



Needham Market Town Council

Town Council Meeting

Minutes – 10.06.2025

Present: Cllr J Reardon (In the Chair), Cllrs: T Lawrence, R Darnell, C Goodchild, I Mason, M Ost, M O'Shea, A Reardon, K Hunter, G Blake.

In Attendance: Assistant Clerk/RFO Gina de Cova.

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and formally notified Council of Cllr Mike Norris' resignation, referring to the many years of service he has served as both a Town and Mid Suffolk Councillor.

NMTC/25/22 To receive Councillor's Apologies for Absence:

Cllrs L Cornish, G Sinnerton, E Smith and T Cooke. Cllr K Oakes. Apologies were received and approved.

NMTC/25/23 To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest for matters on the Agenda:

The following Declarations of Interest were received and recorded in the Declaration of Interest Register:

Cllrs J and A Reardon – Accounts for Payment (VE Day and Orchard).

NMTC/25/24 To approve any Dispensations with respect to Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interests:

There were no interests in this category to approve.

NMTC/25/25 To receive any reports from County and District Councillors:

A report from District Councillor T Lawrence had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Lawrence highlighted the item in the report referring to MSDC grants available for improvements to the infrastructure of sports facilities.

At this point the Chairman asked for the approval of the Council to bring forward item 12 Committees, as the Assistant Clerk who needs to be present for the item as the Proper Officer, has to leave after it is dealt with. This was agreed by all.

NMTC/25/26 Committees

NMTC/25/27 Planning:

Cllr Ost summarised the outcomes of the planning meeting which took place immediately prior to this meeting.

NMTC/25/28 Governance and Finance:

Cllr Goodchild reported that, at the last meeting: Cllr Cooke had been elected as Vice Chair of the committee; a report had been received from the RFO regarding end of year accounts, and; reviewing the internal audit will be a standing item on agendas.

Cllr J Reardon referred Councillors to the AGAR 2024-2025 which had been circulated with Section 2 (page 5) completed by the RFO. 'Section 2 is the Accounting Statements 2024-25 for Needham Market Town Council'.

In reviewing 'Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2024-25' Cllrs were referred to some guidance sought by the RFO from our external auditor PKF Littlejohn. Cllrs agreed that each of questions 1 to 8 should be answered as 'Yes'. Question 9 is not applicable to this council.

Cllr Ost proposed that the AGAR 2024-25 Section 1 with the answers completed as agreed and Section 2 with the figures provided by the RFO be submitted as part of the audit process for this year. This was seconded by Cllr Darnell and agreed unanimously.

Completing the AGAR has a statutory deadline of 30th June annually. However, it is best practice to complete it after the internal audit has been completed. Our internal audit is taking place in June this year. Cllrs noted that next year the internal audit needs to be booked for earlier in the year.

At this point RFO Gina de Cova left the meeting.

NMTC/25/29 Community and Assets:

There has not been a meeting since the ACTM. The first meeting is scheduled for 15th July and the first item of business needs to be to elect a Chair for the committee.

NMTC/25/30 To confirm the Minutes of the Annual Town Council meeting held on 14th May 2025:

The draft minutes were updated with corrections to two Cllr names and additional information to clarify meaning to the item re Cllr O'Shea's apology. The minutes of the meeting of 14th May 2025 were then accepted as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairperson. Proposed Cllr Mason, seconded Cllr Ost. All in favour.

NMTC/25/31 Matters arising from the Minutes of the previous meeting:

Cllr Darnell requested that minutes include action points for individuals to be included. It was agreed that this would be requested of the Clerk and should apply to the minutes of all meetings.

NMTC/25/32 To receive questions from any members of the public present

There were no members of the public present.

NMTC/25/33 To receive a report from the Town Clerk:

The Clerk was not in attendance. The Employment Committee will be discussing Locum support at their next meeting.

AP: Cllr J Reardon to convene a meeting of the Employment Committee.

NMTC/25/34 To consider Grants/Donations for 2025/26:

- a. **Needham Market In Bloom** have requested in writing a donation of £250 to purchase planting and compost for the planters in the Town. Cllr Darnell proposed that this sum be donated to Needham In Bloom. This was seconded by Cllr Ost and all were in favour.

AP: RFO to organise payment.

- b. **Needham Market Community Centre.** Via Tony Bass, Management Consultant three requests for funding and support had been received and circulated to all Cllrs. It had been discussed at the Governance and Finance Meeting of 03.06.2025.

Cllrs discussed the request and considered the need to support the Community Centre whilst also ensuring the precept is properly spent.

Concerning the request that Town Council will act on behalf of the Centre to support a planning application for the solar panel installation, by accessing & paying for the District Council's reduced fee application process with the surveyor acting as agent & facilitator

for this work: Cllr Ost proposed the Council agree to this request. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Darnell and all were in favour.

The other two requests were for funding towards the solar panels and replacement external doors. Cllr Lawrence proposed: That Council ask if the Centre Committee have explored the current grant funding offer from MSDC re improvements to the infrastructure of sports facilities. If not, the suggestion will be that they do so. If yes and this has been refused, the request is that they share the reason for the refusal with Council. Once this information has been established, Council will reconsider the request. This was seconded by Cllr Ost and carried by a majority vote (For – 5; Against – 2; Abstention – 2).

- c. **Bosmere Community Primary School PFA** had requested £700 towards the Year 6 Leavers events and some funding towards the £6000 needed to repair playground surfacing. Cllrs discussed where the responsibilities for these lies alongside current funding difficulties for schools. Cllr Hunter proposed that Council make a £1000 donation toward the repair of the playground surface. Cllr Goodchild seconded the proposal and the vote was carried (For – 8; Against – 1).
- d. **Friends of Suffolk Libraries** The question of the Council continuing to fund newspapers and the photocopier was revisited with updated information. The Needham Market Library Friends Group are now completely disassociated from SCC and have full governance over their monies raised meaning all proceeds are spent on the town's library and its services.

Concerning funding the provision of local newspapers: Cllrs discussed that SCC are not funding this and that this Council could fund them through the Friends Group.

AP – Clerk to speak to Donna Grand and ask that the Friends Group formally approach Town Council to fund the newspapers.

Concerning the photocopier: The position with SCC is still unclear. If the existing photocopier is removed SCC will likely replace with a small scanner/printer only.

AP – Clerk to ask SCC what is happening re the current copier in the Library given that they promised to maintain all Library Services when they took them back.

NMTC/25/35 To receive an update from the Skatepark Group

Cllrs Cornish, Goodchild and J Reardon have had a couple of meetings with the Skatepark Group. An area of the Middle School Field has now been identified and Fearless Ramps have also had input to the meetings. It has been agreed that the Skatepark Group will ask Fearless Ramps to now visit the site and produce a costed proposal. They will also need to consider the funding of surfacing and a perimeter fence. Town Council will also need to consider CCTV.

Town Council will now need to consider all the due diligence factors.

AP – Cllr Hunter to compile a list of the factors which will need consideration.

NMTC/25/36 To receive update on Christmas Fayre 2025

Cllr Cornish has agreed to lead on this and will need commitment from several Cllrs to make this viable. Council will need to liaise with other parties usually involved in the event. Insurance must be considered.

NMTC/25/37 To discuss The Neighbourhood Plan Review

Future funding windows to employ a planning consultant to assist with this are not guaranteed. The Planning Committee have an allocated budget of £5000 annually and in the last few years have not required all of that.

Cllr Ost proposed that Council agree to employ Andrea Long, a planning consultant who has worked with us several times, at a cost of up to £10,000 (to be funded from the Planning Committee's budget + a £5000 overspend). Cllr O'Shea seconded and this was carried with all in favour.

NMTC/25/38 To receive and approve the accounts for payment and confirmation

These had been circulated prior to the meeting. It noted that acquiring a debit card to be used in the office needed to be a priority.

AP – RFO to anonymise the Locum Clerk’s name on the accounts presented.

Cllr Goodchild proposed that the accounts for payment and confirmation be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Ost and carried with a vote.

NMTC/25/39 Matters to be raised by members

An enquiry re busking on the High Street had been received and will be referred to Cllr Kay Oakes at SCC as this is a Highways query.

An offer to attend a meeting had been received from SCC to discuss Local Government reorganisation.

AP – Clerk to invite to the next meeting.

MSDC are exploring the possibility of buying a piece of land in Needham Market.

AP – Add to the next agenda for the next meeting.

With the resignation of Mike Norris, it was agreed he be presented with a plaque as has previously been the case.

AP – Clerk to find the template in records.

With the retirement of Audie, it was agreed that his leaving needs to be recognised.

AP – Cllr J Reardon to discuss with Clerk.

The Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed **Date**