

NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 6th JANUARY 2026

Present:

Cllr Julie Macdonald Town Mayor

Councillors:

Cllr Emma Guy	Cllr Tom Melville
Cllr Kate Cernik	Cllr Brian Holland
Cllr Stephen Harcombe	Cllr Rachel Waterman
Cllr Andy Kent	Cllr Catriona Stewart
Cllr Andy Stott	Cllr Tom Melville
Cllr Graham Emmett	Cllr Robert Cernik
Cllr Lee Siddall	Cllr Sam Naylor
Cllr Catherine Fox	

Also present:

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

NTC 25/95 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alison Gerrard, Cllr Olwyn Dean, Cllr Joanna Callaghan and Cllr Janet Illidge, Cllr Patricia Parkes and Cllr Arthur Neil

Members discussed request for a 6-month leave of absence for Councilor Olwyn Dean due to prolonged illness.

Proposed by Cllr Robert Cernik and seconded by Cllr Tom Melville

All agreed.

NTC 25/96 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, and Councillor Sam Naylor declared an interest in any matter relating to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Councilor Sam Naylor declared an interest in Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

NTC 25/97 OPEN FORUM

There were no speakers.

Chief Inspector Moss was unable to attend this evening's meeting. Members discussed writing a letter to the Chief Inspector. Councillor Emma Guy has already written to Chief Inspector Moss regarding the PCSO in her area.

The letter will highlight the excellent schemes that the police have delivered in partnership with the PCSO, including initiatives such as Mini Police and the summer clubs.

Members raised several concerns they wish to bring to the attention of the Police, particularly regarding proposals to replace PCSOs with Police Officers across all wards. Councillors expressed concern that this change may negatively affect public confidence in the police. Members also requested clarity on how the transition would be managed and what the impact of this change would be on local communities.

Members shared positive examples of the significant impact PCSOs have had in their areas, especially through strong partnership working and community engagement.

Members proposed writing a letter to the Chief Inspector raising their concerns in the reduction of PCSOs.

Proposed by Cllr Catriona Stewart and seconded by Cllr Tom Melville

All agreed.

NTC 25/98 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

5.1 The minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 8th December 2025 be confirmed and approved as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Catherine Fox raised an amendment to the minutes below:

Councillor Fox stated that the Town Council had a responsibility to undertake 'due diligence' on issues raised with the Council and the Trust concerning ownership. She clarified that the Council is not responsible for building the car park and has sought appropriate advice. Councillor Fox stated that the lease is not being taken out by the Council, and it should be the Trust's responsibility to fund the necessary legal advice to ensure all requirements are met. The Town Council's intention is to protect itself and comply with any legal obligations.

Mr George asked if Councillor Fox was legally trained. Councillor Fox confirmed that she was not but had previously pointed out that she had experience in land and planning matters.

Ms Astbury expressed appreciation for Northwich Town Council's openness. She highlighted that it is significant that Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust is unable to fund legal advice as this was not legally permitted between public bodies. Referring to Mr George's earlier comments, she noted that there is often considerable pushback from residents, who do not understand why Verdin Park would be considered for use.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

Councillor Fox asked about the source of the legal advice. Ms Astbury clarified that the advice came from her daughter, who is a specialist barrister in this field. Councillor Fox thanked Ms Astbury for the clarification.

Cllr Catriona Stewart raised an amendment to the minutes below:

Councillor Stewart commented that it is not councillors' role to tell the police how to do their job or the chief constable how to do theirs. Nevertheless, she has concerns as the police deal with crime after it's taken place but PCSOs get involved with the community and crime prevention; part of their role is going into schools meeting with the pupils who form positive attitudes to the law and police.

Proposed by Cllr Catriona Stewart and seconded by Cllr Kate Cernik

All agreed.

NTC 25/99 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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

Members noted the minutes of the meetings

NTC 25/100 TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor's diary – December 2025

Town Mayors Communications	
4 th December	Congleton Town Mayors Festive Feast Fundraiser
6 th December	Davenham and Bostock Parish Council Christmas Markets
12 th December	Tree of Lights Ceremony
15 th December	Mini Police Attestation, <i>attended by Deputy Mayor</i>
16 th December	Councillor David Richardson, Honorary Freedom of the Parish Award, <i>attended by Deputy Mayor</i>
16 th December	Grozone Christmas Party
18 th December	St. Helens Church/Thursday Place of Welcome Christmas lunch

NTC 25/101 CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT

Members received the report from the Chief Officer.

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

Northwich Infirmary Update

Our solicitors are now in receipt of all relevant information, deeds, leases, and conveyances relating to Verdin Park. These documents have also been uploaded to our website and are available for public viewing. Once advice has been received from our solicitors, we will be in a position to address the challenges raised and respond accordingly to residents' concerns.

Councillor Andy Stott requested clarification on whether Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust would be funding the legal fees. The Chief Officer confirmed that they will be.

Northwich Town Council does not accept the allegations made at the previous meeting and confirms that it has acted with due diligence.

Councillor Kate Cernik commented that she has looked on Companies House and the Verdin Trust that a member of the public has previously raised has nothing to do with Verdin Park.

Councillor Stephen Harcombe commented that NTC has taken legal advice and no bad practice has been made.

Councillor Bob Cernik commented that there has been confusion with the Trust and that this is Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust.

Councillor Catherine Fox discussed the deeds and noted that certain facts require clarification. This will be addressed once legal advice has been received.

Councillor Kate Cernik reiterated the importance of using Barons Quay for certain services, which would help relieve parking pressure at the VIN.

Councillor Robert Cernik expressed the need to ensure that all cases relating to Jubilee Field have been handled correctly. Councillor Catherine Fox commented that some of the issues may be related to the selection criteria and the delegation of responsibilities to CWaC staff. It was noted that clarity is required in relation to this particular proposal.

Councillor Graham Emmett reflected on a previous Town Council meeting with the CWaC Chief Executive regarding how NTC would be involved in future matters, noting that this approach had unfortunately not been followed in relation to Jubilee Fields. Councillor Emmett also praised NTC for the Christmas lights, commenting that in some parts of Northwich this is the only area of the town that is lit, and expressed a desire for CWaC to install permanent street lighting. The Chief Officer commented that the festoon lighting will remain in place but will not be illuminated.

Councillor Emmett also commented on a business with scaffolding and barriers outside the building that are in place to protect it. The Chief Officer confirmed that this matter will be taken up with CWaC and that an update on the works will be sought.

Councillor Lee Siddall raised concerns regarding the newly installed bins in the town centre and queried what CWaC is doing to address the litter problem, as well as whether there is a way for NTC to take over this responsibility. The Chief Officer commented that, in his opinion, there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the previous bins, other than the fact that the liners had no base and the cigarette extinguishing points were worn. BID and NTC have both offered to share the cost of replacing the liners; however, CWaC instead installed larger bins, which now require less frequent emptying.

Date.....

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CLlr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor

It was noted that litter remains an issue in the town centre. NTC has requested the small mechanical sweeper be used on a regular basis and this will be taken up with CW&C Council again. The Chief Officer reiterated that if Northwich is to be cleaner, then NTC would need to have a regular presence within the town and work with CW&C Council on the delivery of the service.

Councillor Julie Macdonald raised concerns regarding some businesses were not taking responsibility for their own waste and suggested a joint visit to these businesses with the Northwich BID Manager to offer support.

Councillor Lee Siddall commented that the new bins are looking disgusting and dirty and Chief Officer commented that CWaC are just delivering the basic service and won't cleanse them fully. NTC can create a clean welcoming environment.

Councillor Catherine Fox commented on the previous visit from the CWaC Chief Executive and suggested that another visit is needed to receive updates on town centre activities and any ongoing projects.

Councillor Brian Holland raised concerns regarding public feedback on the new bins, noting that they are not convenient for the public, and suggested that this issue be raised with CWaC.

Councillor Kate Cernik noted that Charlotte Walton had expressed a desire to visit NTC to discuss some of these issues, as certain matters mentioned at the previous meeting have not yet been addressed.

Councillor Catriona Stewart expressed support for providing additional bins and working with local businesses to address litter. She noted that some litter is caused by members of the public who need to take greater responsibility. Councillor Stewart suggested that signs could be installed in key areas to discourage littering, as locations that are kept clean tend to remain so. She emphasized that the entire community shares responsibility for maintaining a clean town.

Councillor Emma Guy commented that CWaC needs to be held accountable for the litter and bin issues. The Chief Officer responded that there is a base-level agreement in place and that NTC and BID do hold CWaC to account. Councillor Emma Guy stated that this constitutes a breach of contract and noted that residents are frustrated, as they continue to pay their Council Tax.

Councillor Sam Naylor acknowledged the comments of other Councillors and noted that while CWaC is often blamed for not delivering services, a lack of resources can prevent them from doing so. Drawing on his 12 years' experience as a ward Councillor, he highlighted the good working relationship that NTC has with CWaC officers and emphasized the importance of maintaining these positive relationships with both new and existing officers. Councillor Naylor also stressed the need to focus on the town's priorities with a constructive and positive outlook.

Councillor Lee Siddall suggested that NTC could launch a campaign to promote litter picking. He highlighted the work of the Litter Heroes, noting their dedication and passion for Northwich. Councillor Siddall proposed establishing a working group to structure the campaign, coordinate efforts, and create a positive impact across the town.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor

Councillor Tom Melville asked whether NTC is being ignored by CWaC. The Chief Officer responded that this is not the case, highlighting the strong working relationship NTC has with CWaC officers, but noted that CWaC is struggling due to a lack of staff to deliver services. The Chief Officer further explained that if NTC were to take on these services, they could be delivered effectively, but this would come at a cost. He noted that NTC has gradually taken on more responsibilities, such as cleansing and maintaining car parks. CWaC will continue to provide a basic presence in the town centre while NTC will enhance the service through the precept.

Councillor Emma Guy disagrees with Councillor Sam Naylor and would like to see a steering group set up.

Councillor Andy Kent noted that the meeting with CWaC had been a breakthrough but emphasised that the positive engagement needs to continue. He expressed a desire to maintain a strong working relationship with CWaC and to hold them accountable for the services they are responsible for delivering.

Councillor Kent also raised concerns regarding the proposed fees for the Christmas lights. The Chief Officer explained that Councillor Bingham had been invited to the meeting to clarify why these charges were being introduced and had been referred to Highways for an explanation. BID Northwich has also contacted Councillor Pardoe, and a meeting is scheduled in the coming weeks to discuss this matter further.

Councillor Bob Cernik commented that CWaC was established following the consolidation of Chester and Ellesmere Port, which previously had their own councils. He noted that Special Expenses used to be paid to CWaC and emphasized that this historical aspect needs to be addressed. Councillor Catherine Fox commented that this is unfair and that it was political around Chester and Ellesmere Port.

Councillor Julie Macdonald suggested putting a letter together and Councillor Sam Naylor commented that the four CWAC councillors on NTC can support NTC with this.

Members noted the Chief Officers Report

NTC 25/102 POLICE UPDATE

There was no Police Update

NTC 25/103 OUTSIDE BODIES

There was no update on Outside Bodies

NTC 25/104 CWAC MEMBERS

Councillor Rachel Waterman provided an update that Mid Cheshire Foodbank will be holding a teams meeting. She noted that all Councillors can make foodbank referrals.

Date.....

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor

NTC 25/105 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Council meeting will be Monday 2nd February 2026 at 6.00 pm

Meeting closed at 7.40pm

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Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor