

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday April 14th 2026 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall

Councillors Present: Gillian Tarrant – Chairman, Cathy Halfacre, Keith Gilbert, Sarah Humphries, Tomos Hutchings, Tina Kiddell, Graham Martin, Keith Prince, Don Saunders, Jacqueline White.

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED from:**

Gavin Bulmer, Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn and Jack White

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE:**

The Chairman declared an interest in item 9. as payment relates to her Civic Reception and Cllr Hutchings declared an interest in item 7 as he has involvement with both Loch Neaton and the Wayland Chamber of Commerce.

**3. MINUTES**

**3.1** The Minutes of the meeting held on March 24th, 2026, were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**3.2** Update from the meeting held on February 24th not agenda items for this meeting:

- New street name plate to be installed at Redhill Park.
- Hare Trail started 03.04.26.
- Statement regarding increase to Council Tax issued.

**4. REPORTS**

**4.1** Chairman's Report

The Chairman has attended the Twinning Association AGM on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and the opening of a new shop in Watton High Street on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

**4.2** Vice-Chairmans Report

Vice-Chairman and the Clerk attended the Breckland Five Market Towns Update on 14.04.26.

Agreed to move item 6 to be included within the Vice-Chairmans Report.

Main Points:

- Unitary Update – 3 Council model for Norfolk  
Decision confirmed: **25 March 2026**  
Elections for new councils: expected **2027**  
Full changeover: **by April 2028**

It is anticipated Joint Committees will be formed to initially run the new Councils and that the Committees will be made up of Councillor representatives – 50% from NCC and rest from the former districts. Tom McCabe CEO of NCC is expected to continue

to hold an overall position but is not known who Chief Execs within the new Unitaries will be.

General feeling is that the changes to Local Government could be an opportunity for Parish & Town Councils.

- Safer Street Wardens

Breckland Council are asking for the opportunity to re-visit Town Councils to update and promote the Safer Street Wardens Scheme. **It was resolved** that Breckland Council will be invited to attend a future Town Council meeting to give further information about the Safer Street Wardens Scheme.

- Article 4

Breckland is undertaking research regarding a possible Article 4 planning direction which could be introduced to remove some permitted development rights in appropriate areas of the district. This would relate to conversion of premises to HMO's resulting in the need for planning permission to be sought in some cases where at present there is permitted development eligibility.

- Armed Forces Community Fund

Breckland grant funding of between £250 to £1000 to support Armed Forces personnel within Breckland. Research will be undertaken regarding who can apply for this grant and what can it be used for.

### 4.3 Clerks Report

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

#### BT Street Hub

Foundations have been put in for a Street Hub in Chaston Place, but it is not known when a Hub will be installed.

#### Neighbourhood Police Meeting

The next Neighbourhood Police will be an on-line meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup> at 7pm. The meeting could not be held at Wayland Hall as planned as the date clashes with the Annual Town Meeting.

#### Norfolk PTS

Upcoming training dates have been shared with Cllrs who were encouraged to take a look at the training offered and let the Office know if they are interested in attending any sessions

#### Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC)

NALC AGM to be held at Great Massingham on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2026. The Clerk will attend.

#### Car Parks

It is understood documents are with the solicitors to progress with the transfer of the Breckland owned car parks in the town to Watton Town Council.

Breckland is also looking at the transfer of open space land within the parish and Heads of Terms are awaited.

#### **4.4 Lead Councillors Reports**

No reports given.

### **5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public present.

### **6. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR) –**

See item 4.2.

### **7. GRANTS**

*Interest in items 7.1 and 7.4 declared by Cllr Hutchings.*

**It was resolved** to defer consideration of any grant funding until the Grant Policy has been reviewed. This will be undertaken by the Finance Committee to be ratified by the Full Council.

7.1 Grant application from Watton Loch Neaton Bowls Club - deferred

7.2 Grant application from The Benjamin Foundation - deferred

7.3 Grant application from 2<sup>nd</sup> Watton RAF Rainbows - deferred

7.4 Grant application from Wayland Chamber of Commerce - deferred

### **8. PRIDE IN BRECKLAND GRANT**

**It was resolved** that the Town Council will look to use the £12210 Pride in Breckland grant to support enhancement of the Reclaim the Rain Project in the High Street. Consultation will be undertaken with Watton and Saham Flood Action Group and the Biodiversity Working Group.

It was suggested if there is enough money consideration will be given to how the gateways into the town might be improved.

### **FINANCE**

*Interest declared in item 9.2 by Cllr Tarrant*

9.1 **It was agreed** to make a payment of £1100 for 8 wooden hares. Grant funding has been allocated.

9.2 **It was agreed** to make a payment of £1830.50 towards the Mayor's Volunteers Celebration event to be held on 19.04.26.

### **10. PARISH FOOTPATH AUDIT**

**It was resolved** to undertake an audit of the footpaths in the parish. Cllr Gilbert offered to assist with this.

### **11. GIFT FOR WEEZE 2027**

The suggested gift for Weeze to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Twinning in 2027 was accepted depending on cost. It is suggested two copies of the framed town logos could be commissioned with one to stay in Watton and one given to Weeze.

## 12. PLANNING

12.1, 12.2 12.3 and 12.4 relate to re-location of the Royal Mail sorting Office – No objections from the Town Council

12.1 PL/2026/0297/CLOPUD Certificate of Lawfulness - Confirmation that the proposed new tenant (Royal Mail) can operate Units C1 & C2 under B8 use with no operating hour restrictions. Unit C1 & C2 Neaton Business Park, Norwich Road, Watton

12.2 PL/2026/0360/FMIN Proposed continued B8 (storage and distribution) use of Units C1 & C2 with unrestricted 24/7 operation, the installation of external air-conditioning and ventilation plant with associated ductwork and minor elevation amendments including signage, and formalisation of staff and operational vehicle parking arrangements. Unit C1 & C2 Neaton Business Park, Norwich Road, Watton, IP25 6JB

12.3 PL/2026/0305/ADV ADV Advert Application for consent to display an advertisement(s) consent Proposed continued B8 (storage and distribution) use of Units C1 & C2 with unrestricted 24/7 operation, the installation of external air-conditioning and ventilation plant with associated ductwork and minor elevation amendments including signage, and formalisation of staff and operational vehicle parking arrangements. Unit C1 & C2 Neaton Business Park, Norwich Road, Watton, IP25 6JB

12.4 PL/2026/0305/ADV There have been amendments submitted to the aforementioned application Proposed Royal Mail Fascia Signage. Unit C1 & C2 Neaton Business Park, Norwich Road, Watton, IP25 6JB

12.5 PL/2026/0441/DCA Discharge of Conditions 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 on PP 3PL/2022/0296/F Land Off Field Maple Road, Watton

Officers/legal decision

12.6 For information - PL/2026/0442/TRE T1- Horse chestnut - Remove all new growth back to old reduction points approx start height 50ft finish 42ft approx. start width 35ft approx finish 25ft 5 Forman Close, Watton, Thetford

12.7 PL/2026/0449/CLOPUD Proposed rear single storey extension The Burrows Watton Green, Watton

No objections

12.8 For information - PL/2026/0483/TRE T1 - Horse Chestnut - Ht 19.6m S 10m - To reduce the crown by 3m to reduce the lever arm effect.

T3 - Sycamore - Ht 18m - To pollard at 10m due to excessive lean towards neighbouring property T10 - Horse Chestnut - Ht 17 S 7m - To fell to a low stump or ground level due to excessive decay likely within the main stem from Ganoderma australe. T11 - Scots Pine - Ht 16.8m - Dead to remove. T12 - Scots Pine - Ht 15.7m - Heavy crown decline to fell tree. T13 - Sycamore - Ht 14.7m - To remove the dead stems only.

THE VICARAGE Norwich Road, Watton

13. Resolution passed to Exclude the Press and Public to consider confidential staffing matters:

13.1 It was resolved to accept the recommendation from the Interview Panel to offer the position of Receptionist/Office Support Clerk to the candidate chosen by the Panel.

On 10.04.26 members of the HR Committee met with the HR consultant working with the Town Council. The consultant has drafted a revised staff handbook and updated all staffing policies which have been presented to the HR Committee. The Committee will meet on 16.04.26 to consider the new documents which will then be brought to Full Council to ratify.