

	Meeting (No)	Full Council Meeting (5)
	Time & Date	21st January 2025 at 6pm
	Location	Neston Town Hall
MINUTES		

Present: Cllrs: Jones (Mayor), Adderley, Braithwaite, Griffiths, Hudspeth, Marple, D. Ruscoe, N. Ruscoe, Swaffer, Townsend and Wastell.

In attendance: Z. Dean (Locum Chief Officer), T. Godfrey (RFO).

PART 1: Items considered in the presence of the press and public

58	Apologies for Absence Cllrs Davies and Kynaston had submitted apologies for personal reasons. It was RESOLVED: To accept the apologies for absence. Cllr P. Doughty was absent. Cllr Warner – another meeting.
59	Declarations of Interest No declarations of interest were received from members.
60	Minutes It was RESOLVED: To accept and sign the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 22 nd October 2024 and the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on 3 rd December 2024. Typo to be corrected by hand on signed documents. Cllr Braithwaite thanked the Locum Chief Office for accurate minute-taking.
61	Questions and Comments from Residents No members of the public were present at the meeting.
62	Committee Minutes a) It was RESOLVED: To approve the minutes from the Market & Town Hall Committee held on 19/11/2024. b) It was RESOLVED: To approve the minutes from the Community & Environment Committee held on 22/10/2024 and 26/11/2024. c) It was RESOLVED: To approve the minutes from the Finance & Administration Committee held on 12/11/2024 and 10/12/2024. d) It was RESOLVED: To approve the minutes from the HR Committee held on 10/12/2024.
63	Insurance Provision It was NOTED: That year 3 out of the 3-year insurance term with Zurich Municipal was due to be paid in January 2025.
<i>NB</i>	<i>Cllr S. Adderley entered the meeting at 6:15pm.</i>
64	Ranger Service a) Cllr Marple spoke in favour of the paper. It was RESOLVED: To receive a report entitled Ranger Service – Next Steps. b) A question was asked regarding the yellow highlighted sections in the job description. The Locum Chief Officer clarified that the yellow section represented which areas of the job description would not apply for the 15-hour working week, as opposed to the 20-hour week option.

	It was RESOLVED: To approve the updated Job Description and Person Specification.
c)	<p>The Mayor read out the recommendation contained within the report. Members discussed the proposal, noting there was not an appetite to add to staff costs and all of the necessary additions relating to employment in the current climate. Instead, the service could be used as a trial to ascertain necessity and to find the middle ground. It was noted that communications needed to be careful. Members were also mindful of Neston Town Council's jurisdiction and preventing crossover with CWaC services. The Chief Officer explained that hours per 'task' would not apply if outsourcing the service. The special expenses budget (ref report FC5/66) could be used for this Project without impacting the proposed committee budgets. Members were reminded to set objectives.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED: To outsource the Ranger Service with a maximum budget of £15,000 for 2025/26. Councillors to report to C&E Committee any ideas for areas to be covered.</p>
d)	<p>It was RESOLVED: To provide delegated authority to Community & Environment Committee up to the value of £1,000. Members noted that any maintenance task above this value would be sent to C&E committee for approval.</p>
65	2025/2026 Budget Setting
a)	<p>The RFO presented the reports to Council, noting that the General Reserves are now back to where they should be. The tax-base had increased by 83, meaning there are more residents paying the precept, providing an average increase of £6,000. This has kept the percentage increase down to 3.9%, when Neston Town Council is receiving 5.4% in reality. The RFO stated that this was a good year, and a good starting point for next year also. Members were pleased to keep the precept lower in comparison to other councils.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED: To receive the RFO reports; budget report, EMRs and band rates.</p>
b)	<p>The RFO confirmed that everything had been included in the draft budget calculation, as well as the 5% NI increase which was not budgeted for this year. The pension strain cost had been paid and the general reserves were back to an appropriate level in 2 years, rather than the previously allotted, 3 years.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED: To approve the draft budget calculation 2025/2026 as recommended by Finance & Administration and informed by Council committees.</p>
c)	<p>It was RESOLVED: To approve the precept request from Cheshire West & Chester Council of £462,962 (3.9%) in order to fund Neston Town Council for 2025/2026.</p>
67	Locum Chief Officer's Report
	<p>Cllr Marple thanked the Locum Chief Officer for hard work and background research.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED: To receive the Locum Chief Officer's Report. The Locum Chief Officer and the Finance Manager left the meeting at 6.30pm.</p>
68	Exclusion of the Public and Press
	<p>It was RESOLVED: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.</p>

PART 2: Items considered in the absence of the Press and Public	
69	Recommendation from HR Committee (HR2/21)
	It was RESOLVED: To extend the Locum Chief Officer’s contract for a 9-month period with effect from 1 st January – 30 th September 2025.

Meeting closed at 18:40.

Signed _____ **Dated** _____