

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday December 9th 2025 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall

Councillors Present: Gillian Tarrant – Chairman, Keith Gilbert, Sarah Humphries, Tomos Hutchings, Graham Martin, Keith Prince, Don Saunders, Jack White

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

4 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED from

Tina Cruz, Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn, Tina Kiddell

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on November 25th 2025 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3.2 Update from the meeting held on November 25th 2025 not agenda items for this meeting:

- The downstairs toilet at Wayland Hall is scheduled to be replaced w/b 15.12.25.
- Meeting to be arranged with Watton Sports Association regarding the play area.
- Breckland Council has been informed that Watton Town Council is keen to take ownership of all open spaces offered in the parish. Breckland are to produce a hard copy map of areas on offer.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman has:

27.11.25 Attended Finance Committee Meeting

30.11.25 Attended Festive Market and lights switch on

04.12.25 Attended US Air Force Tri-Wing Yuletide Reception and tree lighting at RAF Lakenheath

05.12.25 Chaired public meeting at Queens Hall, regarding proposed planning/building issues around site WAT3 as allocated in the draft Breckland Local Plan

08.12.25 Attended Watton Rainbows tea party and presented award badges

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman was not present at the meeting.

4.3 Clerks Report

Written report presented in Councillors Agenda Pack:

Christmas Town Council Office closure - 25th Dec 2025 – 2nd Jan 2026

Reclaim the Rain

'Reclaim the Rain' is a pioneering joint project between Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils which will develop innovative ways to reduce flooding in small, rural communities. The £6.4 million project is funded by Defra and the Environment Agency as part of their Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme and runs until March 2027. Reclaim the Rain aims to promote and improve resilience to both flooding and drought in six selected small rural communities across both counties that will act as case studies. The three communities in Norfolk are Watton, Thompson and Woodton, near Bungay.

The plans for Watton include construction of features in the High Street to reduce the risk of flooding during very heavy rain or storms.

Reclaim the Rain commissioned a company called GreenBlue Urban (GBU) to design the features which include rain gardens, tree pits and special planters. These sustainable drainage features help capture excess surface water to create greener spaces and slow down the flow of water within the system.

On 18th December, GBU are meeting with key stakeholders including the Wayland Partnership, the Town Council, representatives of the Watton & Saham Flood Action Group, Anglian Water, Breckland District Council, County Highways and the County Lead Local Flood Authority.

All these stakeholders need to assess the proposals and decide which are going to work to not only improve the flood risk but also provide enhancement of the High Street. It is hoped that what is proposed will also help increase the footfall in the town.

ACAS Training

The Deputy Clerk attended ACAS Flexible Working Webinar on 20th November 2025

The Clerk attended ACAS Management Training on the 27th and 28th November 2025.

Middle Street Consultation

Public consultation is soon to commence on the proposals for Middle Street pedestrianisation. Before proceeding, NCC has advised that following some recent feedback received from those in the immediate vicinity, it would be prudent to seek some further information before this commences.

Businesses:

Some local businesses have raised concerns about access and deliveries:

Fish and Chip Shop – concerned about potential loss of customer parking and the impact on their business

The Kings Arms – are supportive in principle but require written assurances regarding: 1) a 24/7 tables and chairs licence or alternative, 2) guaranteed dray delivery access, and 3) controlled removal of outdoor furniture only for major works.

To address these issues, detailed information is needed to understand the current delivery arrangements for all businesses in the area. This will allow the development of solutions that meet the needs of as many businesses as possible.

Residents on Middle Street:

NCC's legal team have advised that vehicular access (not necessarily parking) to residential properties is of high importance and therefore if it is proposed to remove it, there must be a strong case to support the reasons why it is believed the perceived loss can be mitigated (and/or) is outweighed by the benefits of the project. This means that further communication will be made with the residents on Middle Street.

Information gathering has begun and the TC will be kept updated on progress and next steps.

4.4 Reports from Councillors

- Cllr Gilbert has attended a meeting of the Twinning Association and it was noted that Weeze will be celebrating its 800th anniversary in 2026. It was suggested the Town Council and the Twinning Association should part fund a commemorative gift. This will be an agenda item for a future meeting when the anticipated cost of a suitable gift may be known.

It was agreed item 12 should be considered prior to public participation.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public present spoke of their concerns with site allocation WAT 3 in the draft Breckland Local Plan.

It was requested that a summary of the response the Town Council submits to Breckland District Council Local Plan consultation be put in the Wayland Times.

6. FINANCE

6.1 Payments for December 2025, were approved as presented, with the addition of £119.06 for the road closure for the Festive Market and £550 for the Interim Internal Audit.

6.2 The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 27.11.25 were noted.

6.3 **It was resolved** to accept the Finance Committee recommendation to Full Council:

- I. To adopt the Internal Control Statement (as recommended by the Internal Auditor) as presented with the following amendments to be made:
 - Ensure the statement is reviewed before 31st March 2026
 - Item 3.1 State a time frame in which the minutes of the Finance Meeting is circulated to Full Council – within 5 working days.

7. Internal Audit

The Interim Report from the Internal Auditor as shared with Councillors was

accepted.

7.2 **It was resolved** to accept the updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as presented but noted that section 19 of the Standing Orders will need to be completed once new staffing policies are in place.

8. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

Noted that the planned Mayoral elections scheduled for 2027 have been delayed until May 2028.

9. TREE WORKS

Only two quotes have been received to undertake the tree works as identified on the annual tree report.

It was resolved to accept the quote from Top Garden Services for £5200 plus VAT.

10. DIGITILISATION WORKING GROUP

The notes from the initial Digitilisation Working Group were noted.

10.1 **It was resolved** to accept the Terms of Reference for the Digitilisation Working Group as presented.

11. FESTIVE MARKET

The Festive Market was an outstanding success and those involved were thanked. Some concern has been raised by staff however that either more volunteer support is needed for future events or paid help will need to be investigated.

12. BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN

Noted that Cllr Gilbert, as a member of Breckland Planning Committee, cannot comment on any specific development proposals.

On December 5th a public meeting had been facilitated by the Town Council so concerns regarding site WAT3 on the draft Breckland Local Plan could be heard. Comments noted at the meeting and which have been received since the meeting will be shared on the Town Council website and with Breckland Council.

Cllr Hutchings was thanked for compiling a response to the WAT3 proposed site allocation adjacent to Wayland Wood. The response had been shared with Councillors prior to the meeting and **it was resolved** to submit the response to Breckland Council as presented, and to request that Tree Preservation Orders are placed on five notable oak trees on the site.

13. GRANT APPLICATION

A further grant request has been received towards support for the Christmas meal to be held at Watton Sports Centre.

However before any decision could be taken two councillors offered the money themselves as a personal donation.

14. PLANNING

Noted that planning consultation has been received for the installation of two new windows to the front elevation of 14 Stevens Close, Watton IP25 6EQ.

Cllrs were asked to let the Office know if they have any concerns with the proposal.

15. Resolution passed to exclude the public and press to consider staffing matters

15.1 The Minutes of the HR Committee Meeting held on 27.11.25 were noted.

15.2 Noted that revised job descriptions and person specifications have been received and shared with staff. The HR Committee will also review the job descriptions provided and once all have been considered and accepted job evaluation can be undertaken.