

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF ST NEOT PARISH  
COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2023 AT 8PM IN THE  
COMMITTEE ROOM, ST NEOT INSTITUTE, ST NEOT**

**Present:** Councillors H Bunt (Chair), C Smith, D Glanville, M Rowe, N Ball, T Hooper and G Rogers

John Body, Mim Mc Cormack, Mark Rodwell  
Sue Blaxley, Clerk and RFO.

The Chair opened the meeting at 8pm. He confirmed that no one was recording the meeting.

**Public Participation**

John Body spoke on behalf of the Scouts. He said that he opposed the use of the pavilion for anything other than as a community facility. He explained that the scouts, beavers and cubs need to meet in a village location in a suitable building with adequate storage. He said that, currently, there is a lack of suitable alternative facilities in the village that meet these criteria. He said that the safety of the participants, helpers and parents must be considered. Councillor G Rogers asked John Body why Cott Yard would not be suitable. John Body said that the space in Cott Yard is small and not as central to the village as the pavilion and he would need to view the space to ascertain if it met the specifications required. The Chairman said that the space in Cott Yard is the same as in the pavilion. Mark Rodwell said that the chapel school room could possibly be used by the scouts and there is storage in that building too. John Body explained that the beavers, cubs and scouts could not all meet in the chapel schoolroom and that it is not an ideal location. He said that the three groups currently meet on a Thursday evening – the beavers in the chapel school room and the cubs, followed by the scouts, in the pavilion. Councillor T Hooper asked John Body what he would like to see for the scouts, in terms of a building, going forward. He said that he would welcome a more useful, practical building than the pavilion as the pavilion is noisy and does not have cooking facilities. He said that, ideally, he would like a purpose-built scout hut. Councillor T Hooper asked if such a building was forthcoming, whether a partly shared space would be acceptable. John Body said this would not be a problem

Mark Rodwell read out the following report, on behalf of the Village Shop Steering Group:

The Companies have raised issues about Cott Yard. These include the need to have a waste bin and a delivery receptacle located outside of the shop. Also, given the low ceilings and the need to have smaller, but extra refrigerators, additional heat will be created and therefore extractors will need to be in operation 24 hours a day. This is likely to create a constant disturbance in the centre of the village. Company A has suggested that the pavilion could be used to overcome these issues.

The Steering Group are sensitive to the fact that the pavilion is used once a week by the Scouts during school terms, and on occasion by others for village events and

parties. The Scouts also have a store next to the pavilion. Furthermore, the Post Office use the pavilion 3 times a week.

A number of people including some parish councillors have suggested that the pavilion could have an extension built (subject to planning), to create an improved community facility. By utilising the existing pavilion and an extension, it would be possible to create a permanent shop, plus a tea or function room and a dedicated Scouts Hut, with storage. In the short term the Scouts would need alternative accommodation and consideration will need to be given regarding the PO. There are other spaces available in the village to support or host events and parties in the short term.

The Steering Group need to have formally appointed a Company (on behalf of the Parish Council) within the next month, in order to ensure they have time to mobilise their business and be ready to open a shop by 26th August. Furthermore, a planning application needs to be submitted as soon as possible, so that grants can be applied for as we don't want to miss out on the 2023/24 funding streams or this would set us back 12 months.

The Steering Group therefore asks the parish council to consider the options to resolve the issues raised by the Companies, and make a decision on how we should proceed without creating any undue time delays.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors T Thrussell, A Tamblyn and H Webb.

### **2. Declaration of interest in items on the agenda**

None. Councillor T Hooper said that, as she has no direct relationship with anyone involved, she was not required to declare an interest. Councillor N Ball questioned Councillor T Hooper's decision regarding this matter. Councillor M Rowe asked Councillor N Ball whether he should declare an interest given his wife's involvement with the scouts. Councillor N Ball said that as his wife was involved with the beavers, and they meet in the chapel school room, he was not required to declare an interest. Councillor T Hooper questioned Councillor N Ball's decision regarding this matter.

### **3. Village Shop Project**

#### **To receive and consider matters arising relating to the Village Shop Project**

Councillor T Hooper explained that Company A would like to run a village shop but have concerns about using Cott Yard and have indicated that it is not a viable position, even in the short term. She said that their main concerns relate to the absence of outside, secure storage for deliveries when the shop is closed, the lack of a refuse facility and the need to have an extraction system which will operate 24 hours a day which may lead to noise disturbance in the centre of the village.

Councillor N Ball asked if there has been any interest shown in running a community shop. Councillor T Hooper said that the desire from the community to participate is very low and that it probably does not offer a long term, sustainable solution. She said that the key to a long-term solution for a shop is capacity in that other activities, such as a parcel collection service, a Post Office and tea room, are required to support the revenue stream and for this, the correct infrastructure is needed. She said that use of the pavilion, as a temporary solution, will allow Company A to build up those revenue streams. She said that the pavilion has a higher ceiling than Cott Yard so refrigeration and freezers will be easier to accommodate and that fresh produce and newspapers could be displayed outside. She said that central shelving could be accommodated in the pavilion. Councillor D Glanville said that the parish council has accepted the termination of the lease for Cott Yard and has offered one of the suites as a temporary shop. Councillor T Hooper said that the interviews with the interested companies have demonstrated that the suite in Cott Yard is not suitable for a temporary shop. Councillor M Rowe said that the shop needs to be sustainable for the community for the future.

Councillor C Smith said that he is in favour of a shop in the village. He said that the survey carried out by the Shop Steering Group identified the goods that people would like to see in the shop: dairy, fruit and vegetables, postal services and a bakery. He said that the identification of other products being needed in quantity in the shop, such as meat, was minimal so questioned the need for large fridges and freezers. He said that if a large retail business operates from the village, it will result in a large influx of vehicles and people and could result in anti-social behaviour. He questioned whether the village wants a large retail business operating from the village. He said that the playing field is a recreational area and there is insufficient space for such a large footfall.

Councillor T Hooper explained that refrigeration is needed for a whole range of stock and that a range of stock is required to enable a viable business to operate.

Councillor N Ball said that the village wants a small shop for small purchases, such as newspapers and milk. He said that the parish council has offered a suite in Cott Yard and this should be used as a temporary shop. He said that the scouts have used the pavilion for many years. He said that the parish council has given up an income from Cott Yard to accommodate a temporary shop. Councillor C Smith said that, whilst the existing tenants did ask for their tenancy to be relinquished early, the parish council could have forced them to stay until its expiration date on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024. He said that, following the site visit by the Shop Steering Group and rumours in the village, he considers that the tenants were forced to say they wanted to relinquish their tenancy early.

Councillor C Smith said that consideration should be given as to how the parish council can enable Cott Yard to work as a shop in the short term. He suggested that an extraction system may be able to be installed and that subject to obtaining permission from the archivists, their parking space could be used for a refuse bin and some secure outside storage. Furthermore, he suggested that part of the archive could be used for storage by the shop. He said that suites in Cott Yard will soon be empty and they should be used. Councillor D Glanville said that the upstairs suite in Cott Yard could be used for storage.

Councillor N Ball said that a suite in Cott Yard has been offered to be used as a temporary shop and that prospective tenants should work with this space and, in the longer term, seek an alternative building of a more permanent nature. Councillor C Smith said that if the shop is accommodated in the short term in Cott Yard, it will enable the parish council and the Village Shop Steering Group to look at the longer-term options. He said that the pavilion is a community and recreational facility.

Councillor M Rowe said that the parish council must look at the long-term future that is right for the community and that all options must be embraced. He said that if Company A is not accommodated, we will be left with a community shop.

Councillor N Ball reiterated the view that Cott Yard should be used as a shop in the short term so that a more permanent solution can be discussed. He said that promises regarding a permanent solution cannot be made to any company as there are too many variables, including funding and planning permission. He said that the scouts cannot use Cott Yard as it is unsafe for the children in the yard.

Councillor M Rowe said that the suite in Cott Yard is not suitable for a shop and there must be an alternative location for the scouts and cubs to use for one night a week. He said that if the pavilion is used as a temporary shop, the parish council can work with the other groups involved to find them alternative premises in the short term. Councillor T Hooper said that parishioners do not consider that Cott Yard is suitable for a retail business and there is an alternative facility in the playing field. She said that the parish council could work with the current users to facilitate the use of the pavilion as a temporary shop.

Councillor D Glanville said that Cott Yard will soon be vacant and that this building should be used as a temporary shop. Councillor G Rogers said that Cott Yard has been offered for use as a shop and that using the pavilion as a temporary shop will take a lot away from the community. He said that he does not understand why company A requires so much refrigeration and freezer capacity. Councillor C Smith said that he had no further comment to make.

The Chairman said that the options are to change the terms and conditions for the use of Cott Yard as a temporary shop or to work with other bodies who use the pavilion and use that building as a temporary shop. It was proposed by Councillor N Ball and seconded by Councillor C Smith that the pavilion is not offered as a site for a temporary shop. Four councillors voted in favour of this proposal and three against. The proposal was therefore carried.

It was proposed by Councillor D Glanville and seconded by Councillor G Rogers that the parish council will work with Company A to alleviate their concerns regarding using Cott Yard as a temporary shop through the installation of a ventilation system, the use of parking spaces for storage and refuse (subject to the deeds and the planning permission and consent of the current users) and storage in the upstairs suite (when that suite becomes available). Five councillors voted in favour of the proposal and two against. The proposal was therefore carried.

Councillor T Hooper said that she wanted to highlight the risks of this decision, namely that a ventilation system may present a noise issue and that if Company A refuses this offer, there will be no commercial shop in the village.

The Chairman said that a meeting with Company A and the parish council might be a way forward.

#### **4. Date of next meeting**

**To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting which will be on Wednesday 14th June 2023.**

The next meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 commencing at 7:30pm in St Neot Institute.

There was no further business and the meeting was closed at 9.50 pm.