

NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2026

Present:

Cllr Robert Cernik Deputy Town Mayor

Councillors:

Cllr Emma Guy	Cllr Kate Cernik
Cllr Stephen Harcombe	Cllr Rachel Waterman
Cllr Catriona Stewart	Cllr Andy Stott
Cllr Graham Emmett	Cllr Alison Gerrard
Cllr Janet Illidge	Cllr Patricia Parkes

Also present:

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

NTC 25/106 PRESENTATION OF GRANTS AWARD

Councillor Robert Cernik presented the Grants Award to:

- Boxing Fit Academy - £580.00
- Changing Lives Together - £1500.00
- Cheshire 7s Cup - £500.00
- Cheshire School FA - £300.00
- Witton Church Walk CE Primary School & Nursery - £832.50

NTC 25/107 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Joanna Callaghan, Cllr Lee Siddall, Cllr Sam Naylor, Cllr Tom Melville, Cllr Andy Kent, Cllr Arthur Neil, Cllr Julie Macdonald and Cllr Catherine Fox.

NTC 25/108 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 Patricia Parkes, 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 Council.

Councillor Catriona Stewart declared an interest in Love Music Trust.

Councillor Kate Cernik declared an interest in Health Watch Cheshire West.

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

NTC 25/109 OPEN FORUM

Members received a presentation from

NTC 25/110 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

- 5.1 The minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 6th January 2025 be confirmed and approved as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Emma Guy requested an amendment to the minutes confirming that Cllr Sam Naylor would take on Cllr Olwyn Deans' workload during her absence.

Cllr Emma Guy requested an amendment to the minutes stating she had requested a steering group to be set up going forward to hold Cheshire West & Chester Council accountable for the cleansing within the town centre.

Proposed by Cllr Catriona Stewart and seconded by Cllr Kate Cernik

All agreed.

NTC 25/111 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- 6.1 To note Finance, Amenities & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Monday 19th January 2026
6.2 To note Grants Committee meeting held on Wednesday 21st January 2026
6.3 To note Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 26th January 2026

Members noted the minutes of the meetings

NTC 25/112 TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor's diary – January 2026

Town Mayors Communications	
14 th January	The Joshua Tree, Open Event
28 th January	Comedy of Errors, Sir John Deanes College
30 th January	Community ReAwards

Cllr Cernik praised Northwich Town Council for receiving an award from BID Northwich, The Unsung Heroes

NTC 25/113 CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT

Members received the report from the Chief Officer.

Cllr Harcombe asked about the legality advice from the solicitors, noting that four weeks had elapsed and a response had been expected. The Chief Officer advised that a detailed response was expected by the end of the week.

Members noted the Chief Officers Report

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

NTC 25/114 POLICE UPDATE

Chief Inspector Leeroy Moss introduced himself and advised that he has been based in Northwich for the past three years. He provided an update on the PCSO position and current policing performance.

All 999 calls are answered within five seconds and attended within 15 minutes. While some areas nationally are seeking to extend response times, Cheshire aims to further improve them. On average, officers arrive at incidents within 6.9 minutes, with 999 calls answered in an average of 8.7 seconds.

Recorded crime has reduced from 1,100 to 750 incidents, covering both Winsford and Northwich, with 55% relating to Winsford and 45% to Northwich. Officers continue to be proactive, and the Residents' Voice is an effective tool used to help shape local policing priorities.

A dedicated town centre police officer, PC Jack Kirkbride has been appointed and is highly visible. His key priorities include improving shop safety and providing support to local businesses.

Inspector Paul Heatley of Northwich LPU updated members on shoplifting within the town centre. He explained that while a £100 shoplifting offence may have limited impact on large retailers such as Tesco or Sainsbury's, it can have a significant effect on small independent businesses.

Cheshire has nine Local Policing Units, and Northwich was the top-performing unit last month. So far this year in Northwich, there have been 30 shoplifting offenders, all of whom have been dealt with, and 18 domestic burglaries have been successfully closed. Currently, 60–70% of shoplifting offences are being resolved.

Work is ongoing to obtain Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) for individuals committing offences. A recent arrest has been made, and any breach of a CBO will be taken into account by the courts. Subject to legal powers, offenders' photographs may also be shared with local shop owners.

Inspector Heatley also provided an update on homelessness in Northwich, outlining the support available to individuals' experiencing homelessness.

Chief Inspector Moss praised the high standard of PCSOs in the area, making specific reference to PCSO Faulkner. He highlighted the positive work undertaken by PCSOs at local events, noting that young people increasingly view PCSOs and police officers as positive role models.

He confirmed that all letters of concern have been forwarded to the Chief Constable's Office. Discussions are ongoing with Unison regarding potential redundancies, and members will be updated once further information becomes available.

At present, the Constabulary is awaiting publication of the Chief Constable's budget. Once finalised, this will provide clarity on the number of PCSOs that will remain in post. Chief Inspector Moss stated that Northwich remains an exceptionally safe area, with crime at its lowest level to date and response times the fastest they have ever been. He also noted that criminal activity entering Northwich is being effectively disrupted. Should PCSO numbers reduce, consideration would be given to replacing them with police officers.

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

PCSO Nic Faulkner updated members on ongoing vehicle-related antisocial behaviour (ASB). While incidents are still occurring, several vehicles have been seized. Numerous individuals have been spoken to by local beat officers, and close partnership working is taking place with Barons Quay to help identify those involved.

Social media footage has also been reviewed, which shows instances of dangerous driving. Police are working closely with Barons Quay, and reassurance was given that support will be provided when Barons Quay security ask individuals to leave the site. Inspector Heatley added to the anti-social driving that additional support from officers will be tasked with this.

Levels of ASB have slightly increased. A young person has been spoken to in the presence

of their parents, and joint work is ongoing to address and improve the behaviour. It was made clear that if offences are committed, those responsible will be charged, as this behaviour will not be tolerated.

Verbal abuse towards shop owners has been reported and is being actively addressed through a range of enforcement and partnership measures.

Cllr Parkes asked about reassurance visits from PCSOs that mean so much for residents and is concerned if this service would be lost if PCSOs go. Chief Inspector Leeroy Moss replied that this will continue under Operation Shield.

Cllr Guy asked about additional funding, Chief Inspector Moss replied with he isn't too sure on the details and commented that clarification in the press has been released. Also, a resident has contacted Cllr Guy regarding a sponsored Facebook post. Chief Inspector Moss said this is a PCC Survey and his understanding has been done in three options: pay the same, pay a little more or pay nothing. This has been directed from the PCC office and asked Cllr Guy to contact the PCC office direct for an answer.

Councillor Harcombe queried why, given that Northwich is a low-crime town centre and PCSOs have a significant positive impact on crime levels, there is a proposed reduction in PCSO numbers. Chief Inspector Moss responded that the Chief Constable has set a strategic ambition for Cheshire to become the number one force in the country for crime prevention. He explained that the issue of PCSO numbers forms part of a wider discussion around police funding. Despite these challenges, he emphasised that Cheshire has a strong police force that continues to perform at a very high level.

With specific reference to PCSOs, Chief Inspector Moss explained that funding levels are determined by allocations from the Home Office, based on submitted funding bids. Additional funding has been sought to account for rising costs.

Councillor Waterman commented on the issue of homelessness and said it was encouraging that the police act as the "eyes and ears" in relation to this matter. He asked whether Police PR could further promote the Residents' Voice survey, as increased resident engagement would be beneficial. He noted that many residents question the value of completing the survey and felt that its importance needs to be communicated more strongly.

Chief Inspector Moss responded that Inspector Paul Heatley oversees police social media and will ensure that the Residents' Voice survey is promoted more widely. He emphasised that the survey is reviewed very closely and that policing decisions are intelligence-led, based on feedback received through the Residents' Voice.

Inspector Heatley also advised that residents could visit the Cheshire Constabulary website to view local policing updates, which are directly informed by the Residents' Voice survey. He added that local newsletters are also available and provide useful information.

Website: [Northwich | Cheshire Constabulary](https://www.northwichcheshireconstabulary.co.uk/)

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

Cllr Bob Cernik thanked them attending the meeting.

Councillor Alison Gerrard left the meeting at 7.05pm.

NTC 25/115 PRECEPT 2026/2027

Members were presented with the Precept for 2026/2027.

Cllr Robert Cernik gave background to the increase. With public sector pay increases, materials increase, increase in the cost of delivering events throughout the town, additional enhancement works within the town centre and we have no alternative but to increase the precept for 2026/27. Finance Committee were presented with the 2026/27 draft budget and have recommended that Full Council approve the precept figure of £741,203 for 2026/27.

This budget gives value for money for residents with an increase to a band D property from **£85.68** to **£94.98** which equates to an increase of **£9.30** per year (77 pence per month per band D household). Members to approve Band D charge of **£94.98** for 2026/27 and to precept CW&C Council **£741,203**

Cllr Graham Emmett commented that this is the highest precept that he has seen.

Cllr Emma Guy asked about a budget on last year's Income and expenditure, RFO will update Cllr Guy with an answer on this. Cllr Guy also asked about Town Centre enhancements and why additional staff should be working in the town centre delivering these additional services Cllr Guy suggested to go back to Cheshire West & Chester Council as they should be accountable for this service.

Councillor Stewart commented that costs increase year on year and noted that previous precepts had not been raised and observed that while freezes may be beneficial in the short term, they can make future increases more challenging and significant when they do occur. Cllr Guy commented that salaries have not gone up by this amount.

Cllr Kate Cernik would like this to be looked at over a 5-year period for comparison. The increase costs have come from certain investments such as electric vehicles which will save on fuel costs this year. Northwich Town Council has a good reputation, and this benefits the local businesses.

Cllr Waterman commented that costs are going up and is concerned that people will look at the percentage increase instead of the actual figure of 77p a month, Cllr Waterman commented on the high standard of service that Northwich Town Council delivers.

Chief Officer commented that as Officers we work hard to keep costs down and that we always deliver our services to a high standard. The precept is kept low due to our staff carrying out additional contract services for other Town & Parish Councils which generates additional income.

Cllr Patricia Parkes feels torn on this as the work Northwich Town Council deliver great work but is concerned what residents will feel.

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

7 in favour – Cllr K Cernik, Cllr R Cernik, Cllr Illidge, Cllr Emmett, Cllr Waterman, Cllr Stewart, Cllr Harcombe, Cllr Stott.

2 against – Cllr Guy and Cllr Parkes

Northwich Town Council to Precept Cheshire West and Chester Council £741,203 for 2026/27

Proposed by Cllr Stewart and seconded by Cllr Cernik

Approved

NTC 25/116 **TO APPROVE FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ON ALL 2026/27 FEES**

Members were presented with 2026/2027 fees.

NTC 25/117 FIRST INTERNAL AUDIT – JDH BUSINESS SERVICES

Members were presented with First Internal Audit.

Cllr Guy asked on who will oversees the comments for this report, Chief Officer responded that the internal auditor will review and we will be than be issued with a 2nd internal Audit.

NTC 25/118 CODE OF CONDUCT

Members were presented with the Code of Conduct to approve.

NTC 25/119 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Members were presented with the Complaint Procedure to approve.

NTC 25/120 PRIVACY NOTICE

Members were presented with the Privacy Notice to approve.

NTC 25/121 BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Members were presented with the Biodiversity Policy to approve.

*Proposed by Cllr Stott and seconded by Cllr Emmett
All agreed*

NTC 25/122 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Members were presented with the Training and Development Policy to approve.

Cllr Stewart would like to add childcare cover for councillors and council to pay these costs

Date.....

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**Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor**

NTC 25/123 EMPLOYEES HANDBOOK

Members were presented with the Employers Handbook to approve.

NTC 25/124 DATA PROTECTION

Members were presented with the Data Protection policy to approve.

Councillor Emma Guy raised concerns regarding the publication of councillors' home addresses and expressed a wish for town council addresses to be used instead, in order to better protect councillors. The Chief Officer agreed to raise this matter with CWaC for confirmation.

Deputy Town Mayor Cllr Robert Cernik proposed the following agenda items be approved En Bloc.

*Proposed by Cllr Kate Cernik and seconded by Cllr Stewart
All agreed*

NTC 25/126 OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Emmett provided an update on the Lime Beds, Wallerscote Road, noting that developers are importing soil from various locations to spread on the site. He confirmed that

vehicles will be cleaned before leaving the site to minimise impact.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place at the Tata office on 10th February. Councillor Emmett also noted that the solar farm will not be connected to the grid until 2032.

NTC 25/127 CWAC MEMBERS

Councillor Parkes updated members on the work at Moss Farm and the new cycle path

Councillor Rachel Waterman updated members regarding Navigation Road, noting that it did not receive Asset of Community Value (ACV) status. She added that the site does hold community value, but after meeting with the new owner, she believes they have a positive approach.

Councillor Waterman proposed inviting CRT Jonathan Horsforth to discuss the path. Councillor Stewart provided an update that CWaC will be repairing the site and noted that the local MP had met with CRT and was assured that the work would be completed. The path is well used, and the repairs are expected to take place within three months.

*Proposed by Cllr K Cernik and seconded by Cllr Illidge
All agreed*

NTC 25/127 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

Meeting closed at 7.55pm

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

Part B

In accordance with Local Government Act—Public Admission to Meetings Act 1960, the following agenda items are to be considered in the absence of press and public.

23. Northwich Town Council Contract Services

To review and approve revised contract services rates.

[Decision of the Council is requested.](#)

Proposed that Standings Orders are suspended.

Proposed by Cllr Parkes and seconded by Cllr Kate Cernik

The Chief Officer explained that Northwich Town Council continues to provide external contract services to other Town and Parish Councils and BIDs across the county. Historically, this service has been highly profitable, helping NTC maintain a low precept with no increases for several years.

Due to rising staff costs and increased machinery expenses, it has become necessary to significantly raise the hourly rates charged for these services. Over the past two years, measures have been implemented to improve profit margins, including revising quotes, ceasing unprofitable contracts, and reducing the team from three operatives to two, which lowered costs in 2025.

The hourly rate now reflects staff costs, van hire, machinery, fuel, and profit. Adjustments have been made for both supervisors and operatives, and all contracts have been reviewed and updated where possible for 2026/27.

Proposal

	Hourly Rate	Employer NIC	Employer Pension	Total Hourly Rate	Contract Rate
Supervisor Rate	17.18	2.18	3.69	23.05	£38.50
Operative Rate	13.69	1.66	2.94	18.29	£32.00

Councillor Emma Guy requested clarification on the revised hourly rate. The Chief Officer explained that the rate includes staff costs and vehicle expenses. Councillor Guy asked to see the previous rate for comparison.

Councillor Catriona Stewart asked whether the revised rates would impact the precept. The Chief Officer confirmed that there is no impact, and that all contracts have been agreed, with satisfaction on the new rates.

Councillor Parkes commented on the income versus expenditure and confirmed agreement with the figures presented.

This is a recommendation from the Finance Committee.

Proposed by Cllr Graham Emmett and seconded by Cllr Andy Stott
All Agreed

Councillor Emma Guy against.

Councillor Emma Guy requested that it be recorded in the minutes that she is unable to make a decision on this matter without reviewing the previous figures.

VIN Update????

Provisional Report from Solicitors. The Chief Officer provided a summary of the provisional report. The conclusion advised the Council to act cautiously and to seek further advice from counsel. Specialist barristers will now review the matter, and the NHS has agreed to continue funding the legal advice.

The Chief Officer proposed establishing a small working group of three councillors to meet with the barrister.

Councillor Kate Cernik, Councillor Graham Emmett, Councillor Tom Melville (could be a conflict but will check, Councillor Janet Illidge.)

Proposed by Cllr Graham Emmett and seconded by Cllr Stephen Harcombe
All agreed

Date.....

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Cllr Robert Cernik
Deputy Mayor

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