

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday January 14th 2025 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall

Councillors Present: Don Saunders - Chairman, Peter Bishop, Tony Bridges, Tina Cruz, Keith Gilbert, Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn, Tomos Hutchings, Tina Kiddell, Graham Martin, Kathryn Stallard, Gillian Tarrant.

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

2 members of the public present for the meeting up to item 6.

1. NO APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on December 10th 2024 were accepted as a true record.

3.2 Updates from the meeting held on November 26th if not agenda items (noted in the agenda pack):

- Wayland Hall heating remedial works to be undertaken on 15.01.25
- Wayland Hall gutters were cleared the end of December

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the Town Council on December 11th and on Christmas Day visited Thorpe Lodge, Dorrington House and the Sports Centre where a dinner was offered to residents.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the Town Council on December 11th, the Food Hub Christmas celebration on December 19th and the HR meeting on January 10th.

4.3 Clerks Report

Written report presented in Councillors Agenda Pack with verbal update given.

Update on High Street Bus Shelters

The contractor took the old solar panels off the bus shelters in the High Street for reuse on the shelter outside the closed 'Boots' store, but they are unable to be reused. The contractors are waiting for a solar RTI unit to be delivered and then they can use the new panels to power everything.

The company will be approached regarding why the solar panels which were removed cannot be reused.

Church Walk bollards

The same contractor was asked about solar bollards with lighting for Church Walk. However their advice is that as the trees cast a significant amount of shade certainly during the summer, and there is no option for an open South facing spot for a set of panels with a battery storage unit, solar bollards may not be suitable. Other alternatives are being investigated.

Co-option

Two applications received to fill the one vacancy on the Town Council.

The two applicants will be invited to attend for interview on the 28.01.25 prior to the Town Council meeting (6.30pm start).

Museum

The Museum will host the launch of Andy Reids new Watton book on Saturday Feb. 1st, in the Council Chamber.

Update from Events and Marketing Officer on VE Day 2025

Plans are being made for Sunday 11th May 2025 to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. The aim will be to re-create the atmosphere of a traditional 'Street Party' with food, music and entertainment for children and families. The event will be held at Watton Sports Centre.

Waste bin for the Wayland Fields new housing estate.

A request has been made by a resident for a litter/dog bin at Waylands Fields.

Recommendation is that the Town Council considers adopting a policy re. requests for new bins as other requests have been received but not acted on and at present no allowance has been made in the budget for purchase of bins.

Youth Provision Meeting

Cllr Hutchings suggested setting up a meeting to make contacts and gather information relating to the provision of youth services in the town. However Councillors felt the Council is not the most appropriate body to call such a meeting but that should another organisation wish to do so the Council would be willing to attend. Cllrs Hutchings and Bridges (Youth Lead Councillor) will continue to look at how the Council can liaise with other service providers.

Tree Risk Assessment

The annual Tree Risk Assessment undertaken in December 2025 has indicated two trees should be felled at Loch Neaton and some other works are needed before the next assessment. The Council will liaise with the Loch Neaton Committee regarding maintenance of the trees as agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

4.4 Lead Councillors Reports:

Cllr Tarrant reported that a further £75 had been raised through a raffle held at the 50th year of the Town Council celebration. This gives a total of £296 for the Mayors Charities from donations given for the 2024 Festive Market.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2 members of the public were present to talk about Watton and Saham Flood Action Group and how the group hopes the Council may be able to support the group moving forward.

6. WATTON AND SAHAM FLOOD ACTION GROUP

A report from the Flood Action Group had been circulated within the agenda pack for the meeting.

The current Chairman of the group is withdrawing from active involvement in the Group from 1st April this year. The Group therefore decided to ask the Town Council and Saham Toney Parish Council if they would jointly take on responsibility for the work of the Group. There are already councillors involved – Cllr Gilbert from the Town Council and Cllrs Creek and Freeman from the Parish Council. There are also 4 residents involved who have been flooded or are at risk of flooding.

The Town Council felt it should wait until Saham Toney Parish Council has met before any decision is made but there is a willingness to support the Group moving forward. However, concern was raised regarding whether the Office staff would have time to become involved.

This matter will be an agenda item again once Saham Toney Parish Council has been approached.

Liz Witcher was given a round of applause in appreciation of the work she has undertaken as Chairman of Watton and Saham Flood Action Group.

7. FINANCE

7.1 The draft minutes from the Finance Committee Meeting held on 12.12.24 were noted.

7.2 Recommendations from the Finance Committee Meeting held on 12.12.24:

- i. **It was resolved** not to subscribe to Norfolk Association of Local Councils in 2025.
- ii. **It was resolved** to invest a further £150000 with CCLA Investment Management Limited.

7.3 WAYLAND HALL WINDOWS

It was resolved to accept the quote of £8480 to remove and fit 5 new hopper type windows in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall.

8. BUDGET AND PRECEPT REQUEST

It was resolved to accept the 2025/26 budget as presented. The budget need is £543250 and will be met through income, drawing some money from general reserves and the precept.

The 4 year financial plan will be revised accordingly.

It was resolved to request a precept of £452213 for 2025/26.

The Council will want to keep within the budget allocations set and large projects will need to be funded from general reserves.

9. DONATION REQUEST

It was resolved to donate £5000 to the Benjamin Foundation as applied for to support the running of the Watton Youth and Young Carers Group at the Charlotte Harvey Centre.

10. TOWN CALENDAR

Much discussion took place regarding whether to produce a Watton Town Council calendar or any other promotional material to either sell or give away. The Events & Marketing Officer will be asked to produce a further report regarding PR merchandise and raising money through sale of promotional goods.

11. s106 FUNDING

Council ratified its support of s106 funding to be used to fund refurbishment of toilets at Watton Sports Centre.

12. MUSEUM FOR WATTON LEASE

It was resolved, that following minor clarification, to accept the letter of engagement from Birketts solicitors regarding acting for the Town Council to renew the Museum4Watton lease of part of Wayland Hall.

13. LOYAL COMPANY OF TOWN CRIERS

It was resolved to pay the membership fee of £35 to the Loyal Company of Town Criers.

14. CAR PARKS

It was resolved to engage Birketts solicitors to act for the Town Council in the lease discussion for the car parks in the town.

15. CLOCK TOWER

It was resolved to accept the quote of £545 plus VAT received to carry out the following relating to the clock tower:

- site inspection of the tower
- review of the present quinquennial survey
- production of a list of works and discussion of the list with a view to producing a minor schedule of works.

16. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

It was resolved to hold the Annual Town meeting 2025 on Tuesday 15th April at Watton Sports Centre.

17. BOUNDARY COMMISSION

It was resolved to respond to the Boundary Commission recommendations relating to proposals to ward boundaries in the Watton area stating that the Town Council does not accept that the suggested changes will give good or proper representation for residents of Watton.

18. PLANNING

18.1 Removal of Chimney Stack (above and below roof level), 1 Windsor Court, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6XB

No comments

18.2 Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Change of use from Commercial, Business and Service (Use Class E) to Dwellinghouses (Use Class C3), Breckland House Norwich Road, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6JT

No comments

18.3 Two storey side and rear extensions and extension partly over the existing garage and utility to add a new lounge and three more bedrooms, 2 St Marys Close, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6DS

No comments

18.4 Upgrade of existing site (replacement and additional antennas), and associated ancillary development, Watton Water Tower Lovell Gardens, Watton, Norfolk, IP25 6HT

No comments

18.5 Convert garage to annexe, including alterations, 47 Priory Road, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6PQ

No comments

18.6 Retrospective application for the installation of 2no. new condensers to the rear elevation, Barclays Bank, 56 High Street, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6AF

No comments

19. RESOLUTION PASSED TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS to consider confidential staffing matters

19.1 Update from Chairman of HR Committee

The Chairman of the HR Committee gave a verbal report of the HR meeting held on 10.01.25. It was noted that a training workshop for all staff has been booked for Feb. 13th 2025.