

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 7.00pm in Wayland Hall

Councillors Present: - Gillian Tarrant (Chairman of the meeting), Keith Gilbert, Sarah Humphries, Tomos Hutchings, Graham Martin, Don Saunders, Jack White.

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

1 member of the public present

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED AND ACCEPTED from**

Tina Kiddell, Stan Hebborn and Sue Hebborn

**2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE**

**3. MINUTES**

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2026 were accepted as a true record.

3.2 Updates from items raised at the meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2026 not agenda items for this meeting:

- Response awaited from the Breckland Tree Officer following his visit 09.01.26.
- Noted that developer has suggested a meeting with Town Councillors relating to land to the south of Thetford Road.

**4. REPORTS**

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman has attended:

15/01/26 Finance Committee Meeting

23/01/26 The 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration at Watton Junior School

4.2 Vice-Chairman's/District Councillors Report

The Vice-Chairman was not present but her written report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

4.3 District Councillor's Report

As above. No further reports.

4.4 County Councillors Report – County Councillor not present.

The County Councillor had submitted a written report shortly before the meeting which was circulated to Cllrs. Cllrs requested, once again, for reports to be presented in time for them to be digested before meetings. The County Council will be approached about this and asked to attend more meetings.

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

- Bridle Road and Sports Centre Update

The Events and Marketing Officer has been investigating alternative safety surfacing for the Sports Centre Play Area to make the site more accessible for all. Play equipment providers have been approached for quotes both for the Sports Centre and for installing a path at Bridle Road.

- Planters

A request has been made to include maintenance of two planters at Watton Library to the Town Council gardening contract. Costs will be sought and this matter will be brought back to Full Council.

- Watton Relief in Need

Request received for a Trustee for Watton Relief in Need. This matter will be an agenda item again once the Council has its full complement of Councillors.

- Reclaim the Rain

The Reclaim the Rain Project Manager is suggesting a meeting to update the Council on the plans for sustainable drainage in Watton High Street. A request will be made for the Town Council to undertake day to day general maintenance of the assets which will be in public areas. It is likely Norfolk Highways will assume ownership providing Watton TC accepts overground maintenance.

- Martyn's Law Training

Thetford Town Council is offering free training on March 24<sup>th</sup> 2026 in relation to Martyn's Law. Anyone wishing to attend was asked to let the Town Council Office know so they can be booked in.

- Casual Vacancy

Noted that the due date for receipts of requests to hold an election is 30.01.26.

#### 4.6 Lead Councillors Reports

Cllr Saunders reported that he has spoken with the Principal of Wayland Academy about the Town Council providing places for Duke of Edinburgh students to undertake some voluntary work and also the possibility of the Town Council employing an apprentice. Cllr White indicated a willingness to be involved with further discussions.

4.7 The notes from the Digitilisation Working Group (DWG) held on 15.01.25 were received.

Suggested actions from the Digitilisation Working Group:

- To consider installation of CCTV in the High Street
- To consider the 2 options presented for public Wi-fi in the High Street
- To consider quote for Smart Benches
- To consider financial viability for updating the Town Council website and creation of a Town App
- To consider consulting the public on communication strategies and digital infrastructure and whether public surveys to gauge support for suggested actions should be undertaken.

As Chairman of the DWG Cllr White spoke of how the above actions would support his aims around digitilisation. He is keen to consider the actions as suggested as integral to an overall project with an important outcome to be effective accessible communication with residents.

It was noted that there has been no allowance made in the forthcoming budget year for additional projects as being put forward.

Points were raised against the actions and it was stressed that the Wayland Partnership and Wayland Chamber of Trade should be consulted prior to any decisions being made.

## 5. WORKS IN PROGRESS

The Works in Progress List was accepted as presented.

## 6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman of the Twinning Association was present to speak of the forthcoming trip to Weeze which is celebrating its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## 7. WEEZE GIFT

Discussion took place regarding what gift the Town Council could give to Weeze in celebration of its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Further investigation will be undertaken including whether a suitable wooden hare and barrell or similar could be sourced in time to be taken to Weeze for the celebration weekend at the end of May. A further suggestion was made that a framed copy of the Watton Heritage Map could be gifted to Weeze.

This matter will be an agenda item for the next meeting of the Full Council.

Also noted that a party from Weeze will be visiting Watton in 2027 when the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Watton Twinning Association will be celebrated.

## 8. FINANCE

- 8.1 Payments for January 2026 were approved for payment as on the list presented prior to the meeting.
- 8.2 The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 15.01.26 were noted.
- 8.3 Recommendations from the Finance Committee Meeting held on 15.01.26:
  - 8.3i **It was resolved** that that the Council will subscribe to Breathe HR at a cost of £22 per month for the basic software package plus £10 per month to add "Rota, Time and Attendance" which will record employees working times.
  - 8.3ii **It was resolved** that the Council accepts the quote of £1000 from SJB Safety Solutions for a Health & Safety audit to be undertaken to ensure all relevant arrangements are in place.

## 9. UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION (LGR)

No update on Devolution as such but noted that the Clerk is to attend a meeting on 29.01.26 with Officers of Breckland Council regarding the transfer of Breckland Council owned assets to the town and parish councils.

## 10. COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

**It was resolved** that the Town Council would initiate a Community Champions Award Scheme whereby exceptional contributions of positive impact to the town could be recognised. The paper presented in the agenda pack for the meeting will be used as a guide to establish a policy for the scheme.

## 11. PLANNING

11.1 PL/2025/1335/FMIN Subject to Planning Appeal: Proposed Change of use from commercial/building land to storage for up to 50 cars & light commercial vehicles. Yard Griston Road Watton Thetford Norfolk IP25 6DL

*The Town Council originally objected to the above application and will re-iterate this to the planning appeal.*

11.2 PL/2026/0052/FMIN Proposed demolition of the existing dwelling and construction of a replacement dwelling in the form of a dormer-style bungalow. 53 Griston Road, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6DN

*No comments*

11.3 PL/2025/1895/HOU Proposed erection of a single storey garden room to the rear elevation. 10 Woodpecker Drive, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6TW

*Noted that no on-line link could be accessed for the above application and therefore no comments made.*

It was also noted that a planning application expected in the latter part of 2025 had not been presented at a Town Council meeting. Investigation will be made as to why the application was not an agenda item for a Town Council meeting.

Reported that the new lighting and change of use relating to planning for the Baguette Shop in Watton High Street lights has been approved.

## **12. Resolution passed to exclude the public and press to consider staffing matters.**

12.1 The Minutes of the HR Committee Meeting held on 15.01.26 were noted.

12.2i It was resolved to accept the Job Descriptions for all staff as presented.

12.2ii It was resolved to accept the recruitment package for the Town Council Caretaker as presented with the addition that a Full UK Driving Licence should be added as an essential requirement on the Person Specification.