



Needham Market Town Council
Governance & Finance
Committee Public Minutes 2nd September 2025

Present

Councillors C Goodchild (Chair), K Hunter, T Lawrence, M O'Shea, A Reardon, G Sinnerton, L Smith.
No members of the public present.

GF/25/025 To receive and approve Apologies for Absence

Cllr T Cooke – unwell.

Cllr R Darnell – holiday.

Cllr I Mason – away on another matter.

Cllr J Reardon – working.

No apologies received from Cllrs M Ost or G Blake.

RESOLVED: Apologies for Absence be accepted.

Proposed: Cllr L Smith

Seconded: Cllr G Sinnerton

All in favour

GF/25/026 To receive any Declarations of Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests by Members

Cllrs T Lawrence, A Reardon and G Sinnerton are all members of the Bowls Club re Agenda Item 9.

GF/25/027 To approve any Dispensations with respect to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None needed as Agenda Item 9 contains an informal matter to be raised with no resolution to be made.

GF/25/028 To receive and confirm the Minutes of the Governance & Finance Committee meeting held Tuesday 22nd July 2025

The following amendments are to be made:

1. GF/25/019 – Replace ‘Gipping Trust’ with ‘Gipping Press’, and; replace ‘good value for money’ with maintain the status quo.’
2. GF/25/021 – This item should be within the Public Minutes.
3. GF/25/022 – Replace ‘staffing will be increased’ with ‘increase capacity to where it should be’.
4. Minutes to be labelled as Private or Public when applicable.

RESOLVED: Minutes to be approved

Proposed: Cllr K Hunter

Seconded: Cllr T Lawrence

All in favour

GF25/029 To discuss matters arising from previous meetings minutes

No matters were raised which were not already included in the agenda.

GF/25/030 To receive questions from any members of the public present

None.

GF/25/031 To receive a report from the Town Clerk

The Council is currently without a Clerk.

GF/25/032 To receive a report from the Responsible Finance Officer

The report has been circulated to all in advance of the meeting.

- Cllrs asked if newsletter advertisers are being tracked so that it is known who we are gaining/losing. It was confirmed that tracking is in place.
- Suggested office furniture order had been presented for information. It will be progressed to Town Council for approval.

GF/25/033 To consider Grants/Donations for 2025/26

The Bowls Club need to purchase a new mower at a cost of around £10,000 and would like to explore with Town Council the possibility of it buying the mower on the club's behalf with an arrangement for repayment being agreed.

In discussion, Cllrs felt it is unlikely that this could be achieved legally within the Council's Financial Management Procedures.

Action: RFO to please seek guidance from SALC.

Item to be deferred to a future agenda once guidance has been received.

GF/25/034 Update on Governance and Finance Arrangements:

GF/25/034 a. To monitor the Council's approved Budget 2025/26 against actual expenditure

The budget spreadsheet has been circulated to all in advance of the meeting.

- Work is continuing on the format agreed at the last meeting.
- Street Cleaning money has been received.
- Plans re recruitment will be covered in the private agenda.

Action: RFO to enquire as to whether our internal auditor is able to assist with templates/formats as raised in the audit and if so, what the costs would be. If this is possible, costed proposal to be put to Town Council to engage the auditor's services.

GF/25/034 b. Review of the Council's Financial Management Procedures

There were no items to discuss.

GF/25/034 c. Review of Council's Community Infrastructure Levy priorities and expenditure

Cllr L Smith has collated a spreadsheet of all the suggested items from Cllrs and those previously agreed. This will be presented for review to the Community and Assets Committee on 14th October. Please continue to send suggestions until then.

GF/25/034 d. Review of Council's policies

A list of all policies still to be drawn up.

GF/25/034 e. Review of the Council's Risk Assessment

Some additions need to be made before this will be circulated.

GF/25/034 f. Review of Councils Reserves Position

It was noted that if reserves are to be earmarked for projects, these must be specifically outlined. Reserves cannot be earmarked for generic reasons.

GF/25/034 g. Review of the Councils Investment Strategy

Moving of reserves to the Cambridge Account has been explored and is yet to be completed.

GF/25/035. To consider matters raised in the Councils Internal Audit Report 24/25

Scanning of invoices has been completed for this financial year to date.

No other updates received.

GF/25/036. To consider a new IT and Electronic Communications Policy for recommendation to Town Council

This had been circulated to all ahead of the meeting. The policy Council adopt is required in order that Council can agree with the new Assertion 10 of the AGAR.

Action: The following points were noted for consideration in preparing a second draft:

- WhatsApp needs to added to the section re SMS.
- Policy needs to comply with the law but also needs to be practicable to achieve.
- It is the role of the Clerk/RFO to help Cllrs to achieve compliance where advice and guidance is needed.
- Lack of equipment and security software etc should not be a barrier for a person to becoming a Councillor and achieving compliance and it is Council’s responsibility to help remove these barriers.
- Spelling of the word ‘communication(s)’ needs to be corrected.
- It needs to be explicitly noted that storage of documents/information on Cllrs’ devices is permissible where there is no personal identifying data.
- Some of the security steps suggested seem excessive – e.g. if the laptop in use by a Cllr is password protected, does it need to be kept in a locked room?

GF/25/037. To receive a report on the Register of Interests for Councillors

Progress has been made towards completion if members’ registers.

Action: RFO to email any Cllr with incomplete register of interest for completion asap.

Action: All Cllrs to check their register to ensure any changes have been updated.

GF/25/038. To scrutinise any matters referred from, or to, The Council’s Community and Assets Committee and/or Planning Committee

There were no items referred.

GF/25/039. To receive an update on The Community Centre Upgrade Plan

There were no updates.

GF/25/040. To receive a report relating to Newsletter costings 2024/25

Invoicing is now in progress and payments are being received.

GF/25/041. Matters to be raised by Members

A question was raised about the reporting of planning breaches/concerns when a person is concerned about potential personal repercussions. It was advised that these can be reported confidentially via the online MSDC reporting tool.

GF/25/042. Exclusion of the Press and Public

At this point, the Chairman moved the following resolution: “Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d) the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted”

Proposed: Cllr K Hunter

Seconded: Cllr G Sinnerton

All in favour

Chairperson..... Date.....