Northam Town Council – Minutes of the Full Council meeting held 30th September 2026 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Windmill Lane, Northam.

Present: Cllrs Bach, Edwards, Hames, Himan, Hodson, Horrocks, Leather, Newman-McKie (Mayor) Sawyer, Singh, Tait and Whittaker (Deputy Mayor).

In attendance: Guy Langton (Town Clerk & RFO), Cllr Mcgeough (Devon County Council), Rev Andrew Vidamour, two members of the public.

2609/325 Apologies
Cllrs Bell and Lo-Vel tendered their apologies, the reasons for which were approved.

2609/326 To agree the agenda as published.
It was **resolved** to proceed with the agenda as published.
Proposed Cllr Whittaker, Seconded Cllr Leather (all in favour)

2609/327 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.

2609/328 Mayor's Announcements
The Mayor reported that she had attended a free DALC Connect Event: Security & Safety Awareness Presentation from Devon and Cornwall Police. This session provided advice, guidance and reassurance on Personal, Physical and Cyber security matters, not just for council life but also for everyday activities. The Mayor encouraged all members to attend the next session, scheduled for the 15th October from 6pm.

The Town Clerk reminded members that the council offices would be closed on the 7th October to allow staff to attend the DALC annual conference and AGM.

Finally, it was announced that following the positive referendum result, the co-opted member of the Northam Neighbourhood Plan working group and NNP volunteers would be hosting a celebration on the 9th October 206, 6.30 to 8.30pm. All councillors and their plus-ones were invited.

2609/329 To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Council held 2nd September 2026
It was resolved to confirm the minutes as a true and accurate record.
Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Whittaker (all in favour).
Action point: re-present the minutes of the meeting held on the 29th July to the October meeting.

2609/330 To receive and adopt the reports of minutes and resolutions contained therein from Committees and Sub-Committees
The below listed minutes were received and adopted.

- Finance & Human Resources 12th August 2026
- Parks & Recreation 15th July 2026
- Review 22nd July 2026
- Planning & Development 13th August 2026

2609/331 Public Participation
The members of the public did not wish to address the council.

2609/332 To receive a report (if any) from Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
The members requested that a written report be tabled if no representative could attend.
Action point: request a written report.

2609/333 To receive a report from the Devon County Councillor

Cllr McGeough provided a report which was circulated in advance (appended to these minutes).

Cllr McGeough further reported that

- he continued to seek a response from County Council officers regarding a traffic count at Wooda Road;
- a meeting had been arranged with County Council officers where he and the Town Clerk would raise the council's concerns regarding the local bus services;
- a response regarding parking restrictions at Northam Library had been received and would be circulated;
- the scheme of traffic works in Westward Ho! and along Bay View road had been planned;
- Lighting column issues in Westward Ho! had been reported;
- The cost of overnight whole-street surface repairs precluded that approach;
- There would soon be a Library grant fund announced.

In response to a request from Cllr Singh to instal a pedestrian footway along the whole length of Fosketh Hill, Cllr McGeough asked Cllr Singh to email him directly.

Cllr McGeough and two members of the public left the meeting at this point (6:55pm)

2609/334 To receive reports from Torridge District Members

Cllr O'Rourke was not available to attend the meeting.

Cllr Whittaker circulated a written report in advance, which is appended to these minutes.

Cllr Bach reminded the council that agendas, papers and minutes of meetings were available on the Torridge District Council website and meetings were recorded and shared on its YouTube channel.

Cllr Hames reported that an extra-ordinary meeting had been called to discuss Local Government reorganisation and the implications of the current central government-mandated pause.

2609/335 To receive a report (if any) from the Police-Councillor Advocate

Cllr Sawyer reported that

- he was in regular contact with the Neighbourhood Team Inspector, noting that the Team covered the whole council area and the Hartland peninsular;
- crime statistics currently available were up to the end of July 2026, with 65 reported incidents that month. With this number of reports, the council is considered lower priority and so would be attended twice per year. People and businesses were encouraged to report all incidents, with online reporting being a more time-efficient method

In response to a request from Cllr Tait regarding a number of thefts on the estuary, Cllr Sawyer agreed to bring the Team's attention to them and urged Cllr Tait to encourage those that had experienced thefts to report them.

2609/336 To receive an update regarding Local Government Reorganisation

Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) had called for clarity and certainty for parish and town councils following the government's decision to pause and review its local government reorganisation programme in the county. DALC would continue to monitor developments and keep members updated as further information becomes available.

Rev Vidamour left the meeting at this point (7:08pm)

2609/337 To consider the action point update

The action point updates were received as below.

2512/525 Speedwatch	Advise the Police of the intention to recommence the SpeedWatch initiative in the Parish and of the volunteer coordinator. A total of four volunteers needed, the coordinator plus three. Adverts have been placed on the Council's website and re-shared fortnightly on social media. Assistance with promotion would be sought. One volunteer had come forward and the Town Clerk was in the process of arranging the training. Cllr Hodson volunteered to promote the initiative to local and community groups and organisations, asking if other members would also do so. **Action Point: contact local and community organisations (e.g. schools' Friends groups) to promote the project and seek further volunteers.** ONGOING
2601/551 Pension arrangements for Council Staff	Initial staff feedback sought 14th July 2026. All staff at the meeting stated they would be willing to make the increased contribution required by the LGPS over the NEST scheme, which could vary between 0.8% and 2.5% more. A report will be prepared for the Full Council meeting later in September 2026. Members requested that the October Finance & HR committee receive the report in the first instance. ONGOING
0606/067 Write to Devon County Council and bus service provider to express the Council's concern over the different levels of service provided to Appledore and Westward Ho!	No further correspondence from the County Council regarding the cost of extending the bus services serving Appledore. No further correspondence regarding the cost of providing a temporary Night Bus to Appledore. It was noted that the provided Night Bus service to Westward Ho! was not what the Council agreed to fund at its meeting in april 2026 (minute 2604/775) and that this should be included in any arranged meeting with the County Council and bus service provider. In the first instance, a meeting has been arranged with the DCC Division member, DCC Officers and Town Clerk with a view to a wider meeting including members of this council and the bus services provider(s). ONGOING
2607/125 Write to PCC and Inspector to express the Council's concerns and clarify the funding of street wardens.	OPCC and Neighbourhood Policing team Inspector contacted, who responded that Westward Ho! was not considered a Hot Spot for 2026. The Town Clerk would share the email threads with Cllr Sawyer as Police Councillor advocate. COMPLETE
2607/211 Split rooms G14&G15 back into two	Structural work contractor instructed. Electrical contractor instructed. RAMS and associated documents required by the building's owner to be completed. Date for works to be confirmed. ONGOING

2609/261 Speedwatch	Contact the Friends Groups and other community organisations regarding this volunteering opportunity. Contact details sought, other groups to be identified. ONGOING
2609/263 Declare the NNP Referendum Expenses	The final invoice had not been received at the time of writing. The expenses would be declared as soon as the final total was available. ONGOING
2609/264 Amend policies as appropriate and sign.	Amendments made. The Mayor had not, at the time of writing, signed the adopted policies. ONGOING
2609/265 Receive feedback on the Allotment Ts&Cs from members	One member had provided feedback, which was considered at the September meeting of the Review committee. The recommended terms & conditions are on the agenda. COMPLETE
2508/283 Meeting with Northam Lions FC	Management agreement is on the agenda for consideration. COMPLETE

2609/338 To receive the Clerk's report

On 31st August 2026 the Council's balances were:

Account	Balance	Interest	Notes
Petty Cash	£102.00	zero	Financial Regulations expect the balance to be maintained at approximately £100
Hinkley & Rugby Building Society	£200,000	1.65%	Holding account for general expenditure and £50,000 of the General Reserve
Mayor's Charitable Fundraising	£2,805.00	1.06%	Mayor's civic dinner and other fundraising
May Fair	£5,250.35	1.06%	Funds for deposits and other spending leading up to the next May Fair
Cambridge & Counties Bank (31-day)	£98,956.82	2.72%	General Reserves
Nationwide (Business 95-day saver)	£98,679.24	3.20%	Earmarked Reserves (as per agreed budget: parks, defibrillators, LCWIP, war memorial cleaning, skate park and pavilion renovation reserve)
Cambridge Building Society	£10,792.20	1.55%	Tennis Reserves
Coop Bank (current account)	£33,980.41	zero	General expenditure

Total cash in hand (SCRIBE) £450,566.02

Petty Cash: The council spent £22.59 of petty cash in August 2026, withdrawing £50 to maintain the balance stated in the financials regulation (£100).

Tennis courts: The gross volume of sales in August 2026 was £1,284.23 after fees.

Year to date (1st April to 31st August)	Received	Change
2026	£3,815.40	-22.14%
2025	£4,881.90	+12.20%
2024	£4,351.02	0% 1st year

Payments: Between 1st and 31st August 2026, the council made 87 payments, totalling £44,846.19 (ex VAT). There were 29 payments of £100 or more totalling £43,279.67 (ex VAT) (appended to these minutes).

Receipts: Between 1st and 31st August 2026, the council had 64 receipts, including 54 for the hire of Northam Hall, totalling £13,673.78 (ex VAT).

Comfort break (7:23pm to 7:32pm)

2609/339 To receive an update on the Northam Neighbourhood Plan referendum

It was noted that on 21st September 2026, Torridge District Council's (TDC) Full Council adopted the Northam Neighbourhood Plan 2024–2031 (NNP), making it part of the Development Plan for the area.

Following the outcome of the referendum, the NNP was already part of the Development Plan, and the decision by TDC's Full Council confirms and maintains that status.

TDC has provided the Qualifying Body with a Decision Statement, which has been made public on this council's website and noticeboards.

TDC's Full Council also granted limited delegated power to enable minor updates to the NNP to reflect its 'made' status. The exact power delegated was as follows:
'Authority to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with Northam Town Council, to make any necessary minor formatting, editorial and factual amendments to the Northam Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2031 as necessary'.

2609/340 To note the letter sent on behalf of Northam Town Council to the DCC Adult Health Scrutiny Committee and consider preparing a joint letter from Torridge and North Devon Town Councils

The letter was noted.

It was **resolved** to delegate authority to the Town Mayor to sign the joint letter on this council's behalf.
Proposed: Cllr Hodson, Seconded: Cllr Whittaker (all in favour)
Action point: Advise the other local councils of this council's agreement.

2609/341 To consider and adopt the below listed controlled documents recommended by committees and working groups

a) Publication Scheme (v0.3)

It was **resolved** to adopt the publication scheme (v0.3).
Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Horrocks (majority in favour, 1 abstention)
Action point: Amend the Procurement Policy to include specific reference to the Council's Carbon Plan at paragraph 8.5.

2609/342

b) Allotment terms & conditions (2026)

Cllr Hames proposed that

- the paragraph on mulching be amended to include specific reference to the effect of climate change on the likelihood of dry periods increasing in the future,
- specific reference to the council's biodiversity policy be included in the introduction and that the leaflet on encouraging pollinators be appended to the terms and conditions.

There was no seconder.

It was **resolved** to adopt the allotment terms and conditions
Proposed: Cllr Bach, Seconded: Cllr Horrocks (majority in favour, 1 abstention)
Action points:
Issue the terms and conditions
Circulate the leaflet on encouraging pollinators and post on the allotment noticeboard.

2609/343 To consider the purchase of pedestrian barriers to assist in the delivery of community events

It was **resolved** to agree a budget of £1,000, to come from the General Projects Budget, to purchase 20 crowd control barriers and 6 banners (2 May Fair and 4 Northam Town Council).
Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Bach (majority in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions)

2609/344 To note the petition to keep a bench close to the bus stop outside Costcutters in Northam Square and consider the next steps

The petition was received by the Mayor.
it was **resolved** to seek a license for and provide a bench at this location, responsibility for the project be delegated to the Environment & Maintenance committee.
Proposed: Cllr Leather, Seconded: Cllr Tait (all in favour)

2609/345 To consider the working with the Bideford, Littleham & Westward Ho! Cricket Club to renovate part of the pavilion in Westward Ho! Park

It was **resolved** to defer consideration of this to the next meeting of the council and after the meeting of the pavilion working group.
Proposed: Cllr Newman-McKie, Seconded: Cllr Sawyer (majority in favour, 1 abstention)

2609/346 To consider nominating a member to take DALC's seat on the Torridge area meeting of DCC's Highway and Traffic orders Committee (HATOC)

It was **resolved** to nominate Cllr Whittaker.
Proposed: Cllr Newman-McKie, Seconded: Cllr Sawyer (all in favour)
Action point: Advise DALC.

2609/347 To consider an uplift to Councillor allowances for 2026/27

It was **resolved** to note that there was no updated Parish Remuneration Report available and that it was unlikely a new one will be available in the foreseeable future, so in the absence of a new report, to apply the NJC award in line with the approach of the Principal Authority, that being 3.3%. The additional £35.48 being paid to members as part of the October 2026 payroll run (making the member's allowance for 2026/27 £1,110.48).
Proposed: Cllr Tait, Seconded: Cllr Edwards (majority in favour, 1 abstention)

There being no further business, the meeting close at 8:56pm

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

Chair's initials

Voucher	Date	Net	VAT	Total	Description	Minute Ref
532	07.08.2026	£101.79	£12.21	£114.00	Membership Fee Town & Country Planning Association	2607/209
543	14.08.2026	£149.98	£30.00	£179.98	Fan x 2	
569	20.08.2026	£180.00	£0.00	£180.00	TV Licence (Town Hall)	
541	13.08.2026	£186.33	£37.27	£223.60	Fuel	
544	14.08.2026	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00	Membership Fee Grants Online	
561	18.08.2026	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00	Security Services (Town Hall)	2606/079
562	18.08.2026	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00	Security Services (CPT/Pavilion)	2606/079
563	18.08.2026	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00	Security Services (Northam Hall)	2606/079
522	07.08.2026	£205.48	£41.10	£246.58	Mower Repair	
560	18.08.2026	£208.25	£0.00	£208.25	Community Centre Water (50% of 1/4ly bill)	
539	12.08.2026	£216.10	£0.00	£216.10	Northam Neighbourhood Plan - hard copies	
564	18.08.2026	£222.00	£44.40	£266.40	Appledore noticeboard header and sundries	
584	26.08.2026	£250.00	£0.00	£250.00	Signage cleaning lance	2608/244
512	03.08.2026	£314.00	£62.80	£376.80	IT contract	
553	18.08.2026	£318.02	£63.61	£381.63	Tennis nets	
514	04.08.2026	£335.00	£67.00	£402.00	Civic.ly Subscription (July 2026)	
519	06.08.2026	£335.00	£67.00	£402.00	Civic.ly Subscription (August 2026)	
565	18.08.2026	£361.39	£72.28	£433.67	Reinstall defib Appledore Soc Club	
508	03.08.2026	£450.73	£0.00	£450.73	Garage and Room rental (Town Hall)	
589	31.08.2026	£450.73	£0.00	£450.73	Garage and Room rental (Town Hall)	
513	03.08.2026	£455.00	£91.00	£546.00	Cleaning CPT	
580	24.08.2026	£827.50	£165.50	£993.00	Van Hire (one EV off road req repair)	
566	18.08.2026	£899.35	£179.87	£1,079.22	Dep Mayor's fob renovation	2607/134
535	10.08.2026	£1,129.46	£0.00	£1,129.46	General Insurance	
585	26.08.2026	£1,240.00	£248.00	£1,488.00	Replacement generator	2608/243
510	03.08.2026	£1,254.16	£250.83	£1,504.99	Defibrillator - Westbourne Tce	2607/131
507	03.08.2026	£2,707.25	£0.00	£2,707.25	Pensions	
581	25.08.2026	£10,482.15	£0.00	£10,482.15	HMRC PAYE	2508/252
549	18.08.2026	£19,200.00	£0.00	£19,200.00	Salaries	2608/221
		£43,279.67	**£1,592.87**	**£44,872.54**		

Chair's initials

County Councillor's Report for Wednesday 30th September

Good evening, Mayor, and councillors

Improvements
Churchill way is receiving ongoing improvements works from Devon Highways, these works were originally applied for by a road closure, working with highways the best solution was to install TTL, (Temporary traffic lights) this was to mitigate the impact towards residents, so far it is working well and I can confirm that is was only the first day that caused disruption due to traffic lights being installed for safety at the junction of Heywood road, Churchill way.

Obstructive parking/ outside the Torridge pool
After numerous communications with Torridge district council and local members, I asked for Active Torridge to deal with the overflow car parking, causing issues for road users and residents of Benson drive. Unfortunately, Torridge district council being the landlords of the arm's length company (they set up) instructed me that they are unable to tell Active travel to stop the obstructive parking on the road!

So, it falls to me to apply for restrictions to enable safe access to Benson drive, I have already spoken with highways, and the details are being drawn up.

Late night buses
Westward Ho! has seen the re-instatement of the late-night bus. This will be available for News Years eve, as Westward Ho! is becoming a prime destination for New Year's Eve celebrations.

I have a meeting with Stagecoach this Friday to discuss the re-instatement of the late night bus service to Appledore village, I offered to pay the £1000 from my locality budget to move this along, Northam town councillors have also been involved in this, the new 17 bus for Bayview road, is specifically a hot topic for the lack of service for Appledore, Westward Ho! and Abbotsham from the town councillors.

The 17 bus was funded by Devon County council for the residents of Bayview Road; this is to help the isolation of residents through the lack of bus service. Once the S106 monies are paid from the developers, an improved service will be installed to offer better and more regular bus journeys. The current temporary bus service is well used by residents.

Due to funding by DCC, the 17 bus is not for other areas and Abbotsham does not fall under the division of Northam and no S106 is legally allowed to be used in this way, same as Westward Ho! and Appledore.

AI Data centre and x-links
I supported the recent public protest at Caddsdown, to express my deep concern over the proposed centre and emergence of the x-links within our Northam division, we are set to see an increase of at least 1000 heavy haulage vehicle movements, daily. This would not see a reduction in any resident's electricity bills! Nor would we have security over the cable as a nation, and this could be turned off whenever the owners wished. leaving us vulnerable and isolated.

Like many other residents I have signed the petition to government to support the local population and object to these monstrosities within our countryside and I am also extremely

disappointed that the UNESCO biosphere have refused to comment against the AI date centre- if this were to pass, we would lose the status and see the decimation of our wildlife, countryside, tourism, communities being ripped apart by the government imposing this upon us!

All-Party support is essential to try to STOP this coming to Torrington. I support our Rural cabinet member, Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin and call for all political parties to stand up and say no to this.

I am extremely concerned that Torridge district council had a meeting back in June 2025 to discuss the AI centre, this is such an important decision for all the community and I feel TDC should have done better by putting this in the public domain.

Planning reform
I was absolutely outraged to see that the government has yet again imposed the new planning reform upon Devon County Council, this will take away the local representation of your local members and give officers the powers under (delegation). I spoke in the chamber that Councillors vote against this to central government, as it makes a mockery of the planning process, leaving local representatives unable to support their communities and call decision in for scrutiny.

I was saddened that councillors did not oppose this, as they said we have no choice, legally to stop this!

Yet they assume that they will have the powers to object to the planning of critical planning infrastructure like, X-links and AI Data centres. I VOTED NO AGAINST THE PLANNING REFORM.

Northam has just approved their local plan, what now will happen to developments that we the elected members can not object to?!

Adult health and scrutiny committee
Last week saw a contentious meeting regarding the re-opening of the maternity unit at NDDH, the meeting was well attended by members of the public and all County councillors for Torridge and North Devon.

Absolutely shocking that the unit will not be open any time soon!

My questions to the committee were.
“When did you first know that North Devon Maternity staffing was becoming critically fragile, what warnings reached you personally, and why was decisive action not taken early enough to prevent the suspension of births? “

“Will you publish a full comparison of the pay, recruitment incentives, retention packages, vacancies and funded establishment for equivalent maternity and obstetric posts at North Devon and Exeter? If North Devon is less attractive financially or professionally, why should this committee accept that as an adequate recruitment strategy?”

“As chief executive, you are ultimately accountable. After repeated failures, a foreseeable staffing crisis and the loss of maternity services, will you now accept responsibility. The public

deserves accountability, not excuses. If senior leadership failed to foresee, prevent and resolve this crisis, why should the public have confidence in the chief executive remaining in post, I therefore call for you to resign, sir. "

The meeting was live streamed and can be view online for the full content.

Westward Ho!
Has recently seen further new lighting columns fixed within the village and the previously damaged light, replaced.

Thank you
Cllr Dermot McGeough

District Councillor's Report, 30th September 2026

On the 7th of September I found myself back at a Joint Crematorium Committee meeting with really only two topics to consider. These were the necessary replacement of the Cremators and some real improvements required to the Crematorium's car parking arrangements.

The two Cremators need replacing and while doing this work it is advisable to upgrade the area that surrounds them. The existing ones were custom built due to the space then available whereas the new ones would include works to improve the surrounding area. These new Cremators will be more energy efficient and run as hybrid Cremators which should future proofed them for around the next 20 years.

Areas of the existing car park would be improved which will provide far better hard standing for the many users of the Crematorium services.

There is a significant amount in reserves to accommodate these items but because of inflation they will no longer cover the required amount. Both Councils will jointly have to meet the shortfall.

Last Friday I attended a joint Thematic Working Group meeting. This, a 3-hour meeting, was established to bring relevant discussion and comments forward towards the eventual development of the new Local Plan. There is quite a way to go with this work and with the changes coming forward in respect of planning I had more than moment of doubt as to the relevance of being there and indeed of attending further meetings. But given that this is our only real way of bringing as much influence as possible to the final document I realised that staying on board is actually important.

Cllr Whittaker
29th September, 2027
Town and District Councillor
Northam and Orchard Hill
Conservative Group Leader