

**Northam Town Council – Minutes of the Parks and Recreation committee meeting held Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam.**

Present: Cllrs Peter Hames (Chair), Barry Edwards, Sam Newman-McKie, Niki Tait and the Mayor, Cllr Louis Bach (ex-officio).

In attendance: Ian Rawle – Parks & Buildings Manager.  
Christine Hutchins – Friends of Westward Ho! Park (FOTWHOP).

Barbara Potts – Volunteer Gardeners (Westward Ho! Park).

**2603/688 To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1)**

Cllr Whittaker and Cllr Hodson apologised, the reasons for which were accepted.

**2603/689 Chair’s Announcements**

The Chair reported that the gates to the football field at Burrough Farm had been padlocked shut, and Members raised concerns regarding access.

A query was also raised by Cllr Tait regarding whether the parks budgets had been allocated separately or combined into a single overall budget.

The Parks and Buildings Manager confirmed he would investigate both matters and report back to the Committee.

**2603/690 To receive any dispensations and disclosable pecuniary or other interests**

Members were reminded that all interests must be declared prior to the item being discussed.

**2603/691 To agree the agenda as published**

It was **resolved** to agree the agenda as published.

**Proposed** Cllr Bach, Seconded Cllr Bell (all in favour)

**2603/692 To confirm as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026**

It was **resolved** that to approve the minutes as a true and correct record, which were signed by the Chair.

**Proposed** Cllr Newman-McKie, Seconded Cllr Bach (all in favour)

**2603/693 Public Participation**

*Members of the public are permitted to make representations, answer questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda.*

*Each member of the public is entitled to speak once only in respect of business itemised on the agenda and shall not speak for more than 4 minutes. The period of time which is designated for public participation in accordance with standing orders shall not exceed 20 minutes.*

There were no members of the public present other than Christine Hutchins and Barbara Potts, who would be invited to contribute at the relevant time.

**2603/694 To receive an update on actions**

The Action table is presented below.

**Item 7 update on actions**

The Chair asked if an item regarding laying the hedge along the Kimberley Drive side of Lords Meadow could be added to the Actions for the next meeting - Members were advised of the proposal to engage Steve McCulloch to do the work, with support from the trained maintenance team. It was **agreed** to obtain a formal quotation for consideration at a future meeting.

Action		November 2025	January 2026	March 2026
1	To purchase Beech and Hazel trees (whips) to re-establish the Hedge line/row at Burrough Farm	Added to actions	Whips purchased awaiting delivery.	COMPLETE.
2	To seek legal advice regarding installation of a step at Blackies (Ref: 2507/194 Construction of Steps and improvement of 'desire line' surface at Blackies Footpath)	Added to actions	If access and steps are created for public use, they must meet safety standards and be regularly inspected to avoid liability. Public liability insurance should be considered. Permission is needed from the landowner, and if the access meets a road or pavement, Highways approval is required. Planning permission may also be needed. Further checks with insurers, legal advisors, and the landowner are recommended.	In progress.
3	Permanent PumpTrack	Added to actions	Burrough Farm preferred site, Lord's Meadow less suitable. Obtain expert advice and cost estimate. If feasible, seek Full Council approval and go to tender. Explore funding opportunities (Sports Lottery, Section 106, others).	In progress.
4	To connect the Tarmac/wetpour path to the play area at Lords Meadow		Added to agenda.	Works planned for the end of March, ready for Easter Holidays.
5	To replace damaged and diseased Silver Birch trees at Lords Meadow		Added to agenda.	On Agenda.
6	Explore and develop alternative summer activities for Lords Meadow		Added to agenda.	Not Started.

**2603/695 To receive a report from the chair of FOTWHOP**

The Committee received an update from Christine Hutchins. The 200 Club continues to operate steadily, with 138 members currently in the draw. A number of participants have generously donated their winnings. Two draws remain before April, when reminder emails will be issued to encourage renewals and new memberships, with further promotion planned ahead of the Mayfair.

Volunteer input remains significant, with approximately 947.5 hours contributed to date in 2025, despite challenging weather conditions. Positive feedback has been received from the public, including comments on social media regarding the appearance of the park and appreciation for the volunteers' efforts.

Thanks, were also **noted** for members of the public who have supported the gardens, including donations of plants.

This was **noted** by the Committee.

**2603/696 To update members on the MUGA Project at Westward Ho!**

The Parks and Building Manager gave the following update - A contractor has been engaged to produce revised plans for the MUGA project following feedback from Torridge District Council. The updated design includes a reduction in the overall size due to planning constraints.

Members were advised that additional sound mitigation measures, including anti-vibration posts and revised fencing arrangements, have been incorporated. The design now includes a separate enclosed fence to prevent noise transfer to the existing tennis court fencing.

Despite these amendments, all changes will remain within the agreed budget as approved at the CNR meeting at Torridge District Council.

This was **noted** by the Committee.

**2603/697 Planned works for all Parish Play Parks and Annual Inspection Report**

The Parks and Building Manager outlined the planned works for all Parish play parks and provided an overview of the annual inspection report from The Play Inspection Company Ltd. However, Members **deferred** this item to the next meeting. Councillors requested that paper copies of the report be distributed in advance, as they did not wish to view the findings solely via the projector. The item will therefore be brought back to the next meeting for full consideration.

***Action Point: Parks and Building Manager to distribute paper copies of the annual play park inspection report to all Councillors ahead of the next meeting.***

**2603/698 Improvements at Anchor Park through wildlife-based activities**

An initial suggestion was presented to host small community events aimed at highlighting the wildlife present within the park and encouraging residents to visit and learn more about the site. Two simple engagement activities were proposed:

- **Bat Walk:** An evening guided walk using bat detectors to identify species within the park, potentially supported by a Biosphere ecologist.
- **Moth Trap Demonstration:** A moth trap placed within the woodland area overnight, followed by a morning session where attendees can view and learn about the species captured, supported by a Biosphere ecologist and potentially a work experience student.

These activities are also intended to gauge community interest in forming a small volunteer or community group to support the park in the future. It was **noted** that timing may need to align with any planned works or activities scheduled for April.

Councillors **agreed** to the proposed community wildlife engagement activities.

**Proposed** Cllr Edwards, Seconded Cllr Tait (all in favour)

**Action Point: Parks and Building Manager to progress the arrangements for the Bat Walk and Moth Trap Demonstration, including coordination with Biosphere staff and confirming suitable dates.**

**2603/699 To replace damaged and diseased Silver Birch trees at Lords Meadow**

Members received an update following the investigation into the condition and suitability of the Silver Birch trees at Lords Meadow. The inspection confirmed that only one Silver Birch requires replacement, along with one Rowan in the same area. The total cost for both trees is £86.40 (inc. VAT), within the previously approved budget of £600.

Councillors **agreed** to proceed with the purchase of one Silver Birch and one Rowan tree.

**Proposed** Cllr Bell, Seconded Cllr Tait (all in favour)

**Action Point: Parks and Building Manager to arrange the purchase and planting of the replacement trees.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19:33pm.

Signed.....Dated.....