

NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 7th JULY 2025

Present:

Cllr Julie MacDonald Town Mayor

Councillors:

Cllr Emma Guy	Cllr Bob Cernik
Cllr Kate Cernik	Cllr Rachel Waterman
Cllr Stephen Harcombe	Cllr Catherine Fox
Cllr Andy Kent	Cllr Patricia Parkes
Cllr Catriona Stewart	Cllr Andy Stott
Cllr Joanne Callaghan	Cllr Janet Illidge
Cllr Olwyn Dean	Cllr Sam Naylor

Also present:

Chris Shaw	Chief Officer
Cath Kirwan	Deputy Chief Officer/Responsible Finance Officer

NTC 25/13 PRESENTATION OF MAYORS AWARD

Councillor Julie Macdonald presented the Mayor's Award to Sheila and Michael Insley.

NTC 25/14 PRESENTATION OF GRANTS AWARD

Councillor Julie MacDonald presented the Grants Award to Cheshire Autism.

NTC 25/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Arthur Neil, Cllr Alison Gerrard, Cllr Lee Siddall, Cllr Graham Emmett and Cllr Tom Melville

NTC 25/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interest under the following categories:

- Pecuniary Interest
- Outside Bodies Interest
- Family, Friend or Close Associate Interest

Cllr Rachel Waterman, Councillor Sam Naylor and Councillor Patricia Parkes declared an interest in any matters relating to Cheshire West and Chester Council.
Councillor Emma Guy declared an interest in her new role as Parliamentary Office Manager for Sarah Pochin (MP, Runcorn and Helsby).

NTC 25/17 OPEN FORUM

There were no speakers.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor

NTC 25/18 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

- 5.1 The minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 2nd June 2025 be confirmed and approved as a true and accurate record.

Members are required to approve the minutes as a true and accurate record.

Proposed by Cllr Catriona Stewart and seconded by Cllr Emma Guy

All agreed.

Minutes to be signed by the Mayor.

NTC 25/19 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- 6.1 To note Finance, Amenities & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Monday 16th June 2025.
6.2 To note Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 23rd June 2025
6.3 To note Grants Committee meeting held on Monday 23rd June 2025

Members noted the minutes of the meetings.

NTC 25/20 TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor's diary – June 2025

Town Mayor's Communications	
8th June	Veterans Breakfast Club
16th June	Daneside Mews Care Home
21st June	Ascendant Grappling Academy
30th June	Official Opening of the Victoria Infirmary, Northwich <i>attended by Deputy Mayor</i>

NTC 25/21 CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT

Members received the report from the Chief Officer.

The Chief Officer provided a verbal update regarding the forthcoming election for Witton Ward. It was noted that polling cards will not be issued.

Councillor Andy Kent clarified that Polling Cards were mentioned within the Chief Officer's verbal report. The report was given, and at the time no comments were received regarding polling cards.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor

Councillor Emma Guy requested it be minuted that the information circulated on social media was incorrect. No decisions regarding polling cards were made. She further stressed that the Council must be transparent and that all residents should be notified of elections by the issuing of polling cards.

Councillor Bob Cernik noted that polling cards were not on the agenda and that the matter arose as part of a verbal report.

Chief Officer reiterated that a verbal report was given and no comments were received. Moving forward, all such matters will be included on the agenda. Chief Officer confirmed he will bring a report on polling cards for any future elections.

Councillor Catriona Stewart acknowledged her social media comments, explaining they were made in reaction to a previous post.

Councillor Andy Kent noted the Chief Officer gave a brief verbal report in relation to an anticipated by-election in the Witton Ward, following the resignation of a ward Councillor, and stated that for cost reasons he was not intending to request the issuing of polling cards for this election.

Councillor Andy Kent stated he does not believe he has misled anyone and found it difficult to distinguish between his comments and those shared on social media. He noted that no elected members raised concerns at the time of discussion. He expressed his support for polling cards to be issued for all future elections and agreed with Councillor Guy's position that residents should be informed by polling cards.

Councillor Julie Macdonald stated that polling cards were not issued due to cost, and no Councillor raised objection to this at the time.

NTC 25/22 POLICE UPDATE

No update from the Police – will forward to members when received.

NTC 25/23 NORTHWICH INFIRMARY PROPOSAL

Members received a report from Chief Officer regarding proposals for a car park in Verdin Park. Northwich Victoria Infirmary has recently received significant investment for a new treatment centre, reducing the need for patients to travel to Leighton Hospital. However, increased patient numbers have worsened parking issues, with some missing appointments due to lack of space. While contractors vacating the site has opened up some parking, problems persist with cars parking in nearby streets and on double yellow lines.

Mid Cheshire Hospitals approached the Council about using a small section of Verdin Park for additional parking. Initial plans were rejected due to the removal of mature trees and unsuitable land. The Council asked for alternatives, but none were viable. Discussions with hospital staff and site visits followed, and legal checks found no issues preventing use of the land.

Councillor Andy Kent requested clarification on the proposed car park location within Verdin Park. The Chief Officer (CO) confirmed the area and noted there would be no cost to the Council. The project supports a vital community facility.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor

Councillor Sam Naylor declared an interest as a board member of Mid Cheshire NHS Trust. He expressed pride in having the new facility locally and, after reviewing aerial plans, considered the proposal a sensible option that uses only a small portion of the park.

Councillor Kate Cernik reported that senior hospital management supported encouraging relatives to drop patients off and park in the town centre while procedures are carried out.

Councillor Bob Cernik suggested relocating the Phlebotomy service to Barons Quay for efficiency. He stressed the hospital should consider long-term parking solutions.

Councillor Emma Guy supported relocating some departments to the town centre and raised concerns about road safety outside the hospital. She recommended reviewing the possibility of installing a pelican crossing.

Councillor Stephen Harcombe asked who initiated the parking proposal. The CO confirmed that no suitable alternative sites were found and this is a temporary leased solution.

Councillor Harcombe voiced frustration over misinformation on social media and welcomed public participation in consultations.

Councillor Olwyn Dean inquired about evening parking arrangements. The CO explained plans are in early stages, but the car park will have ANPR, a barrier, and on-site security. It will improve accessibility, especially for disabled visitors.

Councillor Emma Guy raised concerns about limited bus access to the Infirmary.

Councillor Kate Cernik responded that Mid Cheshire Trust is working with the public and Council to improve bus routes.

Councillor Sam Naylor highlighted the spread of false information on social media and emphasised the importance of responding to misleading comments. He is actively engaging to correct the record and will continue to do so.

Councillor Catriona Stewart agreed with Councillor Naylor, adding that fabricated stories can be harmful and damage public confidence.

Chief Officer updated members that once we have had the public consultation, we will issue a joint statement.

The plan will use minimal green space and existing hardstanding to create 42 staff parking spaces, freeing up more patient parking near the hospital. The car park will be used by staff on weekdays and open to the public on weekends to maintain access to Verdin Park.

Councillor Catherine Fox has offered to support with the planning application.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie MacDonald
Town Mayor

Proposal

During all discussions with the hospital, it has always been emphasised that the least amount of green space will be taken, and we need to utilise existing hard standing where possible. From the plans there will be an additional 42 spaces and these will be used by staff which will free up additional space close to the hospital for patients.

Staff use will be Monday to Friday and on weekends it will be free for the community to enjoy Verdin Park making the park fully accessible to all at the weekend.

Proposed by Councillor Catriona Stewart and seconded by Councillor Kate Cernik.
All agreed

Members received a report from the Chief Officer regarding the Town Centre. Councillor Andy Stott requested clarification on the cost implications. The CO confirmed there will be a cost to Northwich Town Council.

Councillor Kate Cernik asked if the Business Improvement District would be involved. The CO responded that the BID will contribute capital investment, including hanging basket trees and additional planting, while NTC will be responsible for cleansing.

Councillor Rachel Waterman questioned whether NTC receives value for money from Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). The CO advised this will be reviewed and that a meeting with CWaC is scheduled to address service responsibilities. Members will be updated in due course.

Councillor Emma Guy informed members that Chester businesses, in collaboration with Chester Business Club and CWaC, are also beginning to support town centre cleansing. Councillor Guy will provide further updates when more information becomes available.

Councillor Catriona Stewart asked whether CWaC will replace any staff who leave, especially if NTC is enhancing town centre services. This will be reviewed during ongoing discussions with CWaC.

Councillor Sam Naylor updated members that Labour councillors have received a briefing from CWaC leadership. Although additional government funding has been received, it is being directed towards Social Care, not Town Centre cleansing.

*Proposed by Cllr Kate Cernik and seconded by Cllr Catherine Fox
All agreed*

NTC 25/25 TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS SIGNAGE

Members received a report from Chief Officer.

Councillor Catherine Fox updated members on a proposed approach to CWaC regarding restrictions on property lighting. Councillor Fox noted that although the process is complex, similar measures have been used by other councils. She recommended pursuing a blanket Article 4 Direction for the town to allow greater local planning control. She emphasised that landlords should be held accountable for tenancy decisions and that planning regulations should be used to resist inappropriate changes.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie MacDonald
Town Mayor

Councillor Janet Illidge referred to examples of other black-and-white town centres with listed buildings, suggesting these be looked at for best practices.

It was agreed that discussions should take place with Rob Charney, with Councillor Catherine Fox offering to support those conversations.

Councillor Sam Naylor has photographic evidence of the buildings in question and will report these concerns to CWaC.

Councillor Andy Kent suggested involving an officer from CWaC in the matter to keep her informed and engaged.

Councillor Kate Cernik highlighted that many businesses in the town centre are part of the BID and recommended gathering their feedback. The Chief Officer agreed to consult them and report back.

Councillor Rachel Waterman acknowledged that some town centre properties are not in keeping with the area's character and raised concerns about appearance, urging caution

about singling out specific individuals or businesses.

Councillor Jo Callaghan requested the development of an overall strategy to address these issues consistently.

Proposed by Cllr Stephen Harcombe and seconded by Cllr Jo Callaghan

All agreed

NTC 25/26 ROSE MEADOW PLAY AREA

Members received a report from Chief Officer on Rose Meadow Play Area.

Grand opening will be in approx. 2 weeks – Friday 25th July 2025.

NTC 25/27 OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Andy Kent informed members that Network Rail has commenced improvement works at Northwich Train Station.

Councillor Andy Kent thanked Northwich Town Council for the flower displays at the station, noting they are beginning to bloom and enhance the area's appearance.

NTC 25/28 CWaC MEMBERS

Councillor Sam Naylor informed members that a new group has formed with the aim of securing funding for the Navigation Boatyard. He also raised concerns about the front door not being locked.

LSEP is progressing and expected to open next year. HGV movement was addressed in the planning application.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie MacDonald
Town Mayor

A recent town walkaround took place with Sam Chapman (Community Safety Officer, CWaC).

Cllr Naylor will be speaking with Cabinet next week regarding Weaver Square, and confirmed that public consultations will be held in the future.

17 members of the public took part in a town centre litter pick, collecting a significant amount of litter.

Visual Arts Cheshire is currently using a unit in Barons Quay, but it will not be available long-term. Councillor Catriona Stewart has spoken with the group, who expressed appreciation for the support from CWaC and noted the unit has positively contributed to community engagement. Councillor Sam Naylor confirmed he will explore options to assist Visual Arts Cheshire in securing a new venue.

Councillor Kate Cernik supported the comments and encouraged creating more community space in the town centre for volunteers.

Councillor Janet Illidge inquired about using the old J&S building (next to Waitrose), but Cllr Naylor advised it is not suitable. She also asked about the TATA statues.

Cllr Naylor will provide updates. Cllr Catherine Fox clarified that the statues are made of

bronze and are listed.

Councillor Olwyn Dean proposed displaying Colin's artwork again, suggesting Weaver Hall as a suitable venue.

Councillor Catriona Stewart reported on her attendance at a Solar Energy event and reiterated her opposition to LSEP, citing community support and concerns over local disruption.

Councillor Olwyn Dean led a clean-up on Liverpool Street and expressed her desire to maintain its condition. She plans to lead another litter pick on Saturday 11th July and will focus on alleyway cleanliness, using Royal Street as an example of community pride.

Councillor Patricia Parkes shared that she has distributed leaflets in the Firdale Road area advocating for the bus service to become permanent.

Councillor Olwyn Dean also informed members she will hold a surgery with CWaC officers for the 250 staff being made redundant at Roberts Bakery, to be held at Shurlach Chapel.

NTC 25/29 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Council meeting will be Monday 1st September 2025 at 6.00 pm

Meeting closed at 7.45pm

Date.....

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Cllr Julie MacDonald
Town Mayor