

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL

**Minutes from the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on Thursday,
17th July, 2025 at 5.00 pm in the Assembly Room, Town Hall, Saturday
Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT: Councillor A Bullen (Chair)

Councillors B Anota, B Ayres, P Beal, A Beales, S Bearshaw, J Bhondi, P Bland, R Blunt, F Bone, A Bubb, R Coates, Mrs J Collingham, S Collop, R Colwell, C J Crofts, S Dark, M de Whalley, T de Winton, P Devulapalli, A Dickinson, S Everett, J Fry, D Heneghan, P Hodson, A Jamieson, B Jones, C Joyce, A Kemp, J Kirk, P Kunes, A Lawrence, S Lintern, J Lowe, A Moore, J Moriarty, C Morley, J Osborne, T Parish, J Ratcliffe, S Ring, J Rust, A Ryves, D Sayers, Mrs V Spikings, S Squire, D Tyler and A Ware

C:29 PRAYERS

Prayers were led by Rev Canon Ling.

C:30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Long, Rose, Sandell and Storey.

C:31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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Councillors Heneghan, Ring, Dark and Beales declared an interest as Members of the Town Deal Board. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that they could still participate in the debate on the Guildhall and Creative Hub.

C:32 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The Mayor advised that the Mayor of Gallipoli had accepted an invitation to attend the Gallipoli Lunch.

C:33 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

C:34 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNCIL BODIES

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CAB23: GUILDHALL AND CREATIVE HUB

Councillor Ring, seconded by Councillor Beales, proposed the recommendation from the Cabinet Meeting held on 7 July 2025 – Guildhall and Creative Hub.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.1.8 Councillor Ring requested to extend the length of his speech. This was agreed by Council.

Councillor Ring spoke in support of the recommendations highlighting that they had been supported by the Regeneration and Development Panel and brought to Council's attention by way of an update on the reduction to the funding gap. Councillor Ring also believed that the funding gap would be further decreased as the project moved forward.

Councillor Ring spoke of the importance of the redevelopment of the Guildhall and the importance of preserving the history and heritage of the area. He outlined the benefits to young people, volunteers, tourism, the local community and the economy.

Councillor Ring provided detail of the RIBA stages and that Council now had a fully costed and tendered scheme ready for delivery

Councillor Ring outlined the Council's legal obligations to maintain the building.

Councillor Ring summed up his speech by saying how important this project was for the Borough, and that the Council needed to be bold and build for the future.

Councillor Beales, as seconder to the proposal, reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor invited the Group Leaders to contribute to the debate before opening it up to the floor.

Councillor Blunt commented that the Conservative Group had discussed this matter extensively and he would be allowing his Members a free vote on the matter. He raised concern about the information provided in advance of the Meeting to Councillors and hoped in future consideration could be given to making information available as early as possible.

Councillor Blunt stated that the building was important and special to the Borough and significant in terms of history and heritage. He stated that if the Council could not support the capital investment how could they expect others to invest in it.

He raised concern relating to the relationship with the National Trust and Leases, but acknowledged the long term economic benefits of the project.

Councillor Bone raised concern that this project could be a burden to the successor organisation, post Local Government Reorganisation, however he supported the proposals as they would bring regeneration opportunities for the whole Borough and stated he had faith in the finances. He also thanked Councillors and Officers for all their hard work to bring the project forward. Councillor Bone reiterated the social benefits of the project and stated that Labour Members would be supporting the proposal.

Councillor Kirk felt that more time was needed to digest the information that had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. He explained that the Reform Group had concerns relating to funding and costs, but acknowledged that preserving history and heritage was important. He thanked Councillors and Officers for bringing these proposals forward.

Councillor Kemp addressed Council and stated that she had supported this project since inception, and noted the obligations to the National Trust. She was concerned that costs had increased and asked how this looked to residents who were struggling. She also commented that the funding gap was a worry and the impact this could have on a successor organisation, post Local Government Reorganisation. She also hoped that funding this project would not result in cuts to services. She encouraged investors to come forward to support the project.

Councillor de Whalley commended the project design for considering environmental factors and making the building as energy efficient as possible, whilst being sensitive to history and heritage. He welcomed the robust scrutiny that had taken place in advance of this meeting and hoped the project would proceed.

Councillor Ryves stated that the project was dependant on footfall and could easily make a loss if this was not realised. He asked Council to explore other options and raised concern that Alive West Norfolk had not been involved. He asked Councillors to consider the impact this project could have on Council Tax levels. Councillor Ryves stated that he would be asking for a review on the project and why costs had increased. He hoped that a less risky plan would be explored.

Councillor Collingham commented that King's Lynn had been described as a Graveyard of Ambition and that the Council needed to be bold in its ambition.

Councillor Dark spoke in support of the proposals. He acknowledged that costs were high, but so were the cultural and social outcomes from the project. He stated that to stop the project now would stop years of hard work and the securing of external funding and asked the Council

to consider the message this would send to all those involved to date, including volunteers, the public and funders. To continue would allow the Council to become an enabler to secure additional funding. Councillor Dark reminded Councillors of Devolution and the challenges going forward, which could result in less strategic focus on King's Lynn, which was why now was the best time to restore one of the town's most historic buildings.

Councillor Ratcliffe provided detail of a similar successful project in Margate and the benefits of secondary spend in the local economy. She also highlighted the rail links from London to attract visitors.

Councillor Kunes commented that there was no evidence that Shakespeare performed at the Guildhall and that stating this should stop.

Councillor Squire commented that the proposals before Council were the culmination of years of work and had been through the Democratic process, with all Councillors having the opportunity to contribute. She stated that she trusted the experts and the proposals presented. She outlined the benefits the project would have for children, education and culture.

Councillor Ware commented that the project was a chance to ensure the history of the town was preserved and celebrated. She acknowledged the challenges, but noted that most major projects came with risk. She commented that she supported the proposal.

Councillor Joyce commented that the project could be more ambitious in terms of linking up with Sandringham Estate and other heritage buildings. He commented that, post Local Government Reorganisation there would be debts from other Local Authorities which would have to be taken on by the successor authority.

Councillor Heneghan raised concern relating to the level of spending and felt that the proposals had been rushed through, however, she had been given assurance that the Business Case was robust and she thanked Councillors and officers for responding to questions from Labour Members. Councillor Heneghan indicated that she would be supporting the proposals with an expectation that they would deliver what had been promised.

Councillor Lintern commented that this was an extraordinary opportunity and noted the creation of local jobs, diverse revenue streams and the opportunities for outreach and engagement work in the community. She explained that the building was underused at the moment, but the improvements proposed, along with marketing of the site would encourage visitors. She noted that attendances had increased since the Council had taken on management of the site.

Councillor Coates commented that costs were too high and he would be voting against the scheme. He hoped that the project could be reconsidered and more sensible options brought forward. He stated that the proposals failed to show core revenue and demand for the project.

Councillor Lawrence congratulated Councillor Ring on his speech. He acknowledged that something needed to be done to preserve the Guildhall, but felt that this project had escalated since conception. He raised concern on who would take the project over post Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Rust commented that this proposal had been subject to robust scrutiny. She outlined all of the times, since 2022 that Members had had the chance to ask questions and make recommendations. She also noted that the Regeneration and Development Panel had previously established a Task Group on this matter.

Councillor Rust commented that she supported the proposals and highlighted the benefits it would bring in relation to the Health and Wellbeing of residents. She provided information on a similar projects in Wigan and Hull and the benefits these had brought.

Councillor de Winton addressed Council and stated that this project could benefit the whole of the Borough in regards to increased tourism, and a lot of the coastal areas depended on tourism. He stated that marketing of the project was important and he noted the employment opportunities which would be available.

Councillor Morley provided information on the robust processes which had been carried out and he was confident in the finance. He asked Council to note the non-financial benefits of the project including social value and improving the local economy and leaving a legacy for future generations. He stated that he supported the evaluations and aspirations.

Councillor Bubb commented that he supported the proposals and that the links to Shakespeare would draw in visitors.

Councillor Jamieson stated that the borrowing levels were speculative and it was about positioning King's Lynn to change perceptions and he supported the proposals.

Councillor Hodson commented that he applauded the work of Councillors and Members, but was concerned about the cost of borrowing.

Councillor Parish asked if the Councils finances could cope with the burden of this project and referred to the asset management review which could provide capital receipts for the Council. He informed

Council, that this proposal had been supported by the Regeneration and Development Panel.

Councillor Colwell thanked all those involved in bringing these proposals forward and reminded Councillors, that it was 'Love West Norfolk' fortnight and it would be fitting for the proposal, which he supported, to be agreed today.

Under Council procedure rule 11.1.1 Councillor Sayers proposed that "the question now be put". This was agreed by Council.

Council Ring summed up highlighting the importance of the links with Shakespeare, the benefits this project would bring to the Borough and its wider heritage offer and stated that there would be extensive marketing and promotion. He understood concerns relating to funding and risk, but the cost of borrowing set out in the report was purely an example. Councillor Ring stated that almost the entire site would be made accessible and the Council was also fulfilling its obligations within the National Trust lease. He explained that evidence showed that there would be investment opportunities and he outlined the cultural and social benefits of the project.

Councillor Ring proposed a recorded vote under procedure rule 16.4 on the motion and this was supported by the requisite number of Councillors.

The results of the vote were as follows:

Name	For	Against	Abstain
Anota	For		
Ayres	For		
Beal	For		
Beales	For		
Bearshaw	For		
Bhondi	For		
Bland	For		
Blunt	For		
Bone	For		
Bubb	For		
Bullen	For		
Coates		Against	
Collop	For		
Colwell	For		
Crofts	For		
Dark	For		
Devulapalli	For		
Dickinson		Against	
Everett	For		
Fry		Against	
Heneghan	For		

Hodson		Against	
Jamieson	For		
Jones	For		
Joyce		Against	
Kemp		Against	
Kirk		Against	
Kunes		Against	
Lawrence		Against	
Lintern	For		
Lowe	For		
Moore		Against	
Moriarty	For		
Morley	For		
Osborne	For		
Parish	For		
Ratcliffe	For		
Ring	For		
Rust	For		
Ryves	For		
Sayers	For		
Spikings		Against	
Squire	For		
Tyler		Against	
Ware	For		
de Whalley	For		
de Winton	For		
TOTAL	35	12	

RESOLVED: The recommendation from the Cabinet Meeting held on 7 July 2025 was approved as set out below:

To amend the Capital Programme for the Major Scheme up to £30.5m and to amend the Medium Term Financial Strategy in accordance with the Finance Strategy at Appendix 6 (Exempt).

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm