

DISS TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES

A minute's silence was held in memory of David Burn, former Chair of the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group who very sadly passed away earlier this month and was instrumental in delivering the Plan over many years.

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 17th July 2024** at **7.15pm**.

Present: Councillors: S. Browne, D. Collins, D. Craggs, S. Kiddie, A. Kitchen, K. Murphy (Chair), S. Olander, R. Peaty, J. Robertson, L. Sinfield, E. Taylor & J. Welch

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk)
Sonya French (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO Temporary)
County / District Councillor Kiddie
District Councillor Minshull
1 Member of the public

FC0724/01 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from councillors Gingell & Goulder.

FC0724/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Minute No.	Councillors Name	Personal/ Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
FC0724/10	K Murphy	X		This councillor is a member of the District Council's Development Management Committee.

FC0724/03 MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Full Council meeting on 12th June 2024. It was

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings of Full Council held on 12th June 2024 as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC0724/04 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were 3 members of the public present. County & District Councillor Kiddie reported that there are some considerable differences in terms of future direction following the recent general election including changes to the minimum income guarantee.

From a Highways perspective, the entrance to Roydon village hall will be repaired during school holidays but will cause some disruption for 2-3 days. They have reswept the recent surfacing on Shelfanger Road to bed in the shingle and white lining will follow. They have temporarily filled potholes on Mount Street and Walcot Road with the areas to be resurfaced in due course.

With his Diss High School governors hat on he had to sit on a disciplinary panel for a ng – permanent exclusion.

The District Council is considering the possible collection of food waste, which is potentially very expensive and may become a statutory duty or discretionary. Buses will be taken under local control with the impacts currently unknown.

There were questions regarding the funds allocated by County during pandemic for the pedestrianisation of Mere St. It was noted that County has re-allocated their funds and that Diss Town Council has re-allocated its funds to the parking project.

It was reported that there are significant potholes on Frenze Road on a school bus route but that are not any funds budgeted currently.

District Councillor Minshull reported that Clare House has accepted its first residents. It should pay for itself in the first year and the District Council is talking to other Housing Associations regarding other unloved care homes.

The recent planning announcement regarding a requirement for 400k new houses on top of the 200k in the current plan and signal they want to go ahead with the energy / planning infrastructure may see the Deal Farm and pylons projects going ahead.

The District's Community awards took place on Friday with a new 'Town Councillor of the year' award. They are looking to introduce bleed prevention kits to all leisure centres next to defib kits and suggested that DTC may wish to consider purchasing some / training.

The Women's Initiative mentioned at a previous meeting is going ahead the following at Diss Town Football Club.

There was a question regarding when the Park hotel was going to be brought back to support tourism. It was noted that the decision is controlled by the Home Office, that it was originally signed out on a 2-year contract so has another year to go before it should be re-fitted and handed back to owners.

Mr Sanders spoke about his concerns regarding his purchase of the Cemetery bungalow. He was advised that the gas billing issue has been resolved after numerous calls to the supplier. Mr Sanders has been previously advised that it is the responsibility of the purchaser to undertake the appropriate surveys prior to purchase of the property / land regarding the rubbish found on the site.

FC0724/05 **ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business raised.

FC0724/06 **FINANCE**

- a) Members noted bank outgoings for June 2024.
- b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure reports for June 2024.
- c) Members noted the Earmarked Reserves reports for June 2024.
- d) Members noted the reconciliations of income and expenditure with the Council's bank account statements for April & May 2024.

FC0724/07 **QUARTERLY REPORT**

Members received the 1st finance quarterly report (reference 12/2425 referred). The Deputy Town Clerk was complimented on the condensed report highlighting the top-line summary information.

FC0724/08 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

Members considered recommendations regarding amendments to the Schedule of Meetings and committee structure (report reference 13/2425 referred). The Chair raised the points made by cllr Gingell on email before the meeting.

There were concerns that combining committee meetings and thereby increasing committee membership may reduce the amount of time for discussion and around potential political changes regarding local-level decision-making and planning/infrastructure. It was noted that the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan is still in the monitoring phase and the increases in required housing numbers alongside the likelihood that green spaces will be delegated to local level will create a bigger workload.

There were discussions regarding the need for closer links between members of Council and sub-committees. It was agreed that the committee structure should be investigated over the coming months given circumstances.

Clarification was provided regarding the re-arrangement of meeting dates around key activities / events and that there would be the same number of committees and meetings. It was

RESOLVED: to approve the re-scheduling of dates for the Executive committee, Facilities and Full Council and review committee structure proposals in six months.
(Action: Clerk; by 31.07.24)

FC0724/09

SAFETY OF LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES USED IN E-BIKES/E-SCOOTERS

Members considered a request to support the campaign to improve the safety of lithium batteries used in e-bikes & e-scooters and their disposal. The situation is exacerbated in London due to equipment being kept inside to avoid theft. County/District Councillor commented that they present a real danger to waste collection as they are used also in vapes and dust carts are setting on fire due to the batteries.

There was discussion regarding return schemes for vape shops and communicating the message that members of the public carefully consider the safety implications of purchases. There should be an article in the forthcoming Link magazine on the subject.

It was noted that the Police are seizing quite a few e-scooters if the rider does not have the correct insurance and if not registered. Schools are best placed to communicate the dangers to parents. It was

RESOLVED: 1) to support the campaign to improve the safety of lithium batteries used in e-bikes & e-scooters and their disposal through a letter of support, inclusion in Diss Matters and on posters.

2) Liaise with schools, Police and local vape shops to ensure the safety implications of lithium batteries is communicated and to enquire regarding a return vape scheme.

(Action: Clerk; by 30.09.24)

FC0724/10

PLANNING CONSULTATION

Members considered a response to the consultation on introducing a local connection eligibility test for the South Norfolk Self and Custom Build Housing Register by 2nd August. Cllr Murphy's abstention from the vote was noted. The Chair of the Planning Committee spoke in favour of the local connection eligibility test to close the loophole relating to self-built properties and to ensure that any Community Infrastructure Levy funds benefit local people. District councillor Minshull confirmed that this is a change to South Norfolk's policy, and it is not affected by central government. It was

RESOLVED: That councillor Peaty draft a response to the consultation in favour of introducing a local connection eligibility test for the South Norfolk Self & Custom Build Housing Register on behalf of Diss Town Council by 2nd August.
(Action: RP; by 02.08.24)

FC0724/11

COUNCIL LEADER, TOWN MAYOR & CHAIR FORUM

Members considered updates from or questions to the Council Leader, Town Mayor and Committee Chairs on their activities since the last meeting. Chair commented it would be helpful to have a brief update and it was agreed that representatives on outside bodies and a Clerk update could also be included.

There was discussion regarding the timescales for the repairs to St Mary's church clock. Financial issues have resulted in a delay to the project and the church is going through a challenging period. They have been unable to recruit a new Revd primarily due to the enormity of the role across many parishes and the Bishop of Thetford has been called in to help.

Members were keen to support the church in getting the clock repaired and it was suggested that a Go Fund Me fundraising campaign could be organised to raise additional funds potentially by a younger councillor.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

FC0724/12

PROGRESS REPORT

Members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council. The Park enhancement project has been put on hold given the leisure development improvements.

FC0724/13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council is scheduled for Wednesday 11th September 2024 at 7.15pm.

FC0724/14 **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 items which are properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

FC0724/15 **DISS CORN HALL**

Members received a confidential verbal update regarding Diss Corn Hall. It was

RESOLVED: to ask that Diss Town Council be involved in more detailed discussions regarding the Corn Hall following feedback from Trustees and to inform future planning requirements.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

FC0724/16 **STAFFING**

Members received a confidential report (reference 14/2425 referred) regarding recommendations for the recruitment of a Responsible Finance Officer and Deputy Town Clerk. Discussions included budgetary constraints of employing a separate RFO and DepTC particularly given the possible staff pay increases, employing the best person for the roles, and appointing a locum to cover meetings and holidays. It was noted that the Council does not currently have a recruitment policy. It was

RESOLVED:

1. To interview the Finance Officer for the Acting Responsible Finance Officer vacancy on SCP24 for 30 hours per week on a temporary basis for six months from 1st August 2024 with a review of the role after three months.
2. To operate without a Deputy Town Clerk for the next six months.
3. To approve the updated job description for the RFO.
4. To approve the updated job description for the Facilities & Buildings Manager.
5. That the Executive Chair and another member of the Executive committee work alongside the Clerk to review the proposed temporary staffing structure within three months so that the staffing budgetary requirements can be allocated for 2025-26.
6. Consider appointing a locum to manage meetings/absence.

Meeting Closed: 21.19.

Councillor Murphy
TOWN MAYOR