

	<i>Meeting (No)</i>	<b>Annual Council Meeting (1)</b>
	<i>Time &amp; Date</i>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 6.00pm</b>
	<i>Location</i>	<b>Neston Town Hall</b>
<b>MINUTES</b>		

**Present:** Cllrs: Jones (Retiring Mayor), Adderley, Braithwaite, Davies, Griffiths, Hudspeth, Kynaston, Marple, D. Ruscoe, N. Ruscoe, Swaffer, Warner and Wastell.

In attendance: Z. Dean (Locum Chief Officer), 2 x members of the public.

### **PART 1: Items considered in the presence of the press and public**

The meeting was opened by retiring Mayor Cllr S. Jones. Cllr Kynaston thanked the retiring Mayor, Cllr Sion Jones, and retiring Deputy Mayor, Cllr Brenda Marple, for their hard work and excellent support over the year.

<b>1</b>	<b>Election of Chairman</b>
a)	After a proposal from Cllr Kynaston, seconded by Cllr Wastell, <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To appoint Cllr Simon Davies as Chairman/Mayor of Neston Town Council for the 2025/2026 Civic Year. The vote was unanimous.
b)	The newly elected Chairman of Neston Town Council signed the Mayoral Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of members and the Proper Officer of the Council. The retiring Chairman, Cllr Jones, congratulated the new Chairman and presented him with Neston Town Council's Chains of Office.
<b>2</b>	<b>Election of Vice Chairman</b>
a)	After a proposal from Cllr Wastell, seconded by Cllr D. Ruscoe, <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To appoint Cllr Carol Braithwaite as Vice Chairman/Deputy Mayor for the 2025/2026 Civic year. The vote was unanimous.
b)	The newly elected Vice Chairman of Neston Town Council signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for the role of Vice Chairman (Deputy Mayor), in the presence of members and the Proper Officer of the Council.
	The Chair briefly suspended Standing Orders in order for the presentation of the Good News Bible for both the newly elected Mayor and Deputy Mayor with 2 x members of the public, who then left the meeting after the brief presentation.
<b>3</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>
	No apologies were received for this meeting. Cllrs Doughty and Townsend were absent.
<b>4</b>	<b>Questions and Comments from Residents</b>
	No members of the public were present.
<b>5</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting</b>
	A question was asked when the new councillor emails would be set up. The Chief Officer noted that this was imminent, along with the installation of the new server but would chase up a confirmation of the date with the Council's IT consultant. <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To accept and sign the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2025.
<b>6</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>

Mayor's Initial & Date:

Cllr Marple declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 24, Mostyn Square telephone kiosk, as a member of the Parkgate Society.

## **7 Constitution and Terms of Reference for Standing Committees 2024/25**

- a) **It was RESOLVED:** To approve and adopt the Town Council's Committee Structure.
- b) **It was RESOLVED:** To approve and adopt the updated Committee Terms of Reference and Schemes of Delegation for the following Standing Committees: Community & Environment, Finance & Administration, Human Resources and Market & Town Hall Committees.
- c) Members made two amendments to the committee structure, as presented.
- It was RESOLVED:** To accept the document with the two changes as shown.

Committee	No. of Members	Membership
Finance & Administration	7	1. Carol Braithwaite 2. Simon Davies 3. Shirley Hudspeth 4. Sion Jones 5. Pat Kynaston 6. David Ruscoe 7. Paul Doughty
Community & Environment	7	1. Steve Adderley 2. Janet Griffiths 3. Brenda Marple 4. David Ruscoe 5. Geoff Swaffer 6. Andrew Townsend 7. Steve Wastell
Town Hall & Market	7	1. Paul Doughty 2. Sion Jones 3. Pat Kynaston 4. Brenda Marple 5. Nikki Ruscoe 6. Geoff Swaffer 7. Christine Warner
HR	5	1. Simon Davies 2. Steve Adderley 3. Carol Braithwaite 4. Shirley Hudspeth 5. Steve Wastell

## **8 Schedule of Council and Committee Meetings for 2025/2026**

The Locum Chief Officer noted that a small amendment to the proposed calendar had been made and paper copies had been handed out at the meeting.

It was noted that HR Committee would need to be held in a side room on 03/06/25 due to a prior booking in the Town Hall. Following a question, the Locum Chief Officer also noted that HR Committee meetings would remain 'ad-hoc' but two standard committees were required in the calendar for the statutory purposes of electing a Chair in June and setting the budget in November.

Terms of Ref. for HR committee to be updated to reflect this.

**It was RESOLVED:** To accept the schedule of Council and Committee meetings for 2025/2026 in its entirety.

Mayor's Initial & Date:

<b>9</b>	<b>Review of Delegated Arrangements</b> <p>a) Banking Arrangements:  <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To authorise the core members of the Finance and Administration Committee, the Chief Officer and the Finance Manager/RFO to be the authorised signatories, agreeing to sign the banker's mandate for the Neston Town Council accounts.  The Chief Officer noted that the RFO will meet with all members of the F&amp;A Committee to explain the bank's logon procedures and what will be required.</p> <p>b) Market and Town Hall:  <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve delegated authority to the Market &amp; Town Hall Manager as extended to other officers during a time of absence.</p> <p>c) Insurance:  <b>It was NOTED:</b> That the Finance and Administration Committee Terms of Reference provide delegated authority to deal with the Council's insurance requirements.</p> <p>d) Pension Authorisation forms:  <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To authorise the core members of the Human Resources Committee, the Chief Officer and the Finance Manager/RFO to be the authorised signatories for all pension authorisation forms.</p>
<b>11</b>	<b>Appointment of Representatives to External Organisations</b> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> That existing representatives continue, as such, until the first meeting of the reporting committee, with each delegate to report to the appointed committee or sub-committee.</p> <p>b) It was noted that the Community Partnership Group should be added to the list.  <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To appoint representatives to the following organisations at to external organisations:  Neston Female Society – Cllr P. Kynaston  Neston Station Adopters – Cllr S. Wastell (if the group still sits)  Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Association (WBRUA) – Cllr S. Wastell  Community Partnership Group – Cllr S. Adderley</p>
<b>12</b>	<b>Data Protection Officer</b> <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To renew the services and costs of JDH Services as the Council's DPO.
<b>13</b>	<b>Membership</b> <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve the Council's membership of the following organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheshire Community Action (membership packages due in June)</li> <li>• National Association of Local Councils via ChALC and annual subscription of £1,592.00 (no VAT)</li> <li>• National Association of Allotments (NAS), renewal due in November 2025</li> <li>• Society of Local Council Clerks £300.00</li> <li>• The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) and annual subscription fee of £484 (no VAT)</li> </ul>

Mayor's Initial & Date:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Association (WBRUA), and membership fee of £30.00 (no VAT)</li> </ul> <p>Members noted that the group works hard for rail improvements to Neston</p>
<b>14</b>	<b>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations</b> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the updated Standing Orders for Neston Town Council.</p> <p>b) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the updated Standing Orders for Contracts Neston Town Council.</p> <p>c) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the updated Financial Regulations for Neston Town Council.</p>
<b>15</b>	<b>Policies and Procedures</b> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Allotment Policy.</p> <p>b) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Members.</p> <p>c) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Code of Conduct for Officers.</p> <p>d) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Council Property Policy.</p> <p>e) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Complaints Procedure and Vexatious Policy.</p> <p>f) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Grants Policy.</p> <p>g) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Health &amp; Safety Policy and Handbook.</p> <p>h) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the new Loyalty Card Scheme Policy.</p> <p>i) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Procurement Policy.</p> <p>j) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the new Risk Management Policy.</p> <p>k) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Scheme of Delegation for the Market &amp; Town Hall Manager.</p> <p>l) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Trading from Vehicles Policy. A question was asked regarding how the council defines the weight/wind restrictions and whether there is a form to complete.</p> <p>m) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Website Accessibility Statement. A question was asked regarding do we know how many clicks the website generates? The Locum Chief Officer to query with the council's IT consultant.</p> <p>n) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the revised Cookie Policy.</p> <p>o) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To review remaining policies after the start of the council year, as per the attached table.</p>
<b>16</b>	<b>Diversity Champion</b> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To appoint Cllr D. Ruscoe as the Diversity Champion. Cllr Braithwaite expressed a willingness to support the new role-holder.</p>
<b>17</b>	<b>Chairman's Allowance</b> <p>Members debated this item.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To confirm an allowance of £1,250 for the Chairman to defray the expenses of office in the ensuing year, adding an additional £500 this year as a separate allowance for the Deputy Mayor's expenses.</p>

Mayor's Initial & Date:

<b>18</b>	<p><b>To Approve the Minutes of the following Committee Meetings</b></p> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To accept the minutes of the Community &amp; Environment Committee meetings held on 08/04/25 and 02/05/25.</p> <p>b) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To accept the minutes of the Market &amp; Town Hall Committee held on 01/04/25.</p> <p>c) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To accept the minutes of the Finance &amp; Administration Committee held on 15/04/25.</p> <p>Cllr Wastell noted that apologies had been sent for the above meeting. The Chief Officer clarified for all members that apologies must be sent directly to the officer running the specific meeting in order to ensure that apologies are received in time to be accepted at the meeting.</p>
<b>19</b>	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve current account expenditure of £60,104.32 net authorised by the RFO from 01/03/25 to 31/03/25 and Equals card payments of £325.35 net from 01/03/25 to 31/03/25.</p> <p>b) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To note the current account income of £7,623.53 Net from 01/03/25 to 31/03/25.</p> <p>c) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To agree the reconciliation of the council's three bank accounts to 31/03/2025.</p> <p>The Chair signed all of the financial papers.</p>
<b>20</b>	<p><b>Ill Health Liability Insurance</b></p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve payment of £1,864.81 for the Council's ill-health liability scheme for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.</p>
<b>21</b>	<p><b>Year End Internal Auditor's Reports</b></p> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To receive the interim Internal Auditor's Report.</p> <p>It was noted that upon investigation, the item listed in the actions did comply with the Town Council's financial regulations regarding contract awarding.</p> <p>b) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To receive the Year End Internal Auditor's Report, noting there are no actions for 2024/2025.</p>
<b>22</b>	<p><b>Annual Return for Financial Year 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 (AGAR)</b></p> <p>a) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To receive and approve the Annual Internal Audit Report to 31/03/25.</p> <p>b) All of the individual statements were read out by the Proper Officer and each one was agreed by Council in turn.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25. The report was signed by the Chair and the Proper Officer of the Council.</p> <p>c) <b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To approve Section 2 of the Annual Accounting Statement 2024-25. The report was signed by the Chair.</p>
<b>23</b>	<p><b>Noticeboard Monitors</b></p> <p>It was agreed to appoint the following noticeboard monitors:</p> <p>Parkgate – Cllr N. Ruscoe</p> <p>Ness – Cllr Jones</p>

	<p>Little Neston – Cllr Kynaston</p> <p>Westvale – Cllr Wastell</p> <p>Town Hall – Council staff</p>
<b>24</b>	<p><b>Mostyn Square Telephone Kiosk, Parkgate</b></p> <p>Cllr Marple introduced the item, noting that the Parkgate Society had agreed to contribute to the project as and when refurbishment is required.</p> <p>Members debated the proposal.</p> <p>There was a suggestion that the kiosk could house a Cheshire Police bleed kit.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To adopt the telephone kiosk for £1.00 to protect the street scene, preventing its removal.</p>
<b>25</b>	<p><b>Locum Chief Officer's Report</b></p> <p>Cllr Warner thanked the Locum Chief Officer, Zoë Dean, for a very good report and also for all of the hard work and energy that she brings to the role which is very much appreciated. It was requested that the note of thanks was recorded in the minutes.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> to receive the report.</p>
<b>26</b>	<p><b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b></p> <p>To consider that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.</p>
<b>PART 2: Items considered in the absence of the press and public</b>	
<b>27</b>	<p><b>HR Matter</b></p> <p>Members considered the confidential report.</p> <p><b>It was RESOLVED:</b> To gift the remaining expense as a reasonable adjustment, noting it would not go directly to the employee.</p>

**Meeting closed at 19:36.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_