

DISS TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Marriage Room** at **Diss Town Council Offices** on **Wednesday 20th December 2023** at **7.15pm**.

Present: Councillors: S. Browne, D. Collins, M. Gingell, 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/Chief Executive Officer)
Susan Hurst (Responsible Finance Officer)
County Councillor Kiddie
1 member of the public

FC1223/01 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from councillor Wooddissee.

FC1223/02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were none.

FC1223/03 **MINUTES**

Members confirmed the minutes of the Full Council meetings on 15th & 29th November 2023. It was

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings of Full Council held on 15th & 29th November 2023 as a true record to be signed by the Town Mayor.

(Action: Town Clerk; immediately)

FC1223/04 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were two members of the public present. County Councillor Kiddie reported that they've finished the scheme at the top of Denmark Road. The 20mph restriction for the same area is progressing but will take approximately 12 months. Funds have been allocated for 20mph flashing signs to be installed around schools operating during arrival and departure to improve safety.

Cllr Kiddie's member grant has been part allocated to a tree planting scheme on Fair Green and another group to plant bulbs along verges. The traffic works around rail station should be completed soon enabling buses to access the station. Other road schemes include three 20mph areas including one in Croft Lane.

From a District council perspective, the latest Link magazine provides info on their recycling scheme. Recycling in Diss & District is now at 48% up from 31%. They hosted a very successful Reuse & Recycling event held in the Diss Youth & Community Centre car park when 10 bins were filled avoiding landfill. They are likely to set some further dates. The upgrade of the leisure centre is due to start in February with an investment of £4m into Diss' local facilities. This will be followed by the redevelopment of the John Grose and bus station sites.

Thanks were extended to county councillor Kiddie for the improvement to rail station access, which will help improve adult education access. It was noted that additional buses are now running from Shelfanger and North Lopham into Diss with ongoing discussions regarding frequency of service and that two hours free parking on the Saturdays leading to Christmas are offered.

Due to traffic slowing on the A1066, it was agreed that the traffic lights synchronisation would be reviewed, and members noted that buses are using Croft Lane, which has a 7.5 tonne weight restriction on it.

(Action: KK; 31.01.24)

FC1223/05 **ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There was one item of urgent business. Concerns were raised regarding the impact of the planned closure of the Market Place Post Office on footfall, another large empty building and access given the proposed move to the Carphone Warehouse. It was noted that the bailiffs have now boarded this building up and neither Royal Mail nor landlord of the Carphone Warehouse have been approached regarding this.

Members discussed preserving a bank provision via a banking hub and cllr Olander will forward details to members. The banks that have closed and are due to close are directing customers to the Post Office for a paying in service. Diss Town council will respond to the consultation prior to the 5th January deadline expressing its concerns and disappointment with the consultation process.

(Action: SO / Clerk; immediately)

FC1223/06 **FINANCE**

a) Members noted bank outgoings for November 2023. It was noted that a filter tap needs to be installed at the Council Offices to reduce costs of the water cooler.

(Action: FBM; 31.01.24)

b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for November 2023.

c) Members noted Earmarked Reserves for November 2023. It was noted that General Reserves has been split out from Precept in the table at the bottom.

FC1223/07 **INTERNAL AUDIT**

Members received the internal audit report and considered proposed actions relating to the auditor's recommendations (report 46/2324 referred). It was

RESOLVED:

1. To note the contents of the internal interim audit report 2023/24 (Appendix).

2. To approve the proposed actions as appropriate responses to the internal audit report's recommendations.

(Action: RFO / Finance Officer; by 29.02.24)

FC1223/08 **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

Members considered the Council's Annual Community Infrastructure Levy Declaration for 2022-23. It was

RESOLVED: to approve the Council's Annual Community Infrastructure Levy Declaration for 2022-23.

(Action: RFO / Finance Officer; immediately)

FC1223/09 **PRIDE IN PLACE CLEAN UP & BLOOM FUNDING**

Members noted that an application has been submitted to South Norfolk Council for a £300 Pride in Place Clean Up & Bloom grant.

FC1223/10 **CO-OPTION**

Members noted that the elections team at South Norfolk Council has been notified of the Council's casual vacancy and that it will be filled by co-option if an election is not called within 14 working days of the notice being displayed. This period ends on 3rd January 2024.

FC1223/11 **TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS**

Members considered appointing an action group to consider tree preservation orders for Council owned trees that are under threat of being damaged or cut down and make a significant contribution to the amenity of the area. It was

RESOLVED: to appoint councillors Collins, Olander and Robertson to consider suggesting tree preservation orders for Council owned trees that are under

threat of being damaged or cut down and make a significant contribution to the amenity of the area.

(Action: DC / SP / JR; by 30.06.24)

FC1223/12 **BUDGET**

Members reviewed the Council's budget proposals for the financial year 2024-25 for approval at the January meeting of Full Council (report 47/2324 referred). It was noted that the General Reserves balance is low and below the minimum stated in the Council's policy. It was proposed that additional funds are allocated to increase this. Two options were presented - an increase in the precept request from 9.9% to 12.01% i.e. £12.5k or 35p a month per Band D householder and to 13.03% i.e. £18.5k or 50p per month. It was noted that a 12-13% increase is common amongst other councils.

Members discussed the 0% and 2% precept increases that have been applied over the last three years and CPI / RPI increases.

The requirement to review the responsibilities of landlord / tenant of Diss Corn Hall to ensure appropriate expenditure was raised again and cllr Peaty and the Clerk are due to meet with the acting CEO of the Corn Hall in the New Year and once their accounts have been filed. It was

RESOLVED:

1. To approve a precept request of £18,000 for specified EMR Tree Management and £10,543 from the anticipated year-end surplus as shown in Appendix B.
2. Members recognize that the General Reserves' minimum threshold of 6 months' expenditure falls below the agreed-upon standard in our financial regulations. The council, collectively, will make efforts to save funds to restore this to an acceptable level.
3. That members approve the proposed income and expenditure budgets shown in Appendix A for 2024/25, which reflects a 13% increase for Diss taxpayers in the current year.
4. To approve the precept demand to South Norfolk Council of £668,148 or £235.76 for Band D householders, with an increase of 13.03%.
5. To give delegated authority to the Town Clerk to work with the Responsible Finance Officer and the Chair of the Executive Committee to publicise the budget outcomes.

(Action: RFO / Clerk / MG; post January meeting)

FC1223/13 **PROGRESS REPORT**

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

FC1223/14 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council is scheduled for Wednesday 10th January 2024 at 7.15pm.

Meeting Closed: 20.08pm.

Councillor Murphy
TOWN MAYOR