

Diss Town Council

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 14th January 2026** at **7.15pm**.

Present: Councillors: D. Craggs (Chair), C. Dente, S. Kiddie (via Teams), A. Kitchen, R. Peaty, J. Robertson (ex-officio), L. Sinfield, J. Welch.

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk)
District Councillor Minshull
8 members of the public

FC0126/01 Apologies

Councillor's Name	Apologies Received	Absent Without Apology	Reason / Approval
S. Browne	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Written apologies not accepted
K. Murphy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

FC0126/02 Declarations of Interest

Minute No.	Councillor's Name	Personal/Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
FC0126/09	A. Kitchen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Diss & District Royal British Legion

FC0126/03 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Full Council meeting on Wednesday 17th December 2025. It was

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on Wednesday 17th December 2025 as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

FC0126/04 Public Participation

Eight members of the public were in attendance. District Cllr Minshull reported on the quieter Christmas period; the disappointing local government settlement announced just before Christmas, though SNDC had anticipated the outcome and can absorb the impact; the costs and charging arrangements for the introduction of food waste collections; continued reductions in core funding and the end of the New Homes Bonus. He noted that Local Government Reorganisation is progressing, with updates expected in March and a County Councillor election still anticipated in May 2026. Plans for the new leisure centre are advancing, with approval expected in March and construction to begin in April 2026 ahead of an April 2027 opening. SNDC is purchasing a dedicated street cleaner for Diss, with pavement jet-washing planned ahead of summer when weather permits.

County Cllr K. Kiddie apologised for not being able to attend. Cllr Martin Wilby provided a written report covering Norfolk County Council's winter gritting programme, including the deployment of a 58-vehicle fleet and support from volunteers and farmers; the Council's top ranking in the Eastern Region and second nationally in the National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey; confirmation of multi-year government funding for highways maintenance and bus services through to 2029/30, with allocations rising to £83 million for highways and over £15 million annually for buses; delivery of two new state-of-the-art water and foam carriers for Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service; the introduction of Tap on/Tap off payment technology across First and Konnect buses, with all operators expected to follow in 2026. Members were encouraged to contact Cllr Minshull with any questions for the County Councillor.

The majority of the other members of public were observing only with one member interested in the budget, Council Sites and the street naming items. e asked for Mike – budget – questioning 3.7%. DYCC. Shelfanger Road street naming.

FC0126/05 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

FC0126/06 Finance

- a) Members noted bank outgoings for December 2025.
- b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for December 2025. It was requested that the month was updated.
(Action: RFO; immediately)
- c) Members noted the Earmarked Reserves report for December 2025.
- d) Members received the 3rd quarterly financial report (reference 40/2526 herewith).

FC0126/07 Budget 2026-27

Members considered the budget and precept request for the 2026-27 financial year (report 41/2526 referred). The proposed increase hasn't changed since the last meeting and is in line with inflation. Councillors of the Action Group have scrutinised the budget document to keep the increase as low as possible whilst ensuring sufficient funds in Earmarked Reserves to either fund upcoming projects or go towards future known costs. Inflationary and staff salary increases have been accounted for, and the increase equates to an extra £7 per year for each Band D householder compared to the previous year. Cllr Welch abstained from the budget decision. It was

Resolved: To approve the precept demand to South Norfolk Council of £752,684 or £256.19 for each Band D householder for the financial year 2026/27.

(Action: RFO; immediately)

FC0126/08 Council Sites

- a) Members received a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Council's key sites from Cllr Peaty.

The Diss Youth & Community Centre (DYCC) has remained closed since October 2023 following RAAC-related roof issues, and a feasibility study by FMG Consulting confirmed the continued community need for accessible space. Park Radio Ltd has recently vacated the building, now used by the Facilities & Buildings team, Diss Litter picking Group and Community Larder, generating no income. There is no longer an athletics club operating from the Sports Ground site. Norfolk County Council Registration Services will continue to require office accommodation, although wedding ceremonies will relocate to the Corn Hall from April 2026. In addition, a men's mental health & wellbeing group continues to hire space within the Council Offices on a weekly basis.

The strategic context reflects sustained population growth, upcoming housing developments (including Shelfanger Road), and the construction of the John Grose site community facility due for completion in 2027. Evidence from the South Norfolk Built Facilities Assessment, alongside local indicators of deprivation, underscores the need for flexible, modern community space within Diss. From the limited response to the Council's public consultation, the majority (90%) of respondents consider new youth and community facilities a worthwhile investment, with most willing to consider a Council Tax contribution. A nearby church plans to offer a hireable community space, there is interest in a Community/Men's Shed facility, and local groups support using the Citizens Advice porta cabin.

Several development options were presented. Option 1 involves refurbishment of the ageing DYCC structure at an estimated cost exceeding £750k. Option 2 comprises a series of new-build options on the existing site, ranging from a £650k office-only building to a £1.5m facility with a large high-ceiling hall, stage and sprung floor. Example floor plans and modular building case studies were provided for comparison. Available internal funding totals £685,459, with potential additional external funding from Community Infrastructure Levy, Sport England and the National Lottery, alongside possible borrowing via the Public Works Loan Board.

Indicative cost analysis shows that consolidating the DYCC and Council Offices could generate annual savings of approximately £20k. Sport England's 2025 cost guidance was used to benchmark hall construction costs. The presentation concluded with proposed next steps: defining a detailed project brief, commissioning design and cost work, engaging with planning authorities and potential user groups, exploring external funding routes, assessing healthcare

partnership opportunities, developing a future income model, and undertaking further community consultation.

- b) Members considered the recommendation to further investigate the various options for developing a new building on the DYCC site as described on slides 7 & 15 following the presentation. Discussion centred around the benefit of a flexible modular design which could grow alongside need fulfilling immediate office space requirement and reducing operational costs running two sites with the ability to extend the building as demand requires. It was noted that the existing roof cannot be repaired and business rates would apply unless the whole site was demolished at a cost of circa £140k (costs which could be absorbed in a redevelopment project).

District Cllr Minshull encouraged members to appoint a Project Manager to save time and money on the project and to be bold. He recommended the Poringland community facility, funds for which were raised by the community and spoke of the multitude of grants available to support an ambitious higher ceiling facility. He also spoke about the high demand for leisure facilities including the higher-than-expected usage of the recently reopened swim centre.

One member of the public reminded members of the benefactor's wishes to continue to provide a community facility on the site, queried the need for more sports facilities given forthcoming developments and supported the requirement for meeting space for local businesses in a town centre location. It was

Resolved: to further investigate the various options for developing a new building on the DYCC site as described on slides 7 & 15.
(Action: DYCC AG to meet & determine timescales)

FC0126/09 Shelfanger Road Development Street Naming

Members reconsidered the request from Norfolk Homes for street names relating to the new Shelfanger Road housing development. Suggestions have been received from Councillors, staff and members of the public and South Norfolk District Council will select those that adhere to their street naming policy. Five suggestions have already been provided by Roydon Parish Council, and the developer requires between 8 & 10. Preference was given to the following, Betjeman Grove/Gardens, Wilson Way / Walk & Well Place. Members were less keen on the Friendly Invasion references and one member noted there is an Amyot gate at St Mary's church. It was

Resolved: to put forward a selection of street names for the Shelfanger Road housing development to include the above and retain the remaining suggestions for future developments.

(Action: DTC; immediately)

FC0126/10 Clerk & Town Mayor Reports

Members received the Clerk & Town Mayor's updates on activities since their last reports. It was noted that the Mayor and Clerk had most recently attended the installation service of the new Assistant Curates / Revd. and Deacon and wife and husband team at St Mary's church.

FC0126/11 Progress Report

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

FC0126/12 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 11th February 2026 at 7.15pm.

Meeting closed: 20.45.

Councillor D. Craggs
Chair / Town Mayor