



# Needham Market Town Council

## Town Council Meeting

**Minutes – 08.07.2025**

**Present:** Cllr Reardon (Mayor)

Cllrs Blake, Cornish, Goodchild (Deputy Mayor), Hunter, Lawrence, Mason, O'Shea, Ost, A. Reardon, Sinnerton.

**In Attendance:** County Cllr Oakes, District Cllrs Piper & Pratt and locum clerk D McNeill

The meeting was preceded by a presentation by Suffolk County Council (SCC) Officers on Local Government Reorganisation. SCC is proposing a single unitary authority for the whole county because in their view splitting the delivery of services such as children's and adult social services across smaller authorities creates shortfalls in delivery. This model also costs considerably less to set up and will save considerably more in the long term. This is different to the preferred model of three unitary authorities the District Councils are proposing for the county. It was indicated that where the willingness exists, there is an opportunity for Town and Parish Councils to negotiate for funded devolved assets/services as part of the reorganisation.

**NMTC/25/40 To receive Councillor's Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllr's Darnell, Cooke & Smith.

**NMTC/25/41 To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest for matters on the Agenda:** Cllr J Reardon declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Community Centre Management committee.

**NMTC/25/42 To approve any Dispensations with respect to Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interests**  
There were none.

**NMTC/25/43 To receive any reports from County and District Councillors:** County Cllr Oakes and District Council Cllr Piper took questions on their reports.

**NMTC/25/44 To confirm the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025:**  
It was **RESOLVED** to defer approving the minutes to the next meeting to allow for some formatting amendments.

**AP:** reformat minutes and add to next FC agenda

**NMTC/25/45 To discuss land in the Needham Market area that may be suitable for purchasing**  
District Cllrs Pratt and Piper advised of a piece of chalk grassland (rare for this part of Suffolk) which is already valued by the community and has multiple routes through it amounting to 20 acres to the south of the town, adjacent to the George's Park development, which could be available for MSDC to purchase. It has the potential for mixed recreational use and habitat and biodiversity improvements along with the potential for flood mitigation/management for the town. It is currently agricultural land but has been left fallow for several years and is now regenerating. The proposal is for MSDC to purchase it with potential funding support from NMTC with other partners involved including the Suffolk

Naturalists Society and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to name a couple. Funding could be sourced from biodiversity net gain credits and other government grant funding that supports biodiversity enhancement and habitat creation projects. MSDC are working on a business case and wish to move forward as quickly as possible while the funding is available and before local government reorganisation is implemented. A Land Trust was proposed as one option for preserving the long-term ownership of the land and it was also suggested that NMTC could be the landowners with a Memorandum of Understanding or similar to work with the partner organisations. It was agreed that NMTC would consider the principle of the proposal at the August Full Council meeting and MSDC would provide further information including the likely costs and the business case to the September Full Council meeting.

**AP:** add considering the principle to August FC agenda & to receive further information from MSDC to the September FC agenda.

**NMTC/25/46 Matters arising from the Minutes of the previous meeting:**

It was noted that some action points are still outstanding included arranging an Employment Committee meeting, recognising the retirement of a former staff member and a councillor, a formal request from the Library Friends Group for support is still awaited, and the due diligence list for the skatepark is progressing. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have a rolling list of action points going forward.

**AP:** create an action plan spreadsheet

**NMTC/25/47 To receive questions from any members of the public present** There were no members of the public in attendance.

**NMTC/25/48 To receive a report from the Town Clerk:** There is no report this month.

**NMTC/25/49 To consider Grants/Donations for 2025/26:**

- a. Community Centre – it was noted that the sports infrastructure fund was not a suitable source of funding for the community centre. Cllrs considered a request for funding for £15,000 towards doors & equipment and professional fees. With seven in favour, two abstentions & one against

it was **RESOLVED** to grant a total of £15,000 to the Community Centre Management Committee for funding towards doors and equipment (£7,500) and professional fees (£7,500).

**AP:** inform CCMC and arrange for payment to be made.

- b. Library - photocopier & newspapers. It was noted that information about newspapers is still awaited from the Friends of the Library Group.

With respect to the photocopier, it was **RESOLVED** to write again to SCC, the County Councillor & the library to advise that NMTC will withdraw the photocopier equipment at the termination of the existing contract.

**AP:** write to SCC; chase the Friends of the Library Group.

**NMTC/25/50 To discuss the cost of repair to Crowley Park**

A quote has been received to repair a significant safety issue with the surfacing. It was challenging finding companies to carry out this specialised work and is therefore appropriate to suspend Financial Regulations in this instance. The quote, by Turners, is for £1,250.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Turners to carry out the repair work for £1,250.

**AP:** advise Turners ASAP to progress the repair work.

**NMTC/25/51 To receive and adopt the Internal Auditors Report for the year 2024/25**

The RFO was thanked for the extensive hours she has put in to get the audit over the line. It was noted there were fewer advisories this year which is a positive improvement. None of the advisories are serious but there is still considerable work to do. An action plan including timescales will be developed to assist in ensuring all actions are completed within this financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and adopt the Internal Auditors Report for the year 2024/25.

**AP:** develop internal audit action plan.

**NMTC/25/52 To receive and approve the new Financial Regulations 2025/26**

The Financial Regulations have been reviewed by the Governance & Finance Committee and amendments have been made to bring the financial thresholds in line with NALC recommendations.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Regulations subject to amending the date.

**AP:** amend the date on FR's, upload to website & circulate adopted version.

**NMTC/25/53 Committees**

**NMTC/25/53a Planning:** meeting held this evening, two applications were considered, including one for work to trees under TPO and a retrospective application for advertisement consent for Mint Cars.

It was proposed to set up a Working Party to review the Neighbourhood Development Plan, proposing to meet fortnightly, with four or five people. Volunteers were requested and Cllrs Ost, Hunter, Lawrence, O'Shea volunteered, with meetings to be held in the office and suitable non councillors to be invited to join.

**NMTC/25/53b Governance and Finance:**

No meetings held since the last meeting, but much work has been going on in the background including on the internal audit with various policies also being reviewed. The next meeting scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

**NMTC/25/53c Community and Assets:**

There has not been a meeting since the ACTM. The first meeting is scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> July and the first item of business will be to elect a committee Chairman.

**NMTC/25/54 To receive and approve the accounts for payment and confirmation**

**NMTC/25/24/a** It was **RESOLVED** to approve the accounts for payment.

**NMTC/25/54a** It was **RESOLVED** to retrospectively approve payment for the installation of the stepped and sloped access to the Former Middle School Playing Field, which was funded by MSDC before the end of the last financial year.

**NMTC/25/55 Matters to be raised by members**

- a. NMTC committed to a flooding emergency plan and it was agreed to add it to the Community & Asset Committee meeting agenda for next week (Cllr Hunter to review and determine with the Town Clerk whether it requires re-endorsement)

**AP:** add item to C&A agenda

- b. The small parcel of land near Station Approach, the Cattle Tunnel needs to be considered regarding whether it is suitable to be listed as an Asset of Community Value

**AP:** add item to C&A agenda

- c. Councillors would like to see the schedule of improvements for the Community Centre from the building condition and health & safety reports, it was agreed to refer the matter to Governance & Finance

**AP:** add item to G&F agenda

- d. Cllr Ost noted that in conversation with the SALC CEO, there had been virtually no councillor training for Needham Market councillors in recent years and it was agreed to speak to the Acting Clerk and refer the matter to Governance & Finance

**AP:** add item to G&F agenda

- e. An update on the changing room repairs at Crowley Park and the toilets at the bottom of Barretts Lane was requested.

The date and time of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August at 7pm.

**The Meeting closed at 8.58pm**

**Signed .....**      **Date .....**