

# Diss Town Council

## Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024** at **7.15pm**.

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

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk/CEO)  
County / District Councillor Kiddie  
District Councillor Minshull  
2 members of the public

**FC1124/01**

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from councillors Browne, Kitchen & Olander.

**FC1124/02**

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were none.

**FC1124/03**

### **MINUTES**

Members received the minutes of the Full Council meeting on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024. It was

**RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**FC1124/04**

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were four members of the public in attendance. District councillor Minshull reported on the Early Help Hub's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. They have been leading the way in the field and their model has been copied by several other Councils. Mike Pursehouse who has been at the helm will be leaving at the end of the year.

The swimming pool is re-opening on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The public consultation on the John Grose site will start in the New Year. They have had a Business Advice van at Hopper Way providing business support and ran a successful town and parish council summit last week. They have refused a further application for the biodigester in Bressingham and are considering enforcement to clear the site.

There was a question regarding the involvement of the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System in the Early Help Hub and the District Council is still trying to engage.

County councillor Kiddie advised of the completion of the Heywood Road surfacing including lining, flooding issues in Bellrope Lane, Roydon, which are being investigated and confirmed that the railings on Mount St have been repaired. He will be meeting their Highways Engineer for a pre-Winter site visit. Their Ditchwalker is doing inspections and there are several projects relating to preventative flooding measures being discussed, which will be circulated to Town Councils.

Diss library will undergo refurbishment in the New Year. It is anticipated the works, which should include improvements to the frontage, will take six months and the library should be accommodated in the Denny Centre whilst works are completed. They are working with the UEA regarding support for veterans relating to the Armed Forces Covenant.

As a Diss High School Governor, he chaired a health & safety meeting where the results of the fire evacuation procedure in under three minutes were shared. They have also had to permanently exclude two students. Diss Junior School and Roydon primary school will be getting additional SEND provision.

The new plans for collecting food waste from April 2026 will have a considerable impact on the District's resources as they determine how they will manage the purchase of 60,000 caddies, 10 - 12 extra rounds, demand for more vehicles, additional land as the depot is not large enough, and additional staffing.

Both District councillors will be meeting with our new MP on Friday.

County / District Councillor Kiddie congratulated the Council on an appropriate and respectful Remembrance commemoration despite initial reservations.

The third member of the public is interested in joining the Town Council. She introduced herself explaining that she has worked for a large property company and now runs a new estate agent locally. She also volunteers as the Secretary for Diss Athletics Club, where her husband is one of three coaches. She has freed up some time to support the town she's lived in for her whole life.

The fourth member of the public was interested in item 8 on the agenda and confidential item 13. He would stay to discuss item 8.

#### **FC1124/05 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business raised.

#### **FC1124/06 FINANCE**

a) Members noted bank outgoings for October 2024. There was a request to consider grouping items on the bank outgoings report to ease understanding.

**(Action: AG to liaise with Finance Officer; by 18.12.24)**

b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for October 2024.

c) Members noted the Earmarked Reserves report for October 2024.

#### **FC1124/07 BUDGET**

Members received an update (reports 35/2425 & 36/2425 referred) regarding the draft budget. The Chair of the Executive committee summarised key factors for the proposed increase including staffing costs specifically the impact of the lowering of the National Insurance threshold. It was noted that admin salaries are being maintained at a little less than previously with maintenance increasing.

Given the cost-of-living rise, an increase of 7.36% is currently proposed subject to receiving the tax base figure prior to the next meeting. The Budget Action Group also proposes setting aside funds in Earmarked Reserves to cover the future costs of items such as a new vehicle and capital streetlighting replacements. It was noted that the Council usually purchases second-hand vehicles, will be considering e-vehicles and that the mis-selling of vehicle leases and low mileage may render this option not worth pursuing. It was

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

1. To approve the Infrastructure budget, along with the related Earmarked Reserves.
2. To approve the Executive budget, along with the related EMR's.
3. To approve the Facilities budget, along with the related EMR's.
4. To approve the current budget with the increase of 7.36%, pending any further adjustments before the final budget-setting meetings.

**(Action: Finance Officer; by 18.12.24)**

#### **FC1124/08 DISS YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Members received a project update from the DYCC Action Group (report 37/2425 referred). Cllr Goulder provided a detailed summary of the steps leading to today including the options, the feasibility study, consultation with stakeholders including the survey and link with the District Council regarding their leisure hub and community facility. The member of the public reminded members of the Parish Fields Friends interest in extending the woodland path on the DYCC site.

There was discussion on the wishes of the benefactor and covenant, which requires the sharing of any uplift in land value with Norfolk County Council. It was also noted that as part of the stakeholder liaison, the Council would be liaising with Diss High School. School Governor & County / District councillor Kiddie would speak to the Head tomorrow and the best contact for Junior School liaison would be provided. It was

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. To approve the draft initial resident survey subject to removal of statement 3 from question 3.
2. To recruit councillors Murphy, Collins, Craggs & Welch to help with community engagement sessions.

**(Action: Clerk / KM / DC / DC / JW / KK; immediately)**

**FC1124/09 CLERK, COUNCIL LEADER, TOWN MAYOR & CHAIR FORUM**

Members thanked the Clerk for her report and there were no questions to the Council Leader, Town Mayor and Committee Chairs on their activities since the last meeting.

**FC1124/10 PROGRESS REPORT**

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

**FC1124/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council is scheduled for Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 7.15pm taking place at the Council Offices due to the Corn Hall's pantomime.

**FC1124/12 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.

**FC1124/13 SPORTS GROUND SKATEBOARD PARK**

Members received a recommendation for upgrading the Sports Ground Skateboard Park (confidential report 38/2425 referred). It was noted that considerable funds are required to repair the facility and that the number of current users is unknown. It was agreed that Council needs to better understand usage and user needs. It was

**RESOLVED:** To temporarily close the Skateboard Park for safety due to works required and request that users contact Diss Town Council to determine the demand and repairs required.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**FC1124/14 STAFFING**

Members received a confidential update regarding staffing (report 39/2425 referred). The Clerk provided a brief update following her meeting with the Council's Locum Responsible Finance Officer. It was estimated that one further day should be required to complete the Council's banking review ready for Council consideration in December and track the changes on the polices reviewed to date. The services would then be reviewed at the end of each week to determine need.

Members also considered what costs associated with the Community Governance degree study should be repaid by the former Deputy Town Clerk given her resignation within two years of course completion. Councillors considered the staff training policy wording, commitment to repay and benefits to the Council of the study. It was also noted that the policy should be reviewed with consideration for a sliding scale to reflect the benefits of the study borne by the Council. It was

**RESOLVED:** To request that the full course costs associated with the Community Governance degree study are repaid by the former Deputy Town Clerk given her resignation within two years of course completion with delegated authority to the Clerk to negotiate a payment plan.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

Meeting Closed: 8.58pm.

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Councillor Murphy  
TOWN MAYOR