



**NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam EX39 1BY**  
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*Prayers will be held at 6.25pm in the Council Chamber for anyone wishing to attend.*

**To all members of the Council:**

You are hereby summoned to attend the **NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL MEETING** on

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 6:30pm**

**Preceded by**

**Annual General Meeting of the Northam Burrows Charity Trustees 6.30pm**

at The Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam for the transaction of the business listed on the agenda below.

**Council Members:**

Appledore Ward: Cllr Bell, Cllr Edwards, Cllr Hames and Cllr Tait

Northam/Orchard Hill ward: Cllr Himan, Cllr Horrocks, Cllr Leather, Cllr Lo-Vel, Cllr Newman-McKie and Cllr Whittaker.

Westward Ho! ward: Cllr Bach, Cllr Hodson, Cllr Sawyer and Cllr Singh.

**Questions by the public**

There will be a period for questions by the public. In accordance with Standing Order 3, members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of any Council business at Full Council, and at Committee meetings in respect of business on the agenda.

Anyone wishing to ask questions is requested to notify the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.

**Recording, photographs and filming**

In accordance with the Council's policy on filming and recording of Local Council and Committee meetings (available to read in the Chamber) and arising from the *Local Government and Accountability Act 2014* the press or public may audio-record, photograph or film meetings, or report from the meeting using social media. As such, members of the public may be recorded or photographed during the meeting. Anyone wishing to record or photograph the meeting must notify the Town Clerk before the commencement of the meeting.

**Public attendance at Council and committee meetings**

As a public body, Northam Town Council understands the need for transparency and accountability. The Council will therefore seek to conduct meetings using practices and procedures set out within the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, which states:

*Subject to subsection (2)\* below, any meeting of a body exercising public functions, being a body to which this Act applies, shall be open to the public.*

Subsection (2) states:

*Where a meeting is open to the public, a body may, by resolution exclude the public from the meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies.*

Therefore, the Council's policy is to allow public access to meetings unless the business being transacted is confidential or there are 'other special reasons' to exclude the public.

*Guy Langton*

Guy Langton, Town Clerk & RFO

Date of issue: 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026

## AGENDA

### **Annual General Meeting of the Northam Burrows Charity Trustees**

- 1 Chairman's announcements**
- 2 Apologies**
- 3 To note and approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th February 2025 (p3)**
- 4 To note the annual accounts and audit report (2024-25) (attached under separate cover and to follow)**

### **Full Council**

- 1 To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1)**
- 2 To agree the agenda as published**
- 3 To receive any dispensations and disclosable pecuniary or other interests**  
*Members are reminded that all interests must be declared prior to the item being discussed.*
- 4 Mayor's Announcements**
- 5 To confirm as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (attached under separate cover)**
- 6 To receive and adopt the reports of confirmed minutes and resolutions contained therein from Committees and Sub-Committees (attached under separate cover)**
  - Finance 3rd Dec, 10th Dec 25 & 7th Jan 26
  - Planning 18th Dec 25
  - Parks & Recreation 19th Nov 25
- 7 Public Participation**
- 8 To receive a report (if any) from Devon & Cornwall Constabulary**
- 9 To receive a report (if any) from the Devon County Councillor**
- 10 To receive reports (if any) from Torridge District Members**
- 11 To receive an update regarding Local Government Reorganisation (p4)**
- 12 To consider the action point update (p5)**
- 13 To receive the Clerk's report (p6)**
- 14 To receive the draft Northam Neighbourhood Plan Fact Check report (p8 and confidential paper enclosed)**
- 15 To consider renewing the Council's lease for 2 rooms at the Windmill Lane offices (p8 and confidential paper enclosed)**
- 16 To note and consider signing the 2026-27 contract for grass cutting with Devon County Council (p8 and confidential paper enclosed)**
- 17 To note the central government consultation outcome: *Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England* (p9)**
- 18 To consider the revised quote to update the Mayor's chain (p10)**

## **Annual General Meeting of the Northam Burrows Charity Trustees**

**Item 1 Chairman's announcements**

**Item 2 Apologies**

**Item 3 To note and approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th February 2025**

**Annual General Meeting of the Northam Burrows Charity Trustees held 19<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Windmill Lane, Northam.**

Present: Cllrs Bach, Edwards, Hames, Himan, Hodson, Leather, Lo-Vel and Tait (Mayor).

In attendance: Guy Langton (Town Clerk & RFO); Cllr D McGeough (County Councillor); three members of the public.

**Item 1 Chair's announcements**

The Deputy Chair (Cllr Niki Tait) made no announcements.

**Item 2 Apologies**

Cllrs Newman-McKie, Roscoe, Singh and Whittaker tendered their apologies, the reasons for which were approved by the Charity Trustees.

Cllr Hodson proposed that the Council did not approve Cllr Ford's reasons for absence, Cllr Himan seconded the motion. The majority voted against the proposal, the motion was therefore not passed (3 votes for, 3 votes against, 2 abstentions, the Deputy Chair used her casting vote against, resulting in 3 votes for, 4 votes against, 2 abstentions).

**Item 3 To note and approve the minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 22nd January 2025**

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record. They would be signed later by the Deputy Chair.

Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Edwards (all in favour).

**Item 4 To consider grant making policy, recommended by the Northam Burrows Charity Management Committee at its December 2024 meeting**

It was **resolved** to adopt the policy as presented and noted that the first granting window would be in the summer of 2025.

Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Leather (majority in favour, 1 abstention)

**Item 5 To note the Audit report**

The auditor's report for 2023-24 and its contents were noted.

**Item 6 To note the VAT status of the Council's administration recharge to the Northam Burrows Charity and consider the way forward**

It was **resolved** to pay the Council £7,000 plus VAT annually, commencing 2025.

Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Hodson (all in favour).

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6:50pm.

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**4 To note the annual accounts and audit report (2024-25)** (attached under separate cover and to follow)

The management committee considered the annual accounts to be submitted to the Charity Commission.

## **Full Council**

**Item 1** **To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1)**

**Item 2** **To agree the agenda as published**

**Item 3** **To receive any dispensations and disclosable pecuniary or other interests**

*Members are reminded that all interests must be declared prior to the item being discussed*

**Item 4** **Mayor's Announcements**

**Item 5** **To confirm as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (attached under separate cover)**

**Item 6** **To receive and adopt the reports of minutes and resolutions contained therein from Committees and Sub-Committees (enclosed under separate cover)**

- Finance 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec, 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 25 & 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 26
- Planning 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 25
- Parks & Recreation 19<sup>th</sup> Nov 25

**Item 7** **Public Participation**

*We welcome Parishioners speaking or making representations, asking questions or giving evidence at the meeting of the Full Council in respect of any issue affecting the Northam Town Council area. A period of twenty minutes is allocated for this unless directed by the Chair of the meeting and a member of the public shall not speak for more than 4 minutes.*

*A question shall not receive a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question.*

*The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.*

**Item 8** **To receive a report (if any) from Devon & Cornwall Constabulary**

**Item 9** **To receive a report (if any) from the Devon County Councillor**

**Item 10** **To receive reports (if any) from the Torridge District Members**

**Item 11** **To receive an update regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

The various proposals have been submitted to central government. The Local Government Reorganisation calendar, as currently published, indicates public consultations will follow in 2026.

<u>28 November 2025</u>	<u>Deadline to submit final proposals to Government.</u>
<u>January – April 2026</u>	<u>Government-led public consultations will be held to hear local views.</u>
<u>May – August 2026</u>	<u>The Minister will announce a final decision on which proposals will be taken forward.</u>
<u>May 2027</u>	<u>Shadow Elections will take place and Shadow Councils will work alongside the current councils during what will be known as the transition period.</u>

<b>1 April 2028</b>	<i>New unitary councils will come into being and current councils will be abolished.</i>
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## Item 12 Action points

<b>2508/283</b> Meeting with Northam Lions FC	Cllrs Bach, Edwards and Lo-Vel, with the Town Clerk, met with representatives of Northam Lions FC. A way forward was identified and a revised agreement will be drawn up.	ONGOING
<b>2512/520</b> Libraries Unlimited Consultation	Write to the relevant officer and cabinet member at Devon County Council requesting Northam Library be re-banded to a band C and to request the criteria used to place branches in the various bands.	ONGOING
<b>2512/525</b> Speedwatch	Advise the Police of the intention to recommence the SpeedWatch initiative in the Parish and of the volunteer coordinator. A total of four volunteers needed, the coordinator plus three. Adverts to be placed on the Council's website and social media now the Christmas and New Year break is over.	ONGOING
<b>2512/525</b> Speed surveys	Approach the County Council and private sector providers of traffic and speed surveys for quotations. Request for quotations sent. To be followed up as no response has yet been received.	ONGOING
<b>2512/526</b> Northam 'Leisure Centre'	Having received permission, surveyors' reports were shared with the Friends group. A meeting was held with representatives of the Friends group. Property owners advised that this Council did not intend to submit a bid.	COMPLETE
<b>2601/551</b> 2026-27 budget	It was resolved to set the budget at £903,452 for 2026/27, this required a precept of £688,705 to be requested. Request sent to the council tax raising authority.	COMPLETE
<b>2601/551</b> Charges for Council facilities and services	Advise ongoing users of Council facilities and services of the increases, effective 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2026.	COMPLETE
<b>2601/551</b> Pension arrangements for Council Staff	Prepare a report and consultation proposition for staff regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme.	ONGOING

**Item 13 To receive the Clerk's report**

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 the Council's balances were:

Petty Cash	£103.25	no interest	
Hinkley & Rugby Building Society	£265,000	interest rate is 1.75%	holding account for general expenditure
Cambridge & Counties Bank (31-day)	£97,090.39	interest rate is 3.25%	Earmarked Reserves
Nationwide (Business 95-day saver)	£96,593.23	interest rate is 3.35%	General and Earmarked Reserves
Cambridge Building Society	£9,281.88	interest rate is 1.75%	Tennis Reserves
Coop Bank (current account)	£45,442.07	no interest	General expenditure

**Total cash in hand (SCRIBE) £ 513,510.82**

The bank reconciliation to be signed by the Chair is presented overleaf.

**Tennis courts:**

The gross volume of sales in December 2025 was £95.00. After fees, the Council has received £90.46. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, the Council has received £5,432.18 for tennis court memberships and bookings.

**Petty Cash:** A screen shot of the petty cash cashbook is presented, showing the items on which the Council has spent petty cash in the month. The financial regulations seek to maintain a balance of £100 in Petty Cash.

Petty Cash		2025-26 Northam TC Petty Cash												
Details				Income			Expenditure						Balance at start of FY	
Date	Trans action	Description	Ref	Petty Cash Withdrawal	Carry forward	Total in	VAT	Events	Refresh ments	Maint enance	Office expenses	Total out	£	13.45
01.12.25	92	Cash withdrawal	-	35.00		35.00							0.00	101.80
27.11.25	93	Tools	PC25-26.87			0.00	0.50			2.48			2.98	98.82
1.12.25	94	Refreshments	PC25-26.88			0.00			1.89				1.89	96.93
2.12.25	95	Refreshments	PC25-26.89			0.00			1.39				1.39	95.54
3.12.25	96	Refreshments	PC25-26.90			0.00	2.29			11.46			13.75	81.79
3.12.25	97	Refreshments	PC25-26.91			0.00			5.09				5.09	76.70
2.12.25	98	Carol service - Refreshments	PC25-26.92			0.00			15.12				15.12	61.58
4.12.25	99	Christmas LEB bulbs	PC25-26.93			0.00	1.33			6.67			8.00	53.58
4.12.25	100	Vehicle bulb	PC25-26.94			0.00	0.48			2.41			2.89	50.69
5.12.25	101	Refreshments	PC25-26.95			0.00			1.20				1.20	49.49
8.12.25	102	Batteries	PC25-26.96			0.00	1.25			6.25			7.50	41.99
16.12.25	103	Refreshments	PC25-26.97			0.00			1.45				1.45	40.54
17.12.25	104	Photography (Remembrance)	PC25-26.98			0.00		50.00					50.00	-9.46
18.12.25	105	Cash withdrawal	-	120.00		120.00							0.00	110.54
22.12.25	106	Refreshments	PC25-26.99			0.00			1.39				1.39	109.15
30.12.25	107	Picture frames	PC25-26.100			0.00					5.90		5.90	103.25

**Receipts:** Between 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, the Council received 127 payments, totalling £9,146.51 (exVAT).

**Payments:** Between 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, the council made 48 payments of £100 or more totalling £57,788.19 (exVAT), detailed below. The council made a total of 141 payments totalling £59,242.83 (exVAT), detailed below.

Column1	Date	Net	VAT	Total	Description	Cost Centre	Cost Code	Minute Ref
1126	22.12.2025	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1030	04.12.2025	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1108	19.12.2025	£104.34	£20.87	£125.21	Franking Machine	Administration	Franking Machine & Costs	
1147	06.01.2026	£110.00	£0.00	£110.00	Equipment Protection	Administration	Office Equipment	
1015	02.12.2025	£111.49	£22.30	£133.79	Mower Repair	Council Machinery & Equipment	Machinery Maintenance	
1021	02.12.2025	£112.35	£22.47	£134.82	Payroll	Staff Costs	Payroll Processing Fees	
1023	02.12.2025	£117.90	£0.00	£117.90	Expenses	Administration	Expenses	
1127	22.12.2025	£125.00	£0.00	£125.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1052	10.12.2025	£153.49	£7.67	£161.16	Electricity Account	Northam Hall	Electric	
1146	06.01.2026	£155.01	£31.00	£186.01	Photocopier lease	Administration	Photocopier Lease	
1072	15.12.2025	£169.78	£33.96	£203.74	Fuel	Council Machinery & Equipment	Fuel	
1033	04.12.2025	£179.59	£35.92	£215.51	Copier Charges	Administration	Photocopier Fees	
1058	10.12.2025	£190.00	£38.00	£228.00	Fire Alarm System	Northam Hall	Large Project Reserve	2507/170
1086	16.12.2025	£191.67	£38.33	£230.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	
1121	22.12.2025	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00	The Link	Community	Newsletters & Communication	2505/053
1067	11.12.2025	£237.41	£47.48	£284.89	Christmas Decorations	Environment & Maintenance	Christmas Decorations	
1020	02.12.2025	£240.00	£48.00	£288.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1077	15.12.2025	£240.00	£0.00	£240.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1122	22.12.2025	£250.00	£0.00	£250.00	Notice Boards	Notice Boards	Town Hall	2512/493
1061	10.12.2025	£253.50	£0.00	£253.50	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1019	02.12.2025	£260.00	£0.00	£260.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1029	04.12.2025	£284.70	£56.94	£341.64	IT contract	ICT	Cloudy IT	
1054	10.12.2025	£299.39	£14.97	£314.36	Gas Account	Northam Hall	Gas	
1024	02.12.2025	£335.00	£67.00	£402.00	Mapping Software	ICT	Pear Mapping	
1073	15.12.2025	£380.75	£0.00	£380.75	Insurance	Parks & Recreation	Anchor Park	2512/507
1059	10.12.2025	£389.55	£77.91	£467.46	Net 2 Access Control System	Northam Hall	Large Project Reserve	2507/170
1018	02.12.2025	£400.00	£0.00	£400.00	Cleaning Northam Hall	Northam Hall	Cleaning	
1012	01.12.2025	£430.76	£0.00	£430.76	Room rental	Administration	Room Rental	
1013	02.12.2025	£455.00	£91.00	£546.00	Cleaning CPT	CPT	Cleaning	
1034	04.12.2025	£470.56	£0.00	£470.56	Pensions	Staff Costs	Salaries, HMRC and NEST	
1036	04.12.2025	£470.56	£0.00	£470.56	Pensions	Staff Costs	Salaries, HMRC and NEST	
1074	15.12.2025	£475.00	£95.00	£570.00	Computer and software	Planning & Development	NNP	
1032	04.12.2025	£515.00	£103.00	£618.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1128	22.12.2025	£541.20	£0.00	£541.20	Insurance	ICT	IT Purchase, Repair & Maintenance	2512/505
1027	03.12.2025	£625.00	£125.00	£750.00	Training	Training	Training	
1031	04.12.2025	£643.30	£128.66	£771.96	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1123	22.12.2025	£740.00	£148.00	£888.00	May Fair 2026	Community	May Fair Costs	2511/472
1016	02.12.2025	£840.00	£168.00	£1,008.00	Bin	Parks & Recreation	Churchfields Skatepark	2507/227
1076	15.12.2025	£1,250.00	£250.00	£1,500.00	Survey	General Project Budget	Projects	2509/342
1046	08.12.2025	£1,307.46	£0.00	£1,307.46	Insurance	Insurances	General	2405/027
1129	23.12.2025	£1,721.21	£0.00	£1,721.21	PWLB	PWLB	Westward Ho! Park Tranche 2	
1125	22.12.2025	£1,780.00	£356.00	£2,136.00	Anchor Park Orchard & Wildflower Area	Parks & Recreation	Anchor Park	2511/458
1035	04.12.2025	£1,881.02	£0.00	£1,881.02	Pensions	Staff Costs	Salaries, HMRC and NEST	
1037	04.12.2025	£2,161.64	£0.00	£2,161.64	Pensions	Staff Costs	Salaries, HMRC and NEST	
1087	17.12.2025	£4,136.56	£0.00	£4,136.56	PWLB	PWLB	PWLB - Northam Hall	
1075	15.12.2025	£5,500.00	£1,100.00	£6,600.00	Chamber Acoustics	Administration	Chamber - Acoustic Panelling	2508/251
1138	29.12.2025	£6,949.00	£0.00	£6,949.00	HMRC PAYE	Staff Costs	Salaries, HMRC and NEST	2508/252
1092	18.12.2025	£19,200.00	£0.00	£19,200.00	Salaries	Staff Costs	Salaries, HMRC and NEST	2512/507

**Item 14 To receive the draft Northam Neighbourhood Plan Fact Check report  
(see the enclosed confidential paper)**

The Council has received an initial report from the Examiner appointed to examine the Northam Neighbourhood Plan prior to putting to the local community in a referendum.

The Examiner has summarised his findings thus far as follows:

*From my examination of the Northam Neighbourhood Plan (NNP/the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.*

*I have also concluded that:*

- *The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Northam Town Council (NTC);*
- *The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Northam Neighbourhood Area as shown on the map on page 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan;*
- *The Plan specifies the period during which it is to take effect: 2024 -2031; and*
- *The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.*

*I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.*

*I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.*

The Council has been offered the opportunity to respond to the report, commenting on factual accuracy as appropriate, by the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026. Members of the Working Group have discussed the findings in the detail of the report with the Planning Authority and will present the planned response to the Planning and Development Committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

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**Item 15 To consider renewing the Council's lease for 2 rooms at the Windmill Lane offices  
(see the enclosed confidential paper)**

The Council's lease on the two rooms that comprise the room past the kitchen and toilets (G14 and G15) ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

The rent is set to increase from £1,728 to £1,944 per annum (plus £83.33 legal fees).

Should the Council continue to rent the space, it could be used for storage. With the addition of heaters, it could serve another purpose, for example as a rest room for the Council's maintenance team.

Should the Council not renew its lease, there will be some minor making good work to complete.

**Recommendation: The Council establish a task-and-finish group to explore the options and report back to the February meeting of this Council.**

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**Item 16 To note and consider signing the 2026-27 contract for grass cutting with Devon County Council (see the enclosed confidential paper)**

Annual renewal of the Council's grass cutting contract with DCC. The allocation for 2026-27 has been increased by c.3% to £5,141.

The County's policy is to only maintain visibility areas, which must be maintained as a minimum within this allocation. The visibility areas and the plans remain the same. A minimum 4 cuts per year, April, June, July and September.

**Recommendation: Continue to work with Devon County Council to maintain the highway verges across the Parish.**

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**Item 17 To note the central government consultation outcome: Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England**

Please find set out below a media summary and link to the government's response to the consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England (started 18.12.24).

You can read the government response here: [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)

- Sweeping reforms will strengthen standards and rebuild confidence in local government.
- Local authorities will gain powers to suspend councillors and mayors for serious misconduct and to withhold allowances where behaviour falls short.
- Changes follow overwhelming public support, with 94% respondents backing a mandatory code of conduct – as part of wider plans for national renewal.

Councillors and mayors who repeatedly break the rules or commit serious misconduct will face tougher sanctions under proposals published today to clean up local politics and restore public confidence.

Plans for a wholesale reform of the current standards regime will see government tackling widespread concerns head-on. This includes the inconsistent use of rules on behaviour and the lack of effective sanctions for those who breach their codes of conduct, which has undermined people's confidence in local government for too long.

Last year alone, two separate councillors were convicted of serious offences and remained in post until receiving prison sentences because there were no powers to suspend them. Rooting out bad actors within local authorities and providing the powers to quickly deal with misbehaviour will mean that focus can remain firmly on delivering for residents.

Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Steve Reed, said:

*"I know firsthand the dedication and talent within our local authorities up and down the country.*

*"But when a small minority behave badly, it's a disservice to those hardworking councillors and to taxpayers – distracting from the incredible work happening in our communities every day.*

*"We must clean up local politics by rooting out those who bring the system into disrepute. These reforms will give councils and mayoral authorities the power to do exactly that."*

The consultation response, outlines the government's proposals to strengthen sanctions available to local authorities, including new powers to suspend councillors for serious misconduct for up to six months and withholding allowances, ensuring taxpayers' money is not wasted on councillors who are in breach of the code of conduct.

Crucially, a mandatory code of conduct will apply to all types and tiers of local authority in England, ensuring that everyone, everywhere is held to the same high standard.

Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness, Alison McGovern, said:

*"The vast majority of councillors are dedicated public servants working hard for their communities. These reforms will raise the bar and ensure swift, fair action where it's needed most.*

*"Residents deserve the highest standards from their representatives, and those standing for election deserve more back up when things go wrong.*

*"With Town Hall austerity for the poorest places, and rising abuse, being a local councillor is harder than ever. But our country needs local leaders who will stand up for people. These changes are the first step on the road to recovery for local democracy.*

*"These measures will help create a safer, more respectful environment that builds trust and helps attract the best and brightest talent into local government, giving residents the representation they deserve."*

The proposed reforms will also respond to challenges faced by local authorities since the 2011 Localism Act came into effect which has left councils' hands tied in instances of handling misconduct, allowing councillors under criminal investigation for sexual assault and harassment to remain in post.

The consultation revealed widespread support for change, with 94% of respondents backing a mandatory code of conduct and 86% supporting powers to suspend councillors for serious breaches.

The government response confirms intention to legislate to introduce these measures alongside a requirement for principal authorities to establish and maintain standards committees, interim suspension powers, support for complainants, and a national appeals function.

Those measures go hand-in-hand with the government's wider reform agenda to empower local areas through devolution and the grassroots revolution via the landmark Pride in Place strategy – delivering on a decade of national renewal.

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#### **Item 18 To consider the revised quote to update the Mayor's chain**

The Council has previously resolved to send the Mayor's chain to a regalia specialist to be updated as follows:

- Remove 7 oldest links from back outside row.
  - Fit these into the Deputy Mayor's chain as an inner front row and include connecting rings to fit to the existing links.
- Produce 5 new links for the Mayor's Chain, add new links plus 2 links held by the Council and complete with connecting rings.
- Restitch as required.

The Council has been advised that, following increases in the prices of precious metals, the price would increase from £2,660 to £3,000.

**Recommendations The Council update the current chain, agreeing to use the general projects budget to make up the shortfall.**

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