



# Needham Market Town Council

## Town Council Meeting

### Minutes – 09.09.2025

**Present:** J Readon Chairman, Councillors; T Lawrence, A Reardon, T Cooke, K Hunter, I Mason & C Goodchild

**In Attendance:** Mid Suffolk District Councillor R Piper, 1 member of the public and the Locum Clerk Melanie Thurston

**NMTC/25/75 To receive Councillor's Apologies for Absence:**

Councillors; L Smith – holiday, G Blake – holiday, G Sinnerton – holiday, M Ost - holiday, M O'Shea – Church meeting, R Darnell – holiday, Suffolk County Councillor K Oakes – unwell. The apologies were approved, proposed Cllr Goodchild seconded Cllr A Reardon.

**NMTC/25/76 To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest for matters on the Agenda:**

The Chairman declared an interest in item 12 regarding the Community Centre.

**NMTC/25/77 To approve any Dispensations with respect to Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interests:**

None.

**NMTC/25/78 To receive reports, if any, from County and District Councillors:**

Suffolk County Councillor report has been circulated to all ahead of the meeting.

Mid Suffolk District Councillor Piper reported that 12 new electrical recycling banks (6 in Mid Suffolk, and 6 in Babergh) have been installed across the two districts. Clearing of footway/cycle path between Needham and Stowmarket. The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of the TC for getting this job done.

**NMTC/25/79 To receive and confirm the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2025:**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2025, proposed Cllr A Reardon, seconded Cllr Mason, all in favour.

**NMTC/25/80 Matters arising from the Minutes of the previous meeting:**

Action point spreadsheet is still not live as it is being worked on.

**a. Crowley Park:** The repair work has now been completed.

**b. Needham Market Community Centre Donation for Driver of the Minibus:**

The payment for 2024/2025 has been missed.

Cllr Lawrence suggest that this annual donation should be included into the core list of grant payments.

The Chairman informed that the Community Centre has been advised that they will need to write to the TC annually to formally request the donation.

Cllr Hunter recommends that the donation is put to one side for now and to be discussed at the budget meeting, agreed by all.

**c. Barretts Lane Verge Cutting:** This has been completed.

**d. Matters to be raised by Members:** The Assistant Clerk has suggested that in future this agenda item should be removed. If Councillors want something included on the agenda, they should let the Clerk know prior to the agenda being made live.

**NMTC/25/81 To receive questions from any members of the public present:** None.

**NMTC/25/82 To receive a report from the Town Clerk:** No report.

**NMTC/25/83 To consider Grants/Donations for 2025/26:**

**NMTC/25/83a St Johns Church, Regarding the Burial Ground:**

Letter has been received from St John the Baptist Church, circulated to all ahead of the meeting, requesting funding to help with repair costs to the Lychgate at the burial ground.

Cllr A Reardon supports the TC helping to fund repairs, however the request does not give a suggested amount, so would not know how much to suggest.

The Chairman informed that the whole project is expected to cost around £15/17,000 excluding fees and VAT. He would like the TC to receive more information regarding the repairs before the TC commit to a figure.

Cllr Hunter reminded that in the past the TC has given funding towards the maintenance of the burial ground and that this financial year has budgeted £2000.

Cllr Lawrence suggests that if the TC gives a donation towards the repairs, then this should be acknowledged with a small plaque.

It was agreed by all to **RESOLVE** that the Town Council would like to support the project, but more information is needed before deciding on a figure. Therefore, to defer until the information is received. Proposed Cllr Mason, seconded Cllr Lawrence. All in favour.

The Chairman reminded that the TC are responsible for maintaining the war memorial. It needs repair as there are some loose slates on the steps making it unsafe. He will meet with a contractor to get a quote for carrying out the repairs before the Remembrance Day Service.

Cllr Goodchild suggests that the whole of the area around Barretts Lane Corner should be maintained to a higher standard to make it look neat and tidy in the future.

**NMTC/25/84 To receive and approve the accounts for payment and confirmation:**

All have received the payments list ahead of the meeting. Proposed for payment Cllr Lawrence, seconded Cllr Goodchild, all in favour.

**NMTC/25/85 To receive reports from the following:**

**NMTC/25/85a Planning Committee:**

Cllr Lawrence reported on the meeting which took place earlier today.

DC/25/03489 10 Grinstead Gardens. The committee recommends approval.

DC/25/03019 and DC/25/03020 113 High Street – Solar panels, the committee recommends refusal.

DC/25/03611 Community Centre – Solar panels and replacement door. The committee recommends approval.

**NMTC/25/85b Governance and Finance Committee:**

Cllr Goodchild reported that the recommendations highlighted by the auditors for the end of year accounts 2024/2025 is the main focus going forward. Cllr Smith is happy to help with this task. New Assertion 10 requirements will see that the TC must adopt an IT Policy before the AGAR can be signed off next year. Also, accessibility of the TC website must be up to date. The Assistant Clerk has contacted a software company to look at the website and give recommendations. Looking into opening a new TC bank account. Encouraged all Councillors to check their Register of Interests and to update if any changes are needed.

#### **NMTC/25/85c Community and Assets Committee:**

Cllr Cooke confirmed that residents have been informed that the TC will not be doing a Christmas Fayre this year. But hope to go ahead with the fayre in 2026.

25% of the town surveys which went out with the newsletter to residents have now been returned. So work can start on an action plan to address projects raised. Cllr Smith has emailed a list of the projects raised to Councillors. Projects to be prioritised.

Cllr A Reardon informed that the Reverend has approached some of the organisations in the town, they are going to organise their own indoor Christmas Fayre for this year.

#### **NMTC/25/85d Civic Events Working Group:**

Cllr A Reardon reported that the Remembrance Day Ceremony is in hand, she thanked those who have already said that they will help. Help is still needed to set up on the evening before, along with setting out the wreaths and arranging the order of procession for the day.

RAF Wattisham are happy to attend the ceremony again.

The Civic Service is due to take place on 26 April 2026; it would be good to get the community more engaged in the event. It has been suggested that Community Awards could be made. Can the TC consider this?

Cllr Lawrence would be hesitant in making awards, care is needed when leaving people out!

Cllr A Reardon suggests that a set of awards could be listed and then to ask the residents for nominations. People would then get recognised and the nominations could go to public vote.

The Chairman advised that the TC need more information on this proposal and what is involved.

The Civic Event group is made up of 3, Cllr Cooke and Cllr A Reardon, 3<sup>rd</sup> person is needed. This could be the Assistant Clerk.

#### **NMTC/25/85e Climate Awareness Group:**

Cllr A Reardon reported that the hedge and the orchard at the Former Middle School Playing Field Site is being watered.

#### **NMTC/25/86 To discuss the Community Centre:**

The Chairman, after 40 years of managing the Centre plans to retire. The Management Committee would like to work more closely with the Town Council to secure the future of the Centre. A working group, led by Cllr Hunter and including Cllr J Reardon, will oversee the process.

The Chairman asked if the TC is happy for him to be included on the working group, however, is aware that he would have a clash of interests. Cllr Lawrence recommends that it would be difficult for the Chairman to be involved because of this, however, is happy for Cllr Hunter to take the lead.

Cllr A Reardon expressed concern that it is a risk to the community now that the current committee do not wish to run it anymore.

Cllr Mason advised that the community centre was built not only for Needham Market but is for the surrounding villages too, therefore should they not be involved with running it in the future?

Cllr Cooke suggests that the surrounding villages should be involved and that this could be investigated.

The Chairman asked if the TC approves that Cllrs Hunter and Mason represent the TC on the handover process, proposed Cllr Goodchild seconded Cllr Cooke, all in favour.

**NMTC/25/87 To discuss and agree areas of responsibility within Jubilee Crescent:**

The site plan highlighting the areas of responsibility has been circulated to all ahead of the meeting. The Assistant Clerk has informed that a professional gardener/groundskeeper is needed to keep tidy the areas which the TC are responsible for. Does need tidying up and maintaining to a higher standard than it is now. One resident in the area has asked that fortnightly maintenance is undertaken by the TC. The TC caretaker is contracted to spend 5 hours a week at the Crescent.

Cllr Hunter informed that the TC do have some long-term obligations, which included a £20,000 fund from the developers for the first 7 years to help with maintaining the areas. However, this has now expired. The residents are part of a management committee in which to oversee maintenance. The current landscaping is not suitable in a lot of areas of the Crescent and is not low maintenance. The areas need to be made sustainable for the TC to maintain. Suggests engaging with an expert in landscaping to bring to a manageable standard.

The Chairman recommends an **Action Point** for the Assistant Clerk and some councillors to walk through the crescent and to work out what work needs to be done. Cllr Hunter is happy to help to assess the areas and to make an action plan.

**NMTC/25/88 To discuss the provision of Allotments:**

The Chairman reported that 6 requests for allotments have been received, council now need to acknowledge this and discuss the provision. The current allotments are to cease therefore another suitable piece of land is required.

Cllr Mason advised that there is 4 acres of land at Mill Lane which could be suitable.

**Action Point** Chairman will speak with the Assistant Clerk on how to progress the suggested land.

Cllr Hunter is hopeful that a development plan for Needham Market would include Section 106 land.

**NMTC/25/89 to discuss the Asset of Community Value process, and consider any potential nominations:**

**NMTC/25/89a: The parcel of land near the railway station:**

The advice from Mid Suffolk District Councillor Matthissen on a mechanism to give jurisdiction over the unregistered land by the cattle tunnel is;

To prove the land as a community asset and considered a public pathway for the local transport authority to establish jurisdiction and responsibility for, which can be formalised through a section 38 agreement under the Highways Act 1980 (if the necessary requirements are satisfied). Suffolk County Council would be best placed to consider and enact this, therefore it could be worth the TC pursuing this with the relevant county councillor or cabinet member.

The Assistant Clerk advised that there are powers in the same Act for Suffolk County Council to adopt where the owner is not known. Highways need to establish it as a public pathway and take on responsibility, consider asking the County Councillor to give access to SCC Highways advice.

Cllr A Reardon suggests an alternative, it could be taken on as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

Cllr Goodchild noted the helpful guidance which the Assistant Clerk has circulated to all ahead of the meeting, which sets out what an ACV is and the ACV process.

Cllr Hunter informed that he has historical paperwork which says that Network Rail owns the land. Therefore, inform the district councillor of this and hand back to him to investigate.

Cllr Hunter proposed a **Resolution** that the Town Council adopts a proportionate approach, then Town Council concludes the investment required in taking forward the seeking of an ACV, in this case, is not viable.

Seconded Cllr Lawrence. The Chairman asked for a show of hands for the proposal, 4. None against, 3 abstained.

**NMTC/25/89b: Any other nominations:**

Cllr Goodchild advised that the ACV process could have been adopted for the current allotments, however it is now too late to do so.

Cllr Cooke suggests that the TC should be seen to try to get an ACV on the allotment land.

Cllr Hunter advised that many of the allotment plots at the old site are vacant and that the site is too large for the TC to be responsible for.

The Chairman asked the Council if they want to nominate the allotment land as an ACV, this will however upset the sale to the new purchasers.

Cllr Cooke proposed that the town council register the allotment land as an ACV, seconded Cllr Goodchild. The Chairman asked for a show of hands for the proposal, 2 in favour and 4 against. Therefore, the proposal is not carried.

**NMTC/25/90 To discuss and agree the usage of the Cricket Square going forwards:**

The Chairman advised that he has had a meeting with a representative of the Cricket Club. The club has now ended; the football club would like to take over the area of land to use as a training pitch. A small amount of work will be required to be carried out by the football club to bring the area up to use. It was agreed by all to **Resolve** that once the football club has carried out the work at the cricket pitch, that the football club use the land. In addition to this the TC will need to check with the district planners that the land can be handed over. Proposed Cllr Hunter, seconded Cllr Mason, all in favour.

**NMTC/25/91 Matters to be raised by members:**

Cllr Goodchild would like the future of the town council's car parks to be discussed. This will be included on the next Community & Assets agenda.

**AP:** to be added to next Community and Assets Agenda

**NMTC/25/95 To confirm Date, Time and Location of the next Town Council Meeting:**

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 7.00pm in the Green Room, Community Centre.

At this point the meeting ended as item NMTC/25/92 excludes the Press and the Public

**The Meeting closed 8.50pm**