Minutes of the meeting of Watton Town Council held on

Tuesday 13th October 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, Keith Prince, Graham Martin, Don Saunders, Paul Toombs, Jack White.

Officer present: Jane Scarrott Clerk

I. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM:

Gillian Turrant
[Jacqueline White has resigned as a Town Councillor]

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on September 22nd 2026 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
3.2 Updates from items raised at the meeting on September 22nd 2026 not agenda items for this meeting:

- Public Toilets arson –The Insurance assessor has visited the site and is asking the specialist cleaners to return to complete soot removal from the glass roof panels. A report is awaited.
- The Love Your Market Town grant application for £5000 has been successful.
- Further discussion has taken place around forming a possible planning committee with the consensus that the current meeting format works well. Unless specifically requested, this matter will not be a future Town Council agenda item.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report
The Chairman attended the Chairman of Breckland Council Civic Reception held at the English Distillery on 24th Sept., visited a resident of Watton who was celebrating her 100th birthday on 27th Sept. and attended the Wayland Men's Shed 10th anniversary on 30th Sept.

She has also attended Town Council Committee and Working Group Meetings and thanked everyone involved with the Weekly Market.
Cllr Gilbert was thanked for providing Halloween props to support the town's Halloween Trail at the end of the month.

It was noted that reports from District and County Councillors are agenda items for the end of the month Full Council Meetings but County Cllr Jack White reported that he was happy to support the Parish Partnership application for a dropped kerb at Bridle Road and that the County Council is not selling Norse Care homes at the present time.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report
The report from the Vice-Chairman had been circulated prior to the meeting with a verbal brief given at the meeting.

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

Clock Tower Watton

The building surveyor from Kings and Dunne used to compile the original report of the Clock Tower building has contacted the Town Council after seeing an article in the EDP. He has now contacted the appointed builders to add some weight to the request for the work to be undertaken asap.

He also spoke of the refurbishment of Swaffham Town Centre that Kings and Dunne are involved with which might be a model worth looking at for Watton. Paul Kings who has been leading the work there could be asked to meet councillors in Swaffham to see what has been done there.

Watton - Middle Street

The County Council has been working in partnership with Breckland District Council to develop proposals to pedestrianise, or otherwise restrict general traffic from, Middle Street. This forms part of a wider programme aimed at revitalising the town centre, including creating space for markets, outdoor hospitality, and events or public displays.

A range of options have been explored to date, and informal consultation was undertaken in late 2025 to gather initial views from residents, businesses and elected members. While there remains scope to refine the detail of any final scheme, a consistent element across the options considered is the removal of general traffic from Middle Street. This would be supported by associated changes to parking arrangements, access, and kerb alignments on Dereham Road, which connects the High Street with Harvey Road / Middle Street.

The project had been progressing on the assumption that, following devolution, a funding bid could be submitted to the Investment Fund. If this had been successful delivery could have started in 2026/27. However, government's decision to postpone Mayoral elections means that delivery within this timeframe is no longer achievable. As a result, the next stage of the project, which would have included further public consultation and the securing of necessary consents, has been paused until there is greater certainty regarding future funding opportunities, such as through a reconfigured Investment Fund.

The Town Council has been making enquiries with Norfolk County Council regarding how it might progress a TRO for Wednesdays, as a Plan B, should there be a need to relocate the weekly market. No response has been received to date!

Community Action Norfolk AGM
E-mail invite to be forwarded to Cllrs.

Breckland Town & Parish Council Forum 30.09.26
Attended by Cllr Bulmer and the Clerk.
Noted that the next Breckland Five Towns Meeting is to be held on 20.10.25. Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman invited.

4.4 Reports from Lead Councillors
4.4i Fireworks Evening
Cllr Stan Hebborn informed Cllrs that the cost of hire of the field where the Fireworks Event is held was originally £250 but this charge has now risen to a requested £6000 for this years event. A reduction of £1000 has been negotiated and £5000 has been paid for this year. It was suggested the viability of the event will need consideration for future years.

4.5 Social Media

Cllr Gavin Bulmer led a discussion around how the Council might use social media to better promote what it does and what it can and cannot do.

This is something Cllrs are keen to see happening and consideration will be given as to how best to implement a social media promotional campaign which will explain the powers the Town Council has as well as introducing Cllrs and giving an insight into their work and interests.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public present.

6. FINANCE

6.1 The minutes from the Finance Committee Meeting held on 25th September 2026 were noted.

6.2 The appointment of the Internal Auditor for year ending 31st March 2027 was ratified.

7. QUEENS HALL DONATION

The income from the Wednesday Market during the time it was located at the Queen's Hall has been clarified and **it was resolved** that £220 will be donated to the Queen's Hall rather than the £80 previously agreed.

8. HIGH STREET SEATING

It was resolved to re-locate the seat currently placed at the Charlotte Harvey Community Hub to replace the one damaged during the ram-raid of the cash point outside the Old Post Office. A replacement set will be purchased for the Community Hub. It is estimated the cost of a seat and the works to fit the seat and bench into the High Street will be in the region of £1700.

Noted that there is currently grant funding offered by Norfolk County Council which could provide additional seating for the bus shelter areas. This will be investigated.

9. OPEN SPACE TRANSFERS

Plans have been received of the open space areas which Breckland Council is offering to Watton Town Council and final site visits will be made prior to accepting the areas on the plans.

10. RECLAIM THE RAIN

Prior to public consultation being undertaken a site visit was held on 02.10.26 to help finalise the design for the Reclaim the Rain features which are to be located in Watton High Street.

The Project is suggesting tree pits and rain gardens at various locations along the High Street including a water collection tank to be placed on land belonging to the Wayland Partnership.

The aim of the Project is to help eliminate surface water flooding and to harvest rain water for re-use.

The plans currently include quite major works at the west end of the High Street which may include removal of some or all of the trees and planters outside Lings towards the entrance to Harvey Street.

The plans will be presented to the Town Council once they are available.

11. PRIDE IN BRECKLAND

It was resolved to ask the Office to issue a poll giving Cllrs the choice of possible projects which the Pride in Breckland funding could be spent on.
This matter will be and agenda item again for the next meeting of the Full Council when a decision must be made.

12. MARKET WORKING GROUP

Notes from the meeting of the Market Working Group held on 07.10.26 were accepted.

13. HALLOWEEN TRAIL

It was resolved that, if grant funding to pay for a board is not successful, a Halloween Selfie board will be purchased to support the town's Halloween Trail. Estimated cost of £350.

14. CAR PARKS

Some discussion took place as to how the Town Council can manage long stay parking in the town's car parks.
A fair use policy will be put together and the cost of installing removable height restrictions at the entrances to the car parks will be investigated.

15. PLANNING

15.1 PL/2026/1261/TRE 12 Brandon Road, Watton IP25 6AL Chestnut Tree C1 Crown lift over terrace in garden to 3m, removing only smaller branches to give light and clearance. No comments

15.2 PL/2026/1029/FMIN 6 - 8 Dereham Road, Watton, IP25 6ER Change of Use of 2 no buildings from office to 1 no self- contained dwelling and 4no flats

Agreed proposal to be submitted as comment to application PL/2026/1029/FMIN

"Watton Town Council welcomes the proposed re-use and renovation of vacant buildings and recognises the benefits of bringing such properties back into use. However, the Council seeks clarification regarding the provision of private or communal amenity space for future residents, particularly in relation to the proposed 3 Bedroom Dwelling. The Design and Access Statement refers to suitable amenity space but does not clearly identify its location or extent.

Watton Town Council would also request the Planning Authority satisfy itself that appropriate provision is made for refuse storage, cycle storage and long-term amenity, having regard for Policies WTN3 and WTN4 of the Watton Neighbourhood Plan."

Concern was also raised regarding the possible use of the premises as a future HMO with consensus that this would not be an acceptable location.

15.3 PL/2026/1233/VAR 12 Tom Turley Close, Watton, IP25 6GU Variation of Condition 3 on PP PL/2026/0225/FMIN - to remove the upper age limit of 18 years for residents (with no upper age limit proposed), retaining the lower age limit of 7 years, for the small residential home (Use Class C2) accommodating one person.

The Council felt unable to comment on application PL/2026/1233/VAR without further information.

15.4 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

Cllr Bulmer offered to put together an outline pack to be emailed out to councillors regarding Mallard Road which will then be considered at the next meeting of the Full Council.

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

16.1 The minutes of the HR Committee Meeting held on 25.09.26 were noted.

16.2 It was resolved to set a budget of £500 for the 2026 staff Christmas meal.

Youth Advisory Board

A letter dated 04.10.26 received on 08.10.26 from the Youth Advisory Board was shared with Cllrs and a response will be drafted.