COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 17 June 2026 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:	Cllr T Adams	Cllr P Bailey
	Cllr M Batey	Cllr K Bayes
	Cllr H Blathwayt	Cllr J Boyle
	Cllr A Brown	Cllr C Cushing
	Cllr N Dixon	Cllr P Fisher
	Cllr T FitzPatrick	Cllr A Fletcher
	Cllr W Fredericks	Cllr M Gray
	Cllr M Hankins	Cllr V Holliday
	Cllr R Macdonald	Cllr P Neatherway
	Cllr L Paterson	Cllr S Penfold
	Cllr P Porter	Cllr J Punchard
	Cllr C Ringer	Cllr C Rouse
	Cllr L Shires	Cllr M Taylor
	Cllr A Varley	Cllr L Vickers
	Cllr L Withington	

Also in attendance: The Chief Executive, the S151 officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Director for People Services, the HR Manager and the Democratic Services & Governance Manager

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs S Butikofer, A Fitch-Tillett, C Heinink, P Heinrich, N Housden, K Leith, G Mancini-Boyle, J Toye and K Toye.

23 MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual meeting of Full Council held on 20th May were agreed as a correct record.

24 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr J Punchard declared an interest in agenda item 13, as an employee of Norfolk County Council.

Cllr T FitzPatrick declared an interest in Agenda Item 10 – Refurbishment of the Pavilion Theatre, Cromer Pier as the Chair of the Thursford Trust, which ran a Christmas show.

25 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

26 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair spoke about recent civic events that he had attended:

- CSODS – Beauty & the Beast, Cromer Pier Pavilion, 23rd May 2026

- Mayor Making and Civic Service, Kings Lynn Minster, 7th June 2026
- Cromer Pier 125 Gala Day, 8th June 2026
- Role of the Civic Head Training Day, Brentwood Town Hall, 12th June 2026
- The Opening of the Community Classroom, Holt Country Park, 17th June 2026

He then spoke about the Chairman's Tour of the District, a new concept, which he had introduced for his civic year. He planned to visit all corners of North Norfolk, highlighting everything on offer. So far he had visited Holt and been to the Cozy Café at the Holt Community Centre and Sanders Coaches. He had been accompanied by Local Member, Cllr Rouse. He had also visited a local pottery business, Doodle Pots. The Chair had then visited Sheringham Museum and accompanied by Cllr Withington, he had visited the Hillside Animal Sanctuary.

27 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader, Cllr Adams, began by thanking Cllr Emma Tooke, who had recently resigned. He highlighted the contribution that she had made to her ward of Suffield Park but also the wider significant impact she had achieved around issues of inclusivity, which had led to the Council investing in public toilets – particularly 'changing places' which provided fully accessible facilities.

The Leader then thanked members and officers for their contributions to the Pier 125 event. It had been a very successful day and was very well received. He also highlighted the recent opening of educational facilities at Holt Country Park and said that it continued to improve year on year. The biodiversity on the site was very impressive and the team should be commended for their hard work.

There was no significant movement in terms of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Officer groups had been established and were commencing work and member groups would follow soon. He expressed his frustration that there had been no progress at all on devolution and the offer for Norfolk. There had been some announcements around the visitor levy but nothing further. He said that he was concerned that devolution and LGR were no longer intertwined and that Norfolk would not be afforded the same deal as other, previous arrangements had indicated. It looked as though the 'prize' was getting smaller and smaller.

The Leader then handed over to the Deputy Leader, Cllr Shires. She said that she wanted to congratulate Officer Creasey on his recent qualification as a chartered surveyor. He had joined the Council in 2016 and had worked very hard to gain his qualification and then status as an Associate of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). She commended his hard work and the impressive achievement, which had taken 7 years.

28 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

29 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS

The Chair said that the Group Leaders had made following appointments to the Councillor Community Grant Fund Review Panel:

Cllr L Shires (Chair), Cllr R Macdonald, Cllr J Boyle (substitute)

Cllr K Bayes, Cllr T FitzPatrick (substitute)
Cllr J Punchard (substitute)

The Group Leaders confirmed that there were no further appointments to be made.

30 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chair invited Members to ask questions:

Cllr A Fletcher asked Cllr L Withington, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, for an update on Electronic Tourist Information Points (E-TIPs). Cllr Withington replied that these were large screens that Visit North Norfolk, NNDC and Greater Anglia had been installing at stations across the district. A further set of 9 would be coming through the planning system as they needed advertisement consent. She added that they would be a great asset to the local economy as they were fully interactive and people could book tickets for attractions via the system. They would be going 'live' very soon.

Cllr N Dixon asked Cllr A Varley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Net Zero, about the climate change section of his portfolio, particularly the impact of surface water flooding from prolonged heavy rainfall and the excess heat and drought from reduced summer rainfall. He asked Cllr Varley how important he felt the local water cycle was to the work of the Council and the people and environment of North Norfolk. Cllr Varley replied that NNDC took this issue very seriously and worked with external partners such as Anglian Water through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He said that he would provide a written response to Cllr Dixon.

Cllr C Cushing asked Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services, about the reference to the potential disposal of NNDC assets. He asked for more information about the 35 mentioned in her report, and how many were in Cromer. Cllr Shires replied that where town and parish councils had approached NNDC seeking to become caretakers of assets, a discussion had been initiated and the next step was for more information to be provided regarding the capability and capacity of the interested parties to be able to look after them properly in the future. She said that she was not aware of ongoing conversations regarding assets in Cromer at the current time. Cllr Adams added that there was one ongoing discussion regarding a Cromer based asset. He said that it was important that the longevity of assets was assured before any were transferred.

Cllr W Fredericks asked Cllr Shires about the second homes work section of her report (page 66) and sought clarification regarding the implementation of measures to avoid reduce avoidance of paying the council tax premium. Cllr Shires replied that when the Council agreed to implement the second homes council tax premium, it was specifically to address the housing crisis in the district and this had been successful, with another 9 homes being purchased for the provision of temporary accommodation. The avoidance aspect was something that was managed across all collections and with second homes council tax specifically, it was a bit more technical as some homes fell into the holiday let category and some premised had been paying council tax were actually running a business from there too. If anyone approached the council and confirmed that it was not a second home and that they lived in the property, then they would be asked to provide evidence to confirm this – such as a utility bills. If it was a holiday let then they would be asked for letting information and if it was a business then officers may go out and visit them to ascertain the situation. Some people had benefited financially from the checks. If they were operating a holiday let but paying council tax, it was likely that business rates would be lower, especially with rates relief applied. She thanked the Revenues team for all their work in this area.

Cllr L Vickers asked Cllr J Boyle, Portfolio Holder for Housing & People Services, about housing related antisocial behaviour in several areas of her ward. She said that problems had arisen due to men with a history of substance abuse being placed in small housing enclaves, more suited to the elderly and disabled. This had caused a great deal of distress to the existing residents. She had met with the housing provider's safe communities lead, who acknowledged the problem and had agreed to look again at their protocols. She asked if the NNDC housing team would work with housing providers to ensure that potential tenants past history is taken into account before they were placed in accommodation where the elderly and disabled were in the majority. Cllr Boyle replied that officers worked closely with housing providers to deal with situations that arose but there was a variety of people with different housing needs and they could not feasibly all be placed in one location. They wouldn't be placed somewhere where age restrictions were in place, but if there were no age restrictions then they could be placed there. Cllr Vickers said that it was common sense not to place such people in an area where the elderly and disabled were the majority of residents and she would like to see pre-emptive action being taken. Cllr Boyle acknowledged her concerns but said it was inevitable that occasionally conflicts would arise.

Cllr C Rouse thanked the Chair for visiting Holt recently. He then asked Cllr Varley if he could provide an update on the 'Make my House Green' scheme. Cllr A Varley said that it was very successful. It was aimed at households which did not have the financial means to have green home improvements, which meant they could reduce their energy bills and escape fuel poverty. He said that the latest figures showed that 35 households had had an installation through the Warm Homes partnership, which had led to 36,222kg of carbon being saved. There had also been considerable financial savings for the households involved – with an annual estimate of £77,320. He added that the scheme had been positive for local installation firms.

Cllr R Macdonald asked Cllr H Blathwayt, Portfolio Holder for Coast, about the Japanese Knotweed problem on the coast. Cllr Blathwayt replied that treatment had been underway for some time. The first phase was now complete and the knotweed had been removed from the cliff face. Continued treatment would be going on for some time. He added that for the Overstrand part of the project, the Council had recently received a highly commended award from the Coastal Flood conference.

Cllr T FitzPatrick had a question for Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth. He said that he would accept a written answer in his absence. Cllr FitzPatrick referred to the loss of the New Anglia Enterprise Partnership, in the early days of devolution in anticipation of separate Norfolk and Suffolk mayors. Looking to the future with unitary councils coming forward, the intention was that economic development would sit with the elected mayor and he was concerned that if the elected mayor model did not come to fruition, then the money that was aligned with that would not be forthcoming either. In addition, the was concerned that the duty to cooperate, particularly in the West of the district and the rural hinterland, would fall away. He sought assurance that the new unitary authority would not be disadvantaged by the changes. Cllr Adams replied in Cllr Toye's absence. He said that he shared Cllr FitzPatrick's concerns and said it was wider than just the post-LGR issue, it also related to the post-EU funding landscape and promises had been made to replace lost funding streams with the introduction of a mayoral authority and with that election now delayed, a gap in funding availability was now growing. He said that the Council sought to access external funding wherever possible and a good spread of funding across the district had been achieved. He added that the district council had achieved good cooperation with the former administration at the County Council, in terms of economic growth functions and there was regular engagement. He was not convinced that a Mayoral authority would have the same focus on rural communities. Any opportunity to influence outcomes in terms of national government but also neighbouring authorities. Cllr FitzPatrick said that his concern was that if LGR happened but there was no combined authority with an elected mayor, then what would happen to the current duty to cooperate. He wanted assurance that this would be looked at and not lost. Cllr Withington said that in terms of Visit North Norfolk, she could assure Cllr FitzPatrick that it was already working closely with businesses along the Norfolk Coast and its hinterland – beyond the district boundaries and they would continue to do so.

Cllr V Holliday asked Cllr L Shires for an update on the Councillor Community Grant Fund. Cllr Shires replied said that the Review Panel had been set up and the online application process would be live very soon.

Cllr P Bailey asked Cllr C Ringer, Portfolio Holder for Waste for an update on the disposal of electrical items at recycling centres. Cllr Ringer replied that the recycling centres were operated by Norfolk County Council but NNDC did run a collection service for small electrical items and this had been suspended due to a fire at the Thetford plant in April. A lot of work was ongoing to explore all avenues to dispose of these items but in the meantime, he asked people to hold on to these items.

Cllr M Hankins said that he had learnt recently that Openreach had paused the rollout of fibre broadband, particularly in his ward. He sought assurance that the Council would lobby to reverse this and where, necessary seek to put an alternative into place. Cllr Adams said that he would be interested to hear from members how frequently this issue was arising. Most Norfolk MPs had jointly signed a letter to the Government, raising concerns about the abandonment of the commitment to deliver full fibre broadband across the region, with the result that some roads were being missed out. In some cases, there were rural roads which were listed as having full fibre broadband but in reality they did not have it all. Cllr Adams said that if members wanted to email him with any such examples, he would collate them all and have a further discussion with the two Norfolk MPs. He added that he had recently noticed that BT Openreach had closed the email channel for local councillors to contact them and this added to his concerns around this issue.

31 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 01 JUNE 2026

The Chair advised members that he intended to take Agenda item 10 – Recommendations from Cabinet, at the end of the meeting Agenda item 19, to allow for some of the discussion to take place in closed session.

32 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GOVERNANCE, RISK & AUDIT COMMITTEE - 02 JUNE 2026

In the absence of the Chair of the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee, the Vice-Chair, Cllr A Fletcher introduced this item. He said that it had been discussed by the committee and the recommendation was supported.

It was proposed by Cllr A Fletcher, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

RESOLVED to

Approve the Treasury Management Outturn position for 2025/2026.

33 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 10TH JUNE

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr V Holliday, confirmed that there were no formal recommendations to Full Council, however, she wanted to extend an invitation from Anglian Water for any interested members to visit the Water Recycling plant.

34 SCOTTOW ENTERPRISE PARK - REPORTING OF DELEGATED DECISION

The Chief Executive advised members that this item related to a record of an exercise of delegated powers and was for noting only.

35 HR ADVISOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

Cllr T Adams introduced this item. He said that it related to an increase in hours to a post to support increasing demand in the HR team. He added that he had been disappointed to see the narrative that had emerged around this in the press and on local media, particularly around sickness absence. He said that the Council's absence rates remained below the national average and the slight increase had been due to staff suffering from serious illnesses. There was not a lot of long-term absence due to work place stress.

Cllr Adams said that he was not sure what the Tax Payers Alliance stood for but he wanted to put on record that NNDC provided excellent services for a very small proportion of the council tax bill.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED to

Approve Option 1 – to increase the establishment by 7 hours a week to allow for the recruitment to a full-time permanent HR Advisor post.

36 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None received.

37 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None received.

38 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

None received.

39 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

40 PRIVATE BUSINESS

<u>Agenda item 10: Recommendations from Cabinet 01 June 2026</u>

Cabinet agenda item 11: Refurbishment of the Pavilion Theatre, Cromer Pier.

The Chair advised members that if they wished to discuss anything related to matters within the exempt appendix to agenda item 10, they would need go into private session. He suggested that the debate commenced in open session first. He invited Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates and Property Services to introduce the report.

Cllr Shires began by saying it was the 125th anniversary of Cromer Pier and the proposal was to invest £2.4m into the refurbishment of the Pavilion Theatre, one of the district's most iconic assets. The theatre sat at the heart of the pier. She reminded members that the front and back of house areas of the theatre had already been refurbished but the auditorium itself had not been. The proposed project would improve energy efficiency, patron comfort and provide superior facilities to ensure its future viability under a unitary authority. It would also align the works with the planned structural work, taking advantage of a unique delivery window. Cllr Shires said that it was really important to be honest that it was not an investment that would generate direct financial return for the Council. The benefits were primarily strategic, economic and social and this was entirely appropriate for local government. It was an investment that would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors. The tourism economy was worth £547m every year and supported 9000 jobs. Visitors to the Pavilion Theatre would also eat in local restaurants, drink in cafes and pubs and stay in hotels and holiday cottages, supporting local jobs and businesses.

The project would ensure the future of the theatre and strengthen the local economy long after NNDC ceased to exist.

The Chair invited members to speak:

Cllr C Cushing said that he could not see that a compelling business case had been presented to justify the benefits to local residents from this £2.4m investment. He acknowledged that section 2 of the report contained 5 relevant headings but the detail was lacking. No figures were provided setting out how much money would be saved in each category. The use of the word 'may' implied that there was no guarantee of generating additional income. He then referred to section 5.3 and the fact that applications for grant funding had been unsuccessful so far. He asked why residents should step in to pay instead.

He went onto say that people would still come to the pier and Cromer if no work was undertaken. Cllr Cushing said that he felt the Theatre's operator, Openwide, should be contributing more and queried why Cromer Town Council was not contributing, especially given their large reserves. In conclusion, he said that £170k had already been spent on the theatre recently and a lot else could be achieved with £2.4m – such as the purchase of properties to ease the housing crisis in the district.

Cllr L Paterson said that he understood that a thriving pier was important and that it would bring money into the town but he questioned whether the taxpayer should be contributing over 90% of the funds and said he would like to see alternative funding options explored more.

Cllr L Vickers said that she was struck by the speed and decisiveness that this project was being pursued. Other parts of the district would also appreciate such a speedy approach and she said that she hoped the 'invest now while we can' mantra would extend to other areas.
Cllr V Holliday queried why the Council was borrowing to fund this project and not

using reserves. She said that some of the earmarked reserves could be reviewed and reallocated.

Cllr W Fredericks replied to Cllr Cushing’s comment about a housing crisis and said that everyone acknowledged this but she queried whether an important asset like the pier would be valued and invested in by a larger unitary authority. She asked Cllr Shires to remind members about the profit share arrangement with Openwide. Cllr Shires confirmed that there was a profit share arrangement of 15% with the theatre operator.

Cllr N Dixon said that he agreed with earlier comments regarding the lack of detail and metrics of a business case. He supported the exploration of negotiating for a more favourable profit share arrangement with Openwide as well as looking into a contribution from Cromer Town Council. The Statutory Officer comments included in the report underlined the concerns that had been raised during the debate and he would not support the proposals for the following reasons; deficient financial justification and transparency, poor cost sharing arrangements and the undertaking of yet more borrowing.

Cllr A Varley said that he was disappointed by the comments so far. Members should be supporting the longevity of the pier and the economic benefits that this project would bring. It was very unlikely that a new unitary council would have the financial means and will to undertake this investment and whilst there was an opportunity to progress this, then it must be taken. He referred to the Net Zero aspects of the project and said that doing nothing would not reduce energy prices. In addition, the work would improve the comfort of customers and this was surely an important factor to consider.

Cllr M Hankins commented that investing in entertainment venues was very risky and this was probably the only way to ensure the future of the Pavilion Theatre. It was important that members could see that this business was profitable and had longevity and including this information in the report would have been helpful. The S151 Officer said that he would provide a response during the private session.

Cllr L Withington said that it was very disappointing to hear negative comments about the pier such a short time after the 125 year celebrations had been held. It had a very long and difficult history and had only been able to continue because a lot of people had inv4ested time and money in it. The theatre was thriving due to a partnership arrangement with the management company. The ‘seaside special’ and the Christmas show brought in a huge amount of money to the local economy. It was about far more than just the theatre itself. North Norfolk was now a visitor experience economy and this was about comfort and the latest technology such as light shows. The additional work that was being proposed would enable visitors to have that experience and ensure the longevity of the pier and its offer.

Cllr Adams reminded members of the profit share aspect of the proposal and said that the pier theatre had recovered very quickly after the pandemic. Regarding borrowing, he said that the Council had a very simple debt profile and upfront borrowing would only happen if needed. External grant funding options would continue to be explored. He said that Cromer Town Council was very ‘internally focussed’ and he was not hopeful that they would be willing to contribute. He went onto say that the Council car parks in Cromer and Sheringham generated a significant amount of income and meant that the Council was able to make capital investments across the District. It was not possible to hand over the running of the pier to the Town Council, it was too complex an asset. The proposal before members would ensure that that the pier had a long-term future, whilst making it more sustainable and reducing its operating costs.

Cllr T FitzPatrick said that since his election to the Council in 2011, and members had always been supportive of spending money on maintaining the structure of the pier, however, funding such as this should be questioned and challenged. He asked where was the holistic approach across the district and whether options to support the Wells maltings and Fakenham Community centre had been considered too. They were also run by third parties but they supported them. The financial contribution from Openwide was quite small compared to the level of investment being proposed. He said that attendance numbers across the theatre industry were falling and that's why a robust business case was needed. Regarding the wider point of a new authority being reluctant to invest in assets such as the pier, Cllr FitzPatrick said that it might be worth exploring the setting up of trusts to run some of them. In conclusion, he said that this was the first time that the Council had sought to get into this level of borrowing and he was very concerned.

Cllr W Fredericks said that she had recently visited a pier that was commercially run and the experience had been very poor indeed. She did not believe that this was the business model that people wanted for Cromer.

The Chair thanked everyone for their comments and said that he now intended to move the meeting into private session. It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and RESOLVED:

"That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act."

Information in this appendix involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A (as amended) to the Local Government Act 1972.

This paragraph relates to:

Para 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:

The information is commercially sensitive, relating to commercial options being considered by the authority. Releasing this information would be likely to have a prejudicial impact upon third parties as well as the Council in obtaining best value.

At 7.42pm, the meeting returned to public session.

The Chair asked members to vote on the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED

1. To increase the capital programme by £2.400m funded by borrowing.
2. That delegated authority is granted to the Assets and Property Programme Manager, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates and

Property Services and the s151 Officer, to award a contract for the delivery of the works up to the approved budget.

11 members abstained.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

Chairman