

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING **MINUTES**

Minutes of the proceedings of the **Annual Meeting of Duly Registered Local Government Electors** held at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 6pm.**

Present: Councillor Kieran Murphy (Town Mayor) in the Chair
Councillor Simon Olander (Council Leader)
Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk)
Kimberley French (Marketing & Communications Administrator)

Councillors Kitchen, Kiddie, Peaty, Taylor, Welch, Craggs, Goulder, Browne, Sinfield.

District Councillors Kiddie and Minshull
41 members of the public

Apologies received from councillors Collins, Gingell and Robertson.

1. WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR OF DISS

Councillor Kieran Murphy welcomed those in attendance to the Annual Town Meeting.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Wednesday 24th May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Town Mayor. It was

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes from the May 2023 meeting.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM DISS TOWN COUNCIL

Members received an annual report on the activities of Diss Town Council. The Town Mayor thanked two former councillors and introduced two new councillors, Annie Goulder and Declan Craggs. Cllr Taylor summarised the progress of the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan. Council Leader cllr Olander updated residents on the Beacon extension project, date for the 80th anniversary of D-Day commemoration on 6th June and new planting scheme for Market Place.

Former councillor and friend of Diss Town Council, George Waterman spoke on progress towards creating a Green Corridor network across Diss following suggestions from members of the public at our last meeting. Areas to consider suggested included Rectory Meadow, area near Nunnery on Park, and public bridleway next to the catholic church.

Cllr Olander provided an update on the Diss Youth & Community Centre regarding the estimated costs of roof replacement and the options being explored, which require a good understanding of the demand for youth & community space and requirements for existing and new users.

The Council will be running community engagement events on the Market Place throughout the summer and is working hard with volunteers on the forthcoming events including Diss Carnival on 16th June.

4. REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILS

County Councillor Kiddie presented a report on behalf of Norfolk County Council including the completion of major capital works namely Vines Road junction improvement works, flooding prevention work at Sawmills Rd up towards Frenze Beck and bus access to the

railway station. They are continuing to repair potholes and have completed surface dressing on Shelfanger Road to Catholic church.

Via his member grant funding, the Beacon cycle route signage has been completed and trees have been planted on Fair Green. Funds have also supported the Guides based in Roydon, Fox Wood Forest school with extra trees and the Cadets with an interactive board.

It was noted that short notice works on the A1066 are usually emergency utilities works and the surfacing along St Nicholas St and Market Hill does not withstand continuous parking and heavy traffic.

District Councillor Minshall provide a report on behalf of South Norfolk District Council. Updates included £1m savings made by moving out of Long Stratton & into Horizon building with the Octagon building open Monday to Friday to support residents locally.

Leader John Fuller has been elected as a Lord and will be standing down at the next annual meeting and he spoke of his achievements during his tenure including helping to keep the precept low, reserves down and investing in South Norfolk.

Over the next 3 years they will invest £16m into Diss via the swimming pool refurbishment and development of the John Grose / south side of Park Road sites. The former is on time and on budget currently and on schedule to re-open at the end of November 2024. It was noted that swimming pools are not a statutory service and over 300 have closed recently. They are developing plans for the new leisure centre, new bus station and GP surgery in negotiation with health authorities. It is hoped that one of the existing GP surgeries would move into the new development to enable the other practice to expand services.

The District Council carry out 120 statutory services including waste collection, planning, food hygiene standards for food establishments, Help Hub, which provides a gateway to 46 other organisations including Police. There has been a huge increase in homelessness and they purchased Clare House, which will be converted into 26 units to reduce costs of temporary accommodation and will be manned 24/7. It was noted that the units are available on a churn basis, would usually have a limited tenancy of 3 months and are prioritised for South Norfolk residents.

Residents were encouraged to engage with the National Grid proposed pylon line from Norwich to Tilbury consultation on 15th May line Norwich – Tilbury, which will have a major impact on the environment.

5. QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Several questions were raised by electors. It was noted that the DYCC was purchased by a benefactor and gifted to Diss Town Council in 2012 for use as a youth & community centre. The caveat was that if sold, the proceeds would be used to provide community facilities elsewhere in the town. MTM Youth Services has been looking for alternative accommodation and is keen to involve the youth club and young people in decision-making.

It was also suggested that the office opening hours were insufficient. It was noted that the morning office hours were reduced 4 years ago in line with other local council opening times and no other comments have been received. Many members of the public now contact the Town Council via social media streams, and it has freed up staff time in being able to deal with enquiries during the afternoons.

BREAK & NETWORKING

6. **REPORT FROM WAVENEY & LITTLE OUSE RECOVERY PROJECT MANAGER**

The Waveney and Little Ouse Recovery Project, led by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, is looking at how to restore the headwaters of the Waveney and Little Ouse Rivers, between Diss and Thetford. The project is a partnership of 17 landowners, including Suffolk Wildlife Trust, collaboratively working towards land use changes in our catchment area that will help them restore the headwater's hydrology, biodiversity, and climate resilience. They are working collaboratively with the Environment Agency through DEFRA funding to bring an uplift plan to the local landscape that will be funded through both government funding and sales from ecosystem services such as carbon units and biodiversity credits. As local residents, they hope their project will be able to deliver increases in river water quality, better access to your local natural environment and a headwater to be proud of.

Their project has been in development for 15 months and will continue to be in its development phase until at least the end of 2024. Aerial drone footage, kindly obtained by the Environment Agency, was shared of the recent high-water levels which revealed the historical run of the Waveney River adjacent to Wortham Ling, an area of focus for their restoration project. Residents were encouraged to engage with the project via the contact details provided.

7. **REPORT FROM MTM YOUTH SERVICES. COUNCIL GRANT RECIPIENT**

MTM Youth Services lead updated members on ways they have spent the Town Council grant awarded in September 2023. They are working in partnership with other organisations including Quaker Wood, Morrisons, Diss High School and the Park hotel to encourage 11-19 year olds to engage positively with their community including regular life skills and wellbeing sessions.

Attendees were also updated on the World Café initiative. Diss will hold Norfolk's first event on 13th July aiming to bring people together to talk about a subject e.g. wellbeing. And find solutions to challenges.

8. **AWARD PRESENTATIONS TO FORMER COUNCILLORS. THE HONOURED CITIZENS OF DISS FOR 2024/25 & THE 2023/24 TOWN MAYORS NOMINATED CHARITY NELSON'S JOURNEY.**

Cllr Olander presented former councillors George Waterman & John Wooddissee with certificates of recognition for their contribution to the work of the Council including the monthly Litter picking group, supporting key town events, acting as Dinsdale, town enhancement projects, HR related matters, and representing the Council on outside groups.

Cllr Murphy presented two Honoured Citizen awards to Mary Cotton and Mike Garnham after hearing the reasons for their nominations from their proposers. Mary was awarded for raising thousands of pounds for the Royal British Legion's poppy appeal, supporting many events and being a member or volunteer of a range of other organisations in the town. Mike was thanked for his tireless work at Quaker Wood supporting young people in life skills, maintaining the boardwalk gardens and supporting Remembrance Day events.

Cllr Murphy then spoke of his Mayoral year which has been filled with enriching experiences and valuable lessons most importantly the connection with people of Diss. The event concluded with a cheque presentation to a representative of his chosen charity, Nelson's Journey.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.27pm.

Signed as a true record - _____
TOWN MAYOR