

Downham Market Town Council

Events Committee Meeting

Held on Tuesday 07 July 2026 at 6pm

This meeting was held at Downham Market Town Hall, Bridge Street, Downham Market,
Norfolk PE38 9DW

Present

Chair – Cllr Lane

Committee Members - Cllrs Campbell-Robb, Daymond (Joined the meeting at 6:11pm)
Grover & Leach (5)

Town Clerk – Claire Dornan

Administrator – Luke Griffin

Steele Media – Gary Poole

There were no members of the public present.

Members were reminded of the evacuation procedures from the Clock Room.

Attendees were asked to switch mobile phones off or place them on silent.

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive and note apologies for absence.

The Town Clerk advised that Cllr Daymond was in the HR Committee meeting and would join once that had been completed.

No apologies were received from Cllr S. Moyses.

2. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of interest and consider requests for Dispensations.

There were no new declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.

Cllr Lane reminded members that he had a standing dispensation approved at the last meeting.

3. Public Participation (Maximum of 3 minutes per person, up to 15 minutes)

There were no members of the public present.

The Chair brought forward Agenda Item 9.

4. Presentation

To receive a presentation from Steele Media regarding event promotion opportunities and consider any recommendations arising.

The Committee received a presentation from a representative of Steele Media. Members were advised that Steele Media currently works with the Borough Council, Alive Leisure, Discover Downham and has previously supported the Heritage Open Day, which the Town Council delivered in collaboration with Discover Downham. The company provides a range of services including marketing strategy and consultancy, website design and hosting, e-commerce, digital marketing, graphic design, branding, printing, promotional merchandise, photography, audio and video production, and branded clothing.

Members were informed that Steele Media launched Local Free News West Norfolk in January 2026, a free digital news platform supported by a mobile app. The platform has no paywall, making local news accessible to anyone with internet access. It was noted that readership of traditional local newspapers continues to decline, with one local publication's circulation reducing from approximately 30,000 to around 8,000 copies, demonstrating the increasing importance of digital media.

Performance figures for the platform were shared, including approximately 1.5 million monthly views across its social media channels, 105,000 monthly visits to the Local Free News website, and more than 25,000 unique visitors each month across the website and app. The average visit duration was reported to be around ten minutes, indicating strong user engagement. Members also noted that 93% of readers are based within West Norfolk and the surrounding area.

The presentation highlighted that Downham Market already possesses significant strengths, including its history, identity, community spirit, local businesses and programme of events. The Gingerbread Town brand was identified as providing a distinctive identity on which to build future promotional activity. It was suggested that the principal challenge is ensuring that residents, businesses and visitors are aware of the events and initiatives taking place within the town.

Members heard that video-led storytelling is a key strength of the organisation, helping to promote events in advance while also creating content that continues to generate value after events have taken place. The use of drone footage and 360-degree photography was discussed, together with the potential to create virtual tours of Council facilities to help promote venue hire and increase income, particularly from weddings. Effective promotion was considered important in helping residents understand the work of the Town Council, encouraging greater attendance at events, increasing business and community participation, and promoting a more balanced public perception of both the Council and Downham Market.

Members were advised that Steele Media's standard consultancy rate is £90 per hour plus VAT. It was explained that the company could work with the Town Council to develop and coordinate a strategic marketing approach, combining traditional media and digital platforms to increase awareness of Council activities and encourage greater footfall within

the town. Members discussed the potential benefits of adopting a consistent Gingerbread Town theme across all Council event promotion to strengthen the town's identity and branding.

An outline proposal for ongoing support was presented, with a suggested retainer of £300 per month to provide regular promotion of Council events together with wider communications and marketing support. Although there is no minimum contract period, it was suggested that a commitment of around 12 months would provide a realistic opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the service and determine whether it represents good value for the Council.

During this discussion, Cllr Daymond joined the meeting at 6.11 pm. Cllr Campbell-Robb left the meeting briefly between 6.26 pm and 6.27 pm and then rejoined.

RESOLVED:

‘That Full Council be recommended to approve the allocation of £3,600 from the Council's General Reserves to fund an initial 12-month marketing support package with Steele Media, at a cost of £300 per month, to enhance the promotion of Council services, events and facilities, with the effectiveness of the arrangement to be reviewed at the end of the 12 month period.’

Proposed Cllr Leach

Seconder Cllr Grover

All In Favour

5. Minutes

To approve the minutes of the Events Committee held on 10 June 2026

RESOLVED:

‘That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.’

Proposed – Cllr Campbell-Robb

Seconded – Cllr Grover

4 In Favour 1 Abstention

6. Training

To consider and, if appropriate, approve expenditure for Grant Funding Training and Community Engagement Training.

Members considered a quotation for grant funding and project process training tailored specifically for the Council.

The proposed training would cover identifying project need, community engagement, funding opportunities, preparing successful grant applications, and project delivery through to evaluation.

Members noted that the training could be delivered by Laura Apps-Green alone at a cost of £350 plus VAT, or jointly with Rachel Leggett, who specialises in community engagement and neighbourhood planning, at a cost of £550 plus VAT, excluding venue hire.

The benefits of delivering the training to all Councillors and all relevant officers together were also noted.

RESOLVED:

‘That the Committee approve expenditure of £550 plus VAT for tailored grant funding and project process training to be delivered by Laura Apps-Green and Rachel Leggett, with the cost to be met from the existing training budget.

Members considered that the training would provide valuable support to Councillors and officers by improving understanding of grant funding opportunities, community engagement, project development and the preparation of successful funding applications. The training would assist the Council in developing future projects and maximising opportunities to secure external funding.’

Proposed – Cllr Leach

Seconded –Cllr Campbell-Robb

All In Favour

7. Volunteers

To review responses from social media advert for events volunteers

Members discussed the response received following the social media advertisement seeking volunteers to support Town Council events.

It was noted that one member of the public had contacted the Administrator expressing an interest in assisting with adult-focused events. The Town Clerk had also been in contact with a contractor who was interested in supporting a range of Council events.

Members considered the proposed Mayor’s Cadet opportunity and noted that, unfortunately, the RAF Air Cadets squadron had been unable to advertise the position within the required timescales. Due to this delay, it was agreed that the Mayor’s Cadet role would not proceed during the current municipal year. As a result, support from Air Cadet volunteers could not be guaranteed.

Members noted that any volunteers engaged by the Council would require an enhanced DBS check and completion of relevant training, including online safeguarding, manual handling and potentially COSHH training. The approximate cost to the Council for each volunteer was noted to be in the region of £100.

It was suggested that, should the Council proceed with engagement of Steele Media, consideration could be given to developing a targeted volunteer recruitment campaign to encourage further interest from residents.

Actions:

Administrator to contact the member of the public who expressed an interest in volunteering.

Town Clerk to discuss potential volunteering opportunities with the contractor who had expressed an interest.

8. Sponsorship

To discuss event sponsorship opportunities

Members discussed potential opportunities for event sponsorship and generating additional external support for Town Council activities.

It was noted that the Property Committee had previously declined the suggestion of advertising on Council planters. Members discussed the importance of ensuring that any sponsorship arrangements do not give the perception that the Council is favouring one particular business over another.

A range of potential sponsorship opportunities were considered, including offering advertising space for business logos on event promotional material, the possibility of allowing banners on the Town Hall using existing fixing points (subject to appropriate considerations and consultation with the Conservation Officer), and the potential use of digital advertising platforms such as Google Ads. Members noted that any online advertising would need to be carefully managed to ensure that inappropriate, political or demeaning content was not promoted.

The principle of seeking sponsorship was supported; however, members acknowledged that there are currently limited immediate opportunities. It was noted that future opportunities could be explored alongside potential new initiatives, including a Mayor's Awards scheme, Local Heroes Awards, a mini music festival, or the production of a Council newsletter to be distributed throughout the town ahead of the Annual Town Meeting, which takes place between March and June.

Members agreed that sponsorship opportunities should be explored further in the future should the Council approve engagement with Steele Media, as part of a wider marketing and communications strategy.

9. Event Planning

To consider the event format and activities.

To review budget requirements and available funding.

To discuss volunteer requirements and allocations.

To consider and review the event Risk Assessment and any Health & Safety requirements.

To agree publicity, promotion and sponsorship arrangements.

To identify actions, responsibilities and timescales.

Armed Forces Day 2027

The Committee considered a request to collaborate on an event to mark Armed Forces Day 2027.

Members were supportive of the proposal in principle but agreed that further information was required before a formal commitment could be made. It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged with the organiser to discuss the proposed plans, respective roles and responsibilities, expectations of each organisation, funding arrangements, and any other relevant considerations.

A further report will be presented to the Committee following this meeting to enable members to consider the proposal in more detail and determine the Council's involvement.

Halloween

Members discussed arrangements for the Halloween event, which will take place on Thursday 29 October 2026 from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm.

A number of activity packs have been donated and are currently being prepared by the Administration Team, with Councillor Leach offering a further donation of 100 Halloween themed activity packs.

The Town Clerk advised that a contractor had offered to donate Halloween decorations, including full-size skeletons, for use at the event.

Councillor Grover offered to produce three trophies using his 3D printer for the best-dressed competition and also to create Halloween-themed bowling pins for the pumpkin bowling activity. Members agreed that event advertising should clearly state the judging criteria, highlighting that homemade costumes would be prioritised over shop-bought costumes. The Administrator was asked to contact Morrisons and Tesco regarding potential pumpkin donations for the pumpkin bowling activity.

The Administrator was asked to book the roundabout attraction.

The Town Clerk confirmed that JR Light and Sound had been booked to provide entertainment and members agreed that the photo booth on site for last year's event could be used again. The Town Clerk will also confirm with JR Light and Sound that suitable barriers are available for the event.

Members agreed that external pitches could be offered at the event for sweets, food and doughnuts.

A cuddle corner or farm attraction would be considered subject to available budget.

Members agreed that a Halloween-themed cake should be arranged, with the Administrator to contact local bakeries regarding options. It was suggested that the sponge be coloured appropriately for the themed event. Councillor Grover advised that he may be able to arrange additional cakes and will update the Town Clerk. Any surplus cake remaining after the event will be offered to local care homes to allow residents to be involved.

No additional sweets will be purchased, with existing Council stock to be used.

Members discussed volunteer arrangements and noted that Councillor Leach and Councillor Campbell-Robb were unable to assist due to work and college commitments. Councillors Lane, Grover and Daymond confirmed their availability to volunteer, with arrival at 9.30 am. Councillor Leach agreed to seek further volunteer support from Councillors at the Full Council meeting on 14 July 2026.

Members discussed Martyn's Law and agreed that, although not currently legislation, the principles should be considered within the event risk assessment. The Town Clerk advised of a webinar taking place on 16 July 2026 and encouraged Committee members to attend where possible. The Town Clerk will also circulate Community Action Norfolk information regarding Martyn's Law.

Members noted that the event should be promoted through local schools and, subject to approval of engagement with Steele Media, consideration should be given to developing a wider advertising campaign.

Actions:

Administrator to contact Morrisons and Tesco regarding pumpkin donations.
 Administrator to book the roundabout attraction.
 Administrator to contact local bakeries regarding a Halloween-themed cake.
 Administrator to promote the event through local schools.
 Councillor Leach to seek additional volunteer support at Full Council.
 Councillor Grover to update the Town Clerk regarding additional cake arrangements.
 Town Clerk to confirm barrier availability with JR Light and Sound.
 Town Clerk and Administrator to provide an update at the next meeting.
 Town Clerk to circulate Community Action Norfolk information regarding Martyn's Law and the webinar details taking place on 16 July 2026 to Committee members.

Members also discussed a potential future event opportunity to explore reinstating the Downham Games in collaboration with the Town Council. This will be considered at a future meeting.

10. Next Meeting

To confirm the date of next meeting

Members agreed the next meeting would be held on Thursday 06 August 2026 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 7:34.