

Northam Town Council – Minutes of the Parks and Recreation committee meeting held Wednesday 15th July 2026 at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam.

Present: Cllrs Jeremy Bell, Louis Bach, Barry Edwards and Niki Tait and The Mayor, Cllr Sam Newman-McKie.

Arriving during the meeting: Cllr Claire Hodson (from 19:01hrs) and Cllr Jane Whittaker (from 19:08 hrs).

In attendance: Ian Rawle – Parks & Buildings Manager.

Christine Hutchins – Friends of Westward Ho! Park (FOTWHOP).

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

2607/161 To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hames (Chair) due to illness.

Apologies were received from Cllr Hodson and Cllr Whittaker, who were attending a meeting of Torridge District Council and would be joining the meeting later.

2607/162 Chair's Announcements

In the absence of the Chair, Cllr Tait (Vice Chair) took the Chair for the meeting.

Cllr Hodson had advised that she would be arriving later due to her attendance at a meeting of Torridge District Council. She therefore requested that Agenda Item 9 be considered towards the end of the meeting.

This was **proposed** by Cllr Bell, seconded by Cllr Edwards, (all in favour).

The Parks & Buildings Manager provided the following updates:

- Members were advised that the area is currently experiencing a prolonged period of dry weather. The maintenance team is working hard to maintain the Council's parks and floral displays, and watering regimes have been increased wherever possible to help protect planting and maintain display standards.
- Members were informed that a homeless individual is currently staying within Westward Ho! Park. The matter has been reported to the relevant authorities and support organisations to ensure appropriate welfare assistance and support can be offered.

- An update was received regarding the Pavilion Project. Philip Hinton is currently preparing concept designs using Autodesk Revit (Building Information Modelling software) to produce detailed 3D visualisations. The designs will include both a potential new-build option and a refurbishment option, providing Members with a clearer understanding of each proposal. It is anticipated that these designs will be available to present to Members in the near future.

Cllr Edwards requested a further update on the work of the Pavilion Working Group, noting that there had been limited recent activity and seeking clarification on the project's progress and next steps.

Cllr Edwards also raised concerns regarding the number of weeds present in Appledore and requested that the matter be reviewed.

2607/163 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.

2607/164 To agree the agenda as published
It was **resolved** to agree the agenda as published.
Proposed Cllr Bach, Seconded Cllr Edwards (all in favour)

2607/165 To confirm as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Committee held on 20th May 2026
It was **resolved** that to approve the minutes as a true and correct record, which were signed by the Chair.
Proposed Cllr Bach, Seconded Cllr Bell (one abstention due to not being present at the previous meeting; majority in favour)

2607/166 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 two members of the public present: Barbara Potts and Christine Hutchins. Christine and Barbara would be invited to contribute at the relevant time.

2607/167 To receive an update on actions
The Action table is presented below.

Item 7 update on actions

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Action		November 2025	January 2026	March 2026	May 2026	June/July 2026
1	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.	In discussion with DCC Public Rights of Way Officer	On Agenda
2	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.	Researching funding and contractor cost (by in and place using contractors and NTC staff)	On Agenda
6	MUGA WWH!		-Meet with Contractor to discuss plans -investigate Planning, contact Environmental Health	Contractor appointed to revise MUGA plans following feedback -Design reduced in size due to planning constraints	To update P & R in July 2026.	On Agenda

Chair's initials

				-Additional noise mitigation included (anti-vibration posts and revised fencing) -Changes remain within approved budget		
7	Pavilion WWH!		-Survey completed -Plans being developed for options (new build or renovation) -Demolition costs currently being obtained	No Change	-Survey completed -Plans being developed for options (new build or renovation) – Philip Hinton currently preparing draft plans -Demolition costs currently being obtained	On Agenda.
8	Planned works for all Parish Play Parks and Annual Inspection Report		Inspections carried out	On Agenda	On Agenda	Works started.
9	Hedge laying Lords Meadow		Contact Steve McCulloch for quotation and advice.	In talks with Steve McCulloch.	Awaiting quotation.	Awaiting Site visit from Steve McCulloch.

2607/168 To receive a report from the chair of FOTWHOP (Verbal)

The Chair reported that the Annual General Meeting had been held and that the committee membership remained largely unchanged, with existing committee members continuing in their roles. Consideration was being given to financial arrangements, including placing funds into savings accounts where appropriate.

The gardening team continued to make a significant contribution, recording approximately 270 volunteer hours up to April, with a further 89 hours in May and 113.25 hours in June. It was noted that the warmer weather may affect volunteer hours during July.

The 200 Club draw continued to operate successfully. There were 105 numbers in the June draw. The Chair noted that participants either reinvested their winnings or donated them back to the organisation, which was greatly appreciated.

Members were reminded that increased participation would support the draw and improve participants' chances of winning.

2607/169 Construction of Step at Blackies Footpath (Ref: 2507/194)

Members considered a report regarding the potential installation of a step at Blackies Footpath following Minute 2507/194.

The Parks & Buildings Manager advised that further investigations had identified a number of practical and legal considerations, including the ongoing maintenance and liability that would arise should the Town Council install a step for public use.

Members were also informed that, despite enquiries, the ownership of the land had not been established, preventing the Council from obtaining the necessary landowner's permission.

In addition, free verbal legal advice had confirmed that the use of a disclaimer or "use at your own risk" sign would not remove the Council's legal responsibilities if it undertook the works.

It was **Resolved:** That, having considered the potential liabilities, the inability to identify the landowner, and the likely cost of obtaining formal legal advice, the Council does not pursue the installation of a step at Blackies Footpath and leaves the existing informal access unchanged

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

Chair's
initials

2607/170 Modular Pump Track Proposal

Members considered a report regarding the potential provision of a modular pump track as an alternative to a permanent installation. The Parks & Buildings Manager outlined the advantages of a modular pump track, including its lower cost, flexibility, ability to be relocated, and the potential for future expansion. Members were advised that the estimated cost of a modular pump track would range between £49,300 and £63,500, depending on the size and configuration selected. Potential locations identified included Burrows Farm, Lords Meadow and Anchor Park.

During the discussion, Members considered the estimated costs, potential locations and possible funding opportunities. It was agreed that further information was required before an informed decision could be made, particularly regarding the total project costs, available grant funding and the overall financial implications for the Council.

It was **Resolved:** That consideration of the proposal be deferred pending further investigation into the full project costs and potential funding opportunities, with a further report to be presented to the Committee.

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

Action Point: *Parks & Buildings Manager to investigate the full project costs, identify potential grant funding and other external funding opportunities, and report back to a future meeting.*

2607/171 Request from Torrington Tennis Club for Court Hire

Members considered the report regarding Court Hire.

Following discussion, Members agreed that the current booking arrangements should remain unchanged for the remainder of the current season. It was **agreed** that the use of the facility should be monitored throughout the summer period and reviewed ahead of the next season.

It was **Resolved:** That bookings continue under the existing arrangements with no reduction in charges, and that the use of the facility be reviewed following the summer season, with a report brought back to the Committee for consideration prior to the next season.

Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded Cllr Edwards (one abstention due to not being present at the previous meeting; majority in favour)

Action Point: *Parks & Buildings Manager to monitor the use of the facility during the summer period and present a review to the Committee ahead of the next season.*

2607/172 Harbour to Hedge Project – Anchor Park Update

Members received an update regarding discussions with representatives from the Harbour to Hedge community group and Appledore School concerning a potential partnership project at Anchor Park.

The Parks & Buildings Manager advised that the aims of Harbour to Hedge align with the Council's environmental objectives, including biodiversity enhancement, habitat creation and community engagement.

Members were informed that the Parks & Buildings Manager had attended a meeting with the North Devon Biosphere on 21 July 2026 to discuss potential funding opportunities and support for environmental projects.

It was **noted** that further discussions would take place with Harbour to Hedge and Appledore School to explore how a partnership could operate in practice, with any future proposals being brought back to the Committee for consideration.

This was **noted** by the Council

Action Point: *Parks & Buildings Manager to continue discussions with the relevant organisations and keep Members informed of the progression of the project, reporting any future proposals back to the Committee for consideration.*

2607/173 Pavillion Project

Members received an update on the Pavilion Project. The Parks & Buildings Manager advised that Philip Hinton is currently preparing concept designs using Autodesk Revit (Building Information Modelling software) to produce detailed 3D visualisations.

The designs will include both a potential new-build option and a refurbishment option, providing Members with a clearer understanding of each proposal. It was anticipated that the concept designs would be available for presentation to Members in the near future.

This was **noted** by the Council.

2607/174 To update members from the MUGA Working Group.

Members received an update from the MUGA Working Group regarding progress on the proposed Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). The update included the current status of the Lawful Development Certificate application, the project budget and funding position, the draft specification and Invitation to Quote documentation, and the proposed procurement approach.

Members noted the positive response received during the public consultation and the ongoing work of the MUGA Working Group in progressing the project.

During the discussion, Members requested that the proposed MUGA design plans, together with an updated project budget and funding position, be circulated to all Councillors for information.

This was **noted** by the Councillors.

Action point: *Parks & Buildings Manager to circulate the proposed MUGA design plans, together with an updated project budget and funding position, to all Councillors*

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7:41 pm.

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