

NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 6th OCTOBER 2025

Present:

Cllr Robert Cernik Deputy Town Mayor

Councillors:

Cllr Emma Guy	Cllr Tom Melville
Cllr Kate Cernik	Cllr Graham Emmett
Cllr Stephen Harcombe	Cllr Rachel Waterman
Cllr Andy Kent	Cllr Lee Siddall
Cllr Andy Stott	Cllr Tom Melville
Cllr Janet Illidge	Cllr Alison Gerrard
Councillor Joanna Callaghan	

Also present:

Cath Kirwan Deputy Chief Officer/Responsible Finance Officer

NTC 25/48 PRESENTATION OF TOWN MAYORS AWARD

Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Robert Cernik, presented the Town Mayor's Award to Rupert Adams in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the community, from promoting biodiversity to enhancing residents' wellbeing.

Councillor Rachel Waterman also spoke about Rupert's positive impact, describing him as a "force for good" and highlighting the importance he places on listening to others, fostering community cohesion, and offering support to those around him.

Rupert Adam is a key figure in the local Rotary Club, where he has served as both an active member and a past President.

He was nominated for the Town Mayor's Award by Councillor Kate Cernik.

6.10pm - Councillor Joanna Callaghan arrived.

NTC 25/49 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON NORTHWICH LIBRARY

Cheshire West and Chester Council Officer, Rachel Foster, Head of Communities, Culture and Libraries provided members with an update on the redevelopment of Northwich Library. The £4.5 million project funded in part by CWC and Arts Council England aims to create a building and library offer that is fit for future generations.

A Grade II listed building, the building requires full repair and refurbishment. Plans include the installation of a platform lift for access to the second floor, realigning internal space including an accessible community room and improving outdoor space. Sustainability is a key focus within the limitations of the heritage of the building; there will be improvements to the building's overall energy efficiency.

Members were shown concept images, and Rachel Foster explained the proposed internal layout. The upper floor will be primarily occupied by the Employment and Skills Service/ Work Zone, with rooms also available for community or business bookings where possible. At the rear of the building, the existing timber frame will be reclad, and garden access will be included. Fencing and signage around the rear of the building will also be upgraded.

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

The children's library will be redesigned with improved seating and a feature wall.

The library was closed in 2022 due to emergency structural issues. Following the closure, urgent work was carried out to stabilise the building, focused on the main risk area which was the west elevation. All floorboards had to be lifted, and asbestos was discovered and removed. Original features including the roof light have been uncovered and will be restored.

A temporary library is currently operating at Weaver Hall Museum (Salt Museum), with a pop-up library also in place at Brio Leisure Centre. A wide range of activities are available at the library at Weaver Hall, noting that last year the service attracted more than 60k visitors and issued over 80k items.

The library team is eager for the library to return to its permanent location. Northwich Library, in last full operational year before Covid and then the emergency closure, attracted over 123k visitors and issued over 189k items per year and is an important footfall driver in Witton Street.

Once planning permission is hopefully approved, work is expected to begin in early 2026, with completion aimed for late 2026. Rachel Foster confirmed that more than 20 expressions of interest in an initial construction market test have been received from contractors.

Cllr Stephen Harcombe asked whether IT service needs had been considered. Rachel Foster confirmed there will be fixed computers, improved Wi-Fi, and printing services. Some other libraries are now also Resident Assistance Points to assist the public with council services, this will be explored for Northwich Library.

Cllr Harcombe also asked what would happen to the Weaver Hall Museum once the library vacates. Rachel responded that partner organisations have expressed interest in the space, which could help maintain the increased footfall and meet budget challenges.

Cllr Rachel Waterman, speaking on behalf of Leftwich residents, requested to be involved in ongoing discussions with partners. She also questioned how the Northwich Library building had deteriorated to its current state. Rachel Foster explained that maintenance had been undertaken but that budget constraints mean that pro-active maintenance must be prioritised across the council large estate. Rachel Foster confirmed that a maintenance plan will continue to be in place going forward. Cllr Waterman added that the library is an essential service and that nearby businesses have suffered during its closure.

Cllr Lee Siddall raised concerns about budget contingency. Rachel confirmed that a contingency fund is included in the project budget and expressed confidence that a significant number of surveys and the preparatory work undertaken had already derisked some areas. Given the nature of the heritage asset, it is unclear if further significant issues will arise though the full works, but the team were working to minimise risk where possible. Rachel cited her and the wider teams experience in managing similar projects.

Cllr Andy Kent asked how footfall is measured. Rachel explained that the service was exploring more digital methods however while some buildings have electronic counters, others rely on periodic manual counts (e.g., counting visitors during 15 minutes of each hour). Although not perfectly accurate, these methods are consistent across the service and sufficient for tracking usage and planning services.

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Deputy Mayor

NTC 25/50 **TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM MARK BEBBINGTON FROM
NEW ERA COMMUNITY BOXING AND SPORTED**

Members received a presentation from Mark Bebbington, coach and founder of New Era Community CIC. Established in 2011, New Era was the first boxing club in the area. Mark, a former competitive boxer, shared his journey and the development of the club, which now works extensively with a range of partners and has a significant positive impact on the local community.

When applying for funding, Mark is often asked whether there is a genuine need for boxing and outreach services in the area. His response is a resounding “yes”, citing ongoing demand and the club’s success in engaging residents.

New Era not only provides boxing training but also distributes grants, supports grassroots sport, and assists other clubs with a variety of services.

Cllr Robert Cernik asked how Northwich Town Council could support the club. Mark explained that the facility is often empty during the day, suggesting potential for daytime use and engagement.

Cllr Kate Cernik highlighted issues with anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the area, particularly during school holidays. She suggested exploring HAF (Holiday Activities and Food programme) funding and proposed linking Mark with the local PCSO to develop opportunities for youth engagement.

Cllr Emma Guy inquired whether the club works with SEND groups. Mark responded that while he has worked with some SEND-focused sessions, these are typically delivered through short-term projects. Once project funding ends, ongoing costs can become a barrier for families. He is currently running weekly sessions with Oaklands School in Winsford until Christmas.

Cllr Lee Siddall, who knows Mark personally, praised his work and confirmed that Mark is eager to connect with funders, including through SPORTED, to bring people together and build partnerships.

Cllr Rachel Waterman noted that in her Leftwich ward, young people have expressed feelings of boredom and a lack of meaningful activities.

Northwich Town Councillors agreed to inform Mark Bebbington of any local groups or organisations who may benefit from a grant distributed through New Era Community CIC. This will help further support grassroots initiatives and strengthen community ties through shared funding opportunities.

Mark’s presentation was well-received by members, who acknowledged the importance of his work and the potential for further collaboration to benefit the wider Northwich community.

NTC 25/51 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Olwyn Dean, Cllr Arthur Neil, Cllr Patricia Parkes, Cllr Sam Naylor, Cllr Catherine Fox, Cllr Brian Holland and Cllr Catriona Stewart

Date.....

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Deputy Mayor

NTC 25/52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interest under the following categories:

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

Councillor Rachel Waterman declared an interest in any matters relating to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Councillor Alison Gerrard declared an interest in any matters relating to Rudheath Parish Chester Council.

Councillor Emma Guy declared an interest in her role as Parliamentary Office Manager for Sarah Pochin (MP, Runcorn and Helsby).

NTC 25/53 OPEN FORUM

There were no speakers.

NTC 25/54 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

- 5.1 The minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 1st September 2025 be confirmed and approved as a true and accurate record.

*Proposed by Cllr Graham Emmett and seconded by Cllr Jo Callaghan
All agreed.*

Minutes to be signed by the Mayor.

NTC 25/55 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- 6.1 To note Finance, Amenities & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Monday 15th September 2025
- 6.2 To note Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 22nd September 2025

Members noted the minutes of the meetings

NTC 25/56 POLICE UPDATE

No report given.

NTC 25/57 TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor's diary – September 2025

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Town Mayor

Town Mayor's Communications	
19 th September	LOL – Knutsford Little Theatre
20 th September	Winsford Salt Fair
20 th September	Northwich Beer Festival
26 th September	Rail 200 Walk
27 th September	Northwich Uke Club, The Salty Dog

Deputy Mayor, Councillor Robert Cernik, reported on a recent visit with the Canal and River Trust. Discussions took place regarding the potential to bring historic vessels to Northwich, which would enhance the town's heritage offering.

As part of this initiative, it was noted that the canal would need to be dredged to accommodate the vessels. Further updates will be provided as discussions progress.

Councillor Alison Gerrard left at 7pm.

NTC 25/58 CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT

Members received the report from the Chief Officer.

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

Members noted the Chief Officers Report

NTC 25/59 SOLAR FARM (DISCHARGE OF PLANNING CONDITIONS)

A member of the public recorded the agenda item. The Deputy Mayor asked if there were any objections to this and none were raised.

Members received a report from Councillor Graham Emmett regarding the planning application for the proposed Solar Farm on the Wallerscote Lime Beds. The application has already been approved by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC).

Councillor Emmett informed the council of the formation of a campaign group named "Stop the HGVs", which has raised concerns about the project. A barrister involved has advised that all 41 planning conditions must be discharged before any work can commence.

Councillor Neil highlighted several conditions that are causing concern among the group.

Councillor Emmett expressed a desire for CWaC to reconsider their usual procedure, in which planning officers alone oversee the discharge of conditions. Instead, he suggested the process should allow for more formal consideration and oversight by elected councillors.

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Deputy Town Mayor

Councillor Jo Callaghan asked about the project timeline. Councillor Emmett responded that once planning is agreed, the applicant will have six months to produce a proposal that will satisfy the discharge conditions.

Councillor Andy Kent shared concerns that CWaC planning officers may not fully understand the depth of public concern surrounding the development. He recommended that CWaC councillors be made aware of the strength of feeling in the community. A letter will be sent from the Mayor on behalf of Northwich Town Council to express these concerns.

Councillor Emma Guy suggested that the letter should include the names of all councillors to demonstrate unity and strength of opinion.

Northwich Town Council proposes that elected CWaC councillors have the right to consider the discharge of planning conditions. Whilst we understand that normal procedure for CWaC is for planning officers to have oversight of discharge of conditions, this is not written in statute.

Where a development has serious health, safety and environmental implications, CWaC councillors should be involved in the discharge of conditions.

In relation to the Winnington Solar Farm planning application, we request that discharge application relating to the following (but not limited to) conditions be considered by councillors rather than officers.

- 11 Emergency Response Plan
- 15 BESS Design and Drainage Scheme
- 16 Contaminated Land
- 19 Unexpected Contamination Protocol
- 20 Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)

*Proposed by Cllr Andy Stott and seconded by Cllr Jo Callaghan.
All agreed*

NTC 25/60 **NORTHWICH INFIRMARY CAR PARK PRESS RELEASE**

Members received a report from the Chief Officer regarding Northwich Infirmary Car Park Press Release.

*Noted
All agreed*

NTC 25/61 **CHRISTMAS LIGHT TENDER**

Members received a report from Chief Officer on the Christmas Lights Tenders.

Members to approve Finance Committee recommendation to award LITE the contract to supply the Festive Lighting in Northwich for a five year period at a total cost of £30,005 per annum.

*Proposed by Cllr Graham Emmett and seconded by Cllr Jo Callaghan
All agreed*

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Deputy Town Mayor

NTC 25/62 OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Graham Emmett reported that he recently attended the ICCM (Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management) Awards alongside a member of Northwich Town Council (NTC) staff. He expressed his thanks to all NTC staff for their hard work and commitment, which led to achieving the Gold Award.

Members of the Council joined in offering their appreciation, and it was formally noted that NTC Councillors wish to extend their sincere thanks to the Cemetery Staff for their dedication and excellent service.

NTC 25/63 CWaC MEMBERS

Councillor Rachel Waterman informed members about the installation of a new AED in Rose Meadow. The AED has been jointly funded by Rotary, Councillor Waterman's Member Budget, and Northwich Town Council (NTC). The Council noted its appreciation for the collaboration that made this possible.

Councillor Waterman also reported that Leftwich Care Home will soon begin work on a new Brain Unit, which is expected to create 50–70 new jobs in the local area. This development has been confirmed and is anticipated to begin shortly.

NTC 25/64 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Council meeting will be Monday 3rd November 2025 at 6.00 pm

Meeting closed at 7.35pm

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Town Mayor