

**\*NOTE:** In the case of non-members, this agenda is for information only

## **DEREHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

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23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025

### **To All Members of the Social and Welfare Committee**

Councillors H Clarke, C Coleman, S Green, H King, L Monument and R O'Callaghan.

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Social & Welfare Committee** which will be held at the **Memorial Hall**, Dereham on **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7pm** to consider the items on the agenda below. All councillors are welcome to attend the above meeting even if they are not a member of the particular committee.

Yours faithfully

*A N Needham*

**Mr A N Needham**  
**Town Clerk**

Members requiring further information, or with specific questions, are asked to raise these with the appropriate officer at least two working days before the meeting. If the information requested is available, this will be provided and reported to Council.

### **AGENDA**

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. **Declaration of Interest.**  
In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Members are asked at this stage to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Registerable Interests; as defined by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council. Councillors shall declare such interest as soon as it becomes apparent, disclosing the nature and extent of those interests. Failure to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or to knowingly give false or misleading information is a criminal offence under section 34 of the Localism Act 2011.
3. To consider funding for Battle of Britain Memorial Service
4. Update on arson at Barwell's Court Toilets and consider any further actions to reduce risks in the future.
5. To consider commissioning ground anchors to stabilise headstones
6. To consider style for replacement parish boundary sign on A47.

## Dereham Town Council

### Social and Welfare

28<sup>th</sup> January 2025

### Agenda Notes

#### **3. To consider funding for Battle of Britain Memorial Service**

Dereham Town Council has funded and partly organised the arrangements for the memorial service and parade for some years. Dereham Town Council organises the food and drinks for the reception following the service and pays the Dereham Band directly. The direct cost of this in 2024 was £615 excluding staff time. The reception cost £365, but in 2024 less than 10 people attended. This lack of attendance may have been due to communications issues within RAFA rather than a demand for refreshments.

This item is on the agenda because for at least 16 or so years the Council has not considered whether it is happy to fund the event. It is quite unusual for the Council to be funding another organisation's event every year without formally making a decision.

Councillors are being asked to consider whether to continue with the current arrangements or amend so that a grant application is needed each year or some other interval. It is probably good practice that the decision to fund this activity is made periodically rather than it keep rolling forward every year. It may also be more effective for the Town Council to step back from any involvement with the organisation of the event and simply make a grant to RAFA. Where there are two organisation sharing responsibility to organise, it increases the risk of miscommunication between the parties.

#### **4. Update on arson at Barwell's Court Toilets and to consider any further actions to reduce risks in the future.**

The recent fire at the toilets is the second fire in the last 12 months, both fires directly linked to either materials being removed from a nearby bin or a whole bin being taken into the toilets and ignited. The damage is still being assessed but it is expected that the cubicles could be opened quite soon but, depending on the damage in the urinals, these may remain closed for some time.

##### Location and provision of wheelie bins in the Town Centre.

Given that this is the second fire linked to waste bins in the toilets and the third bin fire in Dereham town centre in the last 12 months, it is worth considering what measures could be put in place to reduce the risk of fires linked to waste bins.

The Clerk emailed the Norfolk fire service, Norfolk Highways and Breckland waste collection and Breckland Planning to ascertain what powers are available to these authorities to ensure that domestic and commercial bins do not pose a risk of fire. Norfolk Fire Service, have little powers other than awareness raising. Norfolk Highways have responded stating that the bins should not be located on a public right of way and they will be working with Breckland Council officers to have them removed.

On researching the matter it would seem that Breckland Council as the Waste Collection Authority has powers under Section 46(4) Environmental Protection Act 1990 (the Act) which could be applied more widely to improve the amenity of the Town Centre. Under the Act Breckland Council could make provision with respect to—

- (a) the size, construction and maintenance of the receptacles;
- (b) the placing of the receptacles for the purpose of facilitating the emptying of them, and access to the receptacles for that purpose;
- (c) the placing of the receptacles for that purpose on highways

In addition to the provisions set out in statute the [Briefing](#) Produced by the House of Commons Library, on this subject, clarifies to what extent a local authority could use this provision. The Briefing states that provisions could be made with regards to the placing of the receptacles for the purpose of **avoiding nuisance or detriment to the amenities of the area** [emphasis added]

It would seem that under section 46 of the Act, Breckland Council could make conditions e.g. they may be able to stipulate that:

1. All bins are constructed of galvanised iron rather than flammable plastic (the plastic bins themselves are very flammable).
2. All bins are fitted with a lid lock and the lid must remain locked at all times. No overflowing bins.
3. That bins are securely fixed in the upright position so no unauthorised removal can take place.
4. Bins are located within a secure compound.

Some local authorities stipulate that where bins need to be stored at the front of a property or in a public area that the bins are held within a locked compound. This would not only help prevent the risk of fire but it would also considerably improve the general amenity of the Town Centre. North Norfolk District Council has such bin storage rules, which may be why Holt and Cromer town centres don't look like bin storage depots!



A secure compound, particularly within the conservation area, would be a much more pleasing aesthetic if there really is no alternative to storing bins at the front of a building; examples below.



Similar Powers are contained within Section 47 of the Act, which relate to commercial bins. Breckland might be able to consider using these powers to insist that bins are of a metal construction, fixed so that there can be no unauthorised removal, locked at all times and screened from view. As already stated, other local authorities have such conditions.

#### Ongoing anti-social behaviour in area.

While it is generally the case that, where an alley is a public right of way, it would not be possible to restrict access, there is however provision under section 64 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, for access to be restricted where a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has been granted. So, for example, if Breckland Council applied and was successful in securing a PSPO it might be able to install some form of alley gating which could restrict access during the hours of darkness but still allow those that live along Barwell's Court access.

Whether such a measure would be beneficial needs to be given careful consideration, but the Town Council could consider requesting that Breckland Council investigate the merits of restricting access at certain times.

#### Other measures which the Town Council could implement.

Improved CCTV coverage. It is suggested that one reason groups like to congregate in the area, rather than congregate in say the market place, is that they are unseen. The toilets cannot be moved to a more public location, but they could be made more visible through the installation of a live web-cam in the alleyway so that at all times the Police and general public can see who is there and what they are doing. There would be a cost involved of getting broadband installed and a camera (depending on quality £300 - £2,500) and the ongoing cost of around £200 per year. This is not fool proof, people have hoodies and it is dependant on people watching the live stream, but I suppose the point is that they will not know if they are being watched or not. In combination with other measures it might have some benefit.

Locking cubicle doors. The solenoid locks have been a good success but there occasional problems particularly with the baby changing cubicle and the accessible cubicle. These cubicles are larger and have places to sit, so are popular with groups of people. Some of these groups have become wise to the fact that all they need is a Radar key and they can gain access to the accessible toilet. There has been ongoing damage to these cubicles on a fairly regular basis.

Where problems have started occurring these cubicles have been locked overnight. This has to be done with a key lock so it is not possible to lock the accessible cubicle at the weekend.

The Council could look at installing a door control system so some of the cubicles are locked after a certain time in the evening. The urinals would remain open, and generally speaking there is less vandalism in the urinals.

There would be a cost probably less than £1,500, but it would certainly aid management of the toilets.

#### **Considering the options.**

It is probably the case that no single intervention will resolve future problems, and it is probably the case that there is no way of telling which intervention will have the biggest impact. Councillors are as qualified as anybody to judge whether the cost of any intervention is outweighed by the possible benefits.

#### **Interventions that could be carried out reasonably quickly**

1. Norfolk Highways could insist that bins are removed from the highway of Breckland Council could set conditions for the storage of bins.
2. Dereham Town Council could install a live Web-cam in the area.
3. Dereham Town Council could install door controls to lock some cubicles between certain times.

#### **Longer term interventions.**

Establishing a PSPO area and installing alley gates – would need much more careful consideration and liaison with other bodies and the wider public. This could take some time, but the Town Council could formally request that Breckland Council investigates the possibility of a PSPO and using its powers under section 64 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to consider the installation of some kind of restriction along Barwell's Court in order to reduce ongoing anti-social behaviour in the area.

## 5. To consider commissioning ground anchors to stabilise headstones.

The Town Council is obliged to ensure memorials within the cemetery are safe. To this end each headstone is periodically checked for stability, this is called 'topple testing'. Most of the headstones which fail the topple test are quite old so there is limited opportunity to contact the owners or a relative.

The Council has the power to fix a headstone if it needs to, it can also lay the headstone down in order to make it safe. There are different types of headstone each with a different solution. This item relates to headstones on a plinth like the example below. The reasons these fail is because there was a period in the 60s and 70s when the plinth of the headstone was only 'glued' to the concrete foundation. This practice has changed so that now all sections are pinned together with stainless steel rods. There are however a large number of pre-pinned headstones that fail topple testing.



The Council's current practices, where it is apparent that the grave is never visited, is to fix the headstone. The headstone is carefully laid down, surfaces are cleaned, appropriate specialist cement is applied, the headstone is righted, nobody is the wiser. It was felt fixing the problem in this way was a more cost effective approach than trying to temporarily secure the memorial with post and straps then trying to contact the owner and ask them to fix the memorial.

What has been found is that this fix is only lasting around 4 years, then they need to be fixed again. The surfaces will never be as sound as they were when the memorials were initially installed; there only needs to be some water and a hard frost and the fix will fail. A headstone could be fixed in year 1, fail in year 2, but not be reinspected until year 4.

With the cost of the specialist cement and staff time it is estimated that the cost of each fix is around £30, bearing in mind this may need to be carried out every 3-4 years. There are nearly 50 headstones that have been fixed in this way in the last 4 years.

A possible alternative solution could be to manufacture bespoke ground anchors which would locate to each side of the base and be concreted into the ground. These would be stainless steel, they are unlikely to damage the base and they would provide a permanent solution to this problem. An example of how they would look is shown below.





The cost of a pair of anchors would be £20; with concrete and staff time it will cost between £40 and £50 per fix. This would be a one-off permanent fix rather than spending £30 every 3-4 years.

With the current method it is not known at what point between the 4 year inspection cycle that the fix failed. This method provides the reassurance that the headstone is permanently fixed and can never fail. It also provides a quick visual notification that that headstone does not need checking.

The down side is the visual impact; some people may feel that the aesthetics are not pleasing. If at some point a family member comes forward and objects to the anchor, it can be removed so that they can arrange their own fix.

**Councillors are being asked to consider** purchasing 100 (£1,000) stainless steel anchors to be used to fix this type of headstone, that clearly have no visitors, and that fail the topple test.

The alternative to fixing would be to permanently lay the memorials down, move to another part of the cemetery or remove completely. These alternatives have not been explored in any detail as it was felt that people would find them disrespectful. By the time all the necessary notices have been issued and the headstone moved, it would probably cost more than installing the anchors.

#### **6. To consider style for replacement parish boundary sign on A47.**

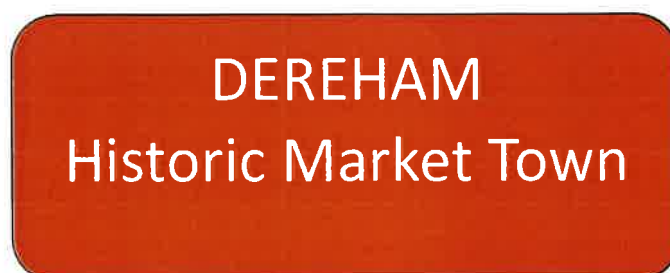
This would normally be dealt with by the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee, but in consultation with the Chairman of that committee, it was agreed that in order to speed up the decision making that it would be presented to this committee.

The parish boundary sign on the A47 has been removed by persons unknown. National Highways would like to understand Dereham Town Council's views on the style of any replacement sign. There are a range of options with cost implications.

To replace the old sign with a plain white sign saying 'DEREHAM', National Highways would do this at their own expense.



There is the option to have a brown sign, but the full cost would need to come from the Town Council (around £20K). There may be some funds remaining in the Dereham waymarking project. National Highways have stated that including symbols of tourist attractions is not an option.



An alternative option might be to follow the example set by Norfolk County Council with their county boundary signs



and link Dereham to some unique aspect of its history or heritage. Example below, although there might be some debate as to which spelling of **Wihtburh** / **Withburga** / **Withburge** to use. If this option is chosen National Highways would only charge the difference in cost between the plain white sign and the white sign with additional features. At the time of writing a cost has not been received for this option. The reason for this suggestion is that many towns have a sign saying 'Historic Market Town' but such a sign does not highlight what is unique or special about Dereham.



Further example below.

