

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday 28th January 2025 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall

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

Keith Prince joined the meeting at item 4.

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED AND APPROVED from

Tony Bridges, Tina Kiddell, Catherine Turley-Long and Steve Turley-Long.

District Councillor/County Councillor Claire Bowes sent notice that she could not attend the meeting.

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. CO-OPTION

It was resolved to co-opt Keith Prince to fill the one casual vacancy on the Council.

Keith Prince duly signed his Acceptance of Office Form and took his seat at the Council table.

4. MINUTES

4.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on January 14th 2025 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Updates from items raised at the meeting on January 14th 2025 not agenda items for this meeting:

- High Street Bus Shelter Solar Panels

Update from contractors

When solar panels are fixed to shelter roofs, they have to be fixed securely using adhesive and fixings, in order to prevent them being vandalised or stolen.

Removing solar panels from a bus shelter, to reuse elsewhere is not a common occurrence and so whilst the contractors have the solar panels, they are still attached to the old roof panel which was removed from the shelter. The old roof panel has been sawn to match the same size of the solar panel but they wouldn't look very good attached to the new shelter roof, so we have chosen not to use them.

New panels will power both the RTI unit and the lights. There is no additional cost for these and from an aesthetics point of view it will look better.

- Additional £150,000 now invested with CCLA.

- The quote received for replacement windows in the Council Chamber has been accepted. Awaiting date for works.

- Budget and Precept request submitted and received by Breckland Council. Payment will be made in April 2025 and September 2025.

- Watton Sports Centre booked for Annual Town Meeting April 15th 2025.

5. REPORTS

5.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman has visited Buckingham Lodge on 19.01.25 to talk to residents and the Finance/HR Meeting on 23.01.25.

5.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman has attended the Police Priority Setting Meeting held on 15.01.25 and the Finance/HR Meeting on 23.01.25.

5.3 District Councillor's Report

E-mailed reports from District Councillors Tina Kiddell and Claire Bowes had been forwarded to Town Councillors prior to the meeting.

District Councillor Keith Gilbert reported that Breckland Council is moving forward in making improvements to shop fronts in Watton High Street. As Chairman of Breckland Council, he attended the recent Holocaust Memorial Service held at St. Peter Mancroft Church, Norwich.

Cllr Gilbert was asked about the reported £350000 being budgeted by Breckland Council to replace Councillors laptops and mobiles.

5.4 County Councillors Report

Written report received from County Councillor Claire Bowes was forwarded to Cllrs prior to the meeting.

5.5 Clerks Report as presented in the agenda pack with verbal update given:

- Car Parks

Call held with Breckland Council Officers 24.01.25 re. draft lease for Watton Town Council to manage the Breckland Council owned car parks in the town. Once the draft Heads of Terms for a lease have been compiled they will be shared with the Town Council.

- Breckland Five Towns Meeting 23.01.25

Points raised:

- Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution – more will be known at the end of the month. Anticipate Mayoral elections in May 26 if Unitary is introduced.
- Local Plan Update – Government target of 900 new dwellings per year within Breckland.

- Staff Training

Clerk and Deputy Clerk – The Procurement Act 2023 21.01.25 (Online)

Clerk and Deputy Clerk – Sexual Harassment 28.01.25 (Online)

All Staff Training Workshop – 13.02.25 (To be held at Watton Sports Centre. The Town Council Office will be closed for the morning.)

- Middle Street pedestrianisation

Breckland Council is waiting to hear from Norfolk County Council regarding the Middle Street proposals with an update expected in February.

- Wayland Partnership

Notes from the Wayland Partnership Meeting held on 13.01.25 e-mailed to Councillors 16.01.25. The Clerk and Events Officer visited the Partnership on 21.01.25.

- Foot counters

Breckland Council is proceeding with the installation of two footfall counters in Watton High Street. The cameras are to be placed at locations where there are already CCTV cameras as the brackets belong to Breckland Council.

- High Street Flag Poles

Breckland Council is refitting four flagpoles to chosen properties in the High Street. New brackets and anti-furling devices will be installed at the Banking Hub, Maxi Poli International Supermarket, Steven Smith Butchers and Watton Health Office.

5.6 Lead Councillors

Heritage Lead Councillor Kathryn Stallard informed the Council that she has filed a copy of papers relating to the Walsingham Gates with the Museum4Watton, with hard copies also held in the Town Council Office.

5.7 SNAP Meeting Report from Gillian Tarrant:

Gill gave a verbal precis of the minutes of the SNAP meeting:

Face to face meeting held at Watton Town Hall

Attended by two community police officers; Pete Fuller and Justin, Councillors Gillian Tarrant and Tomos Hutchings and three members of the public (two of whom are Neighbourhood Watch members).

P.C. Austin Clarke sent apologies due to illness.

Pete Fuller explained a change to the structure of the SNAP meetings, the meetings will now take the format of those in Norwich.

There will now be a face-to-face meeting in each of the four areas with a Teams meeting two weeks later when the chairs of each meeting will receive feedback from the police regarding priority issues.

Everyday issues are seen as those such as speeding, anti-social behaviour etc. Although these are issues that concern residents the priority will be given to major issues such as arson.

Crimes should be reported via the online system, Crimestoppers or by telephone (Not Facebook).

Unfortunately, police resources are stretched and local officers have found they are often called to attend out of area incidents which may have a negative effect on visible police presence around the town.

Watton is considered to have a low crime rate with a higher than average 'clear up rate'. It is possible that some minor crimes are not reported as it may seem to those concerned it is not worth it however if it's not reported it can't be recorded in local crime figures.

A lot of shoplifting goes unreported, the Shop Watch scheme that operates in other areas could be of use to local shops.

Councillor Tarrant suggested the police contact the council Events Officer to explore the possibility of putting something in the free paper to inform residents of how to report crimes. The police were also invited to attend community events to offer an approachable presence, again via contacting the Events Officer.

[Also noted that the Police have received less reports about Church Walk and it is not considered to be an unsafe place.]

6. WORKS IN PROGRESS

The Works in Progress list was noted.

Suggested updates will be made to the Works in Progress List.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public present.

- It will be checked what has happened to requested signage at Heritage Park.
- Suggestion made that references to review of staffing policies could be merged.

8. FINANCE

8.1 Payments for January 2025 were approved for payment as on the list presented prior to the meeting, with the addition of £140 for two members of the staff to attend the NPTP Spring Seminar.

8.2 The draft minutes from the Finance Committee held on 23.01.25 were noted.

8.3 Recommendations from the Finance Committee

I.**It was resolved** to increase the Training Budget as deemed necessary and in agreement with the Finance Committee.

II.**It was resolved** to accept the quote received of £8125 plus VAT to commission an organisational staffing re-structure for Watton Town Council.

III.**It was resolved** to consider a contract with the preferred grounds maintenance contractor for provision of support for the Town Operatives should one or both be off work.

IV.**It was resolved** to increase the monthly expenditure limit on the Town Council bank card to £3000.

V.**It was resolved** to ratify the decision that no increase to Cemetery, Market or Allotment Fees is to be made during the forthcoming financial year.

VI. **It was resolved** to agree to proceed with the transfer of the Thetford Road Allotment land to the Town Council and to accept additional associated costs.

VII. **It was resolved** to accept the quote of £2015 plus VAT from Force8 to provide security and first aid cover as necessary for the 2025 Town Council events.

9. TREE ASSESSMENT

Tree Risk Assessment received and noted.

10. NORFOLK ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC)

Communication received from NALC was noted.

11. PLANNING

Planning applications received for consultation:

11.1 PL/2024/0796/FMIN New residential scheme on site of former gas works for 3No. dwellings Land At 2 Saham Road, Watton, IP25 6EA53 Griston Road, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6DN

Comment will be submitted that the proposed third dwelling at the front of the site will have a negative visual impact on a non-designated Heritage Asset. Town Council will request that this application be considered by the Planning Committee.

11.2 PL/2025/0040/HOU Proposed single storey rear extension and new garage
No comment.

12. No resolution passed to exclude the public and press.