

Northam Town Council – Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held 6th May 2026 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Windmill Lane, Northam.

Present: Cllrs Bell, Bach, Edwards, Hames, Himan, Horrocks, Leather, Lo-Vel, Newman-McKie, Sawyer, Singh, Tait and Whittaker.

In attendance: Guy Langton (Town Clerk & RFO), Rev John Kidd, Hon Alderman A Eastman, Cllr McGeough (Devon County Council) and two members of the public.

2605/001 Election of the Mayor and signing of acceptance of Office

Cllr Bach **nominated** Cllr Newman-McKie as Mayor of Northam Town Council. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Sawyer. There being no other nominations, the matter was put to a vote. All members were in favour and Cllr Newman-McKie was **duly elected Mayor of Northam Town Council** for 2026-27.

Cllr Newman-McKie signed the acceptance of Office.

2605/002 Presentation of the symbols of office:

Cllr Newman-McKie was presented with the Mayoral Chain and Gavel and took the chair.

2605/003 Election of the Deputy Mayor and signing of acceptance of Office

Cllr Newman-McKie **nominated** Cllr Hodson as Deputy Mayor of Northam Town Council. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Bach.

Cllr Tait **nominated** Cllr Whittaker as Deputy Mayor of Northam Town Council. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Hames.

There being two nominations, the matter was put to a ballot of the members. The majority of members voted for Cllr Whittaker, who was **duly elected Deputy Mayor of Northam Town Council** for 2026-27.

Cllr Whittaker signed the acceptance of Office and was presented with the Deputy Mayor's chain.

2605/004 Presentation of the symbols of office:

Cllr Whittaker was presented with the Deputy Mayoral Chain and took the seat adjacent to the chair.

Rev J Kidd left the meeting at this point (6:45pm)

2605/005 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor thanked the members, staff, exhibitors and stall holders for a successful May Fair on Saturday 2nd May 2026.

2605/006 To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1) All apologies must be notified to the Town Council offices by 5pm on the day of the meeting.

Cllrs Hodson tendered her apologies, she had been invited to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party in her role as Deputy Leader of Torridge District Council. The reason for her absence was accepted.

2605/007 To agree the agenda as published.

It was **resolved** to proceed with the agenda, as published.
Proposed Cllr Whittaker, Seconded Cllr Bach (all in favour)

2605/008 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.

Chair's initials

- 2605/009 To confirm and sign the minutes of the Full Council meeting held 22nd April 2026**
It was **resolved** to approve the minutes, which were signed by the Mayor.
Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Leather (majority in favour, four abstentions – not present at the meeting).
- 2605/010 Public Participation**
Two members of the public addressed the council.

The first congratulated the Mayor on her election and thanked her and the outgoing Mayor (Cllr Bach) for their support of Northam Library during the county-wide review of library provision, the outcome of which was expected later in May 2026. She the following points:
- Staffed libraries using volunteers and IT as support were the way forward for the provision of libraries,
 - Libraries are hubs for communities,
 - A library should be a springboard for community growth, not a downward slope.
- Regarding Local Government Reorganisation, she considered that new arrangements would soon be in place for local government across the country and she expressed the hope that Northam Town Council would think in a broad and general way regarding what its community needs and which buildings / assets would be required to provide these and where the funding could come from to meet the requirements.
- Cllr McGeough congratulated the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on their election and reminded the council that grants from the County members' locality budget would be available from 11th May 2026.
- 2605/011 General Power of Competence**
It was **resolved** that from the date of this meeting, until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council that having met the conditions of eligibility (as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012), Northam Town Council adopts the General Power of Competence.
Proposed: Cllr Whittaker, Seconded: Cllr Edwards (all in favour)
- 2605/012 To receive reports from Committee Chairs for 2025/26**
- Environment & Maintenance Committee
 - Finance & Human Resources Committee
 - Parks & Recreation Committee
 - Planning & Development (including Northam Neighbourhood Plan)
 - Review Committee
 - Northam Burrows Charity Management Committee
- The reports are appended to these minutes.
- 2605/013 To resolve which members wish to receive email correspondence and which hard-copy correspondence in respect of council meetings**
It was agreed to circulate council correspondence as follows:
E-Copy: Cllr Hames, Cllr Himan, Cllr Lo-Vel, Cllr Sawyer
The remainder would receive both hard and e-copy.
- 2605/014 To note the Standing Orders (v0.1.1)**
The Standing Orders, which were available to view on the council's website, were noted.

Chair's initials

- 2605/015 To note the Financial Regulations (v1.2)**
The Financial Regulations, which were available to view on the council's website, were noted.
- 2605/016 To note the Scheme of Delegation (v0.5)**
The Scheme of Delegation, which was available to view on the council's website, were noted.
- 2605/017 To note the Committee Structure and Terms of Reference for committees (v0.5)**
The Committee Structure and Terms of Reference for committees, which were available to view on the council's website, were noted.
- 2605/018 To note Northam Town Council policies (v0.5)**
The council's policies, which were available to view on the council's website, were noted.
- 2605/019 To note the schedule of meeting dates for 2026-27**
The meeting calendar was noted. Electronic invites had been circulated.

Cllr McGeough and one member of the public left the meeting at this point (7pm)

- 2605/020 To resolve the appointments to the Council's standing committees**
The Environment & Maintenance committee was oversubscribed, there being eight requests to sit on the committee and seven seats. The Council voted for their choice of seven of the eight members by secret ballot. The membership was **resolved** as:

Cllr Bach	Cllr Hodson
Cllr Bell	Cllr Lo-Vel
Cllr Edwards	Cllr Sawyer
Cllr Hames	

Proposed: Cllr Bell, Seconded: Cllr Hames (all in favour)

The membership of the Finance & Human Resources committee was **resolved** as:

Cllr Edwards	Cllr Leather
Cllr Hames	Cllr Tait
Cllr Himan	Cllr Whittaker
Cllr Hodson	

Proposed: Cllr Hames, Seconded: Cllr Edwards (all in favour)

The membership of the Parks & Recreation committee was **resolved** as:

Cllr Bach	Cllr Hodson
Cllr Bell	Cllr Tait
Cllr Edwards	Cllr Whittaker
Cllr Hames	

Proposed: Cllr Hames, Seconded: Cllr Bach (all in favour)

The membership of the Planning & Development committee was **resolved** as:

Cllr Bach	Cllr Lo-Vel
Cllr Hames	There were three vacancies
Cllr Horrocks	

Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Horrocks (all in favour)

The membership of the Review committee was **resolved** as:

Cllr Bach	Cllr Tait
Cllr Horrocks	There were four vacancies

Proposed: Cllr Newman-McKie, Seconded: Cllr Whittaker (all in favour)

The Mayor was entitled to attend all committees ex officio.

Chair's initials

2605/021

As Corporate Trustee of the Northam Burrows Charity, to resolve appointment to the Northam Burrows Charity Management Committee

The Northam Burrows Charity Management committee was oversubscribed, there being six requests to sit on the committee and five seats. The Council voted for their choice of six of the five members by secret ballot. The membership was **resolved** as:

Cllr Bell	Cllr Hodson
Cllr Edwards	Cllr Leather
Cllr Hames	

Proposed: Cllr Whittaker, Seconded: Cllr Bach (all in favour)

The Deputy Mayor and Mayor were entitled to attend this committees ex officio.

2605/022

To resolve Council appointments to the external and other bodies

It was **resolved** to appoint the representatives of the council as follows:

- Blue Lights Hall – Cllr Edwards
- Taw-Torridge Estuary Forum – Cllr Sawyer
- Bideford Archive Management Committee – Cllrs Himan and Whittaker (two seats available)
- Northam Community Centre – Cllr Lo-Vel
- Northam Town Twinning Committee – Cllr Himan

Proposed: Cllr Sawyer, Seconded: Cllr Bell (all in favour)

2605/023

To appoint a Police Councillor Advocate

It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Sawyer as the council's Police Councillor Advocate.

Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Hames (all in favour)

2605/024

To review the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies

It was **resolved** to continue the council's membership of the Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) for 2026/27, at a cost of £2,073.21 (ex VAT).

Proposed: Cllr Whittaker, Seconded: Hames (all in favour)

It was **resolved** to continue to meet the cost of the Town Clerk's membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and to meet the cost of the Parks & Buildings Manager's membership of SLCC for 2026/27, at an estimated cost of £500 and £330 respectively.

Proposed: Cllr Lo-Vel, Seconded: Leather (all in favour)

It was **resolved** to continue the council's membership of the Rural Services Network Rural Market Towns Group (RSN RMTG) at a cost of £151.04 (ex VAT).

Proposed: Cllr Whittaker, Seconded: Bach (all in favour)

2605/023

To review Councillor Allowances

The District Council had appointed a remuneration committee, which it was expected would meet soon. The outcome would be put before this council for consideration as a suitable juncture after it had been received.

2605/024

To receive a list of the Council's assets and office equipment

The Council had added £24,651 in assets in the 2025/26 financial year, the total value of its land and assets was £1,204,760 - a rise of 2%.

Chair's initials

2605/025	To note the funds raised for the Mayor’s Charity 2025/26	
	Cost of Mayoral events	£3,498.28
	Receipts (ticket sales, raffle, auction, donation boxes)	£6,488.73
	Balance to donate to Devon Air Ambulance	<u>£2,990.45</u>

It was **resolved** to round up the donation to £3,000, the balance being taken from the GERAL Reserve.

Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Whittaker.

In addition, there was £1,035 in personal donations through Just Giving.

There being no further business, the meeting close at 8:00pm

Signed _____ Dated _____

DRAFT

Chair’s initials

Environment & Maintenance committee

It is very satisfying to serve on a committee that is not only very well served by enthusiastic staff, but staff are also keen to implement practical proposals to enhance the green spaces of our town.

Earlier this year, for instance, a planting session was organised at Anchor Park in Appledore. This involved 30 very enthusiastic children from Northern and Appledore Schools who helped council staff plant apple trees, soft fruit and bluebells etc.

I believe the more people from our communities, and in particular are young people, we can involve in taking a practical interest in the green areas of our town, the better for all of us. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all the NTC staff for their care and diligence in maintaining our green spaces.

Councillor Jeremy Bell, committee chair.

Finance & Human Resources committee

Once again, I would like to thank the committee members for their commitment and their contributions to the financial agenda of the Council. This year the significant changes in our systems and banking arrangements introduced in 2024/25 have ensured that every penny of the public purse is well spent, monitored and reported to the entire Council and the community.

Despite some initial challenges with updating the existing banking arrangements, we have now agreed new accounts which attract interest, adding to the spending power of the Council. Also, the Council are investigating the proposal to open two further accounts for the May Fair in the Mayor's charitable fundraising. This will allow greater clarity and transparency for audit purposes and public scrutiny.

Decisions were made with the setting up of the budget to increase the precept the funding received from Torridge's collection of the Council tax by only 3.78%. This will cover costs of agreed pay increases for the staff, the anticipated increase in energy costs payable for our amenity spaces and keep pace with inflation.

Through the prudent approach to accumulating reserves, your Council was able to finance the purchase of replacement upgraded electrically powered maintenance equipment and a new vehicle to replace one of the fleet. These acquisitions will ensure your maintenance team. Function effectively to keep our green spaces in order. It has also enabled the introduction of electric battery charged appliances which can be charged using our own generated solar energy, demonstrating our commitment to climate change and the reduction in carbon emissions.

A fire risk assessment was undertaken at Northern Hall premises in 2024. The report identified several areas which required work to ensure that the safety of the building remained compliant with regulations. The reserves yet again proved vital in enabling works to commence some undertaken by the council's maintenance team, the major works being commissioned through the Council's procurement policy. These works have now been completed, thus spreading the expenditure over 2 years.

Chair's initials

The council's tennis courts have successfully generated an income which will allow the annual contribution to the sinking fund and amounts to be set aside each year for £3,600 for the eventual refurbishment costs. The income will also allow for the subsidy the tennis camps held once a week during the school summer holidays which were well attended, offering an affordable opportunity for the young people within our community.

In December, Northern Town Council approved grants to 41 community organisations totalling £26,670, this is budgeted for in 2026/27 financial year.

Approval was given by Torridge District Council to allow the procurement of an acoustic treatment of the Town Council Chamber to improve the facility for the hearing impaired and the quality of audio recordings. The works was completed in December 2025.

The Committee has approved funding for the continued training and development of all staff, ensuring compliance with legislative changes and acknowledging how they are all valued in delivering high-quality services to the community.

I am sure that I may have overlooked some areas of the work undertaken by the committee but I'm confident that the detailed minutes of the 13 meetings to be relied on to provide a transparent oversight of the decisions that have been implemented. **Councillor Claire Hodson, committee chair.**

Parks & Recreation Committee

The Committee has been active in approving more enhancements in our parks and open spaces. At Anchor Park we agreed to sow additional wildflower areas along the lower side of the site, to plant fruit trees and to provide containers to fill with herbs and soft fruit. It was great to involve local schoolchildren from Appledore and St Margaret Schools in the planting. Heartening too was the sight of swathes of daffodils emerging by the playground in early spring.

At Lords Meadow it was a pleasure to see more areas of daffodils along the Park perimeter and we look forward to the hedge alongside Kimberly Park being laid next winter. Laying a hedge involves cutting the uprights in the hedge so that they can be bent down at an angle. This produces thicker growth which makes a denser hedge and improves biodiversity by providing cover and habitat for birds and small mammals.

A useful addition to the play area at Lords Meadow was the creation of a connecting path to the perimeter footpath. The new hard surface now gives easy access to the play equipment rather than before having to go through muddy grass when there were wet conditions.

Another site owned by the Council is Burrough Farm which is now a very important local recreational asset and the allotment provides a great opportunity for local people to grow fruit and vegetables. The trees planted by the Council over the years around the allotment have matured and made a valuable visual improvement to the site. The hedge which has been laid alongside the National Trust land will now thicken and provide more habitat for wildlife and the new hedge planted by residents and Councillors on the perimeter of the football field is developing nicely.

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Following the success of the temporary pump track installed for cyclists last summer in Lords Meadow the Committee is looking at possibly providing a permanent one at Burrough Farm between the football ground and the Leisure Centre.

Westward Ho! Park continues to provide a valuable outlet for local people. The tennis courts which were refurbished with grant funding have proved to be very well used and so has the new play equipment. The garden by The Pavilion and the planting in the beds around the park are a delight and our thanks go to the excellent work of Friends of the Westward Ho! Park (FOTWHOP) in creating and maintaining them.

It is hoped that a decision will be made soon about the Pavilion in Westward Ho! park, whether to restore it or replace with a new building. Whatever is done, the building will provide an additional community facility in Westward Ho! to add to the Changing Places Toilet which has been provided at the side of the building. Another facility to be provided at that park is a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to be located next the tennis courts, using Section 106 developer contributions arising from developments in Westward Ho! At present a revised plan is being drawn up to align with the advice of the District Council's Environmental Health team. Residents' views about the project will also be sought.

I should mention too the small site in Appledore next to St Mary's Church called Blackies which the Council owns and where more tree planting and more benches are being considered. There are also small play areas which come under the responsibility of the Committee at Appletree Gardens, Wren Close and Ridgeway Drive where the play equipment provided is subject to rigorous safety inspections every year, as is the skateboard track at Churchfields in Appledore.

Councillor Peter Hames, committee chair.

Planning & Development committee

(with responsibility for the Northam Neighbourhood Plan)

The Planning Committee has continued to carry out its good work. It should be noted that an application for housing development above Bloody Corner, Northam was recommended for refusal by the Committee and went to appeal after refusal by TDC. It was gratifying that the Inspector dismissed the appeal and concurred with both Councils' main reasons for refusal i.e. impact on the countryside and undeveloped coast.

Protection of the open countryside between Northam and Appledore is a strong theme in the draft Northam Neighbourhood Plan and I am pleased to report that after a long and arduous process the plan will probably go to Torridge Full Council in June and if approved by that Council will go to referendum, it is hoped at the end of August. Thanks are due to co-opted member Nick Arnold for the huge amount of work he has done on the Neighbourhood Plan and to our Clerk, Guy Langton.

Less positive news is that the Government is proposing to restrict the powers of District Councillors to use the process of calling in some planning applications for consideration at the planning committees of planning authorities rather than being decided by officers. The call in process is very important as a way of considering controversial applications which have been opposed by residents, or which need

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fuller discussion of relevant planning policies. A Government consultation has just finished and District Councillors have expressed strong opposition to the proposals.

I should report too that the formal process of preparing a new North Devon and Torridge Local Plan is about to commence in June and it is vitally important that residents make their views known about the Plan's policies and proposed allocations of land for development when they are submitted for public consultation.

Councillor Peter Hames, committee chair.

Review committee

It's been a busy year for our Review Committee as we went back to look at policies and documents of our Town Council, some of which hadn't been updated for some years and required thorough revision.

We considered 15 of our controlled documents, re-wording some, tweaking others to bring them up to date, including things like our annual grants policy, our safeguarding protocols and our maternity scheme for example. There is, of course, more work still to be completed.

My thanks go to the Town Clerk for his diligent and patient work and guidance and to the members of the committee who read each document through and suggested improvements and careful consideration to ensure robustness for the future.

1. CCTV Policy (V0.1)
2. Complaints (V1.1)
3. Document Retention Policy (V0.2)
4. Environmental (V1.1)
5. Health & Safety Policy (V0.2)
6. Honorary Freeman - Freewomen (V0.1)
7. Investment Strategy (V0.2)
8. Lone Worker Policy (V0.3)
9. Protocol on the Death of a Senior National Figure (V0.3)
10. Recruitment Policy (V0.4)
11. Safeguarding Protocol (V1.1)
12. Scheme of Delegation (v0.5)
13. Standing Orders (V.01)
14. Tennis Court Safeguarding (V0.1)
15. Maternity Scheme (part of the staff handbook)

Councillor Sam Newman-McKie, committee chair.

Chair's initials

Northam Burrows Charity Management Committee

Whilst not a standing committee of the Council, the Charity Management Committee's annual report will be included here when it has been received.

The key responsibility of the Northam Burrows Charity Management Committee is to look after the grazing on the Burrows, both by ensuring the correct level of grazing and also the rights of the graziers and helping to ensure the welfare of the animals.

Whilst not a standing committee of the Council, the charity is the responsibility of the council. Income results from selling the 1500 Burrows passes allocated to us from TDC. Any income over and above that needed for both administration of the charity, and our grazing responsibilities, may be given to local Charities under defined Criteria.

In terms of Grazing aspects of the charity this year:

- The Skern end fence has been extended to deter sheep from escaping.
- A new water trough has been installed close to the Westward Ho! gate.
- There is new signage to warn of dog fouling, livestock worrying and the effect of dogs on the wild bird population.

Substantial work to replace bridges, build new ones and other infrastructure to assist both Graziers and public on the Burrows still currently under discussion.

Since the charity was inaugurated, considerable financial reserves had built up so this year it was agreed to award grants totalling £39,917.80 to the following organizations selected from many applications:

Committee Grants awarded by Charity Management

Appledore Baptist Church	£750.00
Friends of Northam School	£2,926.20
St Marys Hall	£6,500.00
Northam Library - Libraries Unlimited	£9,500.00
Westward Ho! Men's Shed	£528.00
St Margarets Church	£8,000.00
Westward Ho! Community Association	£5,400.00
Appledore Primary School	£6,313.60
Total	£39,917.8

Congratulations to those allocated grants, thank you to the Graziers and Northam Burrows wardens of their input to the committee and to the committee members for their help

CLlr Niki Tait, Northam Burrows committee chair

Chair's initials