

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday 26th November 2024 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall

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

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED AND APPROVED from

Tina Cruz, Catherine Turley-Long and Steve Turley-Long.

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on November 12th 2024 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3.2 Updates from items raised at the meeting on November 12th 2024:

- 19.11.24 High Street clock is still not quite right! Awaiting advice from repairers who are scheduled to visit on 09.12.24. It is possible staff need official training relating to managing the clock but the Council will consider all possibilities once a report has been compiled which will be submitted to Full Council at the meeting scheduled for Feb. 25th 2025.
- Internal Auditor to visit on 27.11.24.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman has:

14th November – attended the Finance Committee Meeting

17th November – started First Watton Junior Fun Run

21st November – judged Chamber of Commerce Shop Window Competition

24th November – attended the Town Council Christmas Activity Afternoon held at the Charlotte Harvey Trust Community Centre

25th November – Met with officers from Breckland Council about car parks. – The meeting was very convivial and successful in initially starting the conversation regarding the possibility of Watton Town Council taking over management of the Breckland Council owned car parks in the town. The Council was in agreement that it would like to continue these talks.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman has:

24th November – attended the Town Council Christmas Activity Afternoon held at the Charlotte Harvey Trust Community Centre

25th November – attended HR Committee Meeting

4.3 District Councillor's Report /4.4 County Councillors Report

- District and County Councillor Claire Bowes had submitted apologies for not attending the meeting but a written report received from her had been forwarded to Cllrs prior to the meeting, with a copy filed with these minutes.
- District Councillor Keith Gilbert has attended an event called the Link. MIND, the Job Centre and Citizens advice were all under one roof - it gave people the opportunity to meet with different organisations in the same visit, which was really positive.
- Information has been shared regarding a possible devolution deal for the Eastern area.
- District Councillor Tina Kiddell informed the meeting that there has been a problem with the street lights in the Kittel Close car park. This is being investigated further.

A youth worker who works with a group to put on plays regarding awareness of county drug lines has approached Tina Kiddell to enquire about visiting the Council to discuss whether the Council could support her initiative.

4.5 Clerks Report

Staffing

It has been a busy time within the Office with event preparation and staff absence due to training, sickness and annual leave.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have undertaken two days of training with another session still to be undertaken. Further training may be scheduled to include all staff after Christmas.

No staff meeting has taken place recently due to the training schedule but meetings will commence again and will follow the agreed pattern to be held on the Weds. after each Full Council meeting.

Thetford Road Allotments

Nothing further has been heard from the solicitors re. the Thetford Road Allotment site but a meeting has been scheduled with the owner of the site.

Car Parks

An Expression of Interest re. the Town Council taking over management of the town car parks has been submitted to Breckland Council (BC). Meeting held with Breckland Officers 25.11.14, response from BC awaited.

Town Councillors will have an opportunity to speak with Breckland Councillors on 04.12.24.

Meeting with Cllrs 04.12.24 is to be held at Elizabeth House Dereham 5pm-6.30pm.
Cllrs who have indicated they plan to attend: DS, TK, TH.

Breckland Council is also holding public consultation events across the district re. the introduction of car parking charges and Officers will be present in Adcocks in Watton on 27.11.24 11:00 - 19:00.

Middle Street

Cllr Hutchings and the Clerk attended a Teams meeting 19.11.14 re. Middle Street and were present at the Middle Street consultation event held at Wayland Hall on 26.11.24.

50th Celebration

The Council is to hold a small event on 11.12.24 to celebrate the 50 years of the Town Council. Invites are being sent to past and present Councillors and staff.

4.6 Reports from Lead Councillors

Market Lead Councillor

The Market Lead Councillor has attended a TEAMS meeting and subsequent invite-only drop-in session held in Wayland Hall re. the proposed pedestrianisation of Middle Street; the market will be affected but it is likely to also reap the most rewards from the project. Feedback received from the drop-in was enough to action from, but more diverse feedback would be appreciated.

A copy of the map fitted with the new proposed design for Middle Street is available for circulation.

There are now up to ten stalls on the Wednesday Market, this is double the end of year goal.

It was noted that the Town Council needs a resources policy, to include use of the market gazebos.

Wayland Partnership

Cllr Hutchings attended the recent Wayland Partnership meeting and once further information has been collated a report will be shared.

Noted that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) owned building on Church Walk is being looked at as the MOD is looking for evidence to actually prove ownership.

Festive Market WTC

The Town Council went above and beyond in keeping people safe by taking the difficult decision to cancel the 2024 Festive Market. Staff worked hard in order to cancel the event. It was suggested that, for the future, an events cancellation policy will be compiled.

It was noted that the Council still holds a lot of tombola donations given for the Festive Market event. Councillors and staff will look at ways the gifts can be used, or possibly returned. Suggestions included holding a raffle at the 50th celebration or at a possible Mayors Civic Reception.

It was stressed that a clear message should be shared with staff about how much the Council appreciate the work done by the staff.

5. WORKS IN PROGRESS

The Works in Progress list was noted.

5.1 Memorial bench

The decision made on 14.05.24 to return a bench to Memorial Garden, to be sited in the grass adjacent to the pavement, was confirmed.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public present.

7. FINANCE

7.1 Payments for November 2024 were approved for payment as on the list presented prior to the meeting, with the addition of invoices for the Wayland Times of £250, Breckland Council signage £196.20 and £300 for the p.a. system for the Remembrance Parade.

7.2 The draft minutes from the Finance Committee held on 14.11.24 were noted.

7.3 Recommendations from the Finance Committee

- i. **It was resolved to** accept the works to the heating controls as recommended in the Wayland Hall Report to be commissioned at a cost of £1975 plus VAT
- ii. **It was resolved to** commission the 2024 annual service of the gas boiler and associated equipment at Wayland Hall at a cost of £670 plus VAT
- iii. **It was resolved to** enter into a three year annual contract for service of the heating control panel at Wayland Hall at a cost of £945 plus VAT p.a.
- iv. **It was resolved to** seek quotes for other works as identified in the report from the heating contractor
- v. **It was resolved to** accept the tenders for 2025/26/27 grounds maintenance contracts:
 - Grounds Maintenance (not including VAT)
 - 2025 £14900.07
 - 2026 £15198.58
 - 2027 £20263.55 (includes pollarding of trees at Church Walk)

 - Cemetery Grounds Maintenance (not including VAT)
 - 2025 £8544.64
 - 2026 £8715.53
 - 2027 £8889.84

 - Gardening (not including VAT)
 - 2025 £17283.00
 - 2026 £17629.65
 - 2027 £17982.24
- vi. **It was resolved** for Office staff to review the Grants and Donations Policies

8. GRANTS

8.1 It was resolved to grant £300 to Watton Ladies Group as requested with the money to be released against invoices received.

8.2 It was resolved grant £60 as requested to fund the cost of hire of the Queens Hall to hold a Christmas event.

8.3 It was resolved to grant £500 to Watton Sports Association as requested.

It was noted that a further grant application had not been received in time for the request to be put on the agenda, but it was agreed that the grant will be considered at the Full Town Council meeting on December 10th 2024.

9. WAYLAND HALL GUTTER CLEANING

It was resolved to accept the quote received of £880 plus VAT to clear the gutters at Wayland Hall.

10. PLANNING

Planning applications received for consultation:

10.1 Installation of a new steel-reinforced concrete skate park at Watton Sports Centre
3PL/2023/1106/F Amended Plans Further Consultations

Support

10.2 Erection of 1 self-build residential dwelling and the use of an existing cabin as ancillary annexe accommodation at land to the rear of 30 Swaffham Road Amended Site Plan
3PL/2024/0719/F

The Council support the representation submitted by Watton and Saham Flood Action Group

10.3 Minor Application New residential scheme on site of former gas works for 3 dwellings
Land at 2 Saham Road, Watton PL/2024/0796/FMIN

Cllr Gilbert has asked for this application to be called in to be determined by the Planning Committee. It is consider that plot 1 of the application is over development of the site and the proposed build would be detrimental to the aesthetics of The Old Gas House which should be classed as a non-designated heritage asset.

Noted that an action in the Watton Neighbourhood Plan was to take forward the designation of non-heritage assets in the parish.

11. Resolution passed to exclude the public and press.

11.1 Verbal report of the HR Committee meeting held on 25.11.14 given by the Chairman of the HR Committee.

11.2 **It was resolved to** accept the 2024/25 Local Government Pay Agreement.