



Watton Town Council

Wayland Hall, Middle Street, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 6AG

Telephone: 01953 881007 Website: www.wattontowncouncil.gov.uk

Town Clerk: Mrs Jane Scarrott clerk@wattontowncouncil.gov.uk

To Councillors: You are hereby summoned to attend the Town Council meeting to be held in the Council Chamber, Wayland Hall on Tuesday 22nd September 2026 at 7.00pm for the purpose of transacting the following business.

Jane Scarrott Town Clerk

16th September 2026

1. To receive and accept apologies for absence
2. To note Declaration of Members personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda
3. MINUTES
 - 3.1 To confirm that the minutes of the meeting held on 08.09.26 are a true and accurate record
 - 3.2 To receive an update on items from the previous meeting if not agenda items for this meeting
4. TO RECEIVE REPORTS
 - 4.1 Chairman's Report
 - 4.2 Vice Chairman's Report
 - 4.3 District Councillor's Report
 - 4.4 County Councillor's Report
 - 4.5 Clerk's Report
 - 4.6 Reports from Councillors
 - I. Gavin Bulmer – Planning Training
 - II. Keith Gilbert – Plans for Weeze visit 2027
 - III. Update and feedback on the Market relaunch
5. To note the Works in Progress List
6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
7. FINANCE
 - 7.1 To approve payments for September 2026 (To follow)
 - 7.2 To note Finance Committee minutes from meeting held on 25th September 2026 (to follow)
 - 7.3 To consider review of how the Council might use the Breckland Council Pride in Breckland funding
8. Update on Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation
9. To agree a donation to the Queens Hall for use of the Hall Car Park for the Weekly Market
10. To note the Completion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 31st March 2026
11. To agree response to the Breckland Local Plan Reg. 19 consultation
12. PLANNING To consult on planning applications received since the last meeting:

12.1	PL/2026/123 0/DCA	Discharge of Conditions 7, 8 and 9 on PP PL/2025/1910/FMIN	Cranswick Country Foods, ABATTOIR Brandon Road, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6LW	https://publicportal.breckland.gov.uk/planning/index.html?fa=getApplication&id=200035
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12.2 From previous meeting:

3PL/2019/0991/D Reserved matters application for residential development of 177 dwellings following outline permission 3PL/2015/0254/0 DEVELOPMENT SITE Mallard Road, Watton, Norfolk

13. To pass a resolution to Exclude the Press and Public to consider confidential matters

13.1 To note HR minutes from meeting held on 25th September 2026 (to follow)

Item 3.1

Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on
Tuesday 8th September 2026 at 7.00pm in Wayland Hall

Councillors Present: - Sarah Humphries (Chairman of the meeting), Gavin Bulmer, Tina Cruz, Keith Gilbert, Cathy Halfacre, Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn, Tomos Hutchings, Graham Martin, Don Saunders, Gillian Tarrant, Jack White.

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

3 members of the public present for part of the meeting.

I. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM:

Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn, Keith Prince, Jacqueline White.

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on August 25th 2026 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3.2 Updates from items raised at the meeting on August 25th 2026 not agenda items for this meeting:

- High Street Bin and Bench – agenda item 13. 08.09.26
Quotes for replacement bin and bench in the High Street has been submitted to the insurers with a settlement offered.
- Public Toilets arson – The ladies and disabled toilets are open. The Insurance company appointed a specialist cleaner to deep clean the mens toilets and a quote has been received from the previous refurb contractor for the remedial works required. A visit from the insurance assessor is being scheduled.
- Open Spaces– The Clerk visited the solicitor acting for the Town Council and issues relating to the transfer of current Breckland owned open space to the Town Council were considered and clarification is being sought from Brecklands solicitor regarding points raised.
- Contractor has been given the go ahead for the maintenance works for the Clock Tower. A commencement date for the works has been requested.
- An Expression of Interest for the Love Your Market Town grant was submitted on 27.08.26 and a full application is now being prepared.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman attended:

- the High Street Bike Event on August 30th.

(It was suggested that music could be provided on the High Street for this event next year and perhaps an 'open mike' session could be made included)

- Lakenheath Civic Leaders Tour on 02.09.26
- Event at Buckingham Lodge on 08.09.26 to acknowledge Mental Health Week.

The Chairman is writing her regular article for the Watton & Wayland Times to be submitted on 11.09.26.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman attended a training session with Norfolk Wildlife Trust on 26.08.26 and he reported that the weekly Wayland Wood's work-parties will recommence on 09.09.26.

The Vice-Chairman also volunteers with Beside Youth CIC to support a weekly youth group at Watton Community Centre.

The Vice-Chairman attended the Dereham Civic Service on 30.08.26 and volunteered at Loch Neaton on 03.09.26.

It was noted that no amendments to the Biodiversity Policy have been suggested and thus the Policy is accepted. The next meeting of the Biodiversity Working Group, chaired by the Vice-Chairman, is scheduled for October 27th at 6.15pm.

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

- Police Neighbourhood Meeting 7th October 7pm Wayland Hall.

4.4 Reports from Lead Councillors

- Planning Lead Councillor Keith Gilbert updated the meeting regarding the introduction of a National Scheme of Delegation for planning applications and he strongly suggested that the Town Council should submit stronger responses to planning applications. He requested that Councillors engage more with the planning process and respond to consultations in more detail.
- A query was raised regarding planting lime trees to replace those which have been lost along Church Walk. The Biodiversity Working Group will investigate this.
- Request made for celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Twinning Association to be an agenda for each Full Council Meeting. Cllr Gilbert has attended a meeting of the Twinning Association and a date needs to be set for the next Town Council Twinning Working Group Meeting.
- County Councillor Jack White reported that the resurfacing of the Thetford Road up to the junction with the B1108 is near completion.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- A member of the public addressed the Council with his concerns regarding removal of the graffiti wall at Lovell Gardens Play Area.
- A resident of Wayland Fields addressed the Council with a request that the Town Council takes over management of the Local Equipped Area (LEAP) of Play at Wayland Fields

6. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Local Government Reorganisation is being paused but it is believed the plans to create a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Strategic Authority remain. This matter will stay as an agenda item at each meeting until further notice.

7. PLAY INSPECTION REPORTS

The reports of the annual RoSPA Play Inspections of the Play Areas at Lovell Gardens, Watton Sports Centre, Hares Green and Bridle Road were presented prior to the meeting together with quotes to undertake the maintenance works identified.

It was resolved to accept the quote of £11081.91 plus VAT to undertake the works but with any works which can be undertaken in house to be completed prior to commissioning the contractor. At least 50% of the cost of the repairs will need to be financed from reserved funding.

8. WAYLAND FIELDS

It was resolved not to accept management of the Local Equipped Area (LEAP) of Play at Wayland Fields.

9. HR COMMITTEE RESERVE

Paul Toombs volunteered to be the reserve for the HR Committee. If he is called upon meetings will need to be held after 5pm.

10. MARKET

10.1 **It was resolved** to relocate the Wednesday Weekly Market to the Crown Car Park off Watton High Street as from 16.09.26.

It was also resolved to investigate obtaining a Deed of Variation of the transfer agreement for the Thetford Road Car park which would allow use of the site to house the weekly market.

County Cllr Jack White will also approach Norfolk County Council Highways regarding a possible further temporary road closure for Middle Street so consideration could then be given to the Market returning to that location.

10.2 **It was resolved** that no charge will be made for weekly market stall pitches for the next six months.

10.3 **It was resolved** that up to £500 would be allocated to purchase promotional materials for the re-launch of the market on 16.09.26.

The purchase of new gazebos for use at the Market will be considered by the Finance Committee.

11. HALLOWEEN

It was resolved that the organisers of the High Street Halloween Trial will be approached with an offer of support for the event by opening the Clock Tower in the High Street for viewing from the outside and use as an information point.

12. RECLAIM THE RAIN

It was resolved that the Vice-Chairman and Clerk will draft a letter of support to Green Blue Urban to support Reclaim the Rain to ensure that High Street regeneration efforts continue promptly.

County Councillor Jack White was asked if he could make enquiries regarding Highways support for the proposals from Reclaim the Rain.

13. HIGH STREET BENCH AND BIN

It was resolved that the Finance Committee should consider the cost to install a replacement bench and bin by the bus stop in the High Street.

14. CAR PARK BINS

It was resolved to replace the litter bin at the Thetford Road Car Park with a new lidded litter bin to match those in the High Street.

15. BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

It was resolved that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Clerk will meet to draft a response to the Breckland Local Plan to be presented to the Full Council on 22.09.26.

16. WAYLAND HALL

It was resolved not to go ahead at this time with the work quoted to the boiler control panel at Wayland Hall, but to wait and include an amount in the Four Year Plan for possible upgrade as may be necessary.

Motion proposed and passed to continue with the meeting beyond 9.00pm. Cllr Tarrant left the meeting.

17. PLANNING

17.1 PL/2026/1153/HOU Proposed Single Storey Extension to Side, and Installation of Velux Rooflight and Roof Lantern, Raising Height of Existing Flat Roofs to Side Elevations, Covered Area to Front including Dropped Kerb 32 Nelson Court, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6EL

No comments

17.2 PL/2026/1190/DCA Discharge of Conditions 3 and 6 on PP PL/2026/0052/FMIN 53 Griston Road, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 6DN

No comments

17.3 3PL/2019/0991/D Reserved matters application for residential development of 177 dwellings following outline permission 3PL/2015/0254/0 DEVELOPMENT SITE Mallard Road, Watton, Norfolk

Office to research for next agenda

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

18.1 It was resolved to accept the nationally agreed 3.3% salary increase for all staff.

Item 3.2 Update from the meeting held 08.09.26

Agenda Item No.	Update
3.2	• Quote for re-installation of bin and bench by the Old Post Office in the High Street being considered by the Finance Committee • Toilets – insurance assessor visiting on 24.09.26 • Love Your Market Town grant application submitted
10	Market - Breckland approached re. a possible Deed of Variation for the car parks. Draft licence for the use the Crown Car Park has been received from the solicitor.
15	Chairman, Dep. Chairman, Chairman of WASFAG and the Clerk met on 14.09.26 to consider a response to the Breckland Local Plan Reg. 19 consultation. Agenda item 11 22.09.26

Item 4.5 Clerks Report

Breckland Town and Parish Forum

Cllr Gavin Bulmer and Town Clerk will be attending the forum on Wednesday, 30 September 2026 at 5.30pm - Little Ellingham Old School Hall, Church Road, Little Ellingham, Attleborough, NR17 1JN

App 1

Sent on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Colin Sutton.

I am writing on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, Colin Sutton, to inform you that the consultation for the new **Norfolk Police and Crime Plan 2026-2028** has now been launched.

The Police and Crime Plan will establish the strategic priorities for policing, crime prevention, and community safety across Norfolk over the next two years. As key partners in supporting and delivering safer communities, the views and experiences of local authorities are invaluable in helping to shape these priorities.

Please find attached information relating to the consultation. I would be grateful if you could take the opportunity to review the enclosed documents and complete the consultation survey, which can be accessed via the following link:

Survey Link: [Police and Crime Plan 26/28 and Police Budget Consultation 2027/28](#)

The consultation will remain open until **Friday 9th October**, and we would encourage responses to be submitted before this date.

In addition, I would be grateful if you could share the consultation materials and survey link with relevant parish councils, and partner networks where appropriate. The Commissioner is keen to ensure that as wide a range of views as possible are reflected in the final Police and Crime Plan.

This consultation represents an important opportunity for public sector partners, communities, and stakeholders to influence the future direction of policing and community safety across Norfolk, and we welcome all contributions.

Should you have any questions regarding the consultation, please do not hesitate to contact me at: OPCCN@Norfolk.Police.UK

Thank you in advance for your support and participation. The Commissioner looks forward to receiving your views and those of your colleagues.

Item 5

	Resolution	Date/ Agenda item	Action	Link to 4YP/ NP	Lead	Current Position – 15.09.26	Status
162	That the organisers of the High Street Halloween Trail will be approached with an offer of support for the event by opening the Clock Tower in the High Street for viewing from the outside and use as an information point	08.09.26 11	Approach organiser of Halloween Trail		Office	Cllr Hutching has approached	
161	Investigate obtaining a Deed of Variation of the transfer agreement for the Thetford Road Car park	08.09.26 10.1	Investigate getting a Deed of Variation		Office	Initial enquires made with BDC – awaiting response	
160	Obtain quotes to engage a landscape architect to help develop plans for the open space land at Heritage Park	25.08.26 7.3iii	Obtain quotes		Office EMO	Refer to 82	
159	Submit expression of interest to the Love Your Market Town Fund before the deadline on August 31 st	11.08.26 9	Express interest		Office EMO	Application submitted	
158	To stage a reception in the Council Chamber on the morning of May 15 th for the visitors from Weeze.	11.08.26 8			Office EMO Twinning	Further Working Group Meeting with members of the Twinning Association to be arranged	
157	Re-plant two replacement trees during the 2027 40 th Twinning visit.	11.08.26 8	Location to be identified		Office	Possible location at CHT	
156	To facilitate a celebratory event on Sunday 16 th May 2027 to mark 40 years of Twinning.	11.08.26 8	Organise		Office EMO Twinning	Further Working Group Meeting with members of the Twinning Association to be arranged	
154	To progress with the transfer of land assets from Breckland District Council to the Town Council as presented.	09.06.26 12	In Progress		Office	Heads of Terms with the solicitor. Some clarification to be undertaken but project paused	

						along with Local Government Re-organisation!	
153	Create a 'Town Council High Street Restoration Plan'	09.06.26 9	Create plan		TH/Office	TH has compiled a draft	😊
152	The Market Working Group will be tasked with discussing the benefits of creating a Four-Year Plan for Watton Market to coincide with the Councils Financial Four-Year Plan.	09.06.25 8	To be considered as part of Four Year Plan review		MWG	Finance Com. Meeting scheduled for 25.09.26	😊
151	Compile a future strategy for the provision of litter and dog waste bins	26.05.26 16	Compile strategy		Office	<i>No policy regarding the provision of bins will be made until more is known about future services once local government reorganisation is underway - to review</i>	😊
146	To accept a policy to offer staff the opportunity to undertake temporary additional hours to cover short-term staff absence	28.04.26 14.2iii	To adopt policy procedure		HR	Policy to be compiled by HR Consultant	😊
144	Undertake an audit of the footpaths in the parish	14.04.26 10	To contact Ramblers Association		Office KG	To agree how audit will be undertaken.	😊
143	Pride in Breckland Grant to support enhancement of the Reclaim the Rain project in the High Street. If there is enough money consideration will be given to how the gateways into the town might be improved	14.04.26 8	Consult with WASFAG and Biodiversity WG		Office	Information regarding Reclaim the Rain has been provided to the Pride in Breckland team but project plans and costs are still awaited. Deputy Chairman and Clerk to draft letter to support the project It has been suggested the Town Council might want to review how the grant is to be used differently.	😊

142	Move forward with plans to hold a Festival of Youth in 2027	24.03.26 4.7			DS EMO	DS and EMO to meet with Love Watton, Wayland Academy and Beside Youth	
141	Further research to purchase a wooden sculpture to present to Weeze for its 40 th year in 2027	10.02.26 7.1	Research gift		Office	Framed plaques from Bowles and Walker have been received Research will also continue to be undertaken regarding the cost of a wooden hare and barrel as an additional gift	 
133	Commission further reports for Bridle Road, Lovell Gardens and Sports Centre play areas	23.09.25 12	Commission reports once the Council has completed the remedial works it is able to do		Office	ROSPA inspections 2026 have now been undertaken and Council has agreed to commission works as in the Reports (08.09.26)	
131	To investigate Honours nominations for two residents	12.08.25 10.3	Investigate		Office	Submission made	
129	To submit an application for s106 funding to pay for the additional works identified at Bridle Road Play Area	12.08.25 4.4ii	Application made		Office	S106 application unsuccessful as funding could not be used as requested	
126	Apply to the Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership Scheme 2025 to help fund a dropped kerb to allow easier disabled access to the Bridle Road Play Area site	08.04.25 10	Apply for funding		Office	To review provision as part of project to refurb Bridle Road Play Equipment	
<i>126 and 129 are linked and research is still being undertaken regarding what works should take place. Quotes received from playground installers to create improved access to both Bridle Road and the Sports Centre Play Areas are expensive. Fin. Com. is suggesting external funding needs to be found.</i>							
120	Quote accepted to carry out the following works to the Clock Tower: - site inspection of the tower - review of the present quinquennial survey	14.01.24 15	Awaiting date for works – to keep chasing!		Office	Building Maintenance quote accepted 08.09.26 Cllr Saunders and EMO to investigate English Heritage Funding for the tower.	

	production of a list of works and discussion of the list with a view to producing a minor schedule of works.					Cllr Bulmer and Mark Humphries to research clock mechanism. Finance Committee recommendation – Agenda item 7.3V on 25.08.26	
104	To produce a staff Well-Being Policy	23.07.24 4.6	Compile Policy		HR	All staffing policies, handbook and Contracts were accepted as presented on 28.04.26. Well-being policy still to be compiled. Office to approach new HR Consultants	😊
85	Compile Play Area Policy	22.08.23 4.6i a,b,c,d	To present Policy to Full Council		TB	Draft Policy to be compiled by Office	😊
82	Landscaping of Portal Avenue Community Land	08.08.23 7.3	Research landscaping.	4YP NP	Office	EMO tasked with researching landscape architects 25.08.26?	😊
68	Seats – to undertake audit of seats around the parish	11.10.22 5	Undertake audit of seats.		Town	Office is continuing to populate Civic.ly Asset software	😊
45	All initial urgent repairs recommended by the Quinquennial Inspection Report on Wayland Hall for which the Town Council is responsible will be undertaken.	14.09.21 6.1	Some works have been undertaken.	4YP	Office	To check final works which need to be undertaken prior to next Quinquennial Inspection Report. Building contractors have been approached.	😊
21	To commission audit of energy usage in Council premises.	22.09.20 5.1		4YP	Office	Work to heating system at Wayland Hall has been undertaken. Audit of Energy could be incorporated within a review of the Sustainability Audit	😊

13	Watton Town Council will consider model Climate Change Awareness Policies for possible adoption.	6 12.11.19	Clerk to investigate and present model policies to Full Council.	4YP	Clerk	Sustainability Audit to include Climate Change Awareness Policies	😊
	To undertake a Town Council Sustainability Audit.	12 24.09.19	To undertake Audit.		Office	Biodiversity Working Group to look at.	
<i>13 and 21 are linked - Suggest including Sustainability Audit in reviewed Climate Change Policy. Climate Change Policy to be researched.</i>							
4	To display photos of past Mayors in Council Chamber.	14/309	To collate photos and display.		Office	Last 2 photos obtained Extend wall area up to accommodate more mayoral photos	😊

NP – Watton Neighbourhood Plan

4YP – Town Council Financial Four Year Forecast

The resolutions from the Works in Progress list is to be incorporated within a Projects Action Plan which will link to the 4 Year Financial Forecast which will include possible projects for the High Street and weekly market.

Item 7.3

Due to the lack of information regarding the cost of the Reclaim the Rain project and whether the provision in the High Street will go ahead. It has been suggested that the Council reconsiders how it might spend the Pride in Breckland Grant of £12,210. The money will not be released until Breckland Council has been given clarity over how the money will be spent.

Item 10

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

Watton Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed		Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes ✓	No	N/A has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✓		has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

23/06/2026

and recorded as minute reference:

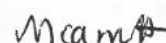
7.4

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair



Clerk



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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

WATTON TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
1. Balances brought forward	REINSTATED 654,041	566,488	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	427,625	452,213	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	69,528	62,954	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	293,609	295,817	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	291,097	259,901	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	566,488	525,937	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	577,536	538,054	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	1,256,886	1,267,824	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?		✓	For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.

M Camm
Date 23.06.26

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

23.06.26

as recorded in minute reference:

MIN 7.5 REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Shirley Hughes

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Watton Town Council – NO0498**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2025/26

Except for the matters reported below, on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with *Proper Practices* and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The smaller authority has confirmed that the response to Section 2, Box 11 is incorrect and should be 'yes'.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None.

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

Date

09/09/2026

Item 11

Chairman, Dep. Chairman, Chairman of WASFAG and the Clerk met on 14.09.26 to consider a response to the Breckland Local Plan Reg. 19 consultation. From that meeting Liz Whitcher has drafted a response for the Town Council to consider. To note the highlighted reference to WAT04 needs agreement. The Town Council needs to submit a response to the Consultation on September 23rd.

Second draft response for the TC to the Local Plan

Introduction

Watton Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on Breckland Council's Regulation 19 Local Plan. The Town Council supports a positively prepared, justified and effective plan that meets local housing and employment needs while protecting the character, infrastructure and amenity of Watton and the surrounding area.

The Town Council will respond below to raise concerns about some aspects of the Plan for Watton but also to support policies that are particularly important for new developments in the town. Any policy not mentioned is because the Town Council approves of it.

We understand that the Plan is based on 5 Strategic Objectives arising from the Strategic Vision with delivery to be facilitated via Strategic Policies which reflect the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as well as local aspirations. We start with responses relating to these 5 Strategic Policies, then consider Infrastructure and conclude with a summary.

1. Development in the Right Place

A major part of this is Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) and one is planned for Watton that it is estimated will provide 1000 homes as well as a new primary school.

This is on the eastern outskirts of the town next to Carbrooke village.

There are 3 other sites WAT04 (130), WAT05 (140) and WAT06 (20). Beside WAT05 are the retained sites from the current adopted Local Plan LP{104}008 and LP{104}019 hatched in pale blue on the allocations map total 6.6 hectares and are for 160 dwellings. They already have requirements such as

3.175 (from the Adopted Local Plan) NCC highways have indicated that improvements to the B1108 and Saham Road junction will be required and therefore a package of transport mitigation measures will be sought. Furthermore there is also a gas pipeline located at the front of the site which would need to be taken into consideration.

As they are part of the new Local Plan, they will have to abide by these policies as well. These sites give a further total of 450 additional homes on top of the 1000 planned at the SUE.

We support the no go area for wildlife at WAT04.

The Town Council has concerns about the SUE.

Noted in 2.1 The increase (in population) is projected to be particularly strong in older age groups. 65% of the growth is projected to be in age groups 65 and over. Data shows that

birth rates are falling nationally and there is projected to be a decline in the number of children aged 0 to 15. The fact that the average age of Breckland residents is increasing, raises issues for health, the level and distribution of appropriate service provision, the economy and the housing market

Data from the last census in 2021 shows that 29% of the population of Watton (8,801) were over 65. In terms of disability, 21% of the population were classed as such under the Equality Act and 7% said they had long term physical or mental health problems. A total of 14% of the population gave unpaid care. This is just for what is defined as Watton and of course does not include the villages, even the Carbrooke bit of Watton. And 5 years on, this will have changed a good deal as Watton has had several developments completed over those years.

The Town Council hopes that the GP Practice and the relevant Health and Social Care bodies are also responding to this point.

In relation to the older generation, we note that SSH1 requirements say the following:

For residential proposals of 500 or more dwellings. as part of the provision under Policy HOU 20, a serviced site for specialist Affordable Housing will be provided comprising either:
(m) Independent Living development of approximately 60 units (approximately 1 hectare)
(n) A site for a Supported Living development of between 12 and 16 units (approximately 0.4 hectares); or, (o) An alternative specialist scheme for Affordable Housing to be agreed with the local planning authority.

In the 2021 census, of those over 65 years, 57.4% lived alone and 26.1% were in a one family household. We also know that our thriving Men's Shed has more than 100 members and there is also a thriving Watton Ladies Group. Many older people may need such a facility. Anecdotal evidence of the number of mobility scooters in the High Street suggests the level of disability/ill health.

We would like to see specific allocation of specialist homes for older people and those with specialist needs.

We think that the SUE is too far out of town, but it is the only site for more than 500 dwellings. As noted above, one provision requires approximately 1 hectare and the other 0.4 hectares. We think these are better placed in WAT05/the retained sites which combined total 12.6 hectares to provide a total of 300 dwellings. These are nearer the town centre.

We also think that there should be a community centre at the SUE to provide a focal point for community activities.

In addition, there are concerns about the SuDS overflows which will presumably drain into the existing watercourses on site which then discharge into the Watton Brook a rare and valuable chalk stream classed as a main river by the Environment Agency as it joins the Wissey and then the Great Ouse. Measures must be in place to ensure there is no pollution going to the Brook.

The Watton & Saham Flood Action Group's response highlights the risk of flooding at the site which is rated as amber in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

2. Meeting Housing Need

The Town Council thinks the following facts in relation to Watton are vital in getting the housing mix correct:

2.8 Wages are relatively low in comparison to the national and regional averages

This is true for Watton and has relevance in relation to housing need. Many local people especially young people cannot afford the open market homes and even the affordable ones.

2.14 67% of homes in Breckland are owned, 18.1% privately rented and 14.1% socially rented.

The percentage in Watton according to the 2021 census was that 69% of homes in Watton were owned, 17% privately rented and 8.2% socially rented. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many people are selling up in the more expensive south and buying homes in Watton. The figures show a shortage of rented accommodation especially in the socially rented category compared to the Breckland figure.

The Town Council strongly supports the development of a balanced housing market and a variety of housing types along with improving the supply of affordable housing and our Neighbourhood Plan refers to this in policies WTN5 Housing Mix and WTN4 Residential Amenity Space.

We also strongly support this part of HOU4 as the town has suffered from reductions in the percentage of affordable housing over the past several years.

Where viability is questioned the Council's priority will be the full delivery of affordable housing to be prioritised over other contributions, with an assessment of all the contributions required and how this affects financial viability as well as options provided as to how the development could be made viable. Where the Council agrees to a reduction in contributions following a Financial Viability Assessment the Council will attach a reconciliation clause to S106 agreements on developments of 10 or more dwellings that will require the viability of a project to be reassessed after an agreed amount of time after planning permission is granted. Depending on the size of the development this process may be conducted more than once to ensure viability is recent and based on actual figures. Any monies obtained by the Council under this process will be spent on the same contributions that were reduced as part of any agreed reduction within the District.

5.122 The District lies within one of the driest parts of the UK. Planned growth in housing and employment will significantly increase water demand. The District's large agricultural sector is also dependent on water availability in the summer. Water quality is crucial due to the number of protected sites relying on high water quality.

5.127 At present it is feasible to achieve a total consumption of 85 l/p/d by taking a fittings-based approach using product types outlined in the Shared Standards Annex C - Section C2, which can be achieved at relatively low cost. In addition, water companies offer incentives to developers to build water efficient homes. These are tied into water company Business Plans that are published every five years, with the latest being published in 2025 alongside WRMPs.

The Town Council strongly supports this, formally stated in HOU15.

5.129 Securing a Mix of Housing National Planning Policy requires Local Planning Authorities to plan for a mix of housing, based on demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community, including the elderly and people with disabilities.

5.132 In respect of Market Housing, the HEDNA concludes the following house size mix is required: (a) One bedroom – 11% (b) Two bedrooms – 34% (c) Three bedrooms – 37% (d) Four or more bedrooms – 18%

The Town Council strongly supports this mix embodied in HOU16 along with the requirements for houses of multiple occupation in HOU17. Watton has many Eastern European residents who work at the Cranswick factory (the 2021 census indicated that 13.7% of the Watton population were from the EU or Europe). Many are separated from their families back home in Europe and require proper homes of multiple occupation. Our Neighbourhood Plan also supports this in policy WTN6 Houses of Multiple Occupation.

The Town Council strongly supports the provision for affordable housing in HOU20 especially the 20% on sites of 10-20 units and 25% on sites of 21 or more units. Also, the provision that the affordable housing should be provided in perpetuity and for them to be distributed across the site in single units or small clusters rather than in a single area. We also strongly support the following in HOU20 Affordable housing will be expected to be delivered on site. Where clear evidence is provided that the site is not viable, if provision is made on site, in line with the requirements set out in this policy, a commuted sum will be sought at £72,500 per equivalent whole dwelling, as recommended by the Council's Local Plan Viability Assessment, or the figure set out in any successor evidence endorsed by the Council. Offsite contributions in lieu of built units on site will only be considered where this is robustly justified by evidence. Where the provision of onsite units threatens the viability of the development the applicant will be required to submit an open book viability assessment in accordance with clause (g) of this Policy.

Design is also important in relation to housing developments. The Strategic Policies DES01, DES02 and DES03 are supported by the Town Council. However, we noted this paragraph at the end of DES03:

All new developments should sensitively incorporate any required service elements such as e.g. utilities, waste storage and collection, cycle storage, EV charging points and air source heat pumps without detrimentally impacting on the street scene.

Why are solar panels not included along with air source heat pumps which can sometimes be noisy?

We also note that a local developer is able to supply solar panels and highly energy efficient homes with sale prices no higher than those of other developments.

3. Promoting a Strong Economy

Given the rural nature and dispersed pattern of settlements, movement in the District is primarily by private car. With a high level of interdependency on higher order centres, Breckland like many other rural authorities, has a high rate of commuting to work, with 59.7% commuting by private car in 2021.

In the 2021 Census, only 15.9% in Watton worked from home. Of those who travelled 58% drove a car or van. There was very little car sharing. 13.5% went on foot with very few cycling. Of those who drove, 16.7% drove from 10-19km with a few travelling up to 60km and 17% working offshore, at no fixed place or outside the UK.

2.3 The market towns of Swaffham and Watton serve as administrative and service centres but are also a focus for retail where they provide a good range of services for day-to-day

needs of local residents and rural hinterlands, as well as providing employment opportunities.

There is in fact very little employment in Watton especially for young people.

Watton has the Threxton Industrial Estate on the outskirts to the west that includes the Cranswick Meat Processing factory, an international electronics company as well as other manufacturing and service units. This manufacturing base is not mentioned in the Local Plan as it identifies Watton as a retail and service centre which is true of the High Street.

The Town Council would like to see expansion of the manufacturing and service base in Watton and the Threxton site is an appropriate place. There is also an industrial area to the east of the town which could possibly also be expanded.

Watton is proud of its High Street with its independent businesses some of which rely on skilled labour and artisans. It is important that the provision of facilities offering skills training is available locally.

2.10 Two trunk roads run across the District and Breckland's strategic position is emphasised by the good road connections offered by the A47 and A11.

2.12 The remaining parts of Breckland are served by a network of non-trunk 'A' category, secondary 'B' category and minor roads, including Watton which is linked by the A1075 to Dereham to the north and Thetford to the south, as well as by the B1108 to Norwich.

The B1108 takes a good deal of east-west traffic including HGVs that serve Cranswick bringing livestock in and transporting finished product out, farm vehicles and those transporting general goods. This leads to considerable congestion in the High Street such that a 20mph limit was imposed in 2024 after a Highways survey. The Watton Market which has a charter going back to the 13th century had to move from the High Street because of safety concerns for both stall holders and the public.

There are cameras to record the number of vehicles traversing the High Street. For example, on Wednesday 18th June 2025 which was market day, there were 1359 pedestrians and 7285 vehicles passed the cameras in the 24 hours. Over the 6-month period 26 March 2025 to 29 September 2025, one million vehicles traversed the High Street, largely due to vehicles passing through and the school runs as both the Infant and Junior School are on the High Street.

There are 14 Grade II listed buildings in the High Street and some shops occupy them. Anecdotal evidence says some have crumbling foundations and are damp inside. Several shops were flooded in the past and the vibration of the heavy traffic may also be affecting their foundations.

3.12

13) Promote the vitality and viability of town centres, including the night-time economy, and support the retention of existing rural services.

14) Provide for improved broadband connections, especially in rural areas.

7.12 The ability to control the mix of uses within centres and designated frontages has changed significantly since the adoption of the previous Breckland Local Plan in 2023. Current and future market trends, the low retail floorspace capacity projections, and changes to the NPPF & the Use Class Order (UCO), indicate a more flexible approach to shop frontage policies and the mix of uses within centres should be considered.

7.13 A flexible approach recognises the need to maintain and enhance each centre's retail role, as well as introducing new non-retail uses including activities in the early evening and night-time economy.

The Wayland Partnership, a charity that has worked in Watton and the surrounding area for more than 25 years to improve the viability of the area is soon to apply for planning permission for a Digital and Creative Media Centre (DCMC) replacing Wayland House in the High Street. This initiative was supported by a grant from the Town Council to contribute to the costs of the application and it is also supported by both Breckland Council and the County Council. The DCMC will provide a new state-of-the-art office and activity space facility in Watton, featuring serviced business accommodation, a 100-seat gaming arena and cinema, podcast studio, a new art gallery and a live performance area. It will also include a café and a children's soft play space. This may well contribute to the night-time economy through the live performance area and cinema.

However, more needs to be done to bring employment to the town particularly for young people.

The Town Council strongly supports the policies embodied in EC01, EC02 and EC03. It is to be noted that in the red bounded area (on the Town Centre map) to the south of the High Street, there is a field for which an outline planning application for 9 residential dwellings has been approved.

4. Creating a Rich Environment

The Council supports planned growth which works in harmony with Breckland's natural and historic environment. The policies in this chapter aim to ensure that natural and historic environmental quality of Breckland is maintained and enhanced.

In relation to the natural environment, Wayland Wood one field away from the Watton conurbation is much valued by the community. It is said to be the wood in the story Babes in the Wood.

It is a Norfolk Wildlife site of ancient woodland. It is one of the largest woods in South Norfolk. It has a fine mix of native tree species including blocks of coppiced hazel. Coppicing creates dense scrub ideal for nesting woodland birds such as warblers and nuthatch. There is a huge variety of wildflowers including bluebells, yellow archangel, water avens, wood anemone, early purple orchid, common twayblade and the rare yellow Star of Bethlehem.

The Town Council would like Wayland Wood to be added to the list under the Environment heading at 8.4 which lists other Local Nature Reserves.

As it is so close to the town, it requires protection and the developer for what is now called Wayland Fields gave S106 funds for a part-time warden at the site to help with its protection. The Town Council would like similar S106 funds from the developments in the Local Plan.

In relation to the historic environment, the comments made above under the Promoting a Strong Economy, indicate that the Grade II listed buildings in the High Street may already be under threat from the amount of traffic traversing the High Street and flood risk.

Over the years, a bypass has been proposed and rejected. Indeed, it is impossible to see where it could go without interfering with the Peddar's Way. We note that there is a Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2025 (updated annually) that includes work to improve

Dereham Market Place where the market is underperforming “due to a traffic dominated environment and a lack of pedestrianised space. Additionally, it has a number of architectural assets that are not highlighted and is congested with buses due to the presence of bus stops on both sides of the road. The centre of the town requires investment to improve its quality, appearance, and accessibility. A proposal is identified within the Future Breckland Dereham Town Delivery Plan to improve the function and appearance of the marketplace, thereby renewing it as a key focal point for the town.”

We understand that there is a similar Future Breckland Plan for Watton’s Middle Street off the High Street and we think it is important that this is added to the Strategic Delivery Plan to ensure that it happens.

We think that there should be contributions from all developers to be spent on mitigating the effects of the through traffic in the High Street as residents from them will travel to and through it.

5. Thriving Communities

10.2 The Health and Social Care Act (2012) gave local authorities new duties and responsibilities for health improvement and requires every local authority to use its available powers, such as Local Plans, to improve health and wellbeing.

The Town Council strongly supports the Strategic Policy COM01 given the current unreliability of the bus service and the pressure on the roads around Watton and in the High Street as noted above due to people travelling to work. This point will be particularly relevant to the SUE.

They particularly support point b) Designed to enable active and healthy lives through prioritising access to inclusive, active, and environmentally sustainable forms of travel and through promoting road safety and managing the negative effects of road traffic;

Also point f) Diverse in the variety of quality employment opportunities for all skill sets and abilities along with education and training facilities to enable residents to fulfil their potential; and point g) Socially enriched with social infrastructure to support development such as health, leisure and education services which are accessible and inclusive; and point i) Digitally inclusive through high quality broadband and other digital services to homes, educational facilities, and employment.

This is particularly important for the young people of the town as mentioned above.

The Town Council strongly supports COM02 COM03 and COM04. The latter is based on a list of community facilities that includes meeting places, churches and so on. It does not specifically mention Community venues. There are 2 in the centre of Watton, the Community Centre in Harvey Street which has two main halls and the hall of the Methodist Church in the High Street. The Sports Centre on Dereham Road also has rooms in which meetings take place. So, we would like to see a similar facility at the SUE as mentioned above for those who live to the east of the town centre which should also reduce the volume of traffic travelling west.

Infrastructure

The Town Council strongly supports INF01 Sustainable Transport Requirements. As noted above, the bus services need to become more reliable, so that residents will then use them rather than the car. Also, INF03, Renewable Energy Development which has requirements to protect the environment and INF04 Telecommunications.

We think that solar panels are best suited to homes and businesses and note that in aerial views that include police buildings in other parts of the country they are covered in solar panels.

We also strongly support INF02 Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage and endorse the response made by the Watton & Saham Flood Action Group on which 2 Town Councillors sit as well as 3 Saham Toney Parish Councillors and 4 residents who have been flooded along with the Chair who has not.

INF05 Developer Contributions

We note that this policy is not classed as strategic and yet it deals with matters such as is outlined in this paragraph: The delivery of development will need to align with the provision of infrastructure. As such, development may be required to be phased to ensure the provision of infrastructure in a timely manner. Planning obligations may be used to secure the phasing arrangement. Commuted payments will be sought to secure the necessary future maintenance of infrastructure.

Provision of infrastructure is so essential that the Town Council ask that this policy be made a strategic one.

We are also aware that developers now set up Management Companies to service and maintain their development including the SuDS as is the case with the development called Wayland Fields. Their expenses on these tasks are paid for by a contribution from residents which can add to their costs. These need to be very clearly stated to such residents so that they know what they are buying into.

2.19 The District is one of the driest areas of the country and availability of water resources is an issue with the increasing pressure for development.

Watton is leading in the efforts to save flood and rainwater as a valuable resource through being part of the Reclaim the Rain project run by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. This includes building retrospective SuDS in the High Street with rain gardens, tree pits and specialist planters that will reduce the flow of water from the roofs onto the road which will reduce flood risk. There will be more trees and plants to brighten the High Street and provide shade in the future for the hot summers which it is hoped will bring increased footfall to the High Street and encourage other retailers to take up the many closed shops in it.

Summary

1. Infrastructure first: Any growth in and around Watton must be matched by timely investment in roads, junction capacity, walking and cycling routes, public transport, drainage, schools, healthcare, open space and community facilities.
2. Transport and highway impacts: The Plan should address existing congestion and pressure on local roads, including the cumulative impact of new development which Watton already suffers from. Highway mitigation must be secured before or alongside development, not after occupation.
3. Delivery and monitoring: The Town Council seeks clear phasing, delivery triggers and monitoring arrangements so that infrastructure commitments are transparent and enforceable.

4. Affordable housing: The Council supports the delivery of genuinely affordable homes, including a mix of tenure and dwelling sizes that meet local needs, particularly for younger people, families and older residents wishing to downsize.
5. Housing mix and design: New development should provide a balanced mix of homes and reflect local character, landscape sensitivity and high-quality design. Larger sites should include family housing, accessible homes and homes suitable for older people. In sites over 500 dwellings, a Community Centre should be included.
6. Employment and the local economy: The Plan should support jobs-led growth in Watton, including land and premises for local businesses, light industrial uses, and opportunities that reduce out-commuting.
7. Town centre vitality: Proposals should strengthen Watton town centre by supporting retail, service and community uses and improving footfall.
8. Green infrastructure, open space and play provision: Development must provide adequate open space, play areas, biodiversity enhancement and green links. Existing assets should be protected and enhanced especially Wayland Wood.
9. Flood risk, drainage and climate resilience: The Plan should ensure that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere and that sustainable drainage is required where appropriate. Climate resilience should be embedded in site allocation and design policies.
10. Community facilities: Growth should be supported by contributions to community buildings, youth provision, health provision, library facilities and other local infrastructure where demand is created.
11. Neighbourhood Plan conformity: The Local Plan should be read consistently with the made Watton Neighbourhood Plan and should avoid allocating sites or setting policies that undermine local community-led planning where applicable.

Watton Town Council requests that Breckland Council gives proper weight to the specific needs of Watton as a growing market town and ensures that the Local Plan delivers sustainable development supported by the necessary infrastructure, services and environmental safeguards.