

Northam Town Council – Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held 28th May 2025 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Windmill Lane, Northam.

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

In attendance: Guy Langton (Town Clerk & RFO); Cllr D McGeough (County Councillor) and Rev J Harris

2505/nnn Apologies

Cllr Singh tendered his apologies, the reason for which were accepted. The Council had one vacant seat, in the Westward Ho! ward.

2505/nnn To agree the agenda as published.

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

Proposed Cllr Hodson, Seconded Cllr Whittaker (all in favour)

2505/nnn 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.

2505/nnn Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor made no announcements. The Town Clerk reported that Torridge District Council had commenced the validation checks on the submitted Northam Neighbourhood Plan.

2505/nnn To confirm and sign the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held 7th May 2025

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes, which were signed by the Mayor.

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

2505/nnn To receive and adopt the reports of minutes and resolutions contained therein from Committees and Sub-Committees

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| • Finance | 9 th April 2025 |
| • Planning and Development | 24 th April 2025 |
| • Parks and Recreation | 26 th March 2025 |

The committee minutes were noted and adopted.

2505/nnn Public Participation

No member of the public wished to address the Council.

2505/nnn To receive a report from Devon & Cornwall Constabulary

The Town Clerk read out correspondence from the Inspector for the Council area.

Northam Parish was graded as 'medium' demand, the engagement level was described as follows:

'There should be a regular meeting structure where we aim to attend at least quarterly and by invite should there be a particular issue or concern. We would aim to proactively update them with any organisational change on our part as and when these occur and seek to include where relevant their engagement with resolving locally based issues. They are expected to furnish themselves with any general police reports from the Home | Police.uk (www.police.uk) website - bespoke reports will only be produced where a specific issue or series of crimes affects that community. Again we will proactively make contact if we identify a series of crimes or incidents that we foresee will affect them. They also have regular access if in CT/CH to the regular online drop in sessions.'

2505/nnn To receive a report from the Devon County Councillor

The County Councillor reported that the newly elected County Council held its first meeting the week before, the details and outcomes of which were available on the County Council website. He looked forward to working with the newly elected members in the Liberal Democrat led authority. The Council had identified two priorities so far:

- Children's services – the County had been graded inadequate by OFSTED at its recent inspection, published 13th May 2025 (Inspection dates: 30 September to 11 October 2024 and 13 to 16 January 2025).
- Highways – the County was reviewing bringing the service back in-house.

He further reported that:

- the licencing of trading on Appledore Quay had been returned to the District Council, whilst some complications had been encountered at handover it was expected that this would benefit local traders in the future,
- yellow lines would continue to be repainted across the Parish, and
- he had once again been allocated a Locality Grants budget of £8,000.

Cllr Hames asked how and when the new Council would be progressing the 20mph zones across Devon, the previous administration having not rolled all areas that applied out.

Cllr McGeough answered saying that the Neighbourhood Highways Officer had been asked to draw plans up for the areas identified in Northam Parish.

2505/nnn To receive reports from Torridge District Members

Cllr Whittaker submitted the below report, no other members wished to make a report.

The only event of particular interest during this period from my perspective was TDC's Annual General Meeting held on Monday 19th. There was also a preliminary Full Council Meeting which took place for an hour before the main event began at 6.30.

The early Full Council meeting considered several interesting items, one being the extending the Public Places Protection Order in relation to the control of dogs. This established that dogs should be kept on leads in Victoria Park, Bideford and in Westward Ho! Park all year round. It also established once again, that from the 1st May to the 30th September each year dogs should stay on their leads on Westward Ho! promenade, as well as being excluded as usual during this period from the Blue Flag arena of Westward Ho! Beach.

Another item discussed was about the significant amount of money secured from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help with local housing needs. Just under a million pounds has been secured to enable the Council to acquire 3 new three bed properties and 2 two bed properties to help with temporary accommodation needs, one of which if required, will be allocated for re settlement purposes.

The Annual General Meeting followed the well-recognised script of electing the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council, Cllr Bushby and Smith both being re-elected to these roles. Following with the election of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr James and Cllr Hodson both being re-elected. After considering a Progress Report on the Corporate Peer Challenge where some considerable improvement has felt it's been made the meeting moved on to agreeing the size of Committees and to their Terms of Reference. Then on again to the Election of Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, this is always an interesting, well supported meeting which ensures that the overall 'machinery' of the Council is established for another.

Councillor Jane Whittaker, Town and District Councillor, Northam and Orchard Hill

Conservative Group Leader

27th May 2025

2505/nnn To receive an update regarding Local Government Reorganisation

The following was copied from Devon Association of Local Council's 'Knowledge Bank' regarding Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Following the launch of the Devolution White Paper on 16th December 2024, DALC has been working hard to engage with our members on this topic, and to provide support and updates where we can.

We will endeavour to keep our members up to date on what we know about devolution as matters in Devon progress. Local government reorganisation (LGR) is being required by government in order to achieve the kind of Devolution deal they want to see. Updates will be circulated in our e-bulletin, and on our website.

At the moment, we have no information about what reorganisation might look like in Devon. The Leaders of Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council are working together to explore the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) – the governance needed for devolved decision-making powers and funding to flow from Whitehall to local decision-makers in Devon and Torbay – is now official.

Following meetings with our member councils in January, steps that DALC are already taking include:

- Working with NALC and other county associations to share knowledge and best practice
- We have asked NALC to lobby for funding package for local councils to assist with asset transfers
- We are investigating the legal position around asset transfer
- We have asked NALC for examples of best practice in terms of devolution
- We have requested that NALC deliver a briefing for all DALC councils
- We have worked with Devon County Council to arrange for regular briefings for our members
- We will continue to engage with district councils wherever possible
- We will continue to keep you updated

We have asked encouraged member councils to carry out asset mapping in their communities. Thanks to all councils that submitted statements to help us build an evidence base, we are very grateful for your assistance in this matter. If you haven't yet sent anything in, we would still be delighted to receive your statements, which all help us build an understanding of our member councils.

2505/nnn To consider the action point update

The action points were received as below and overleaf.

20th November 2024 Re-engage with Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Campaigns (minutes 2407/192 and 2411/416)	The Town Clerk, Community Engagement Officer, Cllrs Bach, Hames and Lo-Vel all attended the meetings arranged for the 27 th November 2024. The Northam Burrows Rangers both apologised in advance. The meeting was positive, with both the Council and SAS agreeing to share information so the Plastic Free Communities could restart. Prior to the meeting, the Town Clerk spoke to Mr Cross, who had been very supportive in the past and had arranged to speak again and plan for 2025 in the new year. ONGOING
20th November 2024 (minute 2411/418)	Town Clerk to prepare a report into the costs of the three options for future work at the pavilion. This work has been overtaken by urgent work required at Northam Hall. ONGOING

18th December 2024 (minute 2412/498)	Request an exemption from parking charges at Windmill Lane on weekdays for Northam TC members. Request made, response awaited, now escalated to the Head of Service. The District Council do not offer this to other Town Councils, for parity the request was refused. COMPLETE
22nd January 2025 (minute 2501/551)	An email was drafted asking the Head of Legal Services at TDC for their opinion of the 1978 minute indicating the land was owned by Northam Town Council and responded saying that a transfer of ownership form, signed by both parties, would be required to identify ownership. The Town Clerk has heard from the Land Registry that the allotment part was removed from the land title a year after it was registered by TDC, in 2006. There being no recorded reason or evidence stating why, the allotment part was re-included in 2024. ONGOING
19th February 2025 (minute 2502/613)	i. Replace the whole set of maintenance equipment with electric models and purchase sufficient batteries and chargers, and ii. That the committee resolves to purchase a petrol powered ‘two-wheel tractor’ and three attachments – a weed ripper, a brush and collector set and a rotary mower, and iii. That the committee resolve to replace the DFSK with a new ORCA, equipped with a cage tipper body and a towbar. iv. That 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. v. That the spending (approximately £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 including unspent funds from the climate emergency budget or earmarked reserves. COMPLETE
23rd April 2025 (minute 2504/742)	Invite Cllr O’Rourke to attend Council meetings. Invitation sent. COMPLETE

2505/nnn To receive the Clerk’s report

On 30th April 2025 (or according to the last available statement balance), the Council’s balances were:

At 30th April 2025 (or according to the last available statement balance), the Council’s balances were:

Nationwide (Business 95-day saver)	£94,358.55
Cambridge & Counties Bank (31-day)	£94,982.97
Cambridge Building Society	£5,452.32
Petty Cash	£47.30
Coop Bank (current account)	£380,197.54
Hinkley & Rugby Building Society	£5000.00
Total cash in hand	£580,038.68

The Finance committee **resolved** to transfer £250,000 to the Council’s easy access account with Hinckley and Rugby Building Society, to take advantage of the interest that account would accrue.

The bank reconciliation was signed by the Proper Officer and the Chair.

Payments

The Council made 134 payments in April 2025, totalling £82,305.18 (exVAT). A full list of these is presented in the Finance & HR committee minutes. There were 45 payments of £100 or more (exVAT). These include:

- £25,863.62 in payroll and associated staff costs
- £21,970.00 for a 2-wheel tractor and three tools (weeder/ sweeper and mower)
- £16,245.46 for a new Nextem ORCA electric truck (to replace HY16 UOL)
- £2006.00 retainer to the Council's legal advisors
- £1,390.41 PPL-PRS community music licence for Northam Hall
- £1,356.67 Civic Dinner
- £1,119.54 electrical work at Northam Hall
- £969.28 insurance premium increase following revised building valuations
- £839.99 annual bulb planting order (over 7,000 bulbs), for delivery September 2025
- £800.00 to clean Northam Hall (invoices for March and April)
- £588.00 annual service contract for the CPT
- £515 for the compares of the May Fair 2025
- £480.88 for gas to heat Northam Hall
- £470.00 for the Northam Neighbourhood Plan website design
- £456.04 for electricity at Northam Hall
- £455.00 to clean the CPT & community centre toilet (monthly fee)
- £427.60 monthly room rental at the Town Hall
- £380.00 four cherry trees for Anchor Park
- £349.95 PAT Tester
- £195.00 PAT training (one staff)
- £330.00 May Fair 2025 entertainment
- £320.25 advert for Maintenance Operative in local paper
- £284.70 monthly IT contract
- £281.67 2 x Li-on 12v 'leisure' batteries for watering
- £224.00 May Fair 2025 dignitaries' lunch
- £221.66 Truck and mower fuel
- £204.00 Chptr 8 training (2 staff)
- £190.00 map updates for neighbourhood plan
- £338.50 copier fees and charges (£186.01 and £152.49)
- £175.00 Northam TC roller banner
- £175.47 stock for May Fair 2025 (diner)
- £168.00 green waste emptying - TDC
- £168.00 footpath surfacing
- £164.50 'dogs on leads' and 'pick up after your dog' 'max fine £1,000' signs (15 of)
- £139.00 600L tank for watering
- £136.05 stationery
- £130.00 annual alarm maintenance (Northam Hall)
- £114.00 water bill (Northam Hall)

The committee **resolved** to approve the list of payments.

Receipts:

In April 2025, the Council received 59 payments, totalling £14,345.24 detailed below. The Council also received £7,234.22 back from HRMC for VAT and the first of two precept payments of £322,168.50

Tennis courts:

The gross volume of sales in April 2025 was £820.00. After fees, the Council has received £769.21. Eleven were annual membership passes (new and renewals) at £35 each. The remainder of the sales were casual courts bookings at £5/crt/hr. 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.

It was resolved to offer the coaches that provided 1:1 tuition would be offered two options, to pay £2 per court per hour and assist the Council with Free Park Tennis and open day(s), or pay £5 per court per hour, the same as a casual user.

Petty Cash:

A screen shot of the petty cash cashbook is presented below showing the items on which the Council has spent petty cash.

The financial regulations seek to maintain a balance of £100 in Petty Cash.

Details					Income			Expenditure						Balance at start of FY
Date	Trans action	Description	Ref	Scribe No	Petty Cash Withdrawal	Carry forward	Total in	VAT	Events	Refresh ments	Maint enance	Office expenses	Total out	£ 13.45
1.4.25	3	Cash withdrawal	-	-	90.00		90.00						0.00	103.45
26.3.25	1	Refreshments	PC25-26.1	130			0.00			1.35			1.35	102.10
26.3.25	2	Propane gas (weedburner)	PC25-26.2	129			0.00	1.99			39.76		41.75	60.35
1.4.25	4	Refreshments	PC25-26.3	128			0.00			1.35			1.35	59.00
14.4.25	5	Refreshments	PC25-26.4	127			0.00			1.35			1.35	57.65
7.4.25	6	Postage	PC25-26.5	126			0.00					0.87	0.87	56.78
22.4.25	7	Refreshments	PC25-26.6	124			0.00			1.25			1.25	55.53
		Fuses		125			0.00	0.46			2.34		2.80	52.73
23.4.25	8	Refreshments	PC25-26.7	123			0.00			4.08			4.08	48.65
28.4.25	9	Refreshments	PC25-26.8	122			0.00			1.35			1.35	47.30

May Fair 2025:

Income: £4,010 (including a grant from the County Councillor for May Poles, the 'Diner' made £375, adverts £1,530 and stalls £1,085)

Expenditure: £6,367, the largest single cost was printing the brochure at £1,690.

The May Fair cost the Council £2,358.

The estimated staff cost (if all were to be paid as overtime at the appropriate rates) would be £1,680.

The budget for 2024-25 was £10,000 and for 2025-26 is £7,500

The committee resolved to purchase a catering quality electric griddle (738 x 330mm surface), with two heat zones on which to cook and keep food warm to use when appropriate at events.

Mayors Charity 2024-25:

The total raised for the Mayor's identified charity in 2024-25 (RNLI Appledore) was:

Ceilidh:	£1,213.82
Civic Dinner and donations to end April 2025:	£3,790.85 (including the balance of the civic dinner budget for 2024-25 of £2,532.88)
Donations received since:	£225
Total raised:	£5,229.67

The estimated staff cost (if all were to be paid as overtime at the appropriate rates) would be £592.

2505/nnn To receive an update on the casual vacancy in the Westward Ho! ward

The Town Clerk reported that the Council had heard that, having received sufficient signatures from voters registered in the Westward Ho! Ward, an election would be held to fill this vacancy. If it was to be contested, the election would be held on the 3rd July 2025.

Nominations for those wishing to stand must be received by the Returning Officer by 4pm on Friday, 6th June 2025.

2505/nnn To receive an update on the nomination of the 'Rest Centre' (old schoolhouse) at The Square, Northam s as an Asset of Community Value (ACV)

The Property Team at Torridge District council have advised that the application had been reviewed the and was accepted. Northam Leisure Centre will be recorded on the ACV register until 21/05/2030.

2505/nnn To note the Open Day at the Council's Tennis Courts on 1st June 2025

The day was to start at 9:45 am, with the Courts being officially opened by Mrs Vinall, a teacher at St Margaret's School for many years and active in tennis locally. The Changing Places Toilet facility would be opened by Mr Braddick, the largest single donor to the crowdfunding effort that enabled the Council to fund the facility.

There would be a short performance by Appledore Band. There would be four staff needed for the day, to cook and serve food and be points of contact and represent of the Council.

2505/nnn To note the appointment of a Maintenance Operative

Following a series of interviews, the Town Clerk reported that he had offered the post of to the successful applicant has accepted. Her references had been taken up and were satisfactory. The agreed start date was 9th June 2024.

2505/nnn To consider appointing an extra member of the Maintenance Team for the summer and autumn (up to six months)

It was **resolved** to recruit a temporary member of the maintenance team to support summer operations (up to six months) and review the need for the team to be expanded on a permanent basis.

Proposed: Cllr Hodson, Seconded: Cllr Whittaker (majority in favour, 2 abstentions)

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:00pm.

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