

Minutes of the Governance & Finance Meeting**Date:** Wednesday 21 January 2026**Time:** 7:00 PM**Venue:** Town Hall, Bridge Street, Downham Market PE38 9DW**Present**

Councillors Brewer, Dickson, Lane & Perkin

Non Committee Members – Councillors Grover, Leivers & Sims

Claire Dornan (Town Clerk)

There were 2 member of the public present.

Cllr Lane opened the meeting, reminded members to place mobile phones on silent and outlined the fire evacuation procedures.

1. To elect a Chair of the Committee following the resignation of Cllr Hobbs**RESOLVED:** That Cllr Brewer be elected Chair of the Committee.

Proposed: Cllr Dickson Seconded: Cllr Lane Vote: All in favour

Cllr Brewer thanked Cllr Hobbs for his dedication to the role and welcomed all members and observers to the meeting.

The Chair agreed to bring forward Item 7 on the agenda to allow Cllr Leivers to address the matter.

7. To discuss financial products and agree actions

Cllr Leivers asked members to consider the impact of sweeping interest from higher-interest accounts into the non-interest-bearing current account.

RESOLVED: That bank interest remain in the account in which it is accrued and not be routinely swept into the current account.

Proposed: Cllr Dickson Seconded: Cllr Brewer Vote: All in favour

Members discussed options for higher-interest savings accounts. Unity Trust Bank requires Councils to hold a current account with them, which was considered not cost-effective given the volume of monthly transactions.

A number of high-street banks were unable to accommodate the Council's three-signatory requirement.

It was agreed that the Council should produce a Business Plan to clarify when and where funds are required, which would allow some savings to be tied up for periods longer than 95 days.

The Town Clerk advised that, as part of the complaint raised with Lloyds regarding mandate issues, low interest rates had also been highlighted and Lloyds were reviewing alternative options.

2. To note apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence as all members were present.

3. To receive declarations of interest and consider requests for dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

4. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 03 December 2025 be approved, as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr Brewer Seconded: Cllr Dickson Vote: All in favour

5. To discuss the suggestion of Full Council governance training to be delivered by Jimmy Miller and agree actions

Members discussed the suggestion that governance training be provided to Full Council.

RESOLVED: That Full Council governance training be recommended to Full Council, to be delivered through Norfolk Parish Training & Support via James Corrigan.

Proposed: Cllr Brewer Seconded: Cllr Lane Vote: All in favour

6. To receive the Security Posture Report and agree actions

Members considered the report prepared by Norfolk Computer Services noting the red ratings for Device Encryption and Mobile Device Management. Members agreed that, unless the Council provides Councillors with Council-owned laptops/tablets and mobile devices, it would be unreasonable to require Councillors' personal devices to be managed by the Council. It was noted that all staff devices are appropriately managed.

Web Content Filtering was discussed. Staff devices are currently controlled; however, similar limitations apply to Councillors' personal devices.

Members noted the red rating for Security Awareness Training and agreed that action should be taken.

RESOLVED: That Security Awareness Training be recommended to Full Council, to be delivered by Norfolk Computer Services.

Proposed: Cllr Dickson Seconded: Cllr Lane Vote: All in favour

The following items were noted as green – Login Identity, Enforced MFA, Managed Anti-Virus, Conditional Access, Back-ups and Disaster Recovery, Patch Management, Local Admin Rights, Endpoint Protection and Privilege Management.

8. To discuss the Hillsborough Law and agree actions

Members noted that the Government had announced that the Hillsborough Law debate had been withdrawn following suggested amendments to the legislation.

Members agreed that it would be essential for Full Council and staff to undertake training on the Duty of Candour once the law has been approved.

Members will continue to monitor developments.

9. To review the Freedom of Information Policy and agree actions

Members agreed that approval and renewal dates should be added to the policy and that the AGAR reference should be updated.

RESOLVED: That the updated Freedom of Information Policy be recommended to Full Council for approval.

Proposed: Cllr Lane Seconded: Cllr Dickson Vote: All in favour

10. To note actions taken in relation to the Mayor's Charities 2025/2026

The Town Clerk advised that £1,600 raised has been divided between the four charities supported by the Mayor, with payments to be made within 30 days of receipt of bank details.

11. To discuss 'Past Mayors' pins and agree actions

Members discussed the cost of re-ordering Past Mayors' pins from Vaughtons:

- 20 pins – £189.00 each (nett)
- 10 pins – £199.00 each (nett)
- 5 pins – £218.00 each (nett)
- 3 pins – £228.00 each (nett)

The badges are handmade at Vaughtons' Birmingham head office and works, made in gilt (gold-plated) metal, die-stamped to shape and vitreous enamelled with a polished finish.

It was agreed that best value should be sought; however, it was noted that this would be an unbudgeted purchase.

RESOLVED: That Full Council approve the purchase of 20 Past Mayors' pins at a cost of £3,780 excluding VAT.

Proposed: Cllr Dickson Seconded: Cllr Brewer Vote: All in favour

12. To discuss the 'Role of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor' Policy and agree actions

Following the second resignation of a Mayor/Deputy Mayor within four years, members discussed reputational considerations for the Council.

Cllr Perkin submitted a suggested amendment to the procedures for consideration.

Members considered whether the Council should have a Chair of the Council, with the Mayor acting in a strictly civic role, noting that some Councillors may not feel confident chairing Full Council meetings but are comfortable undertaking civic and social duties.

RESOLVED: That Full Council consider appointing a Chair and Vice-Chair until May 2026 and consider updated mayoral procedures ahead of May 2026.

Proposed: Cllr Brewer Seconded: Cllr Perkin Vote: All in favour

13. To discuss the submission of the Financial Year End 31.03.2025 report to the Charity Commission and agree actions

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk be authorised to submit the Howdale Community Association financial report on behalf of the Council no later than 31 January 2026.

Proposed: Cllr Brewer Seconded: Cllr Lane Vote: All in favour

14. To review Standing Orders and make recommendations to Full Council

Members agreed that the Standing Orders require further review before making recommendations to Full Council.

15. To review Financial Regulations and make recommendations to Full Council

Members discussed the updated Financial Regulations.

RESOLVED: That the updated Financial Regulations, with the amendments discussed, be recommended to Full Council for adoption.

Proposed: Cllr Brewer Seconded: Cllr Dickson Vote: All in favour

Date of next meeting: 26 February 2026 at 7:00 pm

Meeting closed: 8:13 pm