



UTTOXETER TOWN COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE ARISING FROM ITS MEETING HELD IN THE ALAN DEAN SUITE, UTTOXETER TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY, 28 APRIL 2026 AT 5.30 PM

Chair – Councillor R Hawkins

Councillors: D Boot, B Houlihan, Z Krupski, A Noyes, C Sylvester, A Johnstone (Observer)

Officer in attendance: T Jeffery, Town Clerk

It was noted that was one member of the public was in attendance in the meeting and a Representative from Widgit in attendance for Item No. 5

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair provided a brief on the fire procedure in the event of a fire, the provisions of the Recording and Filming of Meetings as in accordance with "The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014", a reminder that the Council has Signed up to the Civility and Respect Pledge and regarding the use of mobile phones during the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- (a) The Clerk reported that approved apologies had been received from Councillors S Page and A Mansfield (ex-officio).

RECOMMENDED that the same be accepted and approved.

- (b) The Clerk reported that all other Members were in attendance.

RECOMMENDED that the same be noted.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In accordance with Standing Order 3(e-h), the meeting be adjourned for up to 15 minutes to allow for public participation where members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they were entitled to attend in respect of the business on the Agenda. The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting as in accordance with standing order 3(e) shall not exceed (3) minutes unless directed by the Chair of the meeting. It was noted that members of the public may not take part in the Council meeting itself.

It was noted that the Representatives from Widgit were in attendance to provide Committee with a Presentation under Item No. 5 – Widgit Symbols. It was noted that the member of the public in attendance did not wish to address Committee on any item included within the Agenda.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declaration of any disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter to be discussed at the meeting, and which was not included in the register of interests. Members were reminded that they were required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they had a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest was entered in the register of members' interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

None received.

5. WIDGIT SYMBOLS FOR INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY WITHIN UTTOXETER TOWN HALL

- (a) The Chair welcomed the Widgit Symbols Global Education Specialist who was in attendance to provide Committee with a presentation on Widgit Symbols and the possibility of making Uttoxeter Town Hall more inclusive and accessible. The Chair Suspended Standing Orders and welcome the Widgit Representative to the meeting.

The Wigit Representative expressed her thanks to Committee for inviting her to provide a presentation on the benefits of using Wigit Symbols within the Town Hall and possibly within the Town. She reported that:

- She was Wigit Symbols Global Education Specialist, with 14 years' experience in mainstream and SEN settings. Through this experience, it highlighted the importance of accessible communication.
- She had provided Members with a 'Wigit Symbol Friendly Organisation Pack' and had a display board for Members perusal.
- Wigit created resources for children and families to access their communities who often felt lost or had a lack of communication outside of the school environment.
- Wigit had carried out lots of research with the Autism Society and 64% said that they actively avoided going shopping due to difficulties they experienced.
- Wigit believe in the power of symbols to support communication and understanding. They produced the Licence Wigit and work nationally and internationally, initially with schools which has now extended to include other organisations including Dementia charities.
- Their unique combination of software and symbols empowers practitioners to support the diverse needs of symbol users of all ages. When it comes to unlocking potential, Wigit believe symbols have a positive impact, helping to ensure no-one feels left behind.
- Symbols are images which are used to support text, making the meaning clearer and easier to understand. They provide a visual representation of a concept. Symbol Sets are comprehensive collections of images that give greater support than clip art or icon sets. Symbol Sets often follow a schematic structure, or set of design 'rules', that help the reader independently grow their own vocabulary.
- Children and adults with a learning impairment or a communication challenge for instance, Autism, Down Syndrome or Dyslexia benefit from the use of Wigit symbols.
- Some people with severe learning difficulties will never be able to read and write; others will have some capability but find decoding text very difficult. It is estimated that there are 1.5 million people in the UK alone with a learning disability with 10% of the population have dyslexia and 4% of them severely so and these numbers are growing.
- Over 200 languages are currently spoken in UK homes and in 2010, 16% of children in maintained primary schools did not have English as their first language. Symbols are used to enable non-native speakers to communicate and understand English text.
- Children beginning to read or who struggle with text, the symbols can help children to access text when they are beginning to read by reinforcing the meaning of the written word. This can enable progress in many aspects of the curriculum and prevents children from being held back by their reading ability. It also significantly improves behaviour, motivation and learning.
- 20% of the population struggle with reading text and need pictures to help them. 16% of the adult population are classed as functionally illiterate.
- Children and adults with severe physical difficulties use Wigit Symbols as a communication aid. Where peoples physical abilities are restricted or they cannot speak, symbols can be used to help them to communicate their needs and wants, enabling them to make choices. Symbols empower them to be able to share their thoughts and ideas in ways that others can more easily understand.
- If someone has had an accident and is unable to speak, because of their injury or because they cannot speak the local language, symbols can be used as two-way communication to explain and understand the situation.
- Symbols can reinforce the meaning of text and increase their confidence.
- Symbols can aid in the learning of a foreign language by offering additional support for the understanding of vocabulary and grammar.
- Reading is a difficult, multi-step task that must be actively taught and learned. Symbol support is a helpful bridge from the known (pictures/objects) to the unknown (the printed word). Symbols provide a visual representation of an idea or word. They are particularly useful for those who have children with language difficulties, as the symbol image helps reinforce the meaning of the written word and text.

- The Widgit Symbol set contains over 20,000 symbols incorporating everyday home, play, school and areas vocabulary that can be used to support and help children to recognise and learn spoken words, symbols can help explain new concepts, and can be used to point to symbols of facial expressions to explain how they are feeling
- Symbols have been shown to increase motivation and to have a role in managing behaviour. By using symbols, children are able to fully understand what is required of them and what is going to happen next. These easily understood symbols can help reduce the anxiety that many children face throughout the day.
- Symbols can also give these children a voice to express themselves when words fail them.
- Information will be provided on the schools using Widgit within Uttoxeter and if Uttoxeter Town Council agreed to proceed, they would be only the second local authority to use Widgit (Stratford launched on 25 April 2026) and they would be the first local authority in Staffordshire.

It was noted that Councillor Houlihan left the meeting at this point in the meeting to attend a Mayoral Event within the Ballroom

The presentation was followed by a brief question and answer session. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Representative from Widgit Symbols for her informative update. It was noted that the Representative from Widgit left the meeting at this point in the meeting. The Chair Reinstated Standing Orders accordingly.

RECOMMENDED that the same be noted.

- (b) Councillor Johnstone reported that she had not had the opportunity to liaise with St Mary's First School regarding the system they had in place however she understood that it was not Widgit, it was an alternative provider. Councillor Noyes reported that he would liaise with St Mary's First School to seek this information. Committee instruction was sought.

RECOMMENDED that the Clerk:

- (i) Liaise with the Events Team to discuss what Widgit provisions would be required for the Town Hall.
- (ii) Liaise with Widgit to seek information and proposals for use of Widgit within the Town Hall.
- (iii) Include this matter for further consideration by Committee at a future meeting.

6. **PETTY CASH**

The Chair reported that Councillor Houlihan had requested that this matter be included within the Agenda to enable Committee to consider the current and future procedure for management and governance of its petty cash. Committee was advised that the current process was carried out as in accordance with current Financial Regulations, as agreed with Council's Internal Auditor and reviewed and adopted by Council on 9 September 2025.

The Chair reported that, as in accordance with Standing Orders, the Council would be reviewing its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Committee Structure and the Terms of Reference for Committees at its Annual Meeting which was scheduled to take place on 12 May 2026. He reported that he felt it would be appropriate for the Council to review its Committees/Terms of Reference and Financial Regulations prior to this matter being further considered by Committee. He suggested that this item be deferred for further consideration by Committee at its next meeting. Committee instruction was sought.

RECOMMENDED that following Council's review of its Committee structure and Terms of Reference, Petty Cash be deferred for further consideration by Committee at its next meeting.

7. **TOWN HALL REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE**

The Clerk reported that a start date was still awaited from Council's Architect and Greenheart Construction Ltd for the works to the Town Hall side alley and roof light.

RECOMMENDED that the Clerk continue to liaise with Council's Architect and Greenheart Construction Ltd and provide Council with updates accordingly.

It was noted that Councillor Noyes and the member of the public left the meeting at this point.

8. **COMMITTEE IN PRIVATE – PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**
Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act it was requested that the public and press were not present due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted and were asked to withdraw.

RECOMMENDED that the same be accepted and approved.

9. **DESIGNATED PREMISES SUPERVISOR (DPS) PROVISIONS FOR UTTOXETER TOWN HALL UPDATE**

- (a) The Clerk reported that the DPS Variance to Licence for MINT Cocktail had been submitted to ESBC on 28 April 2026 by the Events Team, in the sum of £23, funded by the Licences budget allocation. She reported that she would continue to liaise with the former DPS to provide an update accordingly.

RECOMMENDED that the same be accepted and approved.

- (b) The Clerk reported that the Events Team would provide Committee with ideas and costings for the modernisation of the Adam Peaty Suite including flooring, glass washer and undercounter fridge at a future meeting (May or June). Committee was advised that at this time, meetings were ongoing and the Events Team and MINT Cocktail were seeking costings accordingly.

RECOMMENDED that the Clerk liaise with the Events Team to request ideas and costings be presented to Committee at the earliest opportunity.

- (c) The Clerk reported that the Office Manager had further attempted to make contact with the former, former DPS with respect to an amount of bar stock, majority of which had been opened and expired in November 2024 which was now an environmental concern. The Clerk provided Committee with an update on advice received from Council's Solicitor and former DPS fees. Committee instruction was sought.

Councillor Boot reported that opened stock would have a zero value to the former, former DPS. He suggested that Council's Events Team produce a detailed inventory of the items, stating the bottles were opened/leaking/dirty/damaged and that the inventory log be used against the unpaid DPS fees. He reported that he understood the Council could dispose of the items if the former, former DPS had left them in situ for 12 months and one day and that any unopened bottles should be retained. He encouraged the Events Team to look at the Guidance rules that would apply. Following due debate, it was

RECOMMENDED that the Clerk liaise with the Events Team to:

- (i) Look into the 12 months and one day Guidance rules as suggested.
- (ii) Carry out a detailed inventory of the items stating the bottles were opened/leaking/dirty/damaged and that the inventory log be used against the unpaid DPS fees. Any unopened bottles should be retained subject to the Guidance.

10. **32 CARTER STREET**

The Clerk reported that Council's Tenant had withdrawn their request for permission for a EV charging point to be installed at 32 Carter Street.

RECOMMENDED that the same be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.02pm.