

**FINANCE COMMITTEE****12<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam.**

Present: Cllrs Bach, Edwards, Hames, Himan, Hodson (Chair), Leather and Tait (Mayor, ex-officio).

In attendance: Guy Langton (Town Clerk & RFO)  
Ian Rawle (Parks & Buildings Manager)

**2502/586 To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1)**

Cllr Whittaker tendered her apologies, the reasons for which were approved.

**2502/587 Chair's announcements**

The Chair made no announcements.

**2502/588 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.

**2502/589 To agree the agenda as published.**

It was **resolved** to bring consideration of item 12 (*To consider renewing the Council's fleet and machinery to meet the requirements of the Council's responsibilities and duties and to consider if the Council should extend those duties to include routine street and pavement cleaning*), recorded at minute 2502/592, forward to allow the Parks & Buildings Manager to contribute. With that amendment, the agenda was agreed. Proposed Cllr Hodson, Seconded Cllr Tait (all in favour)

**2502/590 To consider the minutes of the Finance meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025 as a true and correct record**

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

Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Hames (majority in favour, 2 abstentions – not present at the meeting)

**2502/591 Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

**2502/592 To consider renewing the Council's fleet and machinery to meet the requirements of the Council's responsibilities and duties and to consider if the Council should extend those duties to include routine street and pavement cleaning**

The committee considered the report, in particular the vehicle which would replace the Council's 2016 DFSK Loadhopper. Both used and new models were considered as replacements, the committee viewing that there were benefits and disadvantages of all options but that a new vehicle would be more effective over the longer term. The Council already operated one of these vehicles so had experience of it in daily operation.

It was noted that the Council would be replacing all its petrol hand tools (e.g. strimmers and leaf blowers) with electric equivalents, so reducing noise, vibration and carbon footprint in use.

It was noted that a two-wheel tractor could, with the appropriate attachments, support the Council's mowing and street cleaning activities but only required one petrol engine to fuel and maintain.

It was **resolved** to:

1. Replace the whole set of maintenance equipment with electric models and purchase sufficient batteries and chargers, at a cost of approximately £13,000.

Proposed: Cllr Hodson, Seconded: Cllr Hames (majority in favour, 1 against)

Chair's initials

2. purchase a petrol powered ‘two-wheel tractor’ and three attachments – a weed ripper, a brush and collector set and a rotary mower at a cost of approximately £23,000.

Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Edwards (majority in favour, 1 against)

3. Replace the DFSK with a new Nextem Orca EV, equipped with a tipper body and tow bar, at a cost of approximately £23,000

Proposed: Cllr Hames, Seconded: Cllr Leather (majority in favour, 3 against)

4. In all cases, the Council seek to reduce the cost by effective negotiation and offering the Council’s current equipment and truck in part-exchange.

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

5. Allocate the spending (estimated to be £59,000) to the cost centres for replacing a Truck and larger Council machinery (combined total of £43,250 in 2025-26), with any shortfall being identified from the Council’s end of year carry-forward or earmarked reserves.

Proposed: Cllr Hodson, Seconded: Cllr Leather (majority in favour, 1 against).

In recognition of the level of expenditure, it was **agreed** to recommend to Full Council that:

- The Council replace the whole set of maintenance equipment with electric models and purchase sufficient batteries and chargers, and
- The Council purchases a petrol powered ‘two-wheel tractor’ and three attachments – a weed ripper, a brush and collector set and a rotary mower, and
- The Council replaces its oldest truck, A DFSK Loadhopper, a new Nextem ORCA, equipped with a cage tipper body and a towbar.
- In all cases, the Council seek to reduce the cost by effective negotiation and offering the Council’s current equipment and truck in part-exchange.
- The spending (estimated to be £59,000) be allocated to the cost centres for replacing a Truck and larger Council machinery (combined total of £43,250 in 2025-26), with any shortfall being identified from the Council’s end of year carry-forward or earmarked reserves.

Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Hames (majority in favour, 2 abstentions – not present at the meeting)

*I Rawle left the meeting at this point (19:30)*

**2502/593 To receive an update on Action Points**

The action points were noted as below and overleaf.

Item	December 2024	January 2025	February 2025
1. Council’s banking arrangements and draft a report for a future meeting of the committee.	The review has not yet been carried out. INCOMPLETE	The review has been started. The Town Clerk will present a report to a future meeting if this committee. Considerations will include the opening of further deposit accounts, including interest-bearing easy access and moving the Council’s main account to another provider. ONGOING	On the agenda COMPLETE

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Item	December 2024	January 2025	February 2025
2. To consider improvements to the office accommodations, to include decorating painting and the provision of a sink It was resolved to seek permission from the building owner (Torrige District Council) to install a sink for washing up.	The Chamber has been completed. Suitable sink units are being investigated by the Parks & Buildings Manager. ONGOING	The Chamber has been completed. Suitable sink units are being investigated by the Parks & Buildings Manager. ONGOING	The work has been placed on hold with the Council concentrating its attention on Northam Hall and the response to the actions identified in the Fire Risk Assessment. ONGOING
3. Include Northam Town Council logo in the advertising for the 2025 Christmas Fair.			To be undertaken at the appropriate time ONGOING
4. Liaise with the Westward Ho! Business association regarding the location and provision of Christmas Trees in 2025.			To be undertaken at the appropriate time ONGOING
5. Northam Hall works in response to the findings of the Fire Risk Assessment in December 2024		The requirements had been reviewed and work identified that NTC staff could undertake.	Work has commenced. Estimates for the ceiling work are being sought and grants researched. ONGOING
6. Consider recommendation to purchase machinery referred from the Environment & Maintenance committee.		In the light of the repairs needed by the Council's DFSK, the committee requested a full review of the needs of the Council's maintenance machinery and vehicle fleet be undertaken and returned to this committee.	On the agenda. COMPLETE
7. Consideration of a request from a hirer of Northam Hall that the Council reimburse the cost of the Hall hire.		The committee agreed to donate the cost of the Hall Hire to the charitable beneficiary.	The hirer has been contacted COMPLETE.

**2502/594 To receive the Clerk's report**  
**On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, the Council's balances were:**

At 28th January 2025 (the last available statement balance), the Council's balances were:

Nationwide (Business 95 day saver)	£93,166.35	current interest rate is 3.9%
Cambridge & Counties Bank (31 day)	£93,884.82	current interest rate is 3.55%
Cambridge Building Society	£5,024.40	current interest rate is 2.4%
Petty Cash	£94.29	
Coop Bank (current account)	£245,134.80	
<b>Total cash in hand</b>	<b>£437,304.66</b>	

Chair's initials

**Payments:**

The Council made 1081 payments in January 2025, totalling £38,799.24 (exVAT). There were 34 payments of £100 or more (exVAT). These include:

- £24,794.47 in payroll and associated costs
- £2,400 for an independent Planning expert's check on the NNP
- £1,613.50 to book entertainers and facilities for the May Fair 2025
- £1,090.81 direct debit for monthly insurance payment
- £996.00 for Scribe accounts
- £771.78 on materials and tools to repair footpaths
- £752.84 to service the ride on mower
- £660.00 for an 240v pressure washer and consumables
- £603.78 for gas to heat Northam Hall in December
- £428.49 for room rental at the Town Hall
- £420.00 to clean the CPT and Community Centre toilet in December
- £416.67 as deposit for the Mayor's civic dinner
- £400.00 to clean Northam Hall in December
- £312.10 monthly IT contract
- £300.00 for two 2<sup>nd</sup> hand stationery/filing cupboards (£150 each)
- £299.00 Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) at Northam Hall
- £199.00 FRA at the Pavilion
- £180.00 on manual handling training for all Maintenance staff
- £175.25 for electricity at Northam Hall
- £166.47 on fuel for vehicles and equipment
- £148.50 on repairing and updating the Mayor's chain
- £126.32 on PPE
- £114.00 water bill at Northam Hall (monthly direct debit)

**Receipts:**

In January 2025, the Council received 47 payments, totalling £7,923.73, detailed below. There was a £15.00 refund for an overcharged May Fair brochure advert.

**Tennis courts:**

The gross volume of sales since 1st January 2024 is £5,495. After fees, the Council has received £5,114.45. The LTA expect the Council to earmark approximately £3,600 per year for 15 years (index linked) to meet the costs of court maintenance and refurbishment. The Council is £1,514.45 over the target, in this extended year (1st January 2024 to 31st March 25). At the 31st March, a payment will be made to the Council's Cambridge Building Society account, where this earmark is held.

**Petty Cash:**

A screen shot of the petty cash cashbook is presented overleaf showing the items on which the Council has spent petty cash. The aim of the Town Clerk is to maintain a level of £100 or thereabouts in the account.

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Petty Cash		2024-25	Name:	Northam TC Petty Cash														
Details					Income			Expenditure							Balance at start of FY			
Date	Transaction	Description	Ref	Scribe No	Petty Cash Withdrawal	Carry forward	Total in	VAT	Events	Milk etc	Maintenanc e	Office expenses	Total out	£	136.47	Reconciliation balance		
2.1.25	107	Milk	PC24-25.94				0.00			1.35			1.35		92.94			
6.2.25	108	Milk	PC24-25.95				0.00			1.70			1.70		91.24			
8.1.25	109	Milk and coffee	PC24-25.96				0.00			4.55			4.55		86.69			
15.1.25	110	Milk	PC24-25.97				0.00			1.89			1.89		84.80			
20.1.25	111	Milk	PC24-25.98				0.00			1.35			1.35		83.45			
23.1.25	112	Milk	PC24-25.99				0.00			1.35			1.35		82.10			
20.1.25	113	Twine	PC24-25.100				0.00	0.58			2.92		3.50		78.60	£	78.60	
30.1.25	114	Milk	PC24-25.101				0.00			1.70			1.70		76.90	£	76.90	
Number of transactions	114	TOTALS			660.00		660.00	28.56	310.97	141.42	106.07	132.55	719.57		-59.57	Difference between receipts and payments		
budgetted figures (12 month)					-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-					
variance (to date)					660.00		660.00	-	-310.97	-141.42	-	106.07	-	132.55				
													Variance	£ 136.47	76.90			

**Receipts:**

In November / December 2024, the Council received 101 payments, totalling £6,351.12, including interest paid into the Council’s deposit accounts (£1,386.69); payment from TDC for the hire of the Council’s Tower and staff (£312.50); and the annual fee to use Burrough Farm from Northam Lions FC (£120). Payments received in respect of Council services provided for the community was £4,204.37, which included rent payable on the Council’s carpark adjacent to the Seagate Hotel in Appledore. There was a £40.44 refund for cancelled Hall bookings.

**Tennis courts:**

The gross volume of sales since 1st January 2024 is £5,470. After fees, the Council has received £5,091.45. The LTA expect the Council to earmark approximately £3,600 per year for 15 years (index linked) to meet the costs of court maintenance and refurbishment. The Council is £1,491.45 over the target, in this extended year (1st January 2024 to 31st March 25). At the 31st March, a payment will be made to the Council’s Cambridge Building Society account, where this earmark is held.

**Council IT contract:**

Following an increase by Microsoft, the Council’s monthly bill to the IT service provider will increase to £327.20 (exVAT). A £10 increase per month.

**Council precept request:**

The Town Clerk had submitted the precept requirement to Torridge District Council, that being £644,337. The District Council has acknowledged receipt.

**2502/595 To note the Devon County Council highway verge grass cutting contract**

It was noted that Devon County Council for 4 cuts per year, as outlined below. The Contract would be considered by Full Council.

Urban Grass Cutting Timetable vers April 2010

Grass Cutting Programme		April	May	June	July	August	September	October
1	Urban Cutting All Maintenance Catagories ( full width cut to all urban highway verge 4 times per season)	█		█	█		█	

Chair’s initials

**2502/596 To note the annual account returns for 2023-24 for the charities for which the Council is corporate trustee**

It was noted that the accounts for 2023-24 for the two Charities for which the Council was Corporate Trustee (Northam Burrows Charity [charity number 1198021] and Mrs Anderson's Bequest for a Recreation Ground [charity number 300746]) had been filed by 31.01.2025 as required and could be viewed on the Charities' pages of the Charity Commission's website.

**2502/597 To consider the Council's banking arrangements**

The committee noted the reasons why the Council held each account, as follows:

Institution	Why held	Type of account	Interest rate	Balance at 31.01.2025
Co-operative Bank	Day-to-day use	Business Current Account	0.0%	£207,500
Co-operative Bank	Mayor's Charity	Business Current Account	0.0%	£278
Nationwide Building Society	Earmarked and general reserves	95-day notice community savings account	3.9%	£93,474
Cambridge and Counties Bank	Earmarked reserves	31-day notice business savings account	3.49%	£94,178
Cambridge Building Society	Tennis Court 'sinking fund'	Instant access council saver	2.4%	£5,027

The committee noted that with a large precept sum being paid to the Council, it would be financially prudent to place a part of that on deposit to gain interest. Placing it in an instant access account would allow the Council to access it as and when it was needed.

The committee considered that, despite the Council not being eligible for the FCS compensation scheme, spreading its funds across a number of institutions was prudent.

It was **resolved** to open a Local Council Easy Access Deposit Account at Hinkley & Rugby Building Society to hold a portion of its current account balance and precept to maximise the benefit gained from the public money held by the Council.

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

It was further **resolved** to close the Council's Mayor's Charity account and transfer the balance to the Council's general account.

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

**2502/598 To consider a request from a hirer of Northam Hall**

Northam Hall has been booked on the 14th March 2025 by the Bideford Tarka Rotary Club, who are holding a fundraising quiz, in support of Siman Randall's mission to raise funds for North Devon Hospice. The organiser has asked that the Council provide the Hall free of charge or make a donation of equal value to the cost to the North Devon Hospice. The Council has taken the latter approach in the past. The cost of the hire is £66.25.

It was **resolved** to ask the hirer to pay the hire fees, which the Council would then donate to the North Devon Hospice.

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

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It was **resolved** to exclude members of the press and public for the remaining items, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

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

**2502/599 To receive a report into the accumulated TOIL hours across the staff and requests for overtime and sign the payroll information sheet for January 2025 payroll**

It was **resolved** to approve the payroll submission sheet, noting the TOIL hours accumulated and overtime claimed. The payroll information sheet was signed by the Chair.

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

It was **resolved** to readmit members of the press and public, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

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

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.59pm.

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

DRAFT

Chair's initials

Voucher	Date	Net	VAT	Gross	Description
1077	02.01.2025	£1.35	£0.00	£1.35	Milk
978	02.01.2025	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	Mobile Phone - IR
998	02.01.2025	£4.22	£0.00	£4.22	Stripe Fees
982	02.01.2025	£168.00	£0.00	£168.00	Equipment various
312	02.01.2025	£428.49	£0.00	£428.49	Room rental
983	03.01.2025	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	Mobile Phone - CW
977	03.01.2025	£46.07	£9.21	£55.28	telephone system
1078	06.01.2025	£1.70	£0.00	£1.70	Milk
979	06.01.2025	£61.67	£12.33	£74.00	wifi N Hall
980	06.01.2025	£186.01	£0.00	£186.01	Equipment various
985	07.01.2025	£1.34	£0.00	£1.34	square fees
984	07.01.2025	£1.34	£0.00	£1.34	square fees
997	07.01.2025	£6.25	£1.25	£7.50	Domain name renewal
995	07.01.2025	£21.67	£4.33	£26.00	cleaning services
987	07.01.2025	£36.50	£7.30	£43.80	copier charges
990	07.01.2025	£41.98	£8.40	£50.38	Tools
994	07.01.2025	£63.20	£0.00	£63.20	Community Centre Water
996	07.01.2025	£80.00	£0.00	£80.00	Mayor charity event
988	07.01.2025	£299.00	£59.80	£358.80	fire assessment N Hall
992	07.01.2025	£400.00	£0.00	£400.00	cleaning Northam Hall
991	07.01.2025	£420.00	£84.00	£504.00	Cleaning CPT
989	07.01.2025	£660.00	£132.00	£792.00	Pressure washer and consumables
986	07.01.2025	£752.84	£150.57	£903.41	Mower service
1079	08.01.2025	£4.55	£0.00	£4.55	Milk and coffee
999	08.01.2025	£9.45	£1.89	£11.34	cadet armband
1000	08.01.2025	£11.92	£2.38	£14.30	Photo frame
993	08.01.2025	£312.10	£62.42	£374.52	IT contract
303	08.01.2025	£1,090.81	£0.00	£1,090.81	insurance
1009	09.01.2025	£0.22	£0.00	£0.22	square fees
1007	09.01.2025	£0.88	£0.00	£0.88	square fees
1012	09.01.2025	£1.19	£0.00	£1.19	square fees
1006	09.01.2025	£1.19	£0.00	£1.19	square fees
1011	09.01.2025	£1.27	£0.00	£1.27	square fees
1008	09.01.2025	£1.27	£0.00	£1.27	square fees
1004	10.01.2025	£2.62	£0.52	£3.14	safety signs
1005	10.01.2025	£4.75	£0.95	£5.70	Signage N Hall
1001	10.01.2025	£5.05	£1.01	£6.06	safety signs
1003	10.01.2025	£6.88	£1.38	£8.26	safety signs
1002	10.01.2025	£12.41	£2.48	£14.89	Bus Shelter
1010	13.01.2025	£1.19	£0.00	£1.19	square fees
1013	13.01.2025	£1.50	£0.00	£1.50	square fees
1014	13.01.2025	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	Mobile Phone - TT
1016	14.01.2025	£35.00	£0.00	£35.00	glasses for computer

Chair's initials



1017	14.01.2025	£126.32	£25.26	£151.58	PPE
1015	14.01.2025	£166.47	£33.30	£199.77	Fuel
1019	14.01.2025	£180.00	£0.00	£180.00	Training
1018	14.01.2025	£5,613.35	£0.00	£5,613.35	HMRC PAYE
1080	15.01.2025	£1.89	£0.00	£1.89	Milk
1025	15.01.2025	£3.86	£0.77	£4.63	safety signs
1026	15.01.2025	£7.44	£1.49	£8.93	safety signs
1023	15.01.2025	£14.97	£0.00	£14.97	Equipment various
1027	15.01.2025	£23.75	£4.75	£28.50	Domain name renewal (WWHo! Pk - 5 yrs)
322	15.01.2025	£28.50	£0.00	£28.50	water rates
1021	15.01.2025	£110.00	£0.00	£110.00	Tools and equipment
1020	15.01.2025	£114.00	£0.00	£114.00	water bill
1022	15.01.2025	£603.78	£120.76	£724.54	gas account
1029	16.01.2025	£0.31	£0.00	£0.31	square fees
1033	16.01.2025	£9.58	£1.92	£11.50	cadet armband
1032	16.01.2025	£27.50	£5.50	£33.00	flagpole work
1030	16.01.2025	£199.00	£39.80	£238.80	Fire Assessment Pavillion
				£16,899.0	
1031	16.01.2025	£16,899.09	£0.00	9	Salaries
1040	17.01.2025	£2.95	£0.59	£3.54	safety signs
1039	17.01.2025	£3.45	£0.69	£4.14	safety signs
1038	17.01.2025	£6.15	£1.23	£7.38	safety signs
1037	17.01.2025	£20.00	£0.00	£20.00	licence TDC
1036	17.01.2025	£45.00	£9.00	£54.00	SLCC Training etc
1028	17.01.2025	£175.25	£8.76	£184.01	Electricity Account
1035	20.01.2025	£0.31	£0.00	£0.31	square fees
1081	20.01.2025	£1.35	£0.00	£1.35	Milk
1034	20.01.2025	£1.78	£0.00	£1.78	square fees
1044	20.01.2025	£15.00	£3.00	£18.00	flags
1043	20.01.2025	£33.33	£6.67	£40.00	Cabinet
1042	20.01.2025	£75.65	£15.13	£90.78	VE Day Flag
1045	21.01.2025	£1.78	£0.00	£1.78	square fees
1041	21.01.2025	£28.95	£5.79	£34.74	internet
1054	22.01.2025	£53.30	£10.66	£63.96	VE Day Lamp Post Sign
1082	23.01.2025	£1.35	£0.00	£1.35	Milk
1053	23.01.2025	£30.00	£6.00	£36.00	delivery/collection charge
1047	23.01.2025	£33.50	£6.70	£40.20	Equipment repair
1049	23.01.2025	£50.12	£10.02	£60.14	Footpath work
1052	23.01.2025	£70.73	£14.15	£84.88	Toilet rolls paper towels
1051	23.01.2025	£148.50	£29.70	£178.20	Repairs and additions Mayor's chain
1050	23.01.2025	£196.48	£39.30	£235.78	Footpath work
1048	23.01.2025	£2,282.03	£0.00	£2,282.03	Nest January 2025 Payment
1056	24.01.2025	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	Mobile Phone - GL
335	24.01.2025	£6.25	£1.25	£7.50	Mobile Phone - IH
1046	24.01.2025	£47.42	£2.37	£49.79	Electricity - Pavilion

Chair's initials

1057	24.01.2025	£80.97	£16.19	£97.16	VE Day Flag
1055	27.01.2025	£0.31	£0.00	£0.31	square fees
1083	27.01.2025	£2.92	£0.58	£3.50	Twine
1058	27.01.2025	£14.98	£3.00	£17.98	Laptop sleeves
1059	27.01.2025	£80.91	£0.00	£80.91	Books
1074	28.01.2025	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	Mobile Phone - RG
1071	28.01.2025	£15.00	£3.00	£18.00	delivery/collection charge
1072	28.01.2025	£15.39	£3.08	£18.47	Footpath work
1069	28.01.2025	£79.96	£15.99	£95.95	Footpath work
1070	28.01.2025	£111.29	£22.26	£133.55	Equipment hire
1067	28.01.2025	£125.00	£0.00	£125.00	May Fair 2025
1062	28.01.2025	£220.00	£0.00	£220.00	May Fair 2025
1063	28.01.2025	£230.00	£46.00	£276.00	May Fair 2025
1066	28.01.2025	£255.00	£0.00	£255.00	May Fair 2025
1073	28.01.2025	£268.50	£0.00	£268.50	May Fair 2025
1065	28.01.2025	£300.00	£60.00	£360.00	2 <sup>nd</sup> hand Stationery cupboards (x2)
1068	28.01.2025	£416.67	£83.33	£500.00	civic dinner
1064	28.01.2025	£515.00	£103.00	£618.00	May Fair 2025
1061	28.01.2025	£996.00	£199.20	£1,195.20	Scribe Accounts Renewal
1060	28.01.2025	£2,400.00	£480.00	£2,880.00	Healthcheck Northam NDP
1086	29.01.2025	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	Mobile Phone - TA

Chair's initials