

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday 23rd July 2024 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall

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

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

9 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED AND APPROVED from
Steve Turley-Long

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST MADE:
Tobi Amadasun declared an interest in item 9.

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on July 9th 2024 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3.2 Updates from items raised at the meeting on July 9th 2024:

- Electrical works undertaken 19.07.24 in response to works identified in the 5yr fixed electrical wiring inspection at Wayland Hall.
- Written report re. Breckland Local Plan included in agenda pack 19.07.24. The Clerk of Carbrooke Council has said he, and possibly some Carbrooke Parish Councillors would be willing to attend a meeting re. the Local Plan with George Freeman MP, if the TC arranges this. George Freeman has been approached but no response received to date.
- Structural Engineer has visited Wayland Hall 11.07.24. Report awaited.
- Wayland Partnership has been invited to attend a future Town Council meeting to support their donation application.
- Norfolk County Council has been asked for an update on schemes for trods along Norwich Road.
- An initial enquiry has been made to request s106 funding for improvements to the Bridle Road Play Area.
- The Council is awaiting new client care documents from the solicitors working on the transfer of the Thetford Road Allotment site to Watton Town Council.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman attended the Finance Committee Meeting on July 12th, Watton Carnival on July 14th and a site meeting at the Thetford Road Allotment Site on July 18th. He also presented the Watton in Bloom trophy on July 18th.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman has attended the HR Committee meeting on July 18th and, with other Councillors, the Summer Fun Day at the Charlotte Harvey Trust on the 23rd.

4.3 District Councillor's Report

District Councillor Tina Kiddell has shared recent e-mail trails regarding Breckland Councils decision to introduce car parking charges in the market towns and she is meeting with local High Street businesses to establish a "battle plan" to oppose the decision.

District Councillor Keith Gilbert is supporting Cllr Kiddell as best he can as Chairman of Breckland Council.

Cllr Kiddell has reported to Norfolk County Council (NCC) that the footway along the Dereham Road opposite the entrance gate to Loch Neaton is in need of clearing. The Clerk was asked to also report this to NCC.

4.4 County Councillors Report

County Councillor Claire Bowes was not present at the meeting with no written report received.

4.5 Clerks Report

Written report presented in Councillors Agenda packs with verbal update given:

Anglian Water

An e-mail has been received from Anglian Water stating that Anglian Water is currently working on a project in Watton and they would like to work closely with the community. They have people who would like to take part in any volunteering schemes locally.

A suggestion will be put to Anglian Water that volunteers could clean and re-paint the weighbridge at Memorial Garden.

Clock

After many months the clock in the High Street Clock Tower is working! Cost for repairs £7583 plus VAT.

Staff Training

Councillors were provided with information relating to recent training undertaken by staff.

Banking Hub

Notification has been received that the anticipated permanent Banking Hub will be located in the former Barclays Bank in Watton High Street as from Autumn 2024.

Love Your Market Town

A £20000 investment fund has been created by Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council to give local community groups and businesses the opportunity to sell their ideas to a panel, with successful applicants receiving funding up to £2000 to put their plans into action to support initiatives to help generate footfall in the market towns.

4.6 Staff Well-being Report

Council received the Well-being Report submitted by the Events & Marketing Officer.

It was resolved to produce a staff Well-being Policy but in the mean-time a Team Building Day will be supported to be held between September and November 2024 at a cost of up to £500. Staff will be asked to put a suggested package for the day together, to include the venue and costs, and bring this back to Council by the end of August. The Council endorsed the process of staff discussion and well-being to be undertaken by members of the HR Committee.

It was agreed that the HR Committee is to work on a suite of HR Policies to be in place perhaps by September 1st 2024.

4.7 Reports from Lead Councillors

- The Lead Councillor for Youth reported that he has been invited to the 864 Watton Air Cadets Summer Barbecue and Families Evening. The Mayor has also been invited and both will attend if able.
- The Lead Councillor for Emergency Planning reported that he has met with the Chairman of the Watton & Saham Flood Action Group and the Watton Emergency Plan is to be resurrected with volunteers to be recruited for key areas.
- The Chairman of the HR Committee reported that following the appointment of CBR as HR consultants work has begun on review of the Staff Handbook and Policies.

4.8 Report from Working Groups

4.8i Notes from the Church Walk Working Group Meeting held 16.07.24 were received.

4.8ii The Terms of Reference for the Church Walk Working Group were accepted as presented.

4.8iii Notes from the Heritage Park Working Group Meeting held 17.07.24 were received.

4.8iv The Terms of Reference for the Heritage Park Working Group were accepted as presented.

4.8v Allotments

Allotment holders were present at the meeting.

It is hoped that grounds work now undertaken at the Thetford Road Allotment site will help alleviate concerns raised about the management of the site.

There are currently 4 vacant plots which hopefully will be filled from those on the allotment waiting list.

The Thetford Road Allotment site meeting was seen as positive and further conversations will be held with allotment holders regarding removal of waste from site, access through the site and whether or not a gate is wanted at the north end of the site.

4.9 The Chairman of the Watton & Saham Flood Action Group had provided a written report which had been circulated within the agenda pack for the meeting and was present to give a verbal update at the meeting.

5. WORKS IN PROGRESS

The Works in Progress list was received.

Noted that the bench at Memorial Garden is still to be returned and that research is ongoing regarding possible purchase of two additional SAM2 (speed awareness monitor) signs through the Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership Scheme.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public spoke vehemently against the proposed introduction of car parking charges in Watton.

It was agreed to consider item 8, the introduction of car parking charges to the Breckland Market Towns at this point.

Much discussion took place around the detrimental effects charging for parking would have on the town, its residents and those who work in the town.

Points raised included:

- Annoyance and upset caused in that there has been no proper consultation, although Breckland Council claims to be working in partnership with the towns
- grave concern for businesses and the long term impact on the town centre
- concern regarding issues that the displacement of parking to residential streets will cause
- belief that free parking is a USP to attract visitors

Those that have already put in work to object to the charging proposals were thanked and **it was resolved that** Watton Town Council will oppose the proposals to bring in car parking charges and would be prepared to work with other Town Councils towards obtaining a democratic consultation which could then be considered.

7. FINANCE

7.1 Payments for July 2024 were approved for payment as presented.

7.2 The draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 12th July 2024 were received.

7.3 Recommendations from the Finance Committee meeting held on 12th July, as resolved:

7.3i **It was resolved that** in response to the Internal Auditors suggestion that the Council should approve a Reserves Policy: that, in consideration for a worst-case scenario, the Council will ensure an amount equal to 50% of the annual budget figure is held in reserve to cover all legal responsibilities.

7.3ii **It was resolved that** the Council purchases the two centre pages of the new Watton & Wayland Times each month at a cost of £400 per month.

7.3iii **It was resolved to** spend £1746.43 plus VAT on 7 new canopies and side walls for the Market Gazebos. The gazebos to be stored in the Town Council unit and erected by staff.

7.3iv The contractor engaged by the Town Council has failed to cut the grass at Heritage Park so **it was resolved to** accept the quote from the Town Council preferred contractor to undertake a single cut at a cost of £750.

7.4 Mayor's Chain

It was resolved to accept the quote as presented of £4692.01 plus VAT to commission a new Mayor's Chain of Office.

As it is the 50th anniversary of the Town Council [established in 1974] recognition will be made of this on the new chain. **It was resolved** that the Finance Committee could agree additional expenditure relating to the commission as necessary.

8. CAR PARKING CHARGES

(considered after public participation)

9. YOUTH CONFERENCE

It was resolved that the Town Council would support the Watton Sports and Social Club plans to hold a Youth Conference later in 2024 and that the organisation is invited to request an appropriate grant to assist with the event.

10. EVENTS COMMITTEE

It was resolved to defer item 10 until it is known what is being requested relating to the establishment of an Events Committee.

11. PLANNING

11.1 3PL/2024/0563/VAR - Variation of Condition No2 on 3PL/2016/1094/F - design and layout changes - WATTON: Tiffany House 24A Merton Road

No comments

11.2 3PN/2024/0027/PNE - Prior approval for proposal to erect a single storey rear extension projecting from the original rear wall by 4.05m deep, with a maximum height of 3.1m and eaves height of 2.35m The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A - 252 Lovell Gardens IP25 6TU WATTON

No comments

11.3 3PL/2024/0542/HOU - Proposed Single Storey Front Extension - WATTON: 1 Windsor Court

No comments

11.4 3OB/2024/0026/VOB - Application to modify the planning obligation under Schedule 2 - Affordable Housing relating to the S106 Agreement on 3PL/2014/1378/F (as amended on ref 3PL/2023/0408/VAR) - to modify/remove the proportion of affordable housing on the site. - WATTON: AND CARBROOKE Land at Former Officers Mess Site, Norwich Road

Strong objection

11.5 3PL/2024/0423/F Proposal A) Change of Use for Unit B1 to include Sui Generis (to permit display and sale of motor vehicles). B) Amended west elevations of Units B1 & C1 - Neaton Business Park South, B1 & C1 Norwich Road IP25 6JB Parish WATTON

No comments

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11.6 3PL/2024/0424/A Proposal 3 new illuminated signs and new glazed personnel door and sectional door to Unit B1. - Neaton Business Park South, B1 & C1 Norwich Road IP25 6JB Parish WATTON

No comments

12. It was resolved to exclude the public and press to consider confidential staffing matters

12.1 Staffing Matters

The Chairman of the HR Committee gave a precis of the minutes of the HR Committee Meeting held on 18.07.24.

It was noted staff are often undertaking more than their weekly contracted hours.