

DOWNHAM MARKET ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

NOTES OF TOWN MEETING HELD

Tuesday 8 April 2025 at 6pm in the Town Hall

	<p>Present Cllr Hobbs, Mayor, Deputy Mayor Cllr Lane and Members of the Town Council Approx. 30 members of the public</p> <p>Claire Dornan, Town Clerk Tina Griffin, Deputy Clerk</p> <p>Norfolk County Cllr White</p> <p>Borough Cllrs Bullen, Osborne</p>
Number	Item
1	<p>To receive the Chair’s welcome and confirmation of the nature of the meeting The Mayor, Cllr Hobbs welcomed everyone and reminded those present of the emergency evacuation routes and meeting point. He added:</p> <p>“This meeting is not a town council meeting, it’s the annual meeting for all local government electors in the Town of Downham Market.</p> <p>Members of the public and the press are welcome tonight but the only persons entitled to speak or vote at this meeting are people who are registered electors for the town of Downham Market.</p> <p>The purpose of this meeting is so that electors can have their say on anything they consider is important to the people or the town of Downham Market.”</p>
2	<p>To sign the minutes of the Town Meeting held on 14 March 2024</p> <p>Proposed: Cllr Leivers Seconded: Cllr Buxton Majority in favour, no objections</p> <p>‘The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 14 March 2024 were duly signed’</p>
3	<p>To receive a presentation from charities and community groups</p> <p>Twinning Club Chris Nunn outlined the history of the Twinning Club and its links with Civray, a small town in France. She mentioned that she is looking forward to visiting her friends in Civray this year. However although the personal links continue, the civic</p>

	<p>connection is not so certain. Despite several attempts to communicate with the Twinning Club in Civray during this past year, no response has been received, which is a real shame. Chris added that the French style café will return on the first Monday of Festival week.</p> <p>Festival Committee</p> <p>Denise Whiley confirmed the dates for this year's festival 25 May to 31 May. The carnival parade is on 26 May starting from Heygates Mill and ending at the Howdale. There will be arena events, funfair, food and drink vendors and various charity stalls. The programme will be out soon.</p> <p>Discover Downham</p> <p>Tony Hall outlined the activities at Discover Downham over the past year. This included temporary exhibitions 'Butcher, Baker, Basket Maker' and '100 years of the WI'. The centre is self funding and there have been lots of fundraising events such as quizzes, tabletop sales, talks, create and thrive workshops, family history opportunities, a valuation day and outreach activities to local groups. They raised £2,000 to buy and install the Dobson's Bell, and are working on a new library area. Tony highlighted the Heritage Open Day planned for 21 September which will offer activities all around town and promises to be a great day out.</p> <p>Melody all Sorts of Downham</p> <p>Carrie-Ann Lister outlined the work of the amateur dramatics group, emphasising how inclusive the membership is eg they encourage people with visible and non-visible disabilities to take part for the benefit of their confidence and mental health. They are self funded and rely on grants, and Carrie-Ann encouraged any business who wished to contribute to the work of the group to get in touch. She acknowledged the support the Town Council offers MADS.</p> <p>Royal British Legion</p> <p>David Goude confirmed the purpose of the RBL – a charitable organisation to support serving and veteran servicemen and women. He outlined the fund raising successes over the past year which included the Downham Market branch raising £33,655 through the Poppy Appeal and £36,000 in total. Across the County £65,000 has been spent on such things as home support, debt assistance, employment training schemes, funeral expenses, housing, mobility, legal and immigration costs.</p> <p>Downham Wildlife Group</p> <p>Andy Bullen said the group exists only on Facebook currently but they had held two Wild Downham events in the Town Hall to promote and enjoy local wildlife. They had installed 21 swift boxes, and planted wildflower seed beds and trees.</p>
4	<p>To receive any updates from Town, Borough and County Councillors</p> <p>B/Cllr Osborne updated on Local Government Reorganisation and confirmed that the district councils had submitted their preference for 3 unitary authorities to the</p>

	<p>Government and await their decision. He confirmed that residents would be able to put forward their views in due course.</p> <p>B/Cllr Bullen Deputy Mayor highlighted that the Borough Cllrs who live in Downham Market have hopefully had success in turning the focus of the Borough Council out towards our town and to have more involvement in matters important to residents. He said he has been the Deputy Mayor this year which has been an amazing experience and he has tried to engage with residents and developers. Cllr Bullen highlighted the support offered by the 'Lily Service' and the Cllrs Community Grant fund which can be applied to for support to local activities.</p> <p>Town Cllr Leivers reviewed the work of the Community Engagement Committee over the past year including the installation of new fingerposts around the town (funded by the Rural Services Fund via the Borough Council); business meetings involving the Borough and Town Cllrs; various successful events. Upcoming events include the Sunday Makers Markets with Mabel bakery which will run over three Sundays in the summer and the Heritage Open Day in conjunction with Discover Downham on 21 September 2025. She thanked the Town Council staff for their work in making the events a success.</p> <p>Town Cllr Lane, Deputy Mayor spoke about the Council's work with the Youth Advisory Board to engage with younger people in the town aged 11-18 and actively involve them in matters which concern them.</p> <p>The Mayor, Cllr Hobbs reminded everyone that the celebration of 80th Anniversary of VE Day will be held on Thursday 8th May 2025 at St Edmunds Church, with the beacon lighting at 9.15pm. The Mayor's charity this year has been the Downham Dementia café and his quiz, and two Open Mic nights have raised £733.</p>
5	<p>Local electors to raise pertinent local topics for debate (equal time allowed for each topic) -</p> <p>Improved infrastructure – it was noted that there is a lot of housing development in town, but apparently no investment in increasing the capacity of GP practices, dentists, school places etc. There is no opportunity of even getting on a waiting list at the dentist.</p> <p>Old 6th Form Centre – it was suggested that an application be made for the building to become a 'Community Asset'. The Town Clerk advised that an application had already been declined as there is insufficient detail available on what the Town Council would do with the site. There is need to wait and see what the Academy proposes for the site eg an SEN school has been talked about, and decide from there.</p> <p>Two emails were read out from residents unable to attend:</p>

	<p>1. The state of the stream adjacent to the sewage works near the station on the far side of the estate near the station. I walked there recently and there appeared to be no water in the stream but it was clarted up with a caramel coloured material which stank of sewage. I think some complaint needs to be made to the water company about this.</p> <p>The new developments are destroying the country walks which improve the wellbeing of the residents. If the airfield is to be built up further then the community infrastructure levy (is there one here?) could be used to improve rural access for residents who are being sardined into a more built up area. Cannot some more walks in the area be identified for residents to replace those lost to development?</p> <p>What also is being done about loss of habitat for the skylarks who used to nest in the airfield? Are alternative habitats being provided in the area?</p> <p>What also is being done about providing new services for residents such as additional secondary school places? If nothing is being done, existing residents are losing out by the pot having to be shared amongst ever more people?</p> <p>2. As a resident, I welcome this opportunity to comment on the future of Downham Market. I have two major concerns: biodiversity and care for the townscape.</p> <p>May I urge all councillors to nurture the precious biodiversity and see the need for more planting and protection of hedges and trees, and actively encourage this.</p> <p>To keep in good repair areas of the town in council ownership, and encourage the townsfolk and businesses to join the council in its upkeep. Care and progress in these areas would, I hope, lead to a healthier environment for wildlife, residents and visitors to enjoy.</p>
6	<p>Local electors to vote on which pertinent local topics the Town Council should consider during the ensuring municipal year –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The matter of transport links to/from the town and within the town was agreed as a topic to be considered. • Car Parking eg on the Lawnboys estate and at other locations in town causing congestion.
Close	<p>The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.12pm thanking everyone who had contributed and all those attending.</p>