

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL - FULL COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday 19th DECEMBER 2023 at The Cabin, Northstowe

Members: 15
Quorum: 5 Members.
Present: 6 Members: Cllr Littlemore (Mayor); Cllr Bros Sabria (Deputy Mayor); Cllr Castelino;
Cllr Males; Cllr Oluwasanya (from 19:02 pm); Cllr Owen.
Town Clerk.
1 Member of the public.
Apologies: Cllr Benedicic; Cllr Delip; Cllr Greef; Cllr Kinnera; Cllr Mgaidia; Cllr Nikoro; Cllr Panvekar;
Cllr Sovago; Cllr Susarla.
Absent: N/A.

The meeting was opened at 19:00 pm; Cllr Littlemore took the Chair.

186/23-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Standing Item)

To record any apologies for absence received prior to the meeting.

Apologies had been received, and accepted, from: Cllr Benedicic; Cllr Delip; Cllr Greef; Cllr Kinnera; Cllr Mgaidia; Cllr Nikoro; Cllr Panvekar; Cllr Sovago; Cllr Susarla.

It was noted that apologies had also been received from Cllr Warren-Green (SCDC); Cllr Bygott (SCDC); Anne Ainsworth (SCDC) and Michele Eidevik-Skinner (SCDC).

187/23-24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Standing Item)

a) *Councillors to declare any pecuniary or personal interest in any items on the agenda.*

b) *Councillors to declare any prejudicial interest in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chair if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation.*

Cllr Males declared an interest as member of the Northstowe Sports and Wellbeing Committee. This was considered not relevant to any specific item on the agenda.

Cllr Oluwasanya joined at 19:02; she had no declarations to make under item 187/23-24.

188/23-24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Standing Item)

a) *To adjourn the meeting for up to 15 mins. to allow members of the public, and Councillors declaring a prejudicial interest, to address the meeting in relation to business to be transacted at this meeting.*

b) *To reconvene the meeting.*

No member of the public wished to speak. The Chair reconvened the meeting.

189/23-24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS (Standing item)

To approve the minutes of the Full Council meeting of 28th November 2023 as a true record of the meeting (attached).

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, with 4 voting for and 2 abstaining, **to approve the minutes of the meeting of 28th November 2023 as a true record of that meeting.**

190/23-24 REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL WARD MEMBERS (Standing Item)

1) *To receive a report from Cambridgeshire C.C. Division Member Cllr F. Thompson (report, plus A14 replanting update report attached).*

No questions were raised. Cllr Thompson, present, provided the following updates to her report;

- The ramps on the bridges on the B1050 and A1307 near Bar Hill/A14, are soon to be subject of a TTRO (Temporary Prohibition of Through Traffic Order) so temporary repairs can take place whilst further structural research is being conducted.
 - The proposals for the Cambridgeshire County Council budget for the next financial year are to be consulted on; Cllr Thompson is to share a link to this survey.
- 2) *To receive a report from South Cambs D.C. Ward Member Cllr. N. Warren-Green (report attached).*
No questions were raised.
- 3) *To receive a report from South Cambs D.C. Ward Member Cllr. T. Bygott (report to follow - TBC).*
No report had been received. No questions were raised.

191/23-24 REPORT FROM SCDC'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (Standing Item)

To receive a report from South Cambs D.C.'s Phase 1 & 2 Community Development Officers (report attached).

No questions were raised.

192/23-24 NORTHSTOWE DELIVERY GROUP (Standing Item)

Minutes of the Northstowe Delivery Group meeting held on 16th November 2023 are to follow.

The Chair highlighted that a Northstowe Delivery Group meeting in December had been cancelled, and that therefore the draft minutes cannot yet be shared.

Following questions, Cllr Owen added that, following the recent SCDC Planning Committee where the application for the Permanent Community Centre was decided on, detailed conditions have been placed regarding parking systems related to this centre. Cllr Littlemore added that a separate meeting had also been held, exploring possible retail facilities options.

193/23-24 NTC STAFF REPORT (Standing Item)

To receive a report from the Town Clerk on staff activities (for period: Nov. '23) (attached).

No questions were raised. The Chair thanked staff for the coordination of a smooth Switch-on Event.

194/23-24 KICKSTART FUND PANEL (Standing Item)

No meeting held this month.

Noted.

195/23-24 BUDGET FINANCIAL YEAR 2024 - 2025

Recommended to Full Council by the Finance and Governance Committee, with further amendments made by RFO on instructions from the committee [Further to Finance and Governance Committee meeting 12th December 2023, item 60/23-24]:

- 1) *To receive the notification of Parish precept consultation (email and x2 documents shared with Cllrs).*

Noted.

- 2) *To receive a draft budget, with different options set out, for the financial year 2024 – '25 for the Town Council (draft budget options and associated documents attached).*

The Chair introduced the subject, highlighting that the budget proposals as discussed at this meeting stem from recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on 12th December, resulting in two budget options, the key difference being in different staffing scenarios to be considered under budget option 1 and budget option 2. The RFO was also tasked by the committee to provide one more precept calculation option (four scenarios therefore being presented for each of budget options 1 and 2), an additional scenario in which the NTC-element of the Council Tax for a Band D household is raised by around 10%.

He continued, mentioning that, following the summons the RFO had sent through to all Councillors updated information following recent receipt from SCDC of a recalculation of the tax base calculations on the back of queries raised on the original calculation. He highlighted that, as a result, a series of new budget and precept calculation options have been presented taking these new tax base calculations

into account; all other budget calculations have remained the same. It is this new set of proposals that is to be discussed under the subsequent subitems.

The Chair temporarily suspended the meeting at 19:20 and reopened the meeting at 19:25 pm.

3) *To consider the draft budget, including Earmarked Reserves and General Reserve.*

The budget was discussed in some detail; key points discussed;

- It was highlighted that there are several budget items where it is possible that there may be some underspend; examples highlighted include: Mayor's Chain; Station Road Verges; Noticeboards.
- It was pointed out that, under budget option 2 (with one member of staff rather than two new ones under budget option 1) there should normally also be some savings under 'IT, Hardware, Software and Support' and 'Telephone & Internet'.
- There was nevertheless some consensus that it would be better to stay on the safe side rather than having a very tight budget to work with.
- A question was raised whether the Council should set more monies aside for payroll software; the RFO answered that, in his opinion, for the foreseeable future at least until the central staffing team would grow bigger, this could be done in-house using free HMRC PAYE software and that currently no need for separate software or an external payroll service company is needed (and that therefore the relevant budget heading is set at £0) but that this could be revisited at the next budget round.
- It was observed that the £30,000 S106 contributions expected in the financial year would also be indexed, providing a small additional income to be expected.
- A discussion followed for the Town Council to consider, and to discuss with Homes England, the potential use of the additional 'Community Endowment' S106 funds to come to the Town Council over the next three financial years. Some initial suggestions made were that Christmas event-related costs as well as market-related costs could perhaps come out of this, or costs for new staff members more closely linked to phase 2. It was also mentioned that this would then also help ensuring that the Council's General Reserve stays healthy.
- In response to a question about youth work funding, the RFO explained that financial support for the Youth Bus has not been included in the budget as the Youth Bus is no longer coming to Northstowe since a successful Youth Café has restarted. He highlighted that in recent discussions with the Youth Hive and Romsey Mills it has been brought to his attention that youth work in Northstowe may possibly face a funding gap later on in the '24-'25 financial year, and that representatives of these organisations are to present to the Town Council at its Full Council meeting in January to set out their plans and what Council support is sought.

4) *To discuss and consider setting a Precept.*

In a discussion the following key points were raised;

- It was observed that the Council would need to dip in some of its General Reserve otherwise the precept would have to be raised so high that this would unlikely be welcomed by residents.
- There was nevertheless consensus that it would be necessary to raise the household contributions at least somewhat and thus the precept, considering the significant increase in expenditure proposed; this, primarily to ensure that there remains a healthy General Reserve at the end of the financial year 2024-2025, in line with official recommendations to keep between 3 and 12 months' expenditure as General Reserve.

5) *To decide on a budget.*

Following some further discussion, the Chair asked each Member which budget option they preferred; all agreed that budget option 2 is the most suitable for the Town Council, noting also that there may still be some underspend as noted under subitem 3.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the budget as proposed under budget option 2.**

6) *To decide on a Precept.*

Within the scenarios presented under budget option 2, a scenario somewhere between scenarios 2 and 3 was considered most suitable.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Males and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve to set a Precept request of £144,786.44; which is the equivalent of a £96.08 annual costs per band D equivalent household - or a £9.99 increase per band D-equivalent household against the '23-'24 precept, an annual increase (for band D properties) of 11.6%.**

7) *To approve a budget, precept, Earmarked Reserves and General Reserve for 2024-'25.*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve a budget, precept, Earmarked Reserves and General Reserve for 2024-'25, as agreed on.**

196/23-24 RECRUITMENT OF MARKET MANAGER

Recommended to Full Council by the Personnel Committee [Further to Full Council 31 Oct. '23, item 153/23-24(5) and Personnel Committee 5th Dec. '23, item 26/23-24]:

To receive and approve the following (draft) recruitment documents and to start recruitment as per the proposed Recruitment Timetable (all 7 documents are attached):

- i) Job Description;*
- ii) Person Specification;*
- iii) Application Form;*
- iv) Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form;*
- v) Job Advert;*
- vi) Recruitment Timetable;*
- vii) Proposal for advertising the position.*

Noted.

Cllr Bros Sabria proposed an amendment to the recommendation as provided by the Personnel Committee regarding the Interview Panel: although two Councillors from the Personnel Committee with the Clerk are to form the Interview Panel, there will be no member of the Market Development Working Group; she wished to put herself forward, as lead of that Working Group, to also join the Interview Panel.

It was proposed by Cllr Bros Sabria, seconded by Cllr Castelino and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to amend the 'Recruitment Timetable' document to include Cllr Bros Sabria on the Interview Panel.**

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Males and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the following recruitment documents and to start recruitment as per the proposed Recruitment Timetable (as amended):**

- i) Job Description;**
- ii) Person Specification;**
- iii) Application Form;**
- iv) Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form;**
- v) Job Advert;**
- vi) Recruitment Timetable;**
- vii) Proposal for advertising the position.**

197/23-24 NORTHSTOWE COMMUNITY LOUNGE

1) *To receive and discuss draft Terms of Reference for the Community Lounge Working Group (draft ToR attached).*

In a discussion, the following key points were raised for possible improvements to the document;

- Include clarity on policy for whether 18s are to be accompanied by their guardians;
- Further clarity on how activities are to be approved, and to ensure that activities would not contravene Council policies.

The Chair summarised the discussions as such: the draft Terms of Reference for the Community Lounge Working Group were welcomed with general endorsement from the Town Council received, but some further work is considered necessary to finalise this document.

The **Community Lounge Working Group was tasked** to update the draft Terms of Reference, taking the points raised in consideration, with an expectation that an updated version is to be presented to the next Full Council meeting.

- 2) To receive an update from the Community Lounge Working Group on outstanding action (FC meeting, 31st Oct. '23, item 154/23-24(1) re: creation of a management/lead plan for the year until end of October 2024.

Cllr Males mentioned that a list of leads until the end of May had been submitted to the Clerk, and that he will be supplied with further updates for the period thereafter. Noted.

198/23-24 SHREDDER AND LAMINATOR FOR OFFICE

Motion from NTC officers (motion paper attached; documents with quotes shared with Cllrs.)

- 1) To approve the purchase of a Shredder.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, to approve the purchase of a Shredder.

The Clerk was tasked to decide on the final option, choosing from one of the recommended options provided.

- 2) To approve the purchase of a Laminator.

Following a question on how the purchase of a laminator sits with the Council's Plastic-Free Pledge, the Clerk answered that use of a laminator will normally be restricted to laminating items such as promotional materials that can be reused again, and that he shall instruct all staff to try to avoid laminating for single-use purposes.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Bros Sabria and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, to approve the purchase of a Laminator.

The Clerk was tasked to decide on the final option, choosing from one of the recommended options provided.

199/23-24 COMMITTEE MEETINGS (Standing Item)

To receive minutes from the following committee meetings held:

- a) *Planning Committee, 14th November 2023 (minutes attached).*
- b) *Finance and Governance Committee, 14th November 2023 (minutes attached).*
- c) *Personnel Committee, 5th December 2023 (minutes to follow).*
- d) *Planning Committee, 12th December 2023 (minutes to follow).*
- e) *Finance and Governance Committee, 12th December 2023 (minutes to follow).*

Noted.

200/23-24 WORKING GROUPS (Standing Item)

To receive updates from Working Groups reporting to Full Council (where not already covered under other items on this agenda), from;

- a) *Community Lounge Working Group (leads: Cllr Delip and Cllr Males, taking in turns).*

No further updates provided.

- b) *Phase 1 Asset Transfer Opportunities Working Group (Sports Pavilion) (lead: Cllr Benedicic).*

The Working Group is hoping to bring something for consideration to a Full Council meeting soon.

- c) *Road Safety Working Group (leads: Cllr Sovago and Cllr Susarla together).*

No update provided.

201/23-24 UPDATES FROM OUTSIDE BODIES WITH NTC REPRESENTATION (Standing Item)

To receive minutes, or updates, from meetings of outside bodies with Northstowe TC representation;

- a) *19th Oct. '23: Northstowe Open Space and Landscape Steering Group – attended by Cllr Mgaidia (minutes attached).*
- a) *13th Nov. '23: Community Centre Management Board; attended by the Clerk (minutes shared with Cllrs.).*
- b) *14th Nov. '23: Sports Pavilion Management Board; attended by the Clerk (minutes shared with Cllrs).*
- c) *15th Nov. '23: Northstowe Faith Strategy Group; attended by Cllr Greef (minutes attached).*
- d) *16th Nov. '23: Northstowe Open Space and Landscape Steering Group; attended by Cllr Mgaidia (minutes to follow).*

- e) 6th Dec. '23: Sports Pavilion Management Board; no NTC attendance (redacted minutes shared with Cllrs.).
 - f) 11th Dec. '23: Community Centre Management Board; attended by the Clerk (minutes to follow).
 - g) 13th Dec. '23: Northstowe Community Networkers; no NTC representation (minutes to follow).
 - h) 14th Dec. '23: Northstowe Open Space and Landscape Steering Group – no NTC representation (minutes to follow)
 - i) 14th Dec. '23: Northstowe Support Partnership; attended by Cllr Males (minutes to follow).
- Noted.

202/23-24 UPCOMING MEETINGS OUTSIDE BODIES WITH NTC REPRESENTATION (Standing Item)

To note;

- a) Thu 21st Dec. '23, 11:30 – 12:30 (virtual – TBC): Northstowe Delivery Group.
- b) Wed 10th Jan. '24, 10:30 – 12:00 (in person): Sports Pavilion Board Meeting.
- c) Wed 10th Jan. '24, 13:00 – 14:30 (in person): Community Centre Management Board.
- d) Wed. 10th Jan. '24, 19:00 – 21:00 (in person): Northstowe Community Networkers.
- e) Thu. 11th Jan. '24, 10:00 – 12:00 (virtual): Northstowe Open Space and Landscape Steering Group.
- f) Wed 17th Jan. '24, 17:30 – 18:30 (in person): Northstowe Faith Strategy Group.
- g) Thu 18th Jan. '24, 11:30 – 12:30 (virtual): Northstowe Delivery Group.
- h) Wed 24th Jan. '24, 18:30 – 21:00 (in person): Northstowe Community Forum.

Noted. It was also noted that the Homes England Quarterly Parish and Town Council meetings are being reinstated and that a meeting has just been announced for 7th February 2024.

203/23-24 EVENTS WITH NTC INVOLVEMENT (Standing Item)

To note;

- a) Northstowe Arts, 'Lighting up Longest Night', 21/12/'23; Town Mayor to form part of judging panel.
- Noted.

204/23-24 DATES OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETINGS (Standing Item)

To note;

- Full Council meeting: Tue 30th January 2024 (7-9 pm); venue: The Cabin, Northstowe.
[Final versions of motions & papers to be received by 20/01 at the latest]
- For all Council meetings and annual meeting schedule, see www.northstowetowncouncil.gov.uk

Noted.

The meeting was closed at 20:34 pm.

Signed.....

Town Mayor

Date.....