

Diss Town Council

Minutes

A minute's silence was observed in memory of former Town Councillor Eric Taylor, who served as Mayor for two years and played a pivotal role in the development and delivery of the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan. Eric sadly passed away earlier this month after many years of dedicated service to the Plan and the community.

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Ceremony Room** at **Diss Town Council Office** on **Wednesday 29th July 2026** at **7.15pm**.

Present: Councillors D. Craggs (Chair), C. Dente, S. Kiddie, A. Kitchen, T. Knights, R. Peaty, T Shava, L Sinfield, J. Welch, P. Wilson

In attendance: S. Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk)
Adrian Ramsay MP
County Councillor Porteous
District Councillors Kiddie & Minshull
5 members of the public

FC0726/01 Apologies
There were none.

Post-Meeting Note: It was subsequently noted that an apology for absence had been received from District Councillor Murphy prior to the meeting. However, the message was not seen until after the meeting had concluded and was therefore not reported at the time.

FC0726/02 Declarations of Interest

Minute No.	Councillor's Name	Personal/Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
FC0726/09b	D. Craggs	☒	☐	This councillor is a Governor at Diss Primary Academy Partnership.
FC0726/09b	P. Wilson	☒	☐	This councillor's daughter attends Diss Junior School.
FC0726/09b	T. Shava	☒	☐	This councillor's son attends Diss Infant School.

FC0726/03 Minutes
Members received the minutes of the Full Council meeting on Wednesday 24th June 2026.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on Wednesday 24th June 2026 as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

FC0726/04 Public Participation
Nine members of the public were in attendance.

Adrian Ramsay MP provided an update on several parliamentary and constituency matters. He highlighted concerns regarding young people's use of social media, noting that current regulations do not adequately protect children and young people from online harms while still allowing access to the benefits of digital platforms. He has engaged with parents, schools, teachers and young people through roundtable discussions to inform his contributions in Parliament. Topics discussed included educational platforms, support for vulnerable children and potential measures to improve online safety.

Mr Ramsay also updated members on ongoing work relating to Special Educational Needs (SEN). He advised that this remains a key area of focus for Government and generates significant constituency casework, with many young people still not receiving the support they require. Concerns remain regarding alternative provision and the lack of SEN training and support available to teachers in mainstream schools. He has raised these issues in Parliament on several occasions and continues to await further details of proposed reforms to the SEN system.

Members were informed about his continuing campaign to improve access to NHS dentistry across Waveney Valley and East Anglia. Research commissioned by Mr Ramsay found that only a small proportion of practices advertising NHS availability were accepting new NHS patients, with the region among the worst affected nationally. He continues to lobby the Secretary of State for Health and has welcomed steps such as the expansion of urgent dental care and proposals for a dental school, including work with the University of Suffolk to increase dentist training and retention. However, he stressed that current Government funding remains insufficient and limits access to NHS dentistry.

Mr Ramsay also spoke about the impacts of climate change, emphasising the need for stronger action to mitigate long-term effects while ensuring communities are prepared for current challenges relating to infrastructure, food production and water security. He advised that he will be leading a parliamentary debate on Nature Recovery later in the year.

In response to questions, discussion took place regarding SEN provision, with an offer made by a councillor with relevant experience to gather feedback from affected families and forward comments to Mr Ramsay.

The recent meeting regarding bus services was referenced, noting that Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils had received Government funding to support service improvements. Mr Ramsay requested evidence of gaps in local provision to help inform future representations.

Further discussion took place regarding social media regulation, including proposals previously raised by ministers concerning age restrictions, night-time curfews and measures to limit excessive online use by young people. Mr Ramsay noted that regulation has struggled to keep pace with developments in technology, including artificial intelligence, and that current regulatory frameworks do not cover all platforms. It was suggested that limits could be placed on doomscrolling - compulsively consuming negative online content for long periods, often at the expense of your mental well-being - which would be investigated and the emphasis on social media engagement as a condition for youth sports sponsorship deals.

Mr Ramsay also referred to forthcoming events in Diss, including the autumn conference, and commented on the town's central location within East Anglia.

A written report from County Councillor Will Porteous was received. Members noted updates regarding ongoing gas works and road closures, particularly on Victoria Road, as well as delays to road-marking works. Roundabout lining works are scheduled to take place during August. Updates were also received on litter-picking initiatives, enhancements sought at Diss Library, the Summer Reading Challenge, healthy ageing programmes, discussions with Waveney Foodbank, accessibility at Diss railway station, climate change matters, Co-Lab, community engagement activities, and highways issues affecting Roydon, including proposed works at Snow Street and pavement repairs near the primary school.

Additional highways updates included the closure of Walcot Road, the reopening of Priory Road, and concerns regarding drainage infrastructure opposite Diss High School, where damage has been caused by heavy goods vehicles turning over a drain cover.

District Councillor Minshull reported that South Norfolk District Council maintains a dedicated emergency planning team and regularly undertakes multi-agency emergency response exercises across the district.

An update was also provided regarding a proposed care home application. Councillor Minshull advised that the application had been unanimously refused by the Development Management Committee and was likely to go to appeal. He expressed confidence that there were strong planning grounds to support the decision should it be reconsidered.

Members received updates on grant funding, including support for South Norfolk in Bloom, and on Local Government Reorganisation proposals. Concerns were raised that the current proposals could have a negative impact on South Norfolk and Diss. Representations have been made to the relevant Government minister.

Councillor Minshull also highlighted changes to approaches supporting victims of domestic abuse, with a greater emphasis on enabling individuals to remain within their local area where appropriate while moving to a place of safety.

Members were advised that food waste collections are due to commence on 28 September. Households will receive bins and liners in advance of the launch. Residents are reminded that food waste should not be placed in black bins, and enforcement action may be taken in cases of persistent non-compliance.

It was noted that councillors are increasingly experiencing abuse both online and in person. The National Counter Terrorism Security Office has produced guidance for elected members on personal safety and online security.

Members also noted the launch of the new South Norfolk tourism website, which will promote local towns, attractions and walking routes.

In response to a question regarding waste bins in St Nicholas Street, concerns were raised that the area was being used for fly-tipping, resulting in vermin issues. It was suggested that property owners could consider providing bin storage facilities, although South Norfolk District Council does not own the pavement in question.

FC0726/05 Items of Urgent Business

There were none.

FC0726/06 Finance

- a) Members authorised bank outgoings for June 2026 retrospectively.
- b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for June 2026. One of the precept / income figures had not been updated and would be corrected.

(Action: RFO; immediately)

- c) Members noted the Earmarked Reserves report for June 2026.
- d) Members noted the internal control councillor bank reconciliations for April, May and June 2026.
- e) Members received and noted the 1st Quarterly Financial Report (report 21/2627).

FC0726/07 Diss Park

Members considered a revised proposal for the provision of a sauna facility within Diss Park. The proposers outlined the concept, emphasising a collaborative approach and highlighting the potential community benefits of the scheme.

Members reviewed the supporting information provided, including details of the proposed sauna facilities, community wellbeing initiatives, and potential opportunities for future development. Discussion took place regarding the suitability of Diss Park as a location, the anticipated community benefits, local demand, operational arrangements, environmental considerations, and the relationship between the proposal and wider leisure and wellbeing provision in the town. Members also considered how the proposal related to the ongoing work of the Pavilion Working Group.

A member of the Pavilion Working Group spoke about the potential financial contribution the facility could make to Diss Town Council, referring to projected revenue generation and increased use of the site throughout the week. The economic benefits of the proposal were discussed, and the proposers indicated that they would be happy to provide further information to members regarding the financial projections.

The proposers explained that sauna facilities are typically heated either electrically or by wood-fired systems. Given the town centre location, an electric sauna was considered the most appropriate option, with the potential to utilise the existing electrical infrastructure at the Pavilion. They advised that electricity usage was comparable to that of wood-fired systems and noted that associated facilities, including ice baths and lighting, could be supported through renewable energy sources. They also referred to the possibility of entering a green energy contract and incorporating biodiversity measures, such as a living roof, to minimise environmental impact.

Members sought clarification regarding the operation of mixed and single-sex sessions. The proposers advised that a range of options could be offered, including mixed sessions, private bookings, and sessions designated for particular groups. It was noted that they had successfully operated similar facilities elsewhere, serving approximately 10,000 users, without significant issues. The facility would be always staffed, and measures would be in place to address any concerns regarding anti-social behaviour or inappropriate conduct. Reference was made to a previous sauna facility at the swimming pool, where issues relating to inappropriate behaviour had been experienced.

It was

Resolved: To support in principle the proposal by Sauna Box Ltd to establish *The Sanctuary* at the Pavilion, recognising its potential community wellbeing and economic benefits, and authorises the Town Clerk to provide an appropriate letter of support for planning and external funding applications, subject to all statutory consents and detailed agreements being obtained.

(Action: Clerk; to facilitate discussions and report back to Council)

FC0726/08

Gas Contract Renewal

Members considered report 22/2627 regarding renewal of the Council's gas supply contract for the Council Offices and Diss Youth & Community Centre. Members noted that quotations had been obtained from two energy brokers and considered the potential financial implications of each option, together with the benefits of fixed-term contract arrangements and current market conditions. The advantages and disadvantages of the respective proposals were discussed, including contract length, standing charges, anticipated costs and flexibility should the gas supply at the DYCC no longer be required. Members were given assurances that there is a penalty free break within the three years on either removal of the meter or sale of either building. It was

Resolved: To approve the recommended fixed three-year gas supply contract from Broker Two.

(Action: RFO; 30.08.26)

FC0726/09

Community Grant Scheme

- a) Members considered report 23/2627 and the revised grant policy, together with the proposed small & standard community grant application forms. Members noted that the revised arrangements would simplify the application process whilst maintaining appropriate controls and accountability for the award of public funds. Discussion took place regarding the introduction of two application routes and the proportional approach to assessment and due diligence. A member of the public was impressed with the introduction of the smaller grant process as it may increase interest in the funds. It was

Resolved: To adopt the revised community grant policy and small and standard grant application forms with immediate effect.

(Action: Office Admin; immediately)

Cllr Peaty stood in as Chair for this item given the cllr Craggs interest noted above.

- b) Members considered the Grant Panel's recommendation to support, in part, the application from the Diss Primary Academy Partnership for funding towards emergency anaphylaxis kits. Members noted the importance of the project in supporting pupil welfare and compliance with emerging allergy management requirements as well as the challenge of funding the scheme after budgets had been set. External funding contributions were considered particularly a request to the Diss & District Rotary Club. It was

Resolved: To approve a grant contribution of up to £1,300 to the Diss Primary Academy Partnership towards the first year's anaphylaxis kit subscription costs, with the final grant amount to be determined following confirmation of any contribution from the Diss & District Rotary Club.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

FC0726/10

Youth Provision

Members considered report 25/2627 regarding progress towards the development of enhanced youth provision in Diss. Members noted the outcomes of engagement work undertaken with local young people, which identified demand for safe social spaces, sport and recreational activities, creative opportunities, wellbeing support, and personal development opportunities.

Members also considered the proposed delivery arrangements, funding application, procurement process, and the longer-term sustainability of the project. Discussion centred on identifying the most appropriate delivery partner, ensuring that any new provision complements existing services, and coordinating efforts with other organisations.

Members noted that additional government funding has been announced, although further details have yet to be released. It was also noted that the evaluation criteria do not currently total 100% and will require adjustment. It was

Resolved:

1. To approve the draft tender documentation attached at Appendix D subject to amendment to evaluation criteria.
2. To approve commencement of a procurement exercise to appoint a suitably qualified organisation to deliver youth provision for 11 to 20-year-olds in Diss and surrounding communities, subject to the award of the anticipated £20,000 grant funding and additional funding at a later date.
3. To identify sustainable funding arrangements for a minimum period of three years beyond the initial grant-funded programme.
4. To receive a further report setting out the outcome of the procurement exercise and recommending a preferred provider prior to any contract award.

(Action: Clerk / Projects & Grants Administrator; to progress the procurement process and report back to Full Council)

FC0726/11

Policies

- a) Members considered a new Information Technology (IT) Policy to support compliance with AGAR Assertion 10 (Digital and Data Compliance) requirements. Members noted that the policy provides a framework for the secure and appropriate use of Council IT systems, equipment, mobile devices, email and data, whilst supporting compliance with current data protection and cybersecurity requirements. The new policy has been reviewed by both VMit, the Council's IT provider and Worknest, its HR & Legal contractor. It was

Resolved:

To adopt the Information Technology (IT) Policy with immediate effect.

(Action: Office Admin; immediately)

- b) Members considered report 26/2627 and the reviewed policies presented for approval. Members noted that the revisions reflected legislative updates, current Council operations, improved readability and recognised good practice. It was

Resolved:

To approve and adopt the following revised policies:

1. Equal Opportunities Policy;
2. Illegal Encampment Policy;
3. Vexatious Complaints Policy;
4. Elected Member Training Policy;
5. Virtual Meetings Policy;
6. Protocol for Recording Meetings;
7. Child Safeguarding Policy;
8. CCTV Policy;
9. Recording Officer Decisions Policy.

(Action: DTC Admin; immediately)

FC0726/12

Events

- a) Members considered a report outlining the rationale for postponing the Diss Carnival in 2027, with a planned return in 2028. The Council noted the increasing resource demands associated with delivering the event, including financial pressures, reduced staff capacity, challenges in volunteer recruitment, growing regulatory requirements, and the need to prioritise several significant strategic projects. Members recognised that the proposal represented a temporary pause to support the long-term sustainability and future success of the Carnival, rather than its cancellation.

During discussion, Members raised questions regarding funding, budget implications, public perception, and the continuing challenge of volunteer recruitment. It was acknowledged that the workload associated with other priority projects supported the case for postponement. Members noted similar experiences elsewhere, including Roydon Parish Council's restructuring of its Big Green Week programme into a series of events throughout the year to improve manageability and delivery.

Members emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum on key strategic projects and noted that the Transport Fayre would take place on Fair Green on 20th September 2026. The need for clear communications, including a press release, was highlighted to manage public expectations and explain the rationale for the decision. Discussion also focused on improving lead times for vendors and sponsorship opportunities and exploring ways to encourage greater community engagement and volunteering. Members noted that

a revised approach to events delivery could be more cost-effective and provide increased opportunities for public engagement. It was

- Resolved:** To postpone Diss Carnival in 2027 and return the event in 2028, enabling resources to be focused on strategic Council priorities whilst developing a more sustainable long-term Carnival model.
(Action: Events Committee; to develop proposals for the return of Diss Carnival in 2028; by June 2027)

At 21.29, it was

- Resolved:** To invoke Standing Orders 3x and continue with the meeting beyond the two hours from commencement to complete the business on the agenda.

- b) Members noted the minutes of the Events Committee meetings held on 2nd June, 16th June and 21st July 2026.

FC0726/13

Items for Noting

Members received the following updates and reports:

- a) Members received the Town Clerk's update on activities (report 27/2627) since the last report. Updates included progress on the DYCC redevelopment project, stakeholder engagement relating to the Leisure & Community Centre project, discussions regarding the former Citizens Advice building, community partnership initiatives, climate action engagement and the inaugural Diss Strategic Liaison Forum.
- b) Members received the Town Mayor's update on activities (report 28/2627) since the last report, including attendance at community events, civic engagements and fundraising activities undertaken in support of the Mayor's chosen charity.
- c) Members received the Facilities & Buildings Manager's update on maintenance activities (report 29/2627) since the last report. Updates included works at the Cemetery Chapel, repairs and improvements to Council assets, installation of vehicle tracking systems, repairs to speed indicator signs and ongoing grounds and facilities maintenance. District councillor Minshull confirmed he will follow up on the street cleaning equipment. Cllr Craggs keen to review the maintenance team distribution around the town & will liaise with George Waterman accordingly.
(Action: DC; by October meeting)
- d) Members noted progress on decisions made at the previous meeting of Council. Cllr Shava updated members he is creating a digital space for the Mere working party.
(Action: TS; by September meeting)

FC0726/14

Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 23rd September 2026 at 7.15pm.

Meeting closed: 21.39.

Councillor D. Craggs
Chair / Town Mayor