

**KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 6pm on Wednesday 28th January 2026
In the Council Chamber, Kidderminster Town Hall**

Present:

Councillors Doug Hine (Town Mayor), John Beckingham, Vickie Caulfield, Darren Chambers, George Connolly, Mark Crosby, Helen Dyke, Nicky Gale, Steve Hollands, Mary McDonnell, Shazu Miah, Fran Oborski (MBE), Mary Rayner and Mike Smith.

In Attendance

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer

Before commencing the business of the meeting, the Mayor said how pleased he was that the Council had now returned to their own Council Chamber, in their own Town Hall. He said that this was where the Council belonged, it's "Spiritual Home".

He also thanked Councillor Steve Hollands for all his skill, assistance and time helping staff to reinstate the Mayor's Parlour and the Council Chamber.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Bernadette Connor, Ben Brookes, John Aston and Liam Carroll.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The CEO told the meeting that all Members of the Town Council have a dispensation when discussing the precept.

Councillor Steve Hollands declared an interest in the Agenda item re the Museum of Carpet, as he was in the process of becoming a trustee of the Museum.

34. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None

35. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Kidderminster Town Council held on 22nd October 2025.

36. TOWN HALL PROJECT REVIEW

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Peter Brant and Mr Stephen Jones, of Gleeds, the Council's Project Managers for the Town Hall project.

Members received their evaluation presentation following the completion of the project. This was followed by questions from Members, which raised the following matters:

- The delays caused by the podium construction, including the sourcing of the stone from India. This was especially frustrating as it was still not completed before the formal re-opening event;
- The removal of the liquidated damages clause from the construction contract;
- The value engineering process and the impact it had on the overall project, leading to cost increases when essential elements were added back;
- Changes to personnel and to the Council following the Town council elections in 2024;
- Cost control could have been improved;
- Cadent's delay in reinstating the pavement outside the Courtyard entrance;
- Accessibility issues and the need for a wheelchair lift at the stage and in the King Charles room
- The inclusion of the handrail on the podium, for which councillors had to press.

Overall, the Council was satisfied that a good quality outcome had been achieved and the Council now had a fantastic building. The success of the Town Hall since re-opening vindicated the Council's decision to undertake the project.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Brant and Mr. Jones for their presentation and their attendance at the meeting.

37. THE KIDDERMINSTER MUSEUM OF CARPET

The Mayor told the meeting about the public concern expressed when the Trustees of Museum of Carpet announced its planned closure on 20th December 2025. The Mayor had arranged a meeting with the Museum, the District Council, the Town council and other interested parties and he was very pleased when the museum announced plans to open on a temporary basis during the February school half term break.

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Geoff Gilbert, Chairman of the Trustees of The Kidderminster Museum of Carpet and Mr. Gordon Cooper, also a Trustee.

The meeting discussed the issues faced by the Museum and their proposals to retain the Museum. This included plans to widen the Museum offer to include other aspects of the history and heritage of Kidderminster.

Mr. Gilbert told the meeting that the financial details presented depended on volunteers, with no staff costs. This showed a deficit of £19,000 for the year.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Cooper for coming to the meeting.

RESOLVED: A) That the Council supports the transition of the Museum of Carpet to the Museum of Kidderminster,

B) That the Council would support the District Council and other partners and funding organisations to enable this transition, and

C) Approval for any financial support from the Council be delegated to the Finance and Overview Committee of the Council.

(Councillor Mary Rayner left the meeting at 7.26 pm)

38. **TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT**

Councillor Doug Hine, Town Mayor, reported on Mayoral activities since the last meeting of the Council.

He thanked staff for their support, and councillors for their attendance, at the following recent events:

- The Town Hall Grand Reopening, Friday, 7th, and Open Day, 8th November
- Remembrance Sunday, 9th November
- Christmas Lights Switch on, Saturday, 15th November
- Santa in the Town, Saturday, 6th December
- The Mayors' Christmas Carol Service, 14th December

He was also looking forward to the Mayor's Charity Ball on Saturday, 28th February.

39. **THE KIDDERMINSTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

The Mayor pointed out that the Council as a corporate body was the sole Trustee of the Kidderminster Educational Foundation.

RESOLVED: That the Council convenes as the Trustee of the Kidderminster Educational Foundation.

The Foundation noted the Annual report for the financial year ended 31st March 2025, which had been submitted to the Charity Commission. The Mayor said that the Foundation held funds totalling £83,399.25 at the end of the year. No grants were awarded during the year 2024-2025. These funds were invested by Wyre Forest District Council.

The CEO told the meeting that the Foundation had appointed a Management Committee of 3 members to consider applications for funding from the Foundation. If one of these members are unable to attend, there would be

only 2 members, which was a small number, and there could be issues in the event of an equality of votes. He recommended that the foundation appoint at least 4 members to the Management Committee, with a quorum of 3 required for all meetings.

It was noted that Councillors Helen Dyke, Fran Oborski and Liam Carroll had been appointed to the management Committee.

RESOLVED: To appoint 6 members to the Management Committee of the Kidderminster Educational Foundation, with a quorum of 3 members for meetings, and to add Councillors Vicky Caulfield, Shazu Miah and Nicky Gale to the Management Committee.

40. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Council noted the minutes of the Committee Meetings held since the Council meeting on 22nd October (already circulated to Members and published on the Council's website):

- The Planning Committee meetings held on 29th October, 26th November and 18th December
- The Town Hall Committee held on 16th December 2025
- The Operational Services Committee held on 8th December 2025
- The Finance & Overview Committee held on 16th January 2026
- The Staffing Committee held on 3rd December and 15th December 2025, and
- The Civic, Community and Events Committee held on 14th January 2026.

41. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026-27

The Council received the Schedule of meetings for the Municipal Year 2026-27. It was agreed that the Operational services committee and the Civic, Community and Events Committee needed to meet more often and additional dates would be added.

The CEO to forward amended schedule to all members.

(Councillor Mike Smith left the meeting at 7.55 pm)

42. REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR ON THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025.

The CEO presented the report of the Council's External Auditors (PKF Littlejohn) for the financial year ended 31st March 2025 and his report on the issues arising in the report.

RESOLVED: To receive the report and to note the actions which officers are taking to address the issues raised in the report.

43. Vision 2025-2029 (Appendix 8)

The Mayor told the meeting that each of the Council's Committees had reviewed the current Strategy and some proposals for amendments had been received. The amendments recommended the addition of the following:

- *1.H. We will exercise best practice as an employer, promoting fairness and equality for our employees and volunteers*
- *3.H. Support and encourage the understanding of different cultures and peoples through organisations such as the Twinning Association and our various local faith groups*
- *3.I. Encourage and support the promotion of Kidderminster's history, heritage and tourism.*

To Approve the review of the Council's Vision for 2025 to 2029, with the addition of the above amendments.

44. BUDGET 2026-2027

The CEO presented a draft budget for 2026-2027 which proposed a total revenue spend of £1,943,272, capital £175,000 (The retention money outstanding on the Town Hall contract) and contingencies/ transfer to reserves of £40,000, giving total expenditure of £2,158,272.

This would be funded by Council income of £636,292 and a proposed precept of £1,521,980.

The main items to note in the draft budget were as follows:

- i. Loan Charges next year are estimated to cost £248,000
- ii. Expenditure on events, including events staff: £263,817
- iii. Other Town Hall Salaries: £75,098
- iv. On the plus side, a huge increase in income from the Town Hall, forecast to be almost £600,000 (£593,292)
(Overall, the events accounts for the Town Hall are forecast to yield a profit of £304,972, which is equivalent to 20% of the precept proposed for next year)
- v. The retention money held on the refurbishment contract: £175,000
(A one-off capital payment in 2026-27)

The other main items of revenue expenditure are as follows:

- Staff costs (including Town Hall Staff): £ 625,548 (33%)
- Contracts and SLA's: £ 267,341 (14%)

RESOLVED: To approve an overall budget of £2,158,272 for the financial year 2026-27 and to raise a precept of £1,521,980 towards this expenditure for the financial year 2026/27.

45. FULL COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Mayor presented the Forward Programme and invited members to comment or propose any additions for future meetings.

Noted that the Annual review of the Asset Register is on the agenda for April Finance and Overview Committee.

Agreed that arrangements for display and storage of Town Council artefacts be delegated to the Town Hall Committee.

The Meeting concluded at 8.55 pm.

Signed: _____

Town Mayor

Date: _____