDC Cabinet in June 2024. Thank you to everyone that participated in the process and congratulations to Bury, St Neots and Sawtry who have been allocated funds for projects within their towns/parishes. This round saw £2,560,000 of Strategic CIL allocated over three projects, which totalled £4.8m of total project cost.

#### What went well?

It was great to see the high level of detail submitted with some of the applications. The information supplied by applicants like Bury made it easy to see the links between the project and growth within the district.

The changes to the application form seemed to have cleared up some of the issues in previous rounds. Your feedback would be appreciated on this, and we have already taken onboard some suggestions on further improvements for the next round.

Thank you for all of those of you who came over to see us at the town/parish forum, you definitely kept us busy. We also opened a day of pre-bookable sessions for you all to reach out about your proposed projects, which had a good take up rate. So, thank you for everyone who got involved with that. Due to the popularity of both activities we are looking to repeat them this round.

#### What we could improve on

After every CIL funding round the team reflect on the most recent round and look to make improvements for the next one. With some of the feedback we received we have already tweaked the application form. If you have any other suggestions, please do let us know.

There were no applications for funding of £100,000 or less recommended for approval or approved this funding round. This indicates to us that we need to work with you all to help with this going forward. One step we are taking is the new enquiry form and there is more about this below. We are also looking to improve the guidance on our website to clear up any confusion about what is and is not eligible for Strategic CIL funding.

Explaining the difference between Strategic and Meaningful CIL can be tricky, there is legislation that is different between the two which can be confusing. We are looking to clear this up and make it as simple as possible, which will hopefully save you time going forward.

#### **Enquiry Form**

We recognise that a lot of hard work and effort goes into completing CIL funding applications. It can be very frustrating to go through all that effort and then be declined. To save you time we have created an enquiry form that can be submitted at any time and will save you from the frustration of completing an application of your project would not be eligible.

#### The enquiry form can be found on the CIL webpages

https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/planning/community-infrastructure-levy-cil/cil-funding/ and is already available for use. This form has a number of questions that are optional, but the more detail you include the better our understanding of your project will be.

The response to the enquiry form will not guarantee you will receive funding, it will confirm if your project would be eligible in the first place. To receive funding a full submission would be needed during a

funding round, with the correct supporting information to show how your project fits the criteria for Strategic funding.

How you can find out more

An engagement programme is being rolled out which includes:

- · Emails to all stakeholders.
- · A series of town/parish newsletter articles.
- · Videos.
- We will be presenting and available at town/parish forum in June.
- A day of bookable time slots after the round has opened for questions and queries.
- · Updated website content.

## Dates for your diary

- A new funding round will open on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025 and the application form will be available then.
- The funding round will close 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025
- Decisions will be issued in October 2025
- Pre-bookable sessions will be opened for two days after the round has opened for towns/parishes
  to have specific 1:1 time for any questions about the application process. More information about
  these will come out nearer the time.

If you have any questions, then please email implementation@huntingdonshire.gov.uk .

Many thanks

Row





Row Lyons
Funding Project Manager (CIL)
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Phone 01480 388782 Upcoming Leave: April 22nd

#### Disclaimer

The information contained in this communication from the sender is confidential. It is intended solely for use by the recipient and others authorized to receive it. If you are not the recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution or taking action in relation of the contents of this information is strictly prohibited and may be unlawful.

This email has been scanned for viruses and malware, and may have been automatically archived