

Diss Town Council

Minutes

Draft

Minutes of the meeting of the **Assets & Infrastructure Committee** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 8th April 2026** at **7.15pm**.

Present: Councillors: D Craggs (ex-officio), S Kiddie, L Sinfield (Vice-Chair), J Welch and T. Shava

In attendance: Robert Ludkin (Facilities & Buildings Manager)
Colin West (Office Administrator)
3 members of the public

AI0426/01 Apologies

Councillor's Name	Apologies Received	Absent Without Apology	Reason / Approval
C. Dente	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holiday
J. Robertson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ill Health

AI0426/02 Nomination of Substitute Representatives

Members noted that Councillor T. Shava was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor J. Robertson.

AI0426/03 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

There were none.

AI0426/04 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Assets, Infrastructure & Events Committee meeting on Wednesday 28th January 2026. It was

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Assets, Infrastructure & Events Committee held on Wednesday 28th January 2026 as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

AI0426/05 Public Participation

There were three members of the public in attendance. Two members of the public spoke in relation to item 7. One member of the public spoke in a professional capacity in relation to items 10 and 13.

AI0426/06 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

AI0426/07 Park Pavilion

- a) Members considered a report on the future of the existing Park Pavilion in the context of the proposed South Norfolk Council Leisure & Community Centre development (report 01/2627).

Members of the public questioned whether the proposal represented the best use of resources and suggested that alternative priorities warranted attention, including Mere drainage issues, the appearance of the Mere's Mouth area, and the Diss Youth & Community Centre. Concerns were also raised regarding liaison between South Norfolk Council and Diss Town Council and the need for clearer communication.

The Facilities & Buildings Manager (FBM) advised that the existing pavilion is subject to regular vandalism and antisocial behaviour, including graffiti, rough sleeping and related issues, and that the current structure presents ongoing management challenges.

Members discussed the proposal in detail, noting that South Norfolk Council funding was central to the scheme and that the proposal was linked to improving views from the planned leisure centre development, which has yet to commence. Concerns were raised regarding ground drainage and

the importance of addressing any underlying issues prior to construction to avoid risks associated with ground settlement. Members of the public also expressed reservations about the impact of a bandstand on views across the park, the absence of wider public consultation at this stage, and the potential for adverse public reaction if a decision were taken prematurely.

It was clarified that the purpose of the item was to determine whether further engagement with South Norfolk Council should take place, rather than to approve the scheme. Members noted that the existing pavilion no longer accommodates a café use and that the building has reached the end of its practical lifespan. With one abstention, it was

Resolved: That the proposed bandstand concept be supported for the purposes of continued engagement with South Norfolk Council, subject to further consideration of drainage, funding arrangements and future public consultation.

(Action: Officers to continue discussions with South Norfolk Council and report back to Members with further detail as appropriate.)

- b) Members noted that a spring and buffer were being replaced on the aerial runway equipment in the Park as part of routine maintenance.

AI0426/08 Council Offices

Members noted the proposed design and wording of a Council Offices window sticker that will be installed as part of a heritage trail.

AI0426/09 Tree Management

Members received and considered the tree survey report (reference 02/2627), which assessed Council-owned trees across multiple sites including the Cemetery, Park, Sports Ground, Allotments, Council Offices and other landholdings.

The FBM explained the rationale for the proposed changes to the inspection and maintenance approach, noting that moving from a three-yearly to an annual inspection cycle would be more efficient, reflect current industry standards and support earlier identification and management of issues. It was noted that approximately 20–30 trees require remedial works during the current year.

Members noted that the overall volume of recommended works is low, reflecting the effectiveness of previous inspections and ongoing maintenance, and that recommendations are primarily risk-based, with a proportionate approach adopted depending on levels of public access and site usage. Attention was drawn to the balance between public safety and biodiversity, including the retention of deadwood in lower-risk areas where appropriate, and the recommendation that inspection intervals for sites with mature tree populations and high public use should move from a three-year cycle to annual inspections.

A member of the public supported the proposed approach, confirming that it aligns with accepted arboricultural practice, and it was noted that Fair Green is not Council-owned land and therefore falls outside the scope of the report.

(Action: FBM to link Fair Green & contractor; immediately)

Members also noted that any recommended works would be subject to the necessary statutory checks, including Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Area consent and wildlife legislation, prior to implementation. It was

Resolved: That the recommended remedial works from the tree survey be approved, subject to statutory and ecological requirements.

(Action: FBM to progress the prioritised works, complete required statutory checks, and report back on proposals for annual inspections.)

AI0426/10 Mere Boardwalk & Gardens

Members considered a report on maintenance works and access management at the Mere Boardwalk & Gardens (report 03/2627). It was noted that works to the floating planters are ongoing and approximately three-quarters complete. Members were advised that some planned works have been delayed due to the presence of nesting birds and the involvement of the Diss Community Woodland Project in progressing the works was noted.

Members discussed ongoing issues relating to access control and antisocial behaviour. It was noted that the gardens are currently open until 7pm, however the previous informal arrangement for locking the gates has ceased and no replacement arrangement is currently in place. Members

noted that the neighbouring business, closes at approximately 5.30pm and is therefore unable to assist with later evening closures.

Members explored potential solutions, including the feasibility of automated locking, additional physical security measures, and revised locking times. Officers advised that the gates require securing to prevent unauthorised access and that the police have been informed of antisocial behaviour issues at the site. A suggestion was made that a consistent and simple solution would be preferable, with arrangements capable of being reviewed if issues persist. It was

Resolved: That the Mere Boardwalk & Gardens gates be locked at 5.30pm, or earlier if the site is clear of members of the public and the last Council officer has left the area, and that the arrangement be kept under review.

(Action: FBM Manager & Clerk to implement the revised gate-locking arrangements & formally escalate antisocial behaviour issues to the police; immediately)

AI0426/11

Grave digging

Members considered a report on future grave digging arrangements at Diss Cemetery following notice from the Council's long-standing contractor (report 04/2627). It was noted that the existing contract will terminate on 13th July 2026 and that officers had reviewed alternative arrangements to ensure continuity and efficiency of service.

Members sought clarification regarding the impact of the proposed changes on fees and charges and were advised accordingly. Members further noted that the FBM would continue to be responsible for marking out graves and overseeing compliance with Council requirements. It was

Resolved:

That the transition to funeral-director-appointed grave diggers at Diss Cemetery be approved with effect from 14 July 2026, with the Facilities & Buildings Manager continuing to mark out graves, and subject to appropriate Public Liability Insurance and Risk Assessment and Method Statements.

(Action: FBM to implement the new arrangements and update relevant procedures accordingly)

AI0426/12

Shelfanger Road Street Naming

Members considered a report regarding street naming clarification and proposed dedication signage for the Shelfanger Road development (report 05/2627). Members discussed the wider principle of interpretative street naming, noting that while such approaches can be interesting and educational, there were reservations that the proposed dedication in this instance did not provide a clear or meaningful connection for the public. Concerns were expressed that the proposed signage would not effectively convey the significance of the individual concerned, and that the rationale for the dedication was unclear. Members noted general unease with progressing the proposal at committee level and considered that the matter warranted further consideration by Full Council. It was

Resolved: That the proposed dedication signage for Neve Close be referred to Full Council for further consideration.

(Action: Clerk to include the matter on the next Full Council agenda)

AI0426/13

Biodiversity

Members considered a proposal relating to biodiversity improvements and potential tree planting, including additional information circulated within the agenda pack outlining a revised planting concept for Rectory Meadow.

Members noted a proposal for the planting of up to five ornamental cherry trees along the northern pathway of Rectory Meadow, using columnar *Prunus amanogawa* specimens, which are non-spreading, narrow in form and suitable for use within a public green space without impacting neighbouring properties. The proposal was presented as a compromise approach that would enhance a Council-owned site in a non-intrusive manner. Members noted that the proposed trees would be six-foot standard specimens and that watering and early establishment could be incorporated into existing maintenance arrangements at this site given the recent planting.

It was noted that the deadline for Pride in Bloom grant applications is 19th April 2026. Members discussed the need for a prompt decision should external funding be pursued. Officers advised that any grant application should be progressed through the Council's Grants Officer. Members further noted that, should external funding not be secured, the scheme could alternatively be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy. It was

Resolved: That the Council's Projects & Grants Officer be asked to complete the Pride in Bloom grant application for match funding to plant five cherry trees at Rectory Meadow and additional planting.
(Action: Grants Officer to progress funding options; by 19.04.26)

AI0426/14 Rail Station (Active Travel Connectivity)

Members considered a report summarising a Norfolk County Council (NCC) feasibility study into improving active travel and public transport connectivity between Diss railway station and key destinations across the town (report 06/2627). It was noted that the study assessed walking, wheeling and cycling routes linking the station with residential areas, schools, employment sites and the town centre, and identified a range of potential low-cost and longer-term infrastructure improvements.

Members noted the key issues identified within the study, including discontinuous footways, accessibility barriers, limited safe provision for cycling, inconsistent wayfinding and junction safety concerns, together with the proposed focus on improved signage, accessibility enhancements, junction feasibility work and better bus - rail integration. It was further noted that NCC is the lead authority for delivery, with future progress dependent on external funding, developer contributions and further technical assessment. It was

Resolved: To note the contents of the report and use the study to inform future engagement with Norfolk County Council, transport partners and relevant planning processes where appropriate.

AI0426/15 Parish Footpath Audit

Members considered correspondence regarding the condition, accessibility and maintenance of public footpaths and rights of way within the parish. Members noted that any audit would be required on a parish-by-parish basis, and that an example provided related to Pulham St Mary. It was further noted that Roydon Parish Council appoints a dedicated Footpath Councillor, and that undertaking and maintaining such an audit would be a time-consuming and long-term commitment.

Members expressed concern that progressing the matter without a clear scope could risk opening a wider set of issues beyond the Council's statutory obligations. Members discussed whether any work could be aligned with activity undertaken by South Norfolk Council, noting that SNC employs a ditch walker, which may present opportunities for liaison. It was also noted that responsibility for public rights of way rests with Norfolk County Council, and that Diss Town Council is not under any obligation to carry out a formal audit. Members agreed that, while the principle may merit consideration, no commitment should be made at this stage. It was

Resolved: That officers explore potential options and partnerships on an informal basis, without committing the Council to a parish-wide footpath audit at this time.

AI0426/16 Items for Noting

- a) **Skate Park** – that repairs are scheduled to complete w/e 3rd April 2026, the graffiti has been removed, a soft launch event is planned for 12th April 2026, and a larger celebratory event is being considered.
- b) **Mere's Mouth** – that the Flock sculpture lights are still not operational due to the water ingress issue.
- c) **Finger Posts** – that all black and white finger posts have been repainted, and that a replacement post is being ordered for the sign located by the Park on the A1066.
- d) **Norwich Western Link** – that the Department for Transport has confirmed the scheme remains within the Major Road Network programme, enabling the release of agreed funding and progression towards a shortlist of options and a future public consultation.
- e) **Post Office** - that Historic England has declined, at this time, to list the Post Office; however, the building remains a non-designated heritage asset of local significance within the conservation area, and any changes adversely affecting its character will be monitored.
- f) **Progress Report** - members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting.

AI0426/17 Member Forum

Members raised concerns regarding the condition of a vacant building, formerly occupied by NatWest Bank. It was suggested that South Norfolk Council should engage with the owner regarding the appearance and upkeep of the premises, with one member querying whether compulsory purchase powers could be considered. Members were advised that dialogue with SNC is already ongoing regarding general tidying and cleaning of the site. It was clarified that Diss Town

Council does not have authority to carry out cleaning works on private property without the owner's permission. Members requested that an update be sought from SNC on progress and next steps.
(Action: Cllr Welch; by 08.07.26)

AI0426/18

Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Assets & Infrastructure Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 8th July 2026 at 7.15pm.

Meeting closed: 20:45.

Councillor Sinfield
Chair