

Diss Town Council

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 30th July 2025** at **7.15pm**.

Present: Councillors: S. Browne, D. Collins, D. Craggs (Chair), C. Dente, A. Goulder, S. Kiddie (remotely), A. Kitchen, K. Murphy, J. Robertson (ex-officio), R. Peaty, L. Sinfield.

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk/CEO)
County / District Councillor Kiddie
District Councillor Minshull
3 members of the public

FC0725/01 Apologies

Councillor's Name	Apologies Received	Absent Without Apology	Reason / Approval
J. Welch	☐	☒	

FC0725/02 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

FC0725/03 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Full Council meeting on Wednesday 18th June and Wednesday 2nd July 2025. It was

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meetings of the Full Council held on Wednesday 18th June and Wednesday 2nd July 2025 (extraordinary) as a true record and were signed by the Chair. An amendment was made to minute reference EFC0725/08, adding the estimated cost of the works at £30,000.

FC0725/04 Public Participation

There were five members of the public in attendance. County councillor Kiddie reported that the footpath surfacing along Shelfanger Road is now complete, and members were encouraged to report any potholes that need to be filled online. There is a focus on reducing fly tipping, which requires strong evidence and is a costly process. He has been involved in further discussions on Devolution with a decision expected in September. Central government has not confirmed the available funding, parliament is in recess, and all three models are being debated. He will be addressing fading road signage between Roydon & Diss, and the A140 will be closed this weekend to complete the Long Stratton bypass, before opening next week. This development is key to supporting the delivery of much-needed growth in the area (4,000 new houses), making Long Stratton the second largest market town in Norfolk. There were questions regarding a 20mph speed limit and proactively publicising postcodes where fly tipping occurs.

District councillor Minshull promoted the Mindful Towns & Villages initiative, where free mental health training is being offered at Roydon village hall on 23rd October. He will forward details to Clerk for forwarding to members.

(Action – GM / Clerk)

The rumour regarding three weekly bin collections is still going around but is untrue. Cllr Minshull will be considering the first three building premises in Diss to write to under the new High Street Rental Auctions legislation to revitalise long-term vacant properties and support local economic growth. The criteria include that the building has been unoccupied for a minimum of two years. If the landlord does not rent out within a couple of months, the District Council can acquire the building for rental. The care home developer has been asked to revisit plans to make the application more acceptable to the Planning Officers.

He provided an update regarding the Park hotel. He talked about the integration of the current families (including 46 children) into the community, the request with minimal notice from the Home Office to replace current residents with single males and the peaceful protest that took place, albeit frightening residents. The hotel owner was not made aware of the proposed change and is not prepared to house the proposed new occupants. The contract is due to finish in September, and the owner is happy to renew on existing terms. Another meeting with the Home Office is expected and the protest organiser has agreed there will not be any further protests.

FC0725/05 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

FC0725/06 Finance

- a) Members noted bank outgoings for June 2025.
- b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for June 2025.
- c) Members noted the Earmarked Reserves report for June 2025.
- d) Members received the 1st quarterly financial report (reference 20/2526).

FC0725/07 CPRE Norfolk Anti Mega Solar Alliance

Members considered joining the CPRE Norfolk Anti-Mega Solar Alliance. It was noted that the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring & Review Group is responding to the East Pye Solar Scheme consultation with concerns about the extent and local concentration of the solar farms and their impact on the landscape and the most versatile agricultural land. The District Council has passed a similar motion and is consulting on a Landscape Susceptibility study and there are a lot of unhappy farmers despite the financial incentives, due to the impact on food production. Discussion favoured roof solar panels, it was agreed that the CPRE is a well-respected organisation for over 50 years, that there should be joined up thinking with other Councils, and we should be realistic about expectations as the initiative is part of a national, not regional strategy. It was

Resolved: that Diss Town Council joins the CPRE Norfolk Anti Mega Solar Alliance.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

FC0725/08 Diss Youth & Community Centre

Members received a project update from the DYCC Action Group. We are continuing to have regular meetings with the District Council's Officer to understand the facility provision and layout of the John Grose site, with a decision on the final configuration expected in September. The group will reconvene to take stock of where we are, review options and how they fit into a wider strategic template and a plan of action for member consideration.

(Action: DYCC AG; update by 17.09.25)

FC0725/09 Clerk & Town Mayor Reports

Members received the Clerk & Town Mayor's updates on activities since their last reports, which were favourably received. It was noted that the local small charities could be invited to the planned volunteer thank you event.

(Action: DC / Clerk; by 31.12.25)

FC0725/10 Progress Report

Members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council.

FC0725/11 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 17th September 2025 at 7.15pm.

FC0725/12 Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings)

Members considered a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Standing Orders 3d to exclude members of the public and press in order to discuss the following item which is properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

FC0725/13 Staffing Review

Members considered further recommendations from the staffing review undertaken by Local Council Consultancy (confidential report 21/2526 referred). The Chair of Executive provided an update on the work of the Executive Action Group including the appointment of a Responsible Finance Officer to replace both a Finance Officer and RFO previously, with back-up support from an Office Administrator, the internal appointment of a Projects & Grants Officer and the subsequent Office Administrator vacancy for which there is potentially an internal candidate and a further development opportunity.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the recommendations to back pay two members of staff and pay-scale range increases. Cllr Goulder requested a recorded vote against the recommendations as she felt that the strategic plan should inform any recruitment. Together with three further votes against and two abstentions, it was

Resolved:

1. That the start date of the Projects & Grants Officer would be agreed by the Clerk and Chair of the Executive committee.
2. To fill the Office Administrator vacancy.
3. To appoint the Finance Officer as the Council's Responsible Finance Officer on SCP 24 (range 24-28) on 30 hours per week from 1st September 2025.
4. To back pay the Finance Officer at SCP18 from August 2024 and the Clerk at SCP40 from November 2024 for covering the additional responsibilities following the departure of the RFO & Deputy Clerk, and to exclude the time the Locum RFO was in post.
5. To approve the incremental contractual increases for 8/11 staff members & make arrangements for the government staff pay increases back paid to April 2025, which includes:
 - a) Increasing the Office Administrator - Cemetery Lead's SCP range from 7-12 to 13-17.
 - b) Increasing the Marketing & Communications Administrator's SCP range from 7-12 to 13-17 once the top of the scale has been reached.
 - c) Increasing the Clerk's SCP range from 37-41 to 40-42 as per the Associate's recommendation.

(Action: Clerk / RP / FO; by 30.09.25)

Meeting closed: 21.18.

Councillor D. Craggs
Chair / Town Mayor