

# Diss Town Council

## Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025** at **7.15pm**.

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

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk/CEO)  
6 members of the public

*In the absence of the Town Mayor, councillor Taylor opened the meeting.*

### FC0225/01 Apologies

Councillor's Name	Apologies Received	Absent Without Apology	Reason / Approval
S. Browne	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family bereavement
D. Collins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Living temporarily out of area
K. Murphy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attending South Norfolk Council District Council Budget meeting
S. Olander	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### FC0225/02 Election of Chairman

In the absence of the Town Mayor, it was

**Resolved:** To elect Councillor Taylor to chair this meeting in the absence of the Town Mayor.

### FC0225/03 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

### FC0225/04 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Full Council meeting on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025. It was

**Resolved:** To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025 as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

### FC0225/05 Public Participation

There were six members of the public in attendance. Apologies were received from County Councillor Kiddie and District Councillor Minshull as they are attending an important District Council Budget meeting. Another two members of the public were in attendance for items 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14b on the agenda and were happy to await those items to speak. It was confirmed by the Chair of the Town Council's Planning Committee that there will be a public meeting regarding the Norfolk Homes planning application off Shelfanger / Heywood Road after their plans are submitted. Some of the concerns raised have already been addressed specifically that five attenuation ponds will manage the water levels and traffic calming measures.

The Clerk advised that County / District Councillor Kiddie had updated her that pavement resurfacing is scheduled from the junction of Sunnyside & Shelfanger Road to the catholic church in May, that more graffiti has appeared on the Beacon cycle signage, he has ordered 11 food waste vehicles ready for April 2025/26 & 75k caddies to get the best price and the bins and portaloos for Carnival have been booked.

### FC0225/06 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

**FC0225/07****Finance**

- a) Members noted bank outgoings for January 2025. It was noted that the floodlight operating at the DYCC improves the functionality of the CCTV system protecting the maintenance equipment.
- b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for January 2025.
- c) Members noted the Earmarked Reserves report for January 2025.
- d) Members noted the reconciliations of income and expenditure with the Council's bank account statements for November 2024 – January 2025.
- e) Members received the 3rd quarterly financial report (report reference 54/2425). Members comments that it is good to see the budget performing well towards the end of year.

**FC0225/08****Banking**

- a) Members received recommendations from the Executive Committee for new banking arrangements (report 55/2425 referred). The level of dissatisfaction with Barclays was noted and it was confirmed that the proposal is to transfer all accounts from Barclays to Unity. It was

**Resolved:**

1. Keep the Nationwide savings account as it is, as it attracts favourable interest for minimal work.
2. Keep the Lloyds account, so we can continue to utilise their longer-term savings for Earmarked Reserves funds.
3. Open a Unity Trust account, with a current and savings account, with councillors Craggs, Kitchen, Peaty, Robertson, Sinfield & Taylor as signatories.
4. Close the Barclays accounts.

**(Action: Finance Officer; by 31.03.25)**

- b) Members noted that the maturing Lloyds 1-Year Term account has been invested into a 95-day notice account.

**FC0225/09****Diss Youth & Community Centre**

- a) Members received a verbal project update from the DYCC Action Group. It was noted that a 70-page report has been received by the Group who also met with the consultant to review a draft presentation to Full Council. The recommendations broadly categorise into conducting more research, more stakeholder engagement, and a detailed review of the preferred options.

The response rate of 330 with approximately a third being non-Diss residents i.e. less than 2% of the population is too low to be statistically significant although it was noted that the survey was intended to gauge initial public opinion and not provide an immediate answer. There is broadly a lot of support for further exploring a new roof or building on the same site with access being the primary concern for the Sports Ground site. A key issue is affordability as very few are prepared to pay substantially more Council Tax to contribute to the considerable costs of any option.

Critical to planning are the District Council's decisions around the John Grose site development to avoid duplication and in light of the proposals to reorganise local government. Monthly meetings are scheduled with the relevant District Officer to maximise engagement and maintain strong relations. Further research will include liaising with the District Council on capital planning and spending thresholds, assessing the demand for the facility, developing a business case including options appraisal and financial analysis and seeking external grants given the considerable expenditure required.

The Group met with a Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) specialist who confirmed that the technical survey the Council had received was of high quality.

It was noted that the Council believed the consultancy report, which has been funded by a Pride in Place award, has been good value for money, particularly in bringing external expertise to the project not available within Diss Town Council. Cllr Goulder was thanked for her comprehensive report.

- b) Members considered a proposal to site the community garden on the DYCC site. This followed the original proposal to site it in the wildlife gardens at the rear of the Council offices. The Council had concerns regarding potential vandalism and the openness of this site and suggested that the allotments off Louies Lane may be more appropriate. Although the Allotment Association was supportive of the idea, they no longer have space and had some concerns regarding insurance. The DYCC site was proposed as it already accommodates the community fridge and composter and is centrally located not far from the hotel. The space is enclosed on three sides

and is a good size for a couple of beds. It was noted that the organising body for the group / activity would need to cover the insurance liability. It was noted that the amenity is intended to involve residents in town as well as providing an activity for the Park Hotel inhabitants.

It was agreed that this would only be a temporary solution given the potential development of the site. There was discussion regarding the destination for the produce from the community allotment and it was agreed that the community fridge, The Shelf at the Citizens Advice, Waveney Foodbank at Hope church and cooking sessions at the Taylor Road meeting room and local churches could be explored.

One member talked about the primary outcome of the project is bringing the community together with the by-product of the scheme food and there was a request to extend an invitation to veterans. It was

**Resolved:** to approve the usage of the grassed area at the rear of the Diss Youth & Community Centre as a community allotment temporarily (until such time the site might be developed) and subject to insurance cover being provided by the organising body.

**(Action: George / Clerk; immediately)**

**FC0225/10**

### **IT Support**

Members considered proposals for continuing the IT support contract with VMit Ltd (report 56/2425 referred). There was discussion regarding the importance of operational sustainability for the staffing team, productivity improvements in the office and cost savings being made on the staffing head count. VMit has performed well to date and staff are happy with the service. It was

**Resolved:** 1. To enter into a three-year contract with VMiT Ltd from April 2025 – March 2028 at an annual cost of £7,752.  
2. Replace the Lenovo laptop at an estimated cost of £750 - £1k from the 2024-25 budget.  
3. To add Last Pass and Microsoft 365 Premium licenses to the Council's IT contract from April 2025 and September 2025 respectively.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**FC0225/11**

### **Mayor Elect**

Members considered the role of Mayor Elect, a role to shadow the Mayor leading up to the May election. It was agreed that this would be a helpful transition period from one Mayor to another and provides an opportunity for the Mayor Elect to exchange knowledge with the existing Mayor as well as develop a closer relationship with the Clerk. It creates a transparent and accountable process. Councillor Craggs is still interested in undertaking the role. It was

**Resolved:** That councillor Craggs was appointed as the Mayor Elect leading up to the May election.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**FC0225/12**

### **Staff Performance Management Review**

Members considered a recommendation from the Executive Committee to adopt the new staff appraisal scheme with associated forms and policy (report 57/2425 referred). It was agreed that staff should be rewarded for good performance and a meaningful structured appraisal is essential to provide a two-way dialogue. The form provides the opportunity for both the employee and employer to assess performance against criteria with a free field box for additional comments. There were comments regarding the requirement for the fourth column, but the scheme will be reviewed after the first appraisals have been undertaken. Measures of success include retention, training and development. Cllr Welch wished for his abstention vote to be recorded. It was

**Resolved:** To adopt the new staff appraisal scheme with associated forms and policy with a review by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**FC0225/13**

### **Anglian Memorial Garden**

Members reconsidered the proposed repairs and refurbishment to the Anglian Memorial Garden following a response from the contractor (report 58/2425 referred). The member of the public spoke given he would be the Supervisor on the contract. He stated that he is confident the proposed work is the best solution, and the materials proposed will last longer than existing. He confirmed that the

tree roots are not currently against the wall but that he couldn't guarantee they wouldn't affect the integrity of the wall long term. They would ensure that water can run off to minimise water ingress and a good maintenance programme should ensure longevity. They require permission to work on the pathway with vehicles.

It was also noted that a memorial stone to commemorate the Friendly Invasion, funded by South Norfolk Council, is being proposed for installation near the Gardens like the one already installed for the Anglian Regiment. A mock-up of the design was shared, and wording is to be agreed. VE & VJ Day 80 is proposed to be commemorated on the Park beacon seat panels. It was

**Resolved:** To appoint the Garden Project Team to complete the works in the Anglian Memorial Garden for the price of £9,283 plus VAT allocated to Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

**(Action: FBM; immediately)**

**FC0225/14 Clerk's Report**

Members received the Clerk's report on activities since the last meeting. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact the Corn Hall to resolve the last remaining queries regarding the sublease to Park Radio Ltd so they can relocate as soon as possible.

**(Action: Clerk; immediately)**

**FC0225/15 Items for Noting**

a) Progress Report – members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council.  
b) Planning – members noted that the 'Norfolk Homes' public consultation regarding proposed housing and open space on land off Shelfanger / Heywood Road is scheduled to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 3-7pm at Diss Corn Hall with the deadline for responses by 7<sup>th</sup> March.

**FC0225/16 Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Full Council is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7.15pm.

**FC0225/17 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 item which is properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

**FC0225/18 Staffing Review**

Members considered quotations received for a staffing review (confidential report 59/2425 referred). It was noted that the rationale for the review is to ensure staff are being paid fairly for the tasks they undertake, particularly given the recent loss of two key staff members and the hours being undertaken and absorbed by less well-paid staff. The second part of the review will consider the Council's structure to ensure the right level of resourcing is achieved to deliver against the Council's plans. It was

**Resolved:** To appoint LCC to undertake a staffing review for a total cost of £2,190 excluding mileage as per quote received allocated to Legal/Financial/Prof fees (4675) and schedule from April 2025.

**(Action: Clerk; by 31.03.25)**

Meeting closed: 21.15.

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Councillor E. Taylor  
Pp Chair / Town Mayor