

Mayor's Annual report 2025

As always this has been a busy year for the Town Council with the statutory duties to be carried out plus the activities and functions that add to the wellbeing and fabric of our community.

Events

The following events were organised by, or in conjunction with the Town Council;

1. Watton in Bloom (organised by the Watton Society and judged by the Mayor)
2. Yard Sale and Open Gardens Antiques Fair on the High Street and at the Queens Hall
3. Bike Event on the High Street
4. Firework Display
5. Remembrance Day Parade
6. Christmas lights and Artificial Tree
7. D Day Celebrations
8. A series of Family Fun Days at Watton Community Centre during the 2024 school summer holidays and the 2025 school holidays

Watton Community Centre in Harvey Street

The improvement of the Centre's facilities has continued at a pace and a new kitchen has been installed for the use of the many organisations and individuals that hire rooms, this in addition to a new website for the Centre that allows for booking on-line and a whole lot more.

As many of you will know Community Centre houses the Watton Food Hub which has gone from strength to strength, thanks to Jo and her band of volunteers, in offering a helping hand in this period of an extended and painful 'Cost of Living Crisis'.

The Centre also houses youth clubs, run weekly by the Benjamin Foundation.

Church Walk

Pollarding has taken place on the avenue of trees on either side of Church Walk and thanks to the efforts of a volunteer a fine display of colourful daffodils have been on show. Investigations and discussions are still on-going to improve the lighting on this much used thoroughfare

Car Parking

As most people know Breckland Council consulted widely then made the decision to go ahead with car parking charges in all Breckland car parks. This decision has now been put on hold while the discussions on devolution and unitary councils are in progress. Watton Town Council, after hearing the views of local people, opened discussions with Breckland Council about the possibility of taking over the management of the Town's three car parks and keeping them free to use. These discussions are still on-going but have been somewhat complicated by talks about devolution.

District Councillor Report for the Town Meeting

It has been a year of unexpended twists and turns, with my moving from the conservatives to become an independent councillor.

This move has allowed me to speak more freely as a councillor and to speak up when I do not agree with something that the ruling party at Breckland bring in.

As an independent you are not politically whipped, nor are you forced to toe the party line. For me, this has been liberating and has enabled me to freely fight items like the carparking charges that were going to be brought in.

I was able to suggest that our very own town council look at taking them over, putting a voice to our enthusiastic local group of shopkeepers Paul Adcock and Mark Bunning was a good thing.

Along with many others we all gathered many signatures and kept the fight going. Im pleased that due to devolution and the government reorganisation, the whole idea has been put on hold, and Breckland are now talking to all the market towns with a view of each of them taking over the lease of the car parks within their towns.

Re the government reorganisation, Breckland decided to put the idea of three unitary councils forward to central government. Their thinking behind this is to keep some form of localism.

I personally, believe that one single council for the whole of Norfolk is a better idea. With more powers being pushed down to town and parish councils, it would save millions in administration costs. It would also keep the localism very much local, more local in fact, because how it is now, Breckland hardly ever listen to the town and parish councils.

Only central government know what and how this will all look like in the very near future, and to be honest, everything regarding it between now and later in the year, is guess work and speculation.

I truly believe this is a long overdue shake up of local government.

For too long there has been a lot of confusion as to what each council does, and for where they do it.

Hopefully this new system will streamline the whole local government, with town and parishes speaking up for the localism issues.

The council buildings that house many staff all cost the taxpayer a lot of money, this money could, and should, be reallocated to front line services, I believe this is the objective. I hope this transition goes smoothly, it will help if the public can engage with any consultations that will be advertised through the town council.

It has been a good local thing to see that Town council have taken over the allotment land at the Thetford Road site and are engaging with the allotment holders.

One massive boost to our town has been the skate park, that will soon become a reality and not a pipe dream. No pun intended!

I went on the council in 2016 with my main aim to help bring more for our youth, a skate park was on my list. I worked alongside the Breckland YAB, and we highlighted the need. I was elected to Breckland in 2019, and I took my fight with me there. Covid hit and everything stopped, but im pleased to say that it is finally happening.

The recent hold ups were down purely to one resident who bitterly complained that it would cause too much noise and anti-social behaviour. This complaint has cost the taxpayer, i.e. you, 89K This is because costs in the interim had escalated, and noise abatement measures and CCTV has rocketed the costs.

I know we all have a right to complain, but when the skate park has been on the wish list for decades and decades, and so many local people have fought for it to happen. It seems so very sad that one person can cost the taxpayer so much money, money that could have been used for another project.

There has been a boundary commission change which I feel has been brought about because of the change to local government, this will possibly see Watton split into two wards. Im sure we will know more when things become clearer.

Whilst we still have a district council, I will continue to fight for all things local to Watton, from individual issues to keeping Watton on the Map.

Tina Kiddell
District Councillor Watton Ward

District Councillors Report

It has been my great honour to have been Chairman of Breckland Council this year.

My term ends on the 22nd of May.

The position of Chairman is non political, so you need to be as impartial as you can, making sure that Council meetings are run properly and according to the constitution, showing no favour to and group or individual. Luckily the members are pretty well behaved.

The other part of the job is to represent the Council at various events and ceremonies across Breckland and beyond.

These range from flag raising ceremonies at the Breckland offices, to things like to opening of the Kings Lynn Mart and Civic receptions.

I have attended 61 such events so far, with another 6 to go, including a Skydive in aid of East Anglian Childre's Hospices, and a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

If anyone would like to contribute to this very worthwhile Charity please give me or the Town Clerk your email address and I will send you the link to the Just Giving page, or you can just give me the cash and I will do it for you.

I have attended the Planning Committee as a substitute member on several occasions as well as carrying out my duty helping people with confidential casework.

It has been a busy year and I have enjoyed every minute of it.

Keith Gilbert

Annual summary from County and District Councillor Claire Bowes to Watton Parish Meeting April 2025

Norfolk County Council Delivers Balanced Budget

Norfolk County Council has approved a balanced budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year, despite facing considerable financial challenges.

Key Details from the Norfolk County Council Budget:

- **Gross Budget:** The council has a gross expenditure budget of £2.2 billion (£1.7 billion excluding schools). This includes:
 - £700 million for Adult Social Care
 - £367 million for Children's Services (non-schools)
 - £283 million for Infrastructure
 - £44 million for Communities and Environment
 - £46 million for Fire Services

Net Budget: The net budget for 2025/26 is £572 million. This represents the amount raised through Council Tax to fund the services provided by the council.

- **Budget Growth:** The 2025/26 budget includes an increase of £121 million, which covers:
 - £31 million for inflationary pressures
 - £35 million for legislative pressures (including the increase in the National Living Wage and higher Employers National Insurance contributions)
 - £15 million for demand and demographic pressures
 - Over £25 million to cover recurrent overspends from Adult and Children's Services in 2024/25.
- **Funding, Savings and Council Tax:** While costs have risen by £121 million, funding has only increased by £32 million. The Labour Government has eliminated the Rural Services Delivery Grant and reallocated funds from rural to metropolitan areas. To balance the budget, savings of £45 million will be implemented. Therefore for 2025/26, Council Tax will increase by 4.99%, which includes a 3% rise for general Council Tax and a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care precept. A Band D household will pay £1,755.63 per year, or around £34 per week, for County Council services in 2025/26.

Norfolk announced as priority area for new powers and funding

Norfolk is set to gain new powers and funding following a Government announcement on 5th February 2025. Norfolk has secured a place on a priority list for devolution and local government reform. As part of this, the Government is seeking to create a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk, which would include the introduction of an elected mayor across both counties.

In addition, there are plans to reshape local government in Norfolk. The Government intends to replace the current two-tier structure, where services are shared between county and district councils, with unitary authorities. This could centralise decision-making and service delivery into a single authority, which it is claimed, should streamline local government processes and potentially

increase efficiency and save taxpayers money. However proposals and arguments have also been put forward for two and three unitary authority models.

Norfolk signs historic agreement with Ukrainian region of Lviv

A cooperation agreement has been signed between Norfolk County Council and the Ukrainian region of Lviv which is designed to explore knowledge transfer, educational exchange and trade opportunities.

The historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Thursday 2 May 2024 at the Ukrainian Embassy in London by Leader of Norfolk County Council and in Lviv via video link by head of the Lviv Regional Military Administration. It is the first such agreement to be signed with Lviv by any part of the UK.

Norfolk County Council opposes National Grid pylon scheme

Councillors in Norfolk have objected to a National Grid proposal to construct an electricity transmission line across the county.

In non-statutory consultations, Norfolk County Council has urged National Grid to reconsider the scheme, arguing that alternative options, including an offshore or underground scheme, had not been adequately considered. At a full council meeting, councillors backed a motion expressing concerns over the proposals.

Norfolk's highways set for major investment in the year ahead

Norfolk County Council Cabinet has reviewed a series of investments and improvements to the county's highways infrastructure.

97 parishes, will benefit from projects funded through the Council's Parish Partnership scheme. The 2025/26 programme is designed to deliver what local communities have requested, including trods, village gateways, bus shelters, and vehicle-activated signs.

The programme is jointly funded by the County Council and contributions from Town and Parish Councils. This year, Norfolk County Council plans to contribute £425,476, enabling a total investment of £848,702 for local projects.

I was very pleased to support the Town Council's successful bid for SAM2 signs through the Parish Partnership scheme.

And through the Highway's Investment Fund I was pleased that we were able to secure funding for two projects being delivered locally, 20mph speed advisory signage through Caudle Springs to Carbrooke (along the school footpath route) and the same on Merton Road, past Wayland Academy.

Norfolk County Council committed over £1m to keep people warm last winter

£1.15m of the £6.7m allocated to the county through the Household Support Fund was used to keep people warm and help them make ends meet. The county council used £0.75m to partner with local organisations, including Age UK and Citizens Advice Bureau, to reach some of those most affected by the Labour Government's changes to the Winter Fuel Payments.

Economic news

Norfolk is already well known for a visitor economy which accounts for nearly 20% of all employment. The county was recently successful in bidding to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, alongside Visit East of England and Suffolk County Council. This put them on an even footing with the likes of Cornwall, the Peak District, and the Cotswolds.

The county council continues to push for improvements along the A47, with an ongoing campaign to improve connectivity and safety through further dualling in key areas.

Norfolk has built an increasingly enterprising culture, supporting residents to start up their own business, and for new start-ups to survive and thrive. Norfolk has a better than UK average for survival of new businesses at 63% after 3 years, compared to the UK average of 56%.

New Anglia Growth Hub acts as the 'front door' for local businesses looking for support. Over the past 10 years, the Growth Hub has supported over 14,000 businesses with free, impartial support and advice.

Norfolk County Council supports Norfolk's Family Farms

Conservative-led Norfolk County Council is taking proactive steps to support the county's hard-working family farms in response to recent budget announcements from the Labour Government. Recognising the essential role that farming plays in the local economy, the Council debated a motion aimed at ensuring that Norfolk's farmers are well-supported as they navigate the challenges brought on by these new policies.

Energy efficient Norfolk street lighting

Norfolk is leading the way in energy efficiency with the successful completion of its street lighting upgrade project, finishing almost a year ahead of schedule. The final phase of this project will save approximately 1,099,032 kWh of energy each year, translating to an estimated £380,000 in savings based on current electricity prices.

Discover the Best of Norfolk: Explore 1,500 Miles of Scenic Trails for Walking, Cycling, and Horse-Riding

Norfolk offers over 1,500 miles of beautiful walking, cycling, and horse-riding routes, each showcasing the county's unique nature and rich cultural heritage. Whether you're exploring tranquil river valleys, historic landscapes, or scenic coastal paths, Norfolk's trails offer something for every adventurer.

Highlights include the **Norfolk Coast Path**, **Angles Way**, **Boudicca Way**, **Bure Valley Path**, **Kett's Country Trail**, and **Peddars Way**. Whether you're interested in history, nature, or simply exploring the countryside, Norfolk's extensive network of trails provides the perfect way to experience our beautiful region.

For more information please visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/42852/Norfolk-Trails

Breckland Council's achievements over the last year and future priorities:

To tackle housing challenges, the Council adopted a comprehensive strategy outlining how it will collaborate with stakeholders to boost affordable housing supply, enhance quality and design of housing and support all residents with their housing needs.

To inspire future generations, the council arranged for 300 children to visit local businesses as part of National Manufacturing Day and also worked in partnership with local schools to deliver the Young Enterprise Programme.

Recognising the needs of the district, the council created a new Rural Business Support service to support it's rural business community.

To help support our local economy and fill empty commercial units, the council awarded £50k to 7 new or expanded businesses through our Meanwhile programme.

Breckland have funded feasibility work to help unlock an exciting new walking and cycling route between Watton and Swaffham. And o increase footfall into our town centres, it worked in Partnership with Norfolk County Council to deliver funded activity as part of the Love Your Market Town initiative. This included treasure trails and craft workshops.

Using enforcement to protect our local spaces, Breckland issued Fixed Penalty Notices, Environmental Protection Abatement Notices and Community Protection Notices where required and in addition, suspended licenses where required and issued formal enforcement notices.

Continuing it's commitment to preserve local heritage, the council secured match funding from Historic England for a revised Conservation Area Appraisal, Management Plan and Shop Front Design Guide. It also delivered skills workshops on heritage construction works.

To support local businesses with job retention, diversification and expansion, Breckland administered £750k of business grant funding which has helped create 37 new jobs and safeguard a further 52.

Recognising the need to unlock new housing developments Breckland helped to launch the Norfolk Nutrient Mitigation Fund with £10m available for local schemes.

Continuing it's commitment to support the local economy, the council distributed £1m of Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF), which saw a total of £3.2m investment leveraged, supporting 57 Breckland business and community organisations.

To further support housing needs and sustainable growth, the council secured £1m Brownfield Funding to unlock affordable homes across the district.

Working closely with partners, Breckland Council used £125k of Norfolk Investment Framework funding to deliver a business case and designs for a new state-of-the-art digital and creative centre in Watton. This work also included community and business support to evidence demand, including sessions to help local people improve their IT skills.

To ensure compliance and consumer confidence, the council rated over 200 businesses in accordance with National Food Hygiene Ratings and Animal Welfare Licensing.

To empower and uplift the vital work of local community organisations, the council awarded over £75,000 in grant funding through it's Inspiring Communities Grant Scheme, helping to support projects that make a real difference at grassroots level.

Supporting residents facing financial difficulties, Breckland continued to fund access to Debt Advisors in partnership with Citizens Advice.

To support the disposal of waste in a sustainable way, the council increased its trade waste customer base to over 480 local businesses.

To address damp and mould issues in the private rental sector, Breckland secured funding and collaborated with landlords to enhance housing conditions throughout the district as part of its Healthy Homes Project.

To help tackle homelessness, Breckland secured funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund and purchased 23 homes for use as temporary accommodation.

To improve its service provision and reduce the risk of crisis, the council is better aligning its Housing & Communities Teams and implementing a programme of service improvements.

The Council distributed £26,400 of Kings Coronation Grants to community groups to plant community orchards – totalling over 1,000 trees to 30 different community groups.

Through its Inspiring communities programme, Breckland funded the important work of Citizens Advice to offer extended debt and financial advice for those experiencing severe hardship.

Taking a robust approach to anti-social behaviour, the council coordinated the deployment of mobile cameras for evidential purposes.

To help vulnerable residents stay warm throughout the winter, Breckland launched its 'Warm Packs' incentive with support from local retailers.

The council has made 16 Inspiring Communities grants totalling over £70k to support important grass-roots community activity.

Breckland adopted a comprehensive new property strategy to ensure the Council's assets are managed efficiently whilst maximizing value and effectively supporting service delivery.

To improve efficiency and reduce costs, Breckland Council brought all its planning services in-house.

To continue leveraging funding to improve living conditions for residents, the council secured £155k grant funding from DLUHC and NCC to deliver housing-related improvement projects.

Breckland continued to use its commercial property portfolio to generate income and capital receipts that contribute to improving service provision across the Council. It launched a new dedicated food waste collection service for businesses, providing local enterprises with a practical and cost-effective solution to meet new national recycling regulations introduced on 31 March 2025.

To help promote career opportunities, Breckland attended events such as the Watton Jobs Fair and UEA Careers Fair.

The Council continues to take a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping by using mobile cameras to help enforce against those that commit offences and is actively cracking down on and imposing fines on general littering.

Encouraging a pro-active approach to the local environment Breckland secured equipment to support community litter picks across the district.

As residents will know I publicly, and at council meetings , stood against Breckland's proposals for car park charging in Watton. I'm pleased therefore that Breckland is now open to and engaging with Watton and it's other market towns to discuss and progress the transfer of car parks to it's town councils.

Claire Bowes

County Councillor, Watton Division (including Carbrooke, Caston, Griston and Ovington)

claire.bowes@norfolk.gov.uk

District Councillor for Watton Ward

Claire.bowes@breckland.gov.uk

07789796937



Grants and Donations

In this financial year from March 31st 2024 – 1st April 2025 the Town Council has awarded the following Grants and Donations to local organisations

Grants

Applicant	Amount	Report received
Watton Family Group	£500.00	✓
Watton Society	£500.00	✓
Loch Neaton	£250.00	✓
Watton Carnival Committee	£500.00	✓
Watton Rainbows	£200.00	✓
Watton Brownies	£300.00	✓
Watton Sports Association	£500.00	✓
Queens Hall/Louise Elder Vocalist	£60.00	✓
Watton Ladies Group	£128.21	✓
Norfolk Clubhouse	£500.00	✓
Watton District Guiding	£500.00	✓

Donations

Applicant	Amount	Report received
Watton & Saham Flood Action Group	£252.00	✓
Wayland Chamber of Commerce	£1750.00	✓
The Charlotte Harvey Trust	£2500.00	✓
The Wayland Partnership	£574.80	✓
The Benjamin Foundation	£5000.00	✓

As a condition of any grant the Town Council requests all successful applicants to give a short presentation at the Annual Town Meeting on how the money has been spent.

If any voluntary groups in the town would like to be considered for a grant please view the Grant Application pack on www.wattontowncouncil.gov.uk for information.

Reports received from other Organisations or local groups

- 864 (Watton) Squadron ATC
- Loch Neaton Park Run
- Museum 4 Watton
- Queens Hall
- Watton Food Hub
- Watton Inner Wheel Club
- Watton Twinning Association
- Watton Evening WI
- Wayland Men's Shed

All reports will be available on the Town Council Website

<https://www.wattontowncouncil.gov.uk/annual-town-meeting-2025/>

Grants

Watton Family Group report 2024

This group has been running for some years now and meets every week in the Charlotte Hartley Centre on Thursdays during school term times. It is run entirely by volunteers and is overseen by St Mary's Church.

The group provides a space for families to meet and plenty of toys and games for children up to school age. The adults who bring their children really appreciate the opportunity to get together in a safe environment where the volunteers help to entertain the children.

We received £500.00 from Watton Town Council in April 2024 and this money was used to provide refreshments and fruit for the children and their adults, and also to help with the rent for the hall. We do ask for a small donation from adults who come to the meetings but this does not provide sufficient to cover all the rent and refreshments and we would never turn anyone away if they did not have a donation. We also have very kind donations sent into St Mary's Church account on a regular basis but there was still a shortfall during 2023 – 2024. This is why we requested the grant.

Numbers attending the group has now steadied to be regularly between 15 and 20 children every week.

This group is a very welcome addition to the outreach provided by St Mary's and we really appreciate the work done by the volunteers at the group, particularly from Romaine Humphreys and Eileen Kibler. Some volunteers have found that they can no longer support the group and so we are looking for more. Please ask for more information or come along to a meeting to find out more if you feel that you could help.

We are very grateful for the grant from the Town Council and are very happy to report that the group will continue and hopefully grow even more during 2025.

Linda Benton

WATTON SOCIETY REPORT FOR TOWN MEETING – TUESDAY, 15TH APRIL, 2025

What is the Watton Society, what does it do, what does it cost. The Watton Society is a club where people meet at 7.45 pm on the third Wednesday of the month except August at the Watton Methodist Church Hall. We have speakers on a wide variety of subjects or arrange our own activities, such as a quiz, or visits. Costs are small, at the moment the cost for members is £2.50 at meeting and £3.50 for non members. Subs are only £5 per year payable in October, or £2.50 if you join in May, which takes you up to the next October. We have a committee of six people, John and Judy Kerr, Roy Challand, Margaret Cator, Wendy Collins and Liz Whitcher. We have over thirty paid up members at the moment, and often have visitors at meetings.

In addition to our monthly meetings and outings we hold an annual picture competition for children, for which we award prizes. We are currently deciding on the topic for this year's competition. We send this out to local schools and young peoples' organizations. Choosing the winners is sometimes not easy, but always enjoyable. We also hold the Watton in Bloom Competition, which entails the committee and sometimes other helpers touring the town to look at gardens that can be seen from the road with an excellent display of colour. This is held at various times of the year. Judging is usually done by the current Mayor.

The Heritage Trail leaflet produced by the Watton Society has been updated and plaques now placed on over twenty buildings and sites of historical interest in Watton. Each plaque costs approximately one hundred pounds now. We are very grateful to Watton Town Council for their assistance with this scheme over the years.

We try to cover all the costs we can with the income we receive from takings on the door and the subscriptions. However, this is not always achievable for various reasons. The cost of maintaining the website has risen over the years. Also we now have the recent new bank charges to cover and the rising costs of speakers to cover their fees and expenses. We are in discussion about how to remain solvent. We are very grateful to the Town Council for their support and list all our expenditure in our Grant Application.

We are in the process of booking our programme for 2025. If you would like any information on this and a copy of the Heritage Trail please go to our table this evening or the following addresses.

www.wattonsociety.org.uk email – info@wattonsociety.org.uk Tel: 01953 882613 (John and Judy)

Loch Neaton Recreation Ground



Town Meeting 2025

The last two years have been a busy time for the volunteers at Loch Neaton. Construction of the boardwalk alongside the old railway embankment, construction of the D Day Memorial Rose Garden and general work around the Loch to maintain it.

At 21.30 on May 8th we will light the beacon in commemoration of VE Day as part of a nationwide beacon lighting ceremony.

All are welcome and there will be a short speech by our Mayor, Councillor Don Saunders. As it is a school day next morning this will be a simple occasion but Watton Town Council, in conjunction with the Sports Centre, will have a Community Fun Day on Sunday 11th May where thanks for our Victory in the European theatre of war will be combined with a fun day for all ages. There will be lots of free and low-cost things to enjoy as we all strive to make it fun for everyone.



Spring and Summer 2025 will see the DD Rose Garden planted and a number of picnic benches will be re-located to lessen anti-social behaviour amongst a small minority of our users.

Many fishing platforms require renewal of planking, and this will commence shortly, and a new floating Duck House Platform will be positioned in the centre of the Loch.

At the end of 2024 Tesco invited us to apply for funding under their "Blue Token" scheme and we expect to hear shortly about the level of funding we will receive.

This will be used to build a new Picnic Platform at the Dereham road end of the Loch and we aim to have this constructed by the end of June.

All work is carried out by volunteers and new volunteers are always welcome. By careful management and willing volunteers, we manage to run Loch Neaton for under £1500 per year and much of this is raised by the sale of fishing tickets.

If you are interested in helping, please message us on our website www.lochneaton.org.uk or email phil.kibler@lochneaton.org. All ages and abilities welcome as there are useful jobs whether you're big and strong or petite and of advancing years.

REPORT FROM WATTON CARNIVAL COMMITTEE

7th April 2025

On behalf of Watton Carnival Committee I would like to say a huge thank you to Watton Town Councillors for approving our grant for monies towards the Watton Carnival on the 14th July 2024 at Watton Sports and Social Club.

We have received a lot of criticism from members of the general public because we moved

The Carnival from the High Street to the Watton Sports Centre the reasons for this was that it was becoming increasingly difficult to grow the Carnival offering more activities for children. We also faced difficulties from our Insurance Company with regard to safeguarding

Issues and keeping children and the general public safe on the High Street.

Following the Carnival which we believe was supported more than when we had been on the High Street as families had more things to do and keep their children and young people safe. We were asked to keep the Carnival at the Sports Centre. The atmosphere was amazing.

We are finding the overheads for the Carnival seem to be increasing alarmingly post Covid.

The £500 that we very kindly received from the Council was used to cover the cost of the

Pony Rides meaning every family got at least 1 free ride. The small amount of grant that was left was used towards the cost of the Road Closure to enable to Parade to happen safely.

Without the support of the Watton Town Council it would make putting the Watton Carnival on very difficult as we are finding it harder to get sponsorship due to the economic climate.

Once again, a huge thank you as we believe that the Carnival has been part of the life of the Town for decades.

Thank you we are so grateful for your support.

Jayne Eastwood

Treasurer Watton Carnival Committee

1st Watton Rainbows

First of all, may I send my apologies for not attending the meeting in person, as I already had plans when I received the invitation. I would like to thank Linda, who helps with the Rainbows, for delivering the report on my behalf.

1st Watton Rainbows is a unit of 20 girls aged from 4 – 7 years. We meet on Mondays from 4.30 until 5.45, and follow a programme of activities designed to help the girls to “laugh, learn and have fun” whilst developing skills, confidence and the belief that they can do anything they put their mind to. We see girls join us as 4-year-olds with little knowledge of the world, and leave at 7 as strong, sociable girls developing their independence and ready to move to the next level of Guiding.

When I took over the leadership of the unit a couple of years ago, I wanted the Rainbows to develop a true sense of belonging. They love getting their uniform, and with very few exceptions, all wear it every week, with pride.

We took part in the Watton Carnival in July last year and I could sense the pride the girls (and their parents) felt as they walked together holding home-made ‘flags’ and I realised how lovely it would be if we could have an official flag with the unit’s name on, for the next parade we would take part in, on Remembrance Sunday. Unfortunately, our unit funds didn’t justify the expense of the flag, with all the accessories (the flagpole etc, which all cost extra) so when it was suggested that Watton Town Council might provide us with a grant, I put in an application. We were all delighted when we were awarded £200 which would cover the cost of the flag complete with accessories. Even better was the fact that it came in time for us to have the flag ready for Remembrance Sunday. After some amusing practice sessions, when the girls realised how difficult it is to actually carry a flag, I chose the two oldest girls on the day to take turns at leading the unit.

This term, one of the Rainbows has achieved her Gold Award, which is the highest award in Rainbows, to be completed just before moving up to Brownies. As one of the last challenges for this, she had to do a small presentation to the rest of the unit, about her time as a Rainbow, including some of the most memorable things she has done. Top of her list was “carrying the flag on Remembrance Sunday” (closely followed by the sleepover at the SeaLife Centre!)

So, to Watton Town Council, on behalf of all the girls who will also feel this sense of pride at future events, I would like to say a big ‘Thank You’ for helping provide memories and add to the confidence and self-esteem of the Rainbows.



2nd Watton Brownies

We took over as brownie leaders last easter the unit currently had 12 girls and were shocked to see that for a unit that had been running for several years only owned a bag of items. We instantly knew that we needed to do some fundraising to build up our craft and general unit supplies to run the unit. We did a stall at Armed Forces Day and Watton carnival and we applied for a grant from Watton town council to help us build up the unit.

With the money that we raised and received we have managed to buy new everyday items stationary juice and biscuits plus materials for weekly activities towards the programme. Also, we took the girls to Banham Zoo in the summer holidays for a small donation. We also did a Christmas craft day all crafts were provided free of charge the girls just contributed to their lunch of either sausage and chips or pizza.

We are currently up to 20 girls and growing the unit now owns a vast selection of craft materials and games equipment and because of the grant we haven't had to increase the subscription paid by the girl's parents.

So, thank you on behalf of us leaders and parents at 2nd Watton Brownies



Watton Sports and Recreational Centre

Town Meeting 2025

It's no secret that the Sports Centre has been through some tough times in recent years with substantial losses being incurred.

Our new General Manager, Paul Rayner, has worked hard to turn the situation around. The Trustees have restructured the board of management to introduce sound principles into the running of the charity to ensure we meet the joint needs of user groups and survivability of the Charity. Trustees are unpaid, elected volunteers.

Our staff have also worked incredibly hard to achieve good results with just a skeleton crew and over the last year we have:

- Increased the number of events hosted (Birthdays, Wakes, Wedding Receptions etc)
- Increased number of special events (Quiz, Bingo (Drag and Standard), Murder Mystery Night, Music.
- Improved and increased our food offerings
- Trebled Gym membership in conjunction with Elliot from Armoured Muscle.
- Cut operating costs with the help of Watton Town Council (free grass cutting) and Breckland District Council (Rate Waiver) and this really helps. Watton Town Council also provided a grant to Watton United Football Club to help with transports costs for their big Final!
- Supplier contracts have been reviewed and where necessary changes have been made and better terms negotiated.
- We have also registered the Charity for Gift Aid allowing us to maximise income from charitable donations.

The net result of this is that for the 2024 / 2025 Financial Year it looks like we haven't made a loss for the first time in several years. Good but it still leaves us with no cash for repairs!

Future Projects

As many will know we finally got planning permission for the Skate Park at the end of 2024. The delays, due largely to one resident's objections, necessitated a number of design changes which combined with substantial increases in raw materials costs created a huge

cost increase. This meant we had to apply for additional funding and we hope to receive the additional funding this month and construction should start shortly afterwards.

Although we are providing the location for the park the project is largely at the request of Watton Town Council and the Youth Action Board. There is no financial benefit to the Sports Centre as the park will be free to use.

The Skate Park is financed from S106 money. This is money paid into a fund by developers to provide amenities in the area they are building.

We believe the Skate Park will be a fantastic benefit to the young people of Watton. We were told by a councillor that she found that the first letters to Watton Town Council requesting a Skate Park date back 40 years so 2025 will not be a minute to soon to open the park!

Events

We will be hosting a number of open-air events again this year and these include:

11th May VE Day – Community Fun Day - We will host this event free of charge for Watton Town Council and we hope it will be a great day for all the family. Everyone involved in the organising is striving to include as many free or low-cost activities as possible so everyone can have a great time.

Watton Carnival 13th July – we will host this free of charge for Watton Carnival Committee and we know they are planning a fantastic fun day for everyone with no entry charges.

So where are we now?

The Sports Centre still faces huge challenges with many major repairs being needed including replacement of the broken-down heating system that will cost circa £10,000.

Many people will have seen our appeals to try and raise £25,000 which is needed for the above repair and other urgent works and although many kind people and organisations have donated, we still need to raise over £20,000.

We did approach Watton Town Council to see if they would provide us with a £20,000 loan but unfortunately, they felt unable to help us at this time so we are still trying to raise the funds, both from donations, and by working to increase our turnover. We are mindful of the fact that many people using our facilities can't afford price increases, and we face a delicate balance between meeting the needs of the residents of the town and generating enough

money to operate the facility. Many people in Watton still don't realise we are an independent Charity, and we need to take around £325,000 per year to break even!

We have a number of grant applications in place with various grant giving Charities and we hope at least some of these will come to fruition. These will help with improvements and repairs.

The other major cost we face is resurfacing the Astro turf Hockey Pitch as the surface is completely worn out. This will cost around £350,000 and we are approaching a number of organisations to try and achieve enough smaller grants to make up the sum required. This is even more important now as the Hockey Pitch at Thetford has been converted into a 3G Football Pitch and Hockey can't be played on a 3G surface.

Love the Sports Centre?

If you love the Sports Centre and you can make a donation of any size we'll really appreciate it. Whether it's 50p or a pound dropped into one of our collection pots or something larger everything is welcome right now.

We hope visitors can see we are trying hard to make the centre the best we can for all of Watton's community...Sporty or Sedate, Young or Older.

Please help us to ensure it's around for our grandchildren to enjoy.

Thank you.

Phil Kibler

Chair, Watton Sports and Recreation Centre

phil.kibler@wattonsportscentre.co.uk

Louise Elder Vocalist – Queens Hall

On 22 December 2024, an event was held at the Queens Hall that was made possible with grant money received from the Watton Town Council. The event was primarily planned by Louise Elder with an initial callout on social media for the loan of a projector for a proposed Christmas themed event and sing-song that would help to raise community esprit de corps.

Will O'Donnell made contact with Louise Elder and began discussions to loan the necessary equipment as well as donating his time playing Santa Claus at the event as he is a professional actor and already owns a prestige Santa Claus costume. Shortly after, professional singer Charlie Wilson volunteered to sing a set at the event and collaborate further with Louise on a joint set.

During the planning phase, Louise continued to garner additional support and donations from local businesses and individuals. Some of that support came from food donated by Tesco, over 100 gift bags for children donated by Love Watton, and additional contributions from Down Melody Lane, Rae of Light, and Kaisy.

Prior to the event, residents were notified via mailers, social media posts on the Watton Community Notice Board facebook page, and a sign prominently displayed on the Queens Hall fence line. A few days prior to the event, Louise Elder fell ill and transferred primary planning and execution to Charlie Wilson of Down Melody Lane. Charlie took over final preparations along with hosting/singing as a solo artist.

The event had a smaller than expected turnout but still serviced over 100 members of the local community with an afternoon of fun family oriented entertainment. Christmas songs were sung by Charlie Wilson with the words being projected for the audience to participate. In between some songs, Charlie led the group through games and activities, using her previous training as a Parkdeans Resort Entertainer and Host to bring some fun-filled resort park entertainment to local Watton.

Will O'Donnell as Santa provided additional entertainment throughout the afternoon, allowing kids to spend a considerable amount of time singing along to carols and dancing to games with Santa Claus, a far stretch from standard meet-and-greets. Many families were thrilled that Santa stayed throughout.

Other community members also volunteered their time and supplies in face painting and bracelet making for the children. At the end of the day, the event was enjoyed by all who attended but could do with additional advertising in the future to help get the word out. Although every effort was made to attract a bigger participation, breaking through the noise of social media and other happenings becomes increasingly difficult in the modern era. Those that found out after the event were gutted they could not attend. For those that did, they left with small gift bags, community spirit, and even bigger smiles.

Watton Ladies Group

Over 2024 WLG has gone from strength to strength, having new members joining every month. In December we introduced an event that would benefit those who live on their own, Christmas Day Lunch at Watton Sports & Social Club. We contacted businesses in Watton and surrounding villages to ask if they would help by donating food, drink and miscellaneous items. The result was astounding. Watton Town Council asked us if we would like a donation and as we had everything in place we asked for some money to buy each person a Christmas present. Which they did and we were able to purchase a present for all the 'guests', including the housebound and the volunteers. We fed 26 people that day and even had a visit from Don Saunders, Watton's Mayor. Everyone enjoyed themselves and asked if we would do it again next year. A special thank you goes out to Watton Sports and Social Club for letting us hold it on their premises.

Norfolk Clubhouse

Watton Town Council Funding Report 2025

Norfolk Clubhouse is a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) operating in Norfolk. We have Hubs in Watton, meeting weekly at the Methodist Centre, 57 High Street, Watton, IP25 6LA and Norwich at Carrow House open since October 2024 when we obtained a 3 year licence to occupy.

Our Hub in Watton has been operating for over 3 years and we work with adults 18 and over, living with mental health difficulties, some also having physical issues around mobility. We provide support for a potential 20 Members each week through our Monday and Friday meetings 2-4pm. Members are referred from the NHS, Social Prescribers and through self-referrals. Our service is Member led and long term, providing we can continue our work through funding received through grants and donations.

Our Members provide peer support to each other and we have one self employed Sessional Worker facilitating sessions. We have now recruited two new volunteers to work with our paid facilitator each week to Coach and Mentor our Members. Furthermore very recently one of our members has felt confident enough to become a volunteer which is massive for her.. She now supports members on Friday when our two recruited volunteers are unavailable. Our work also support the carers of our Members, providing much needed respite.

We secured funding in November 2024 from the Norfolk Community Foundation and Breckland Council with the support of 3 District Councillors to help us provide an additional facilitated session at our Watton Hub. We thank Watton Town Council for funding us with £500 to support us from 13th December 2024 with materials to be used by our Volunteer Craft Coach.

The money is being used for the following weekly activities:-

Art Therapy and interactive cooking demonstrations.

Aims. Learn how to use creativity as a therapeutic practice and a catalyst for mental health improvement and self development.

Costings. Art and craft materials £350.00

Food and cooking utensils. £150.00

Our Craft Coach has also listed the benefits below of our work on a weekly basis:

The Five Ways to Well being

- Keep Learning
- Take Notice
- Be Active
- Connect to Others
- Give

Benefits:

Improved physical health through physical activities

Improved mental health through interactive coaching sessions (learning new skills)

Increased sense of belonging

Increased confidence

Opportunities for personal development

Reducing loneliness

Reduction of social isolation and promotion of social connection with weekly meetings

Member led and increased agency (Nine regular members– scope to increase membership as we now have two volunteers as well as a facilitator)

Coaching for Leadership – one Member is now a formal Volunteer, another member now helps out at the sensory garden in Watton

Membership is free, tea and coffee are provided free of charge

Activities:

Listening and talking – interacting with others

Art Therapy -

Healthy Eating – Cooking for health

Group Activities – for Self Development and promotion of team work

Physical Activities for mental stimulation (table tennis and badminton for increased hand/eye coordination)

Games and Puzzles – team work

Coaching/Mentoring – sharing lived experience by Peer Support Worker and Volunteer Coach

Peer Support – sharing lived experience and life skills

Music hour- members chose a piece of music that resonates with them and we discuss this further as a group

General support - making phone calls, supporting members with administrative matters.

The members have organised their own evening out and are planning a trip to Great Yarmouth later in the year.

Visits from Organisations:

British Red Cross – Learning CPR, becoming resilient

Seeco – Support with Employment, C.V, interviews

Norfolk & Waveney talking therapies- support and signposting

Watton District Guiding

Each year Girlguiding celebrates its Founder's Day known as thinking day this year Girlguiding Anglia had the idea of a pj sleepover to get the girls who are not normally offered a sleepover the chance to experience this. Girlguiding Anglia had 21,000 Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers, and volunteers sign up to take part.

On 22 February 2025, girls from across the region came together for a night of fun, friendship, and inspiration—celebrating the power of guiding in a way that's truly special.

Watton district decided to take part our first challenge was finding a location big enough to sleep potentially 100 girls plus leaders we had to hire 2 venues Ashill community centre and Ashill school. Also, to keep the cost as low as possible so that the event was open to all this is where the grant money came in.

Watton District had 70 girls and 20 leaders joined together at the Ashill Community Centre, for 24 hours of fun. The girls were put into 4 groups with ages ranging from 4-year-old Rainbows to 14-year-old Guides. Saturday's activities included decorating a tote-bag, making armpit fudge, making a Japanese dragon and decorating a tree for all seasons. At 4pm we joined a zoom call with Girlguiding members across the region, to renew the Promise we all make when joining. After an evening meal of jacket potatoes and pasta, the girls did some singing and had a few bedtime stories before turning the community centre & School into a makeshift dorm and settling down for the night. On Sunday morning, after packing away their beds, the girls enjoyed a breakfast of fruit, eggy-bread and hot chocolate before learning some new songs and games.

We would like to say a massive thank you for this grant the girls all had an amazing time and many of them had never stayed away before so experienced things for the first time for only for a small contribution this would not have been possible without the grant.

Donations

Report from Watton & Saham Flood Action Group (WASFAG) to the Annual Town Meeting on 15th April 2025

Introduction

The Group is in a period of transition as I, as Chairman, am retiring this year. The Town Council of Watton and the Parish Council of Saham Toney have agreed to support the Group and will facilitate future meetings of the Group.

They have agreed to form a joint Working Group and have appointed 2 councillors each to this. Cllrs Gilbert and Hutchings will attend from the Town Council. The draft Terms of Reference state the following:

- Membership is open to residents, businesses, and other stakeholders within Watton and Saham Toney and will include 2 representatives from Watton Town Council and 2 from Saham Toney Parish Council. The Group will encourage diverse participation, including those with local knowledge, technical expertise, or experience of flooding.
- A Chairperson will be elected by the Flood Group to lead meetings, represent the Group externally, and ensure objectives are met.
- Additional roles may be created as needed.
- Office staff from Watton Town Council will take minutes, manage correspondence, and maintains records.
- The Group will meet [quarterly] with additional meetings as necessary.

I have agreed to be available in the early days of the new Group to give them the benefit of my knowledge built up over the past 8 years.

Achievements in the past year

Those of you who read the Watton & Wayland Times will know some of this already.

Anglian Water

The new foul sewer built by Anglian Water has been completed. In an email to the Town Council, the Customer Experience Coordinator wrote: "The new pipes along with the new pumping station will reduce the risk of flooding in Watton by sending flows directly to the recycling centre. It's also part of our commitment to support new homes in the area, making sure they're connected to a reliable water and sewerage network while protecting the environment."

The Eastern Daily Press reported that it was a £10 million project and that the improvements included building a new storm tank at the Recycling Works which cost £850,000. The site is now able to capture and hold more than a million litres of rainwater to protect the environment during heavy rainfall. By expanding the system's ability to manage heavy rain and storm events, the risk of untreated wastewater spills has been reduced, offering greater protection to watercourses in Watton and the surrounding area.

Actions to mitigate flooding:

Reclaim the Rain (RtR)

Reclaim the Rain is designed to persuade the Environment Agency, local authorities and the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) that saving rain and flood water for

reuse during times of drought while at the same time lessening flood risk will work in small rural communities that suffer from surface water flooding and that do not receive funding currently.

The following are the main projects in Watton:

- A reservoir on land south of Watton which will take water from the watercourse on the land and store it for use in dry summers. This is hoped to help the risk of flooding in the Bridle Way. Defra also provide grants for such reservoirs, and these are being applied for.
- Those of you with children or grandchildren at the three schools will know that there is a lot going on there. The RtR team have managed to obtain extra funding (£70k in total) for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in all the schools in the project. These have been or are being installed this year at the Junior and Infant Schools and at Wayland Academy. In addition, the officers obtained funding from the Million Trees for Norfolk to plant fruit trees and bushes at all the Watton schools. These will be used to teach the children about the importance of water conservation and flood protection.
- A project to hold back the water from the roofs in the High Street for reuse in watering planters and to prevent the flooding that occurs when the surface water sewer becomes overloaded and soaks the High Street. A representative of the company, GreenBlue Urban, gave a presentation to the Town Council in March last year to gauge their support. The Town Council have given their support. The company's design consultants have presented a design to the officers and it is now a question of seeing whether that design is both something suitable and at a cost that can be afforded.
- When this is costed and approved by the Board of Reclaim the Rain, the details will be made public.

WSP Project

Watton and Saham were chosen in February 2021 as one of the first 16 areas in Norfolk affected by flooding to receive support from the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA). The County has put aside a sum each year to support works in these areas.

One of these is in Watton where Norfolk County Council have commissioned WSP Engineering Consultants to undertake a study looking at potential options to reduce flood risk. Through collaboration with the Flood Action Group and other partners they have identified 6 flood zones or hotspots where the highest number of properties at risk are located and where potential investment will have most effect. These are Lovell Gardens, Watton Green, Brandon Road with Langmere Road etc., Jubilee Road, Aircraft Drive with Saham Road and as far east as Nelson Court and the High Street. WSP have completed their investigations and the cost/benefit analysis of any works ie will the number of properties protected outweigh the cost of any installation. The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has obtained £100,000 of funding from the Environment Agency for this project

Community Emergency Plan

While these projects will lessen flood risk, they are going to take time to be put in place and working. So, we will still get flooding. When that happens, it would be desirable to have an Emergency Plan in place. This will be part of the work of the new joint Working Group.

Representation on Planning Applications

As appropriate, the Group have made representations on Planning applications where there is a risk of flooding, and we also speak at the Planning Committee. In recent months we have commented on single developments and those with less than 10 dwellings to request adequate drainage and prevent flooding.

Future Plans

1. We should be clear that if we have other storms like those of the past, no-one can guarantee that there will not be flooding. What we hope to do is create more resilient communities with more resources to reduce the risk.
2. Breckland District Council has updated their Local Plan which forms the basis of where future housing and business developments will be allocated. WASFAG and both councils made representations on behalf of our communities by answering questions in the various consultation documents put forward by BDC. WASFAG successfully contributed to the new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Map where all the areas which have been flooded by surface water in the past are located on it. This will be a huge improvement when it comes to planning applications of whatever size. The main report is now available at the following link on the Breckland Website though the maps are still to be uploaded as of today
https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/22354/Breckland-District-Council-Level-1-Strategic-Flood-Risk-Assessment-Final-Report/pdf/BRK-JBAU-XX-XX-RP-HM-0001-S3-P02-Breckland_L1SFRA-Main_Report.pdf?m=1742221654257

Liz Whitcher
Chairman
3rd April 2025

Summary of National Flood Forum Webinar Presentation on Insurance for Flooded Properties

The presenter was Liz Mitchell who has her own insurance broker business called Flood Assist with 6 colleagues and she is part of the Flood Re Scheme for those whose properties have flooded. She has 29 years of experience in insurance.

General information about the insurance industry

1. Homeowners enter a legal contract with their insurance company which is a risk transfer mechanism where the latter takes on the risk on behalf of the homeowner. It gives certainty and a promise that a claim will be paid. But there is no obligation on the insurer's part to re-insure.
2. Insurance companies are in business to make money. Less appetite for insuring against flooding.
3. Now, they have to take into account the increased frequency of storms and flood events.
4. There has been a massive change in the past 5 years.
5. In 2022, insurers paid £122 in claims for every £100 premium.
6. In 2023, it was £118 paid in claims for every £100 premium.
7. In October 2024, premiums rose by 32% more than the previous year and 56% more than 2 years before.
8. Due to Covid, higher costs of materials for repair and cost of indoor burst pipes causing flooding.
9. So, all people's premiums have gone up, not just those who have been flooded.

Definition of a flood

1. A flood is a sudden ingress of water from outside to inside the property including groundwater.
2. Two types of ingress from groundwater – an ingress from a slow change in the water table and a sudden flood.
3. Surface water flooding is the most tricky because it can be due to a blocked culvert or a farmer ploughing his field the wrong way or some other seemingly random event. So, this is difficult for insurers to assess the risk.
4. Groundwater flooding is of two types. The first is a gradual change in the level of the water table, most often seen in areas where there is a chalk underlay. The second is where the water table level changes suddenly and affects properties which have basements. Many insurers don't insure against the first and are reluctant to include the second. If you suffer from groundwater flooding, make sure it is in your policy. Flood Re does include groundwater flooding. This is because the property insurance does include the gardens/grounds and flooding there is covered.

How do insurance companies assess flood risk?

1. Contrary to popular belief, they use multiple sets of data (not publicly available) not just the Environment Agency maps. Most are no longer using the postcode but the actual address.
2. Property Resilience Features do not make a difference to premiums at present, but this could be taken into account in the future. Companies do not have the resources of the training.

Flood Re

This is a scheme of insurance for insurers. It is owned jointly by UK insurance companies and a law established by the Government.

It is due to end in 2039 as properties are to be made more flood resilient, but it is thought it may have to continue longer than that because of pressure from big insurers. Sufficient notice of what will happen will be given.

How the scheme works

1. Insurance companies provide any homeowner with a regular, normal insurance policy. There are none for flood only.
2. Not all insurance companies are part of Flood Re.
3. Those that are, can access funds to cover the cost of repairing a flooded property if it was built before 2009 and is the main home.
4. The insurance company decides if it is in the Flood Re Scheme depending on how they assess the flood risk.
5. The flood excess for the homeowner is fixed at £250 if the insurer is part of the Flood Re Scheme.
6. Not all insurance companies do Build Back Better which costs around an additional £10,000. The insurer decides the criteria for when Build Back Better will be invoked eg you have flooded before, have a claim for a particular amount they set etc.

7. House insurance premium are set by Council Tax Band and will go up with effect from 1st April 2025.

Top tips for keeping premiums to a minimum

1. Shop around but check small print to see if flood risk is included in the policy.
2. Remove any additional cover such as legal cover or home emergency.
3. Add a voluntary excess for other than flooding.
4. Remove accidental damage cover to buildings, contents or both.
5. Remove cover for items away from home.
6. Cover just your buildings if you can't afford anything else.

Liz Whitcher

31st March 2025



Town Council Report for March 2024-25.

Dr David Dent

24-25 - A Highly Productive Year

This last year has been particularly productive for the Wayland Chamber of Commerce; undertaking a range of activities, some new, some re-introduced and given a new life and some the same that just keep on working for us all. These include:

Video Marketing: A grant from Breckland Council to test the market for video marketing with 15 Wayland businesses led to the establishment of the Chamber YouTube Channel, another form for the Chamber to promote itself and the interests of its members.

Breakfast Networking Meetings: Re-introduced following Covid the events have seen a consistent attendance and meetings now every two months.

The Jobs Fair: In its third year organised by Pat Warwick a definite date in the calendar that continues to gain plaudits from participant companies and visitors alike.

Improved marketing and social media: Consistent publication of the members monthly newsletter, promotion of events and activities on social media.

New Five year Strategy: The views of members and other businesses at an open event in 2024 form the basis of your new five year strategy that will:

1. Promote and implement with the Wayland Partnership the re-development of the Wayland House site with an iconic new building
2. A series of Member events e.g. business networking, jobs fair.
3. Training and skills development
4. Tourism and visitors
5. Growth of the Chamber to better serve all members and businesses in the Wayland area.

In the Community: Sponsorship of the Wayland Academy Awards night event and the Retail Christmas Window Competition.

Christmas Awards Evening: 2024 saw the new Annual Awards evening held as a Christmas evening Dinner event at Broom Hall attracting 50 representatives of local businesses and community organisations, with the Principal of Wayland Academy providing as compeer and Peter Dawe OBE the PIPEX entrepreneur as guest speaker. Awards were given for the Retail Business, A Special Business Support and Economic Development Award; Employee of the Year and Lifetime Achievement Award

Progress with the DCMC in partnership with the Wayland Partnership

The Cambridge consultants Deyton Bell were commissioned by Breckland District Council to undertake a business case study of the DCMC. The report was completed in November 2024 and supports the commercial/financial and community need and viability for the new centre. The Wayland Partnership and the Chamber in a good example of Watton and Wayland organisations working together for the greater good, are also working with Naked Marketing Ltd and Plain Speaking PR building our relationships with the Councils, Businesses and Government in support of securing funding for this major development in the heart of Watton.

Watton Town Council Support and the Annual Chamber Directory

Watton Town Council have been supportive of our endeavours and particular thanks go to Tomos Hutchins and the Mayor Don Saunders. The Council also supported the Chamber with a donation to enable us to maintain the Community Pages of our Annual Directory up to date, for which we are genuinely thankful. The Directory is delivered to residents within Wayland and remains a cornerstone of our efforts to promote our members services to our community.

Thanks also to all of the Committee Pat Warwick, Heather Nunn, Paul Girling, Michael Barwood and Ina Coubrough who give their time freely and for all of their hard work, commitment and dedication to the Chamber and our members. A special thanks to Ina Coubrough and the Wayland Academy and the Olde Windmill at Great Cressingham for hosting our Committee Meetings and to Broom Hall for hosting our events.

Report to the Annual Town Meeting April 2025

The Charlotte Harvey Trust is the charity that is responsible for Watton Community Centre on Harvey Street. The Centre is now the Home of Watton Food Hub which is part of the Nourishing Norfolk Network. Please see their separate report.

The Centre provides a base for fourteen community groups and activities with over 175 people using the Centre each week. There are 3 part time members of staff who are responsible for running the Centre and Food Hub and also work to improve the facilities and put on community activities.

Groups using the Community Centre during 2024-25:

Watton Junior School	<u>TinyTalk</u>
Yoga	Saracens Martial Arts
Benjamin Foundation Youth Group and Young Carers	HM Prison & Probation <u>Service Dog</u> Training Team
Sewing Group	Watton Family Group
Saracens Kickboxing	3 rd Watton Brownies
Hackers, Tackers & Stuffers	Breckland Boardgamers
All Nations Church	Chair Yoga
Wayland Short Mat Bowls	
As well as one-off use birthday parties and celebrations.	

Other activities in 2024-25:

Summer Family Fun Tuesdays

Free family activities held every Tuesday during the summer holiday. Funded with support from Tesco and Watton Town Council. The days were very popular with over 100 children and their 'adults' attended. Funded with support from Tesco and Watton Town Council.

c/o Watton Town Council 01953 881007
admin@wattontowncouncil.gov.uk
www.wattoncommunitycentre.co.uk

Community Day, Aug 2024

A chance to find out more about what is happening in the community with over 20 local groups and societies represented.

Wellbeing Day, March 2025

A chance to meet representatives from government and community groups offering support and advice. Hosted by Wayland Chamber of Commerce

Watton Food Hub

The Community Centre continues to host The Watton Food Hub. This provides a valuable service to the Community and now supports over 300 households in the Watton area.

Projects in 2024-25:

Kitchen

The kitchen has been completely refurbished and now has much improved facilities including an oven. Funded by Breckland Council from the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

Website

The Centre now has it's own dedicated website: www.wattoncommunitycentre.co.uk which include links to booking and information about the Centre. Funded by Love Norfolk via the Norfolk Community Foundation.

Orchard Trees

10 new orchard trees were planted thanks to funding from Breckland Council from the King's Coronation Living Heritage Fund.]

Plans for 2025-26:

Centre Access

Grant funding will be sought to improve disabled access and improve the car park.

Family Activity Days

As the days were so successful the team will aim to hold a family activity every Tuesday morning during the school holidays with support from local businesses and community groups, Tesco and Watton Town Council.

Falls Prevention

The team hope to set up a weekly exercise class that help older residents keep active and mobile.

WAYLAND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRUST

REPORT TO THE TOWN COUNCIL 2025

PRESENTED BY BRONWEN TYLER, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

It has been a busy year. The Business Case for the Digital and Creative Media Centre was completed by consultants Deyton Bell and is available to go out to potential investors and other interested parties. It includes draft plans for what the building might look like. However, the decisions made by the new government about the proposed unitary authority have delayed the funding potential so we are faced with keeping Wayland House safe and fit for purpose a little longer than expected. David Dent and I have been giving presentations on the project and we are available if any group or organization would like to learn more. David will explain progress in more detail in his report.

We are very pleased with our new website and grateful to Tom Clark for working with us to develop it. The site now combines the previously two separate ones for the Partnership and Dragonfly Gallery. The drawings of the proposed new build are on there to view. We are happy to include information from organisations in the Wayland area to promote their activities. We also run two facebook pages. One for the Partnership as a whole and one for the gallery.

The laptop courses were completed successfully with great feedback, but the drop in sessions, designed to offer further support for attendees and those needing a bit of one-off help, were not well supported and were discontinued. There is still demand for further courses and we are working on this, the need now being for a slightly different focus.

Our rentable offices are almost at full-time capacity, with just one used on a part-time basis a few times a week. We are especially pleased that our small meeting room is used each week on a Wednesday morning by Norfolk Citizens Advice. Our Support Officer, Nicki, worked hard to obtain their presence in Watton. Initially, it is a trial run in order to ascertain need and gain the evidence for continued funding. If the area wants it to remain it must be used, so please spread the word. At first, they did not want us to make a big fuss as they were concerned that they would be inundated before they had settled in, but we have placed articles in the Watton Times and parish magazines.

The Dragonfly Gallery has received quite a make-over. We have moved Swapshop into part of it and thanks to our volunteers, in particular Katie, it is looking very smart. We see it as part of our environmental remit to encourage recycling of crafting materials which might otherwise end up in landfill. It also enables people to craft cheaply, which supports the less well off in our community. The stock is much easier to view and we have seen a real increase in footfall now that is available whenever we are open and not just on Wednesday mornings. We have had a large amount of papercraft materials donated and this is being sorted. We will be creating packs of some of it to give to the schools who are always in need of supplies. We welcome donations of fabrics, wool, haberdashery, art materials, papercraft and other crafting items so long as it is clean and still suitable for crafting.

We continue to exhibit local craft and art, most recently showcasing the lifetime's work of a local craftswoman. One of our tenants has a sewing and craft room. She offers help with sewing and will undertake minor repairs. She also has a sales corner of surplus and preloved stock. We have had a good programme of workshops over the past year with many more planned. Getting together to craft is good for wellbeing and a way of making new friendships, so

to this end, as well as encouraging those who find many workshops too expensive, we have subsidised them whenever possible. We have taken part in Town events such as the bike weekend, which was so popular our car park was called into service to park some of the bikes. We served a lot of tea and coffee! Despite the weather affecting the Christmas market we were able to take our tombola and raffle out to other local events (Buckingham Lodge and St Mary's Christmas fair) so the wonderful donations of prizes were not wasted.

We continue to welcome volunteers to add to our rota managing the gallery, maintaining the garden and other tasks. We will be taking on a work experience from the Academy at the end of June for a week.

We are grateful for the grant allocated by the Town Council for essential works at Wayland House. All ageing buildings need continual upkeep and this is especially important in buildings used by the public if they are to remain safe and fit for purpose. We have spent the majority of the grant on essential works and have one or two jobs waiting for the contractors, which will account for the rest. So far we have had to install a new fire door; upgrade all our fire extinguishers following the last inspection due to changes in content requirements (and there are a lot!); repair light fittings, which includes a number of emergency exit lights which need upgrading and one damaged by a water leak. We are waiting for a further fire door to be replaced and the disabled toilet used by podiatry and physio patients to be repaired or replaced. It is a macerator and has been repaired quite recently so may need replacing. There is an occasional issue with the drainage which may need resolving by experts. We have obtained the most favourable quotes possible at all times to ensure value for money and that Wayland House remains a safe and comfortable environment. There will always be further repairs and maintenance once the grant is at an end. I meet regularly with the Town Clerk to ensure that we meet the terms of the grant and to foster working together.

We are very pleased to have the younger people of the town, and the Town Council, given a voice at Reps meetings by Tomos Hutchings. We have also welcomed new representatives from the churches. The Representatives Group is gradually getting up to the numbers we had at meetings before covid, which helps us all learn what issues Wayland has in common and together find ways to help.

In 2024 we were very conscious of the impact that rising energy costs might have, especially if we were to experience a harsh winter. There were also other projects for which we needed funding so we applied to National Lottery and obtained £20k. It may seem a lot but buildings such as Wayland House can be expensive to run, leaving less of our regular income to provide services and activities for the community. We have to heat and light the building 24/7 because our tenants all work varied hours, especially the police. Grants are a huge help in making sure we can do as much as possible. Peace of mind enables us to concentrate on activities and not just on running a building. We have other funding applications in the pipeline for the coming winter costs as we all face a very unpredictable time at the moment.

No two days are the same at Wayland House and it is hard to give a full picture of all we do in a short report. If you wish to learn more we are happy to give presentations or have you visit us.



The **Benjamin** Foundation

Watton Youth Group

Spring Term 2025 Report

Our group has gone from strength to strength since the merging of groups in April. We have continued to have new members. We have gained another 4 members across the two groups. In total we have 47 members: 23 Juniors and 24 Seniors. 26 of these young people are Young Carers.



Our young people gave us lots of different ideas of things they would like to do this term which we put in place. We have done lots of different crafts such as painting, jewellery making, origami and air-dry clay.

Many of our young people have been enjoying the new board games, such as Uno Teams and Rubick's Race.

We also got a new

basketball hoop, which is already being put to good use! The Community Centre has also got a new kitchen, complete with an oven meaning we have started being able to bake!



We also celebrated a couple of occasions, including both Valentines Day and Pancake Day. On Valentine's Day we had lots of themed crafts for the young people to make for themselves or their loved ones. To celebrate Pancake Day, we had lots of different types of pancakes, with many different topics to choose from!



We had **Jo** from **SENDIASS** and **Michelle** from **Breckland Family Hubs** visit our group. They did some activities with the young people, getting them to think about ways they could relax and take care of themselves when they are struggling. We also had a drop-in for parents to chat to Jo and Michelle if they felt they needed some extra support or had any questions.



We also had another great visit from **Miranda Shaw** from **UEA**. The session helped them to further identify their strengths and start to look at what career options may be out there for them, including jobs they haven't considered before. Miranda will kindly be delivering personalised information sheets to help them when it comes to making decisions about future career options.



Our older young people were also invited to an Exam Stress workshop run by Cup-O-T. With their GCSE and A level exams coming up, this was something that was asked for. Many of our young people are homeschooled, so don't often get the opportunity to access workshops such as these.

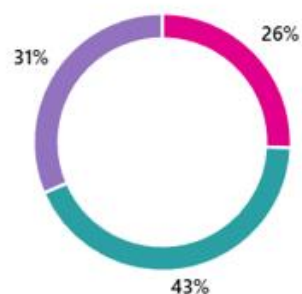
We were lucky enough to receive some money from Swaffham Rotary Club, Watton Rotary Club and the Inner Wheel in Watton. This money went towards trips during the February half term. Some of our young people chose to go bowling at Strikes. They had a great time bowling and playing on the arcades! Some of our other young people went to a swim session alongside North Walsham young carers. They had a great time on the Wobstacle!



Outcomes:

7. How would you rate your mental wellbeing/health?

● Poor	0
● Fair	9
● Good	15
● Very good	11



Support was offered to those struggling with their mental wellbeing. 3 young people have been receiving 1:1 support during the Spring Term.

A lot of young people said that if they weren't at the group, they would be at home, often in bed or playing video games. Many of them said that they come to group to get out of the house, and to see friends.

There was a lot of positive feedback about why the young people enjoy coming to the group:

'I like the games and the colouring'

'I get to see my friends'

'I can meet new friends'

Lots of the young people who started this term and said it is 'lovely' and they have made new friends from coming along.

What's Next?

We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back in the Summer term. We are looking forward to being able to spend more time doing activities outside, with more sports coaches coming in! We have received funding from Tesco Stronger Starts that will go towards a trip during the summer holidays! We are also planning to start fundraising for a bigger trip. The young people have already got plenty of ideas for how to raise the money!

Reports received from other Organisations and local groups

864 (Watton) Squadron ATC Watton Town Council Report 2024-25

864 (Watton) Squadron Air Training Corps continues to thrive in the town and has enjoyed another successful year of activities and service since the last Town Meeting. Currently sitting a 33 cadets, we are looking forward to our next recruitment nights in May and September to welcome new members.

Primarily an aviation-focused organisation, we were pleased to see our first few cadets of 2025 get into the air at RAF Cranwell in March. For the three, this was their first experience of powered flying in a small aircraft and loved every minute of it – all of them asking for aerobatics and to take control! We also had a number of cadets enjoy gliding in a winch launched glider in 2024, held at RAF Honington. With perfect weather for gliding, the cadets were able to get hands on with the engineless aircraft and assist with launching the gliders as well as taking control of them when in the air.



One of our biggest highlights of 2024-25 was our first ever Adventurous Training camp to the Yorkshire Dales in February 2025. Run entirely by Squadron staff, we spent five days trekking in the national park, staying locally in a bunk barn in Grassington. For February, the weather was quite pleasant on most days, if a little on the cold side. However, all were prepared for this weather and brought plenty of warm layers. We even enjoyed a day of exciting activities at a local activity centre, where cadets challenged themselves with high ropes, axe throwing and an old-fashioned sports day (which got very competitive!). All participants climbed Malham Cove on the Thursday, getting very wet in a torrential

downpour but still thoroughly enjoying themselves. We have been asked on several occasions when we are going back!



We've seen a variety of badges and qualifications awarded to our cadets over the last 12 months, with awards in shooting, road marching, first aid, radio and cyber communications and more. During the winter months, we had a focus on our organisation's new space syllabus and I was proud to be able to present 22 blue space badges to our cadets over the last two months.

We've also celebrated success in a number of other areas. We placed third out of 25 Squadrons in the Norfolk and Suffolk Wing Drill Competition in October. We also held our Annual Awards and Presentation Evening in November 2024 to celebrate the hard work of our cadets throughout the year. One of our cadets, Flight Sergeant Lily-May Goddard-Kemp, was also awarded a Rotary Club Young People's Award, and Flight Sergeant Ailish Jenner and Cadet Emily Poole saw success in the 2024 cross country competition, representing Norfolk and Suffolk Wing in the event at RAF Cranwell.



The Squadron has also been engaged in supporting the local community, helping out at over 30 community events since the last Town Meeting. We supported community fetes, the Town Crier Competition, commemoration events, litter picks and more. We have another busy year ahead of us in 2025 with community gardening, a litter pick and plenty of coffee mornings already scheduled within the next month.



I'd like to thank all those who support 864 Squadron and allow us to do what we do. Volunteer staff, Civilian Committee members, parents and guardians, Watton Town Council and members of the public all play an important part in supporting our young people to develop and become the best versions of themselves that they can be.

We are really excited to see what 2025 holds for us. We have a busy schedule already and are already looking ahead to our 50th anniversary in 2027 where we hope to deliver some large-scale events to celebrate our many years of service to the young people of Watton and Breckland.

Flt Lt Alex Stapleton RAFAC
Officer Commanding

Loch Neaton Parkrun

Loch Neaton parkrun has just celebrated it's 6th birthday. Our numbers are steady and can range from 50 through to 80. We have an amazing band of volunteers too that help to keep the show on the road, and many regular runners and walkers. We are also greatly supported by the sports centre and by Watton Medical Centre who are a registered parkrun practitioner.

We have also been joined now by our sibling Watton Sports Centre Junior parkrun which started in November 2024. This event is growing in popularity with many children coming along on a Sunday morning to run or walk 2k and with the warmer weather on the horizon we are hoping that this will encourage more children to come along.

Parkrun as a company continues to grow, and at the moment they are committed to relaunching parkwalk. This is an amazing initiative to encourage people to be more active and sociable as the emphasis is on coming along to parkwalk with your friends and family and have a chat whilst you are doing it.

On Saturday 26th April, parkruns in the UK are joining together to host the Let's Walk Together' event where they are going to try and break the parkrun record for the number of walks at parkrun in the UK. We are actively encouraging people to bring along a friend or a family member to join in.

Parkrun is an amazing phenomenon and does wonders for people's physical and mental health, so if you haven't tried it we suggest that you do, and why not make Saturday 26th April your first one!.



Supported by
Watton Town Council

info@museumforwatton.org.uk

Wayland Hall,
Middle Street,
Watton IP25 6AG

01953 797060

info@museum4watton

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2025

Following on from last year we have spent the last twelve months completing the alterations and improvements to the Council Chamber, which we now share. The new pelmets with the Museum logo have been fitted and Coffee bar is now open. Six glass cabinets are being displayed, one with the history of Wayland Hall, regarding which, a booklet is now available, the others representing, the Council in the past, the High Street as it has been, the Round Table and Ladies Circle, and local Industry, the final cabinet shows the history of our three churches.

We have been loaned and bequeathed what we believe to be the finest collection of Pre Penny-Black Postal History relating to Norfolk and in particular Watton. Towards displaying the items 18 display cases have been made with UV acrylic covers, and manufactured from recycled antique furniture, the display has completed by two young men who are doing a D of E award. These show cases are fitted above a series of low-level cupboards that we have especially made to house part of the Ruth Dwornik photographic archive, there about half a million negatives in the archive, 60 euro-boxes of which are housed at the Museum, the remainder being in store. The non personal items from this archive are being published, look at Museum 4 Watton You Tube, the first few thousand can be seen there and we are adding to them weekly.

The Museum and Coffee Bar are now open Wednesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm.

Chis Hutchings
Chairman



Member Association of Independent Museums
Member Heritage Network Norfolk
CIO Registration 1164831



The Queens Hall
Norwich Road,
Watton,
Norfolk
IP25 6DA

This past year has been a good year for the Queens Hall. We have been very fortunate to be the venue of choice for a growing number of community groups and classes. It is wonderful to see the Hall being used often and by such a diverse range of people - on a regular basis, we welcome ballroom dancing, Broadway Boogie, carpet bowls, bingo, jiu jitsu, line dancing, pilates, antiques fairs, trading card fairs, mediumship and car boot sales to the Hall.

We have recently worked with Tom, from TCQC to redesign our website and streamline our booking system. We were so impressed by Tom's professionalism and his creativity. We now have a website we are proud of and encourage everyone to take a look - if only to admire Tom's fantastic work!

We have made investments in the Hall in the last year to help secure its future - we have re-laid the sprung dance floor and continue to maintain this aging building to the best of our ability. Our thanks must go to the small, but mighty team who voluntarily do all of the maintenance the Hall needs. They meet weekly and we would not be able to function without them.

We are of course indebted to Mike and Barbara Rix, who have been the custodians of the Queens Hall for so many years, and who continue to be on hand for the regular and ad hoc hirers of the Hall.

As we go forward, we are looking for more volunteers to join us. We would be happy to hear from anyone who thinks they could help us to run and look after this local landmark.

Aimée Neale

Secretary of the Queens Hall Committee.

Watton Food Hub Report Spring 2025

Since opening, Watton Food Hub has continued to grow. We opened in January 2023 and by 3rd April 2025, 335 members had joined.

We have continued to support local residents within the Wayland boundaries. As we do not ask for proof of income, we are able to support households that might fall through the net as they are over the threshold for receiving other forms of support. For example, families who are working and don't qualify for benefits can access cheaper nutritional foods at the Hub. Some of our items are free, for example, fresh fruit and vegetables, certain hygiene products (soap and sanitary products), bread and other essentials on our free shelf. Other food items, pet food and household groceries are available at discounted rates.

I am incredibly grateful to have a team of wonderful volunteers who support me in the running of the Hub. 12 volunteers help on a regular basis. They help with roles such as pricing grocery deliveries and stacking shelves, collecting donations, helping members fill in membership forms, making hot drinks for members, plus working on the till and cashing up.

We have been able to help people to access food, but the Hub has also become much more. Members like to meet up and have a chat or stay and have a hot drink in the Community Hot Spot. I have also been able to do referrals to Breckland Council for a few households that needed a little extra help, plus we have been able to distribute a few 'tide you over' (emergency) parcels for those in desperate need. We also accessed funding that enabled us to give each household £100 of goods, which members were able to claim around £5 per session in order to help them manage their budgets.

We have increased our product range vastly in the last year. We have been able to work with local businesses to offer high quality meat, dairy products and eggs at discounted prices. We have also been able to join the Fareshare scheme which means we can purchase discounted foods that Fareshare have collected from supermarkets and suppliers. This also helps to cut down on food waste and enables us to be sustainable as we continue to offer discounted prices.

I have really enjoyed getting to know our members and as budgets are becoming tighter with recent price rises, I am sure Watton Food Hub will be needed as much next year.

Jo Howe, Watton Food Hub Supervisor

WATTON INNER WHEEL CLUB.

Our club has had a continuous presence in the town since 1981 when it was very much part of the Rotary family. Since that time women joining do not have to have a family connection to a Rotary member although we do, of course, maintain a friendly link with the Watton Rotary club.

We have had a regular membership of around 20 – 25 ladies and run the club with a President who changes every year and committee members who serve for 3 year terms.

We have a monthly evening meeting now held in the Methodist Centre on the third Thursday of each month where we frequently have an interesting speaker or sometimes organise our own entertainment. This fulfils our aim of providing fun and friendship to members.

We do participate in the town Christmas market and offer public events each year in the form of several Lunchtime concerts held in the Queens Hall (where 2 of our members are on the committee) and also 4/5 coffee mornings on Wednesdays in the Methodist Centre. Our President will sometimes arrange a special event to raise funds for the charity of her choice for that year.

These activities do raise funds towards our Benevolent funds which we distribute twice a year to both local, National and International charities.

Our club is part of the Inner Wheel structure which has a District, National and International Organisation and our members enjoy their visits to District events and to both the annual National Conferences and the International Conventions which happen every 3 years. These always provide stimulating speakers and enable you to form friendships across the country and to meet members from across the world. 5 members were able to attend the Convention held in Manchester last year when Inner Wheel celebrated it's 100th year in the city in which it was born. It was quite an occasion!

Brenda Davis

Club Secretary.

Watton Twinning Association Chairman's Report March 2024

This again has been a very busy year, which started with our AGM and Cream Tea in March then the Watton to Weeze visit in May, 15 members travelled on a 17 seat minibus, with our planned itinerary and Open House with Chairman Benedikt, Melonie and family a good time was had by all.

During our visit we had a special event at The Weeze RAF museum on the old RAF Laarbruch site which is now Weeze Airport. The museum has tripled its size from the last time we visited it by taking over some of the adjacent buildings. This celebration was made all the more special as with the help of Watton Town Council who very generously gave us a grant which enabled us to purchase 3 very large photo albums and to get printed hundreds of photos taken from the very start of twinning in 1984 when we were canvassing for members, the official signing in 1987 and right up until February 2024 also a framed collage picture of places of importance in Watton, these were presented to the people of the museum who were delighted to receive them, we had a great celebration with them and the Press was there to record it all for the newspapers.

The Coronation Picnic was very enjoyable also The Beetle Drive afternoon. Unfortunately I had to cancel the July event due to bereavement. Carnival was held in October at the Sports Centre which was later than usual, as we had our Oktoberfest at The Old Bell as well we decided not to do the town fireworks event as it was to many events in one month. A huge Thank You to Cindy and Graham at the Bell who always support us brilliantly with our fundraising. We also had a table at the Festive Market at the end of November, a very successful event.

Unfortunately I had to cancel our New Year Get-together in January due to a burst pipe and no heating. February we had our Anniversary Meal, a Carvery at the Old Bell Saham Toney, 16 members attended also our guests Watton Town Mayor Peter Bishop and his wife Catherine plus 1 other guest.

I hope members have been happy with the efforts that I with the enormous help of the committee have done throughout the year to keep all our events enjoyable and running smoothly. I'm very happy to say we have some new members Maude & Malcolm Ankomah & Terry Fenge. We need more people to come onto the committee at the moment there are just 5 of us, please think seriously about this if you wish your Twinning club to survive. We have meetings approx. every 2 months on Mondays. Except for the AGM all meetings are held at my place, during the winter months at 2pm and others start at 7pm and normally finish by 9pm. Please come and talk to me if you are interested

I would like to say a huge Thank You to our Watton Town Council for the huge support they have given us over the years.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make these occasions successful.

We are now looking forward and making plans for several events during the course of 2024/25

May:- Weeze to Watton Visit, 17 members travelling on 2 minibuses. Plans to be made.

July: Cream Tea & Quiz? Possibly a Beetle Drive

Sept:- Carnival?

Oct:- Town Fireworks & Oktoberfest

Nov:- Festive Christmas Market

Jan 2025:- New Year Get-together.

Feb: Anniversary Meal.

March: AGM

This concludes my report for this year.

Margaret Devine (Chairman)

Report to Watton Town Council AGM - 15th April 2025

from

Watton Evening WI

Charity No. 1017171

Watton Evening WI celebrates its 35th birthday this year. It is part of the National Federation of Women's Institutes and here in the Norfolk Federation we have our own house in Norwich which enables us to meet up and participate in diverse activities.

The Women's Institute is the largest women's organisation in the UK. We are non-party political and non sectarian and we pride ourselves on being a trusted place for all women of all generations, and provide life long learning and self development opportunities for women in England and Wales.

We have national annual campaigns which have included recently, clean rivers, domestic abuse of women and the lack of dentists.

Here in Watton other than our monthly meetings on the 2nd Thursday of each month our members can take part in our lunch club, craft group, book club and games afternoon and we hope soon to start a walking group.

We lost a few members during Covid but membership has risen and we look forward to an interesting programme of speakers and activities as well as taking part in community events.

Visitors and New Members are always welcome to our meetings at the Methodist Centre.

Wayland Men's Shed

Wayland Men's Shed has now been in existence since 2016. We moved from the old school house in Church Walk, to the Sports Centre in Dereham Road in May 2021. We have converted the old groundsman's building into a woodworking shop and a computer and printer repair shop. We currently have 96 registered and paid-up members with potential new men regularly visiting or enquiring about becoming members. Apart from being able to actively spend time in the workshops there is also a social room where members engage in games and just enjoying a chat over tea, coffee and biscuits.

The current average age of members is 74 with our youngest member being 28 and our oldest member being 95. We are a community group which is run by a committee of 7. We hold bi-monthly meetings addressing issues arising and ensuring the smooth running of the group. Our AGM is held in June each year when the committee members are elected. We are currently seeking to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

We have a number of sub- groups for members to engage with if they wish.

We have a camera group who call themselves "The Shutterists" who go on monthly trips to places of interest to take pictures plus a monthly photo competition.

There is a music appreciation group who meet up once a month to listen to a variety of different music chosen by individuals attending. Each piece is scored by those in attendance and a winner announced at the end of the session.

There is a shanty group who meet up twice a month to enjoy singing shanty songs. Their success has been such that they are regularly in demand to sing at different functions (10 so far this year).

We hold regular events and since last June have held 2 Quiz nights, a summer Bar-b-que, a Christmas meal at Broom Hall and a mulled wine and mince pie morning.

Our shed proudly played host to a gathering of Men's sheds throughout Norfolk which is called a "Mardle" (a Norfolk and Suffolk term for a chat or gossip). We have also had trips out and these included the Cromer end of pier show, the Thursford Christmas spectacular and ten pin bowling at Strikes Bowling Alley in Dereham.

Although shed days on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are for our Men members all functions and outings are open to members their partners and guests.

We must give thanks to the trustees and staff at the sports centre who are very helpful and fully support us. Also, to the co-op who chose us as one of their recipients of coop local group grant for coop members to support through shopping with them. They also supply us with tea and coffee for our sessions. Not forgetting Watton Town Council who have been constant supporters of the men's shed and who we work together with on a regular basis.

We are proud that being a member of our Men's Shed has a big impact on Men's well-being.