

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL - FULL COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Extraordinary Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 22nd April 2025 at The Cabin, Northstowe

Members: 14
Quorum: 5 Members.
Present: 9 Members: Cllr Littlemore (Mayor); Cllr Delip (Deputy-Mayor); Cllr Benedicic; Cllr Birr-Pixton; Cllr Hunter; Cllr Owen; Cllr Hodgson (from 19:04); Cllr Bros Sabría (from 19:07); Cllr Oluwasanya (from 19:08).
Attendance: Town Clerk.
Members of the public: none.
Apologies: Cllr Castelino; Cllr Hughes.
Absent: Cllr Kinnera; Cllr Mgaidia; Cllr Susarla.

The meeting was opened at 7:01 PM; Cllr Littlemore took the Chair.

01/25-26/FC APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Standing Item)

To record apologies for absence received prior to the meeting.

Apologies had been received and accepted from: Cllr Castelino; Cllr Hughes.

02/25-26/FC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Standing Item)

a) *Councillors to declare any pecuniary or personal interest in any items on the agenda.*

b) *Councillors to declare any prejudicial interest in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chair if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation.*

No interests were declared.

03/25-26/FC PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Standing Item)

To allow members of the public and Councillors declaring a prejudicial interest to address the meeting in relation to business to be transacted at this meeting (maximum 3 minutes per person; up to 15 minutes in total).

There were no members of the public present.

04/25-26/FC MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS (Standing item)

Deferred from Full Council 25th March 2025, item 261/24-25:

1) *To approve minutes of 25 Feb. 2025 Full Council meeting as a true record of the meeting (draft minutes attached).*

NB: draft minutes of the 25th March 2025 Full Council meeting are to follow.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, with 4 voting for and 3 abstaining, **to approve the minutes of the 25th February 2025 Full Council meeting as a true record of the meeting.**

05/25-26/FC REPORT FROM SCDC'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (Standing Item)

1) *To receive a report from South Cambs. D.C.'s Northstowe Community Development Officers (attached).*

Noted.

Cllr Hodgson joined the meeting at 7:04 PM; no interests were declared.

06/25-26/FC NORTHSTOWE DELIVERY GROUP (Standing Item)

1) *To receive minutes of the Northstowe Delivery Group meetings held on 27th February 2025 (attached).*

Noted.

07/25-26/FC KICKSTART FUND PANEL (Standing Item)

1) *To receive paperwork from the Kickstart Fund Panel meeting held on 2nd April 2025 (application and panel recommendations shared with Cllrs.).*

There was a general discussion around eligibility criteria for certain community groups for Kickstart Funding.

Cllr Bros Sabría joined the meeting at 7:07 PM; no interests were declared.

2) *To decide on NTC's response to the application & recommendations, and for the Clerk to provide feedback to the Kickstart Fund Panel Coordinator.*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Hodgson and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the Kickstart panel's recommendation.**

The **clerk was tasked** to let the Kickstart coordinator know of the Council's recommendation.

Cllr Oluwasanya joined the meeting at 7:08 PM; no interests were declared.

08/25-26/FC TOWN COUNCILLOR VACANCY / CO-OPTION

- 1) *For Information: D. Greef stepped down as Town Councillor; Co-option procedures have been instigated (on 7th April 2025).*

Noted.

- 2) *If the electorate do not call for an election, to agree to fill the vacant Member seat by co-option and to promote the vacancy for nominees to come forward for co-option which is to take place at the next suitable Full Council meeting.*

It was proposed by Cllr Owen, seconded by Cllr Birr-Pixton and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **that, if the electorate do not call for an election, to agree to fill the vacant Member seat by co-option and to promote the vacancy for nominees to come forward for co-option which is to take place at the next suitable Full Council meeting.**

09/25-26/FC ASSET REGISTER

- 1) *To receive and adopt an updated Asset Register (attached).*

A question was asked why the Asset Register had not been prepared through the accounting system. The RFO explained that this is a legacy of how the asset register was originally set up, on a separate spreadsheet, but that it is indeed the intention to move the asset register within Scribe to ensure it can be better integrated and updated more frequently.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to adopt the updated Asset Register.**

Following a question from a Councillor, **the clerk was tasked** to investigate whether the Council's Asset Register should be publicised on the website or not.

10/25-26/FC INSURANCE RENEWAL

- 1) *To receive a renewal quote for Northstowe Town Council, from Hiscox Insurance Company Limited for the period 7th May 2025 to 6th May 2026 (information shared with Cllrs.).*

It was observed by a Councillor that the procedures had not been followed as stipulated in the Financial Regulations, in that three quotes had not been obtained, and the Councillor wished to have minuted that this has happened before. The RFO explained that he is of the understanding that the insurance broker provides the Town Council with the best-value quote from a number of quotes they obtain, although those quotes had not been seen.

- 2) *To approve payment of the insurance premium, as quoted (£855.92).*

It was proposed by Cllr Hodgson, seconded by Cllr Hunter and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the annual insurance premium, as quoted (£855.92), for the period 7th May 2025 to 6th May 2026, on the basis that the clerk can verify that the insurance broker has carried out its due diligence in providing the Council with the cheapest quote of at least three quotes they have obtained.**

The **RFO was tasked** to ask the insurance broker for the details of the quotes they would have obtained and report back to the Council with proof supplied.

11/25-26/FC POLICIES

Further to Full Council 25th March 2025, item 268/24-25(2):

- 1) *To adopt a Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (draft attached).*

In a discussion, the need to appoint a Designated Safeguard Lead for the Town Council was highlighted, as referred to in this policy.

Cllr Hodgson, working with staff, was tasked to look into the practicalities needed to appoint a Designated Safeguard Lead and any associated needs such as DBS checks and reporting mechanisms, and to bring this back to a future Full Council meeting.

- 2) *To adopt a Protection of the Environment Policy (draft attached).*

- 3) *To adopt a Volunteer Policy (draft attached).*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Oluwasanya and **RESOLVED**, with 8 voting for and 1 abstaining, **to adopt the Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, Protection of the Environment Policy, and Volunteer Policy, noting the need to implement a Designated Safeguard Lead.**

12/25-26/FC UNITY CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN – UPDATE ON SUBMISSION TO SCDC

Further to Full Council 25th March 2025, item 268/24-25:

- 1) *Update on SCDC Review: Following the formal submission of the Town Council's Business Plan on 28th March 2025; to receive an update on the SCDC assessment, feedback and decision-making processes, as verbally provided to the Clerk.*

The clerk provided a summary of discussions held with SCDC representatives recently. The Chair highlighted that, since the summons went out, details of the SCDC's additional clarification requests stemming from the initial assessment had been shared with the Town Councillors. The various points of clarification requested from SCDC were discussed in some detail, with various points raised, including;

- NTC to show where we intend to deploy the S106 funding requested;
 - Opening times to be aligned with current Cabin use/times;
 - Charging rate options to be considered for key partners;
 - Discussion around decision-making, accountability and management options. Some consensus reached that there is a potential for an advisory group, within or aligned with the Town Council overall decision-making structure, and that there will also be other ways that the Council will deploy to enable residents to have a say in the Council's Unity Centre management.
 - Consideration to be given to set up some form of Facilities Committee, also to help in attracting external grants.
- 2) *Discussion on Input Option: To discuss how best to provide input into SCDC's queries resulting from their initial panel assessment; update NTC's proposals prior to submission to SCDC's Cabinet decision making (summary report shared with Cllrs).*

Consensus was reached that the establishment of a dedicated Councillor group, working with NTC officers, to address SCDC's queries would not be necessary. It was considered that responding to the clarification requests could, instead, be dealt with in between meetings by collating Councillors' further viewpoints and in discussions with SCDC officers and could also be discussed in more detail at the next Full Council meeting.

To resolve to move into a closed session and exclude the public and press, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, due to the sensitive and/or commercial nature of business to be discussed under items 13/25-26 – 15/25-26.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to move into a closed session and exclude the public and press, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, due to the sensitive and/or commercial nature of business to be discussed under items 13/25-26 – 15/25-26.**

13/25-26/FC MARKET MANAGEMENT – MARKET MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Item includes those deferred at Full Council 25th March 2025, item 271/24-25:

- 1) *To receive a brief for market management quotations, as shared with Councillors since the 25th March Full Council meeting (attached.).*

Noted.

- 2) *To receive quotations from prospective companies as received, and to decide on suitable company to implement the market management support (Quotations and motion paper shared with Cllrs.).*

Questions were raised around the reasons why only quote had been obtained from the three companies that had been approached; clarification was also sought around the exact costs for this additional market support work. The clerk provided further details, to clarify the points raised.

- 3) *To decide on an option for market management and delivery.*

It was proposed by Cllr Hunter, seconded by Cllr Birr-Pixton and **RESOLVED**, with 8 voting for and 1 abstaining, **to commit to a contract for up to four months with the company Phoenix Events (East) Ltd., for a total cost of up to £3,513.60, to provide additional market management support in managing and delivering monthly Northstowe markets, as well as support in attracting and liaising with market traders.**

14/25-26/FC STAFFING MATTERS

Assets and Estates Manager Resignation

- 1) *To discuss the recent resignation of the Assets and Estates Manager.*

The resignation of the Assets and Estates Manager was discussed. It was noted that their last working day was to be 6th of May 2025.

- 2) *To decide to arrange an exit interview with the outgoing Assets and Estates Manager and to appoint a Councillor to conduct the interview.*

It was proposed by Cllr Hodgson, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **for Cllr Hodgson to conduct an exit interview with the outgoing Assets and Estates Manager.**

- 3) *To decide to re-recruit for an Assets and Estates Manager as soon as possible, using the existing Job Description as a template; and for the Clerk to work with the Personnel Committee to implement this.*

Councillors requested that the Job Description is to be re-examined, and that the notice period and conditions of employment may also need to be re-considered. In addition, it was considered that the expectations for the role may need to be looked at again, with the Unity Centre management plans now in place.

A Councillor highlighted that there may be a sense of urgency to readvertise this position. There was nevertheless consensus that the Personnel Committee would be best placed to take further decisions in this matter.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Bros Sabría and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to DEFER the re-recruitment of the Assets and Estates Manager to the Personnel Committee, and to give the committee delegated powers to make further decisions in this matter.**

Exit Strategy Policy and Exit interview Template

Items deferred at the extraordinary Personnel Committee 11th March 2025, item 44/24-25:

4) *To receive and discuss draft Exit Strategy Policy and draft template for Exit Interviews.*

The Council reached consensus that the exit interview questions are acceptable, but that the policy would be better renamed to 'Employee Departure Policy'.

5) *To adopt the Exit Strategy Policy and Exit Interview template.*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Benedicic and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to DEFER the draft Exit Strategy Policy and draft template for Exit Interviews to the Personnel Committee, with the committee empowered to adapt, and rename, the policy where needed.**

Annual Leave request for Town Clerk

Summary report shared with Cllrs.

6) *Retrospective approval of Town Clerk's annual leave requests.*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to approve the Town Clerk's annual leave requests submitted.**

7) *To review the current clause regarding holiday requests in the Town Clerk's contract.*

It was noted that the new NALC model contract could address this.

The **Personnel Committee was tasked** to consider the new NALC Model contract for new members of staff, and also for existing members of staff, which would need to come with an impact analysis were existing contracts to be changed to a new model.

8) *To agree an annual leave policy for the Town Clerk.*

A Councillor suggested to adopt the model NALC Annual Leave Policy, instead of the proposal from the clerk. The **Personnel Committee was tasked** to look into this and prepare a policy to be adopted by Full Council.

15/25-26/FC SECURITY

1) *To receive an updated Data Breach Register.*

Noted.

2) *To discuss any issues and mitigation measures.*

In line with the proposed mitigation measures already proposed in the document, the **clerk was tasked** to look into options for, and any costs associated with, having automatic email system linked to the invoices generated through the Council's accounting system.

To resolve to end the closed session.

It was proposed by Cllr. Littlemore, seconded by Cllr. Owen and **RESOLVED**, unanimously, **to end the closed session.**

16/25-26/FC PARKING ON CYCLE LANES – LETTER/ UPDATE

Further to Full Council 25th February 2025, item 235/24-25(2):

1) *To receive and decide to send out an updated letter to the master developer of Phase 1 Urban & Civic requesting the finalisation of cycle lanes giving priority to route to Northstowe Learning Community (attached).*

It was proposed by Cllr Bros Sabría, seconded by Cllr Hodgson and **RESOLVED**, with 7 voting for and 2 abstaining, **to finalise and send out the letter for the master developer of Phase 1, requesting the finalisation of cycle lanes giving priority to route to Northstowe Learning Community.**

The **clerk was tasked** to send a copy of this letter to all signatories, with a request to be mindful of the upcoming elections and not to publish this themselves until afterwards.

17/25-26/FC COMMITTEE MEETINGS (Standing Item)

Items deferred from Full Council 28th Jan. 2025, item 215/24-25 and Full Council 25th Feb. 2025, item 247/24-25:

To receive minutes from the following committee meetings held:

a) *Finance and Governance Committee, 21st January 2025 (draft minutes attached).*

b) *Finance and Governance Committee, 18th February 2025 (draft minutes attached).*

c) *Finance and Governance Committee, 18th March 2025 (draft minutes attached).*

d) *Planning Committee, 21st January 2025 (draft minutes attached).*

e) *Planning Committee, 18th February 2025 (draft minutes attached).*

NB: Minutes of the Personnel Committee and Planning Committee meetings held in Mar. 2025 are to follow.

Noted.

18/25-26/FC MEETINGS WHERE NTC HAS BEEN INVITED (Standing Item)

- a) Wed. 30th April 2025, 13:00 – 13:45 (online): Town, Co-housing information session (meeting link shared with Cllrs.).
- b) Sat. 28th June 2025: Guided tour of Letchworth Garden City; via Cllr Hunter and U3A.

19/25-26/FC DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS (Standing item)

- Annual Town Meeting: Tue 29th April 2025, 7-9 pm; The Cabin, Northstowe.
 - Annual Meeting of the Town Council: Tue 27th May 2025, 7-9 pm; The Cabin, Northstowe.
- [Final versions of motions & papers to be received by 16/05 at the latest].

For all Council meetings and annual meeting schedule, see www.northstowetowncouncil.gov.uk

Noted.

The meeting was closed at 8:58 PM.

Signed.....

Town Mayor

Date.....