

## NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL - FULL COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday **28th January 2025** at The Cabin, Northstowe

Members: 11  
Quorum: 5 Members.  
Present: 7 Members: Cllr Littlemore (Mayor); Cllr Delip (Deputy Mayor); Cllr Benedicic; Cllr Bros Sabría; Cllr Owen; Cllr Oluwasanya (from 19:17); Cllr Susarla (from 19:02).  
Town Clerk; Deputy Clerk; Assets & Estates Manager  
9 Members of the public.  
Apologies: Cllr Castelino; Cllr Kinnera; Cllr Greef; Cllr Mgaidia.  
Absent: N/A

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

### **195/24-25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** (Standing Item)

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

Apologies had been received and accepted from: Cllr Kinnera; Cllr Castelino; Cllr Greef; Cllr Mgaidia.

Apologies had also been received from SCDC Cllr Warren-Green; (SCDC); Cllr Bygott; (SCDC).

### **196/24-25 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.*

No interests were declared.

Cllr Susarla joined the meeting at 19:02 pm; they had no declarations to make.

### **197/24-25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Standing Item)

*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 (for up to 15 minutes in total; maximum 3 minutes per person).*

There was a representative from Sustainable Northstowe who informed the council that they will be planting an additional 25 trees on their community planting day on the 8<sup>th</sup> March; they requested help in promoting the event.

A question was raised around the maturity of the trees. It was explained that these will be fairly young and with community involvement and ability for the public as part of a new 'adopt a tree' scheme to be started the hope is that the trees will be looked after by the community/adoptees of the trees. The Chair thanked them for their contribution.

### **198/24-25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETING(S)** (Standing item)

1) *To approve the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Full Council meeting minutes as a true record of the meeting.*

It was proposed by Cllr. Littlemore, seconded by Cllr. Owen and **RESOLVED**, with 4 voting for and 2 abstaining, **to approve the 26<sup>th</sup> November Full Council meeting minutes as a true record of the meeting.**

2) *To approve the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024 Full Council meeting minutes as a true record of the meeting.*

It was proposed by Cllr. Littlemore, seconded by Cllr. Benedicic and **RESOLVED**, with 3 voting for and 3 abstaining, **to approve the 17<sup>th</sup> December Full Council meeting minutes as a true record of the meeting.**

### **199/24-25 REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBERS** (Standing Item)

1) *To receive a report from Cambridgeshire C.C. Division Member Cllr F. Thompson.*

*NB: this item was at the meeting discussed following item 205/24-25:*

- A question was raised about any further updates about Stagecoach regarding changes to zoning made. Cllr Thompson informed the Council that Keepmoat and Homes England have written to Stagecoach and CPCA, On the back of this Cllr Thompson had had a meeting with the MP, CPCA and Homes England. The Travel Group is also to restart and Stagecoach will be invited to those meetings once arranged; the Town Council is requested to join those meetings. Stagecoach have also been invited to the Northstowe Community Forum.
- Devolution White Paper: Town and Parish Councils may potentially end up with more work; Cllr Thompson suggested obtaining advice through CAPALC.
- Teams AI: Cllr Thompson suggested this could potentially help with minute creations, reducing time input needs.

2) *To receive a report from South Cambs D.C. Ward Member Cllr. N. Warren-Green.*

Noted. No questions were raised.

3) *To receive a report from South Cambs D.C. Ward Member Cllr. T. Bygott.*

Noted. No questions were raised.

### **200/24-25 REPORT FROM SCDC'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS** (Standing Item)

1) *To receive a report from South Cambs D.C.'s Northstowe Community Development Officers.*

The Community Development Officer present provided a couple of updates:

- Voi e-scooter extension plans: locations are being looked at in Phase 1 and Phase 2 and that there is a desire for as many locations as possible within Northstowe. Intention is to start this as soon as possible.
- LEL- London-Edinburgh-London cycling event: this will be happening 3-5 August; 24/7, 2000 cyclists, volunteers are needed and the event will be stopping at Northstowe Secondary College. More information to follow.

**201/24-25 NORTHSTOWE DELIVERY GROUP** (Standing Item)

*Item deferred from Full Council meeting 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024, item 181/24-25:*

- 1) *To receive minutes of the Northstowe Delivery Group meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024.*

Noted. No questions were raised.

**202/24-25 KICKSTART FUND PANEL** (Standing Item)

*No Kickstart Fund Panel meeting has been held recently.*

Noted.

**203/24-25 NTC STAFF REPORT** (Standing Item)

- 1) *To receive a report from the Clerk on NTC staff activities (period: Dec. 2024).*

Noted. No questions were raised.

**204/24-25 CO-OPTION OF TOWN COUNCILLORS**

*Further to Full Council meeting 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024, item 186/24-25(3):*

- 1) *To receive a report with information obtained from written applications received from prospective candidates for the office of Town Councillor.*

Noted.

Cllr. Oluwasanya joined the meeting at 19:17 pm; they had no declarations to make.

- 2) *To receive presentations (max. 2 mins. each) from prospective candidates who are present at the meeting, setting out why they wish to join the Town Council and how they see themselves adding value to the Town Council's work with and for the community. NB: All eligible candidates have been invited to join this meeting.*

Five candidates presented themselves.

- 3) *To vote on co-option for Councillors, to fill the existing three vacancies, in accordance with the Town Council's Co-Option Policy. It is recommended that voting is carried out using ballot papers (at Chair's discretion).*

Following 2 rounds of voting by ballot paper, the Chair declared that all 3 vacancies were filled, with three candidates having received an absolute clear majority of the votes: Ian Hunter, Graeme Hodgson and Joe Birr-Pixton.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to appoint I. Hunter, G.**

**Hodgson and J. Birr-Pixton as Town Councillors.**

- 4) *For candidates voted in and, if present and having accepted the Council's position offer, to be invited by the Chair to join the remainder of the meeting as Town Councillor.*

The Chair congratulated them on their new position as Town Councillors and invited them to join the remainder of the meeting. All three voted in Cllr Hunter, Cllr Hodgson and Cllr Birr-Pixton joined the remainder of the meeting as Town Councillors.

**205/24-25 BUDGET FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026**

*Item includes decision-items deferred from Finance and Governance Committee meeting 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025; NB: The budget proposals have been updated following latest recommendations by the Finance and Governance Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025:*

- 1) *To receive the notification of Parish precept consultation.*

- 2) *To receive from the RFO an updated draft budget for the Town Council, for the financial year 2025-2026.*

*NB: Relevant, background information has also been shared with Cllrs for the Council's consideration: Paperwork from the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Personnel Committee meeting (updated 5-year staffing plan proposals; staffing changes proposed for 25-26). A draft version of related financial projections for management of the Unity Centre was previously shared with Cllrs for the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 Finance & Governance Committee – final versions of this information is shared with Cllrs as part of item 206/24-25.*

The RFO introduced the subject, explaining that the current budget and precept-setting proposals follow three rounds of input received from the Finance and Governance Committee at their November, December and January meetings, and that the Finance and Governance Committee one week earlier did not recommend the latest proposals but deferred a final decision-making to the current Full Council meeting.

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

Many different items on the budget were discussed, including;

- Costs associated with potential future management of the Unity Centre, including associated staffing, insurance and legal costs; some concerns were raised over the high staffing costs as a percentage of total expenditure. Staffing

needs, level and types of staffing needs and division of roles including between current and new staff members, for managing the Unity Centre, were also discussed.

- Market delivery costs and how to reduce the gap between projected income and expenditure;
- Hope CIC Mobile Food Hub performance and the need to review this before approval after trial period;
- S106 request to balance the books and what this is to cover;

The following changes were made against the budget as proposed by the RFO:

- The amount set aside for a Mayoral chain was amended, decreased by £500;
- A total of £3,000 was taken out of the Community Grant Fund budget line and moved into 'Youthwork' heading.

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

Different options for Precept amounts were discussed; a lower amount was suggested at 5% and what this would cost: 5% would be an increase of £4.80 a year and 10% would result in an increase of £9.61 per Band D household per annum. A potential need to increase between 10%-15% in future years was also mentioned in order to achieve what may be required for NTC to achieve in the future, considering Northstowe parish started off with a low precept in 2021, lower than most surrounding parishes.

It was discussed that communication to residents around the precept and by how much it would be increased was going to be important so that the residents were informed on how the percentage increase was arrived at what the Council is aiming to achieve with this and how this presents good value for the community.

5) *To decide on a budget.*

Following a lengthy discussion the Council **agreed** on a budget for the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 that shows a projected expenditure of £286,105.96 and a projected income of £273,988.11. The income will include Earmarked Reserves expected and the Council decided to use some of its General Reserve to balance the books.

It was **agreed** that the proposed new staff roles, indicatively named as 'Engagement Officer' and Unity Centre Officer' in the budget, are to be dependent on first securing a £60,000 S106 contribution as part of the agreement with SCDC for taking on the Unity Centre management.

6) *To decide on a Precept.*

The Town Council **agreed** to increase the precept request to a total of £169,586.96 for the next financial year, 1st April 2025 - 31st March 2026; this means that the Band-D equivalent for the Town Council's element of households' Council Tax bill will rise to £105.69 per annum, an increase of £9.61 (10.0%) on the previous year.

This was deemed necessary, considering a steep increase in expenditure expected associated with the Town Council potentially taking on the management of the Permanent Community Centre ('Unity Centre') early 2026, once built by Kier on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, with 9 voting for and 1 abstaining, **to increase the precept request to a total of £169,586.96 for the next financial year.**

7) *To approve a budget, precept, Earmarked Reserves and General Reserve for the financial year 2025-2026.*

It was proposed by Cllr. Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, with 9 voting for and 1 abstention, **to approve a budget, with Earmarked Reserves and General Reserve projections and a Precept request for a total of £169,586.96 for the financial year 2025-2026.**

The Chair suspended Standing Order 3x for the remainder of the meeting or until at least the discussions had finished around the draft Business Plan for the Unity Centre, item 206/24-25.

*To resolve to move into a closed session and exclude the public and press, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, due to the sensitive and/or commercial nature of business to be discussed under item 206/24-25.*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to move into a closed session and exclude the public and press, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, due to the sensitive and/or commercial nature of business to be discussed under item 206/24-25.**

## **206/24-25 BUSINESS PLAN FOR UNITY CENTRE**

*Further to Full Council meeting 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024, item 164/24-25:*

- 1) *To receive a business plan for a potential Town Council management of the Unity Centre (business plan with two associated spreadsheets detailing financial projections and other considerations shared with Cllrs.).*
- 2) *To discuss the findings and recommendations in the business plan.*

The Assets & Estates Manager introduced the draft Business Plan and invited feedback.

In a discussion various items were raised, including;

- The income predictions in the Business Plan were deemed to be on the conservative side. More optimistic income predictions were requested, with also increases in potential income sources to be considered including other revenue streams such as more commercial bookings of e.g. training / conferences; and additional grant funding opportunities.
- Comments were also made around the current Business Plan figures being based on data originally gathered from SCDC on their Unity Centre calculations at the beginning of the process: more potential in new building to be explored with potentially larger client base, and to be reflected as a more ambitious financial overview.

- Income from commercial café operator to be included in financial predictions; Consideration also to be given to charge ourselves in the financial overview for office space and room hire. Staffing costs also to be included in expenditure overviews.
- NNDR costs as well as annual insurance cost were considered to potentially be too high.
- Staffing costs were discussed and how the staff would be utilised; staffing model to demonstrate better how it supports the operation of the building, especially for opening and closing the building. A question was raised whether volunteers/Community group leaders could be key holders as they are now at The Cabin; this was answered that the Business Plan proposals are based on a model moving away from that model, as it could have liability and insurance implications.

3) *To decide to submit the business plan, together with any further information South Cambridgeshire District Council may need (awaiting further details) to South Cambridgeshire District Council, for their consideration.*  
 It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen, and **RESOLVED**, unanimously **to defer item 206/24-25 to February’s Council meeting.**

The Assets and Estates Manager was tasked to update the Business Plan, taking the Councillors’ recommendations into account.

**To resolve to end the closed session.**

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to resolve to end the closed session.**

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Benedicic and **RESOLVED**, unanimously **to defer the rest of the agenda (items 207/24-25 to 221/24-25) to the next Full Council meeting in February.**

**222/24-25 DATES OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETINGS** (Standing Item)

- Full Council: Tue 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025 (7-9 pm); The Cabin, Northstowe.  
*[Final versions of motions & papers to be received by 15/02 at the latest].*

For all Council meetings and annual meeting schedule, see [www.northstowetowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.northstowetowncouncil.gov.uk)  
 The meeting was closed at 21:42 pm.  
 Noted.

Signed.....

Town Mayor

Date.....