

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
held at **The Orwell Hotel, Hamilton Road, Felixstowe**
on **Wednesday 11 May 2022** at 7pm

IN ATTENDANCE:

From Felixstowe Town Council:

Cllr M Jepson (Mayor)	Cllr T Green
Cllr S Harkin (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr M Morris
Cllr N Barber	Cllr G Newman
Cllr S Bennett	Cllr M Richardson
Cllr M Deacon	Cllr D Savage
Mr A Tadjirishi (Town Clerk)	Cllr S Wiles
Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)	Mrs S Faversham (Civic Events Officer)
Mrs S Morrison (Admin Assistant)	Mr S Congi (Financial Admin Assistant)
Miss H Miles (Communications Apprentice)	Mrs J Smith (Admin Assistant)

Approximately 142 members of the public were also in attendance.

514. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Mayor of Felixstowe welcomed everyone and outlined the format of the meeting.

515. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS TOWN MEETING MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 5 May 2021 were confirmed as a true record by those present and the Mayor was authorised to sign them.

516. MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Mayor presented the following report:

Looking back from this present moment, it is incredible to contemplate that, now two years ago, I took over the role of Mayor of Felixstowe from my dining table during a Full Council Meeting that was held via Zoom. This was a first experience in both senses – my first day as Mayor, and the first step in adjusting Council arrangements in the wake of the pandemic. Even at that early stage, I think we had no idea what the coming years would entail, and when life would begin to resemble some form of normality again. Though the past two years have been largely unprecedented, they have been filled with wonderful experiences and many fantastic memories.

As the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic started to become apparent and prior to becoming Mayor, I had explored potential options of how we remained visible to our community with the previous Mayor, Nick Barber. Nick was happy for me to develop a new approach alongside Visit Felixstowe, and suggested we delayed the initiative until I became Mayor. I have always appreciated Nick's counsel and was an excellent role model during my period of Deputy Mayor as I

familiarised myself with the role. Even to this day, Nick is someone I still turn to for advice.

Together, alongside Visit Felixstowe, we sought to promote local independent businesses who continued to operate during the lockdown. We organised a series of video interviews or “Mayor’s chats”, published via the Visit Felixstowe Facebook page. I received incredible support from Clare Baker and Stephen Rampley, who both worked tirelessly to promote the town, lining up a diverse range of different companies for me to chat with. Over time, we developed this feature, and started to converse with local celebrities to enquire what they like about Felixstowe. During my tenure I have conducted 90 interviews. Every single conversation was a pleasure and taught me something new about the town. As part of my “Mayor’s chats” I interviewed a number of people about their experiences of Felixstowe. This included Ipswich Town legends Terry Butcher and Russell Osman, Status Quo’s bassist John ‘Rhino’ Edwards and a number of Radio Suffolk presenters. All were a pleasure to chat to, and I thank them for taking part.

Two particular businesses stand out, The Alba Chiara, run by Stefan, and The Crescent Café, operated by Lewis. These businesses only opened their doors seven weeks before lockdown. I can only imagine the stress that they were under as newly established businesses. It is really pleasing to see them both continuing to operate successfully along with many other businesses who went through such a difficult time. Although the pandemic presented so many challenges, I appreciated this opportunity to engage with such a diverse range of organisations in a way that may otherwise have not been facilitated.

During the first year of the pandemic, as the operations of the Town Council moved online, I would like to thank Ash, the hard-working Town Clerk, for his role in getting the Town Council to a point where this became second nature and our daily business was largely uninterrupted. We are very lucky with the quality of our Town Council staff. From those working at the Town Hall to everyone who operates from the Cemetery, thank you to you all. I know it was also through your hard work and dedication that we continued to deliver our frontline services successfully.

During my two years in office there have been many memorable moments. I would like to share a few with you.

In June 2020 I met Joan Rich as she set out on her 62nd lap of Allenby Park. Her target was to complete 102 laps by her 102nd birthday. Joan was a delight to talk to, along with her daughter, Dianne. Over the next few months I followed Joan’s progress. On the 11th September 2020 – Joan’s birthday – it felt as though the nation’s media had descended on Felixstowe to capture her remarkable achievement. It was an emotional and proud day as Joan completed the 102nd lap of Allenby Park. Joan raised in excess of £30,000. She should feel incredibly proud of her achievement. I still see Joan and Dianne today. It is unfortunate she cannot be here this evening.

In January 2021, The Grove Surgery began to deliver the vaccination programme to Felixstowe residents and the wider community. By the beginning of February

I had become one of the many volunteers supporting the operation. On the 8 February 2021, we woke up to considerable snowfall. It was astonishing to see volunteers and Town Council staff work so hard to clear the Grove's car park of snow to allow the surgery to operate when every other centre had to close for the day. It is experiences such as these that have made my tenure so memorable. As of the 3 May 2022, in excess of 88,900 vaccinations have been administered – evidence of what can be achieved through united effort. Everyone involved in the vaccination programme should feel incredibly proud.

In October 2021 East Suffolk District Council and Felixstowe Town Council hosted the final stage of The Women's Tour. It was a tremendous day and I was very proud to represent the town. The Tour Director informed me that the day had been the best of the whole tour. We were able to use the stage to present last year's Civic Awards and it was a valuable opportunity to highlight the immense contribution of the residents to the community.

Though the St Elizabeth's Hospice Christmas Day Dip was postponed due to poor weather and unsafe conditions in the water, it was rescheduled and subsequently rebranded as the Easter Day Dip. The weather was much warmer than it likely would have been in September, though I can't say the same for the water! Despite taking place at this later date, there was a fantastic turnout, and a great mixture of Christmas and Easter themed costumes on display as participants sprinted into the water.

I have been appalled by the ongoing and unlawful invasion of Ukraine – an outlook that I'm sure you all share. I am grateful to Rev. Andrew Dotchin for his role in conducting an emotional and poignant service at Felixstowe War Memorial on 4 March. It was uplifting to see how many of you turned out to show your support for Ukraine. Since the service was delivered, I have heard from a number of families in Felixstowe who have opened their home to Ukrainian refugees in need of a safe place to reside. This, alongside the voluntary efforts to collect and distribute to those affected by the ongoing conflict, demonstrates the resolve of the community in Felixstowe. It is this that has made me so proud to be your Mayor.

Finally having met Doris Sagar at the launch of the Poppy Appeal last October where I learnt she would celebrate her 100th birthday on the 2 May I was delighted visit her and present her with a card and bouquet of flowers. My card was unfortunately not as grand as the card she received from the Queen, but I was pleased for the opportunity to congratulate her in-person.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors of all parties who have been very supportive over the last two years. Thanks to the excellent Town Council staff, we have been able to continue to fulfil our duties. This has, at times, required a great deal of patience and understanding, and I believe through their professionalism they should feel proud with how we adapted and delivered our responsibilities.

Now we arrive at the "thank you" stage of the address and, as I have so many of you to thank, I will do my best to be brief.

Felixstowe Citizen's Advice and the Felixstowe Carnival Association have both worked incredibly hard on the Mayor's charity events. After the interruptions that restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on the first year of my tenure, I wanted present the opportunity for as many of you as possible to get out and to start socialising again. Almost every Mayor's charity event that we have organised has sold out. I would like to thank all the venues who have hosted us, and their staff for their hard work in making each event so enjoyable and successful. To me, the priority was having fun not necessarily how much we could raise. I will be forever grateful to our Civic Events Officer, Sue and Communications Apprentice, Holly, who worked so hard to make them a success. You have become friends to me and Julie, we have enjoyed your company and I know we will keep in contact regularly, Holly particularly when she joins me for the Dare to Dip swim at 7.30am on my last day as Mayor on the 18 May!

I would like to pay tribute to Sue Faversham, the Town Council's Civic Events Officer. Sue took over the role unexpectedly shortly after I took over as Mayor. She has worked incredibly hard, sometimes under challenging circumstances. She is always a positive and radiant presence, and has been the driving force behind such a successful run of Mayor's Charity Events. Thank you Sue!

I would also like to thank Deputy Mayor Cllr Sharon Harkin who I believe has been an outstanding Deputy. She has embedded herself into a wide range of organisations and charities, which will be an advantage to her next year if she is elected to become the new Mayor. She has consistently made herself available when I have been unable to attend an event, and has been extremely reliable. Thank you Sharon. It has been reassuring to be supported by somebody as dependable as you.

Finally, I could not have enjoyed the last two years as I have had it not been for the incredible support I have received from my wife, Julie. We often hear the phrase "she is my rock". Well, she is! The majority of my tenure has been an incredibly positive and rewarding experience. In this role you also encounter many challenges and, when I have, we have met them together. I know that at every event we attended people were delighted to meet you. You should feel incredibly proud how you have represented the town and the role of Mayoress.

(Present flowers to Julie at this point as we go away 2 days after the 18... so she at least has a week to enjoy them.)

As we come to the end of my speech, I have felt immensely proud representing you as Mayor of Felixstowe. I have met many inspirational people and organisations and the memories will live with me forever.

Thank you.

517. 'JUBILEE JEWEL OF FELIXSTOWE' CIVIC AWARDS 2022

Awards were presented to the following individuals and organisations for their contribution to supporting and enriching the town, its residents, and visitors:

a) Mayor's Awards 2022

Richard Holland, for his role in running 'THE HUT' on Felixstowe seafront, the Senior Citizens' Day Centre and for his involvement in Felixstowe Travelwatch and the Felixstowe-Wesel Twinning Association.

Susan Pascall, for her voluntary work at the local RSPCA shop and for offering voluntary support to the NHS. The Award was collected on behalf of Susan, by her nominator, Steve Crocker.

Amanda Folley, for her role in the formation of Shine a Light on Walton.

Lisa Williams, for her role in the coordination of Stennett's Community café.

Maryann Byrne, for her involvement throughout the community, including her voluntary work at The Compass, Wavemakers, her service at a pop-up food bank and her role in Felixstowe Helping Hands..

b) HMS Ganges Youth Trophy

Alfie Lack, for his role as a staff flight Sergeant in the Felixstowe Air Cadets and in office as Lord lieutenant cadet, representing Suffolk at various events on behalf of H.M. Queen Elizabeth.

c) The Community Award

Clive Garnham and The Grove Medical Centre, for the outstanding effort of both staff and volunteers at The Grove Medical Centre in administering the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

d) 'Jubilee Jewel of Felixstowe' Award

John Cresswell, for founding the Felixstowe Volunteer Coast Patrol Rescue Service some 26 years ago and helming the organisation since until his retirement in January this year.

John Cresswell has also been chosen to carry the torch as part of the 'Festival of Suffolk' Queen's Platinum Jubilee Torch Relay.

518. PRESENTATION TO MAYOR'S CHARITIES

The Mayor announced that a total of £15,000 had been raised in support of his two chosen charities: Citizen's Advice and the Felixstowe Carnival Association. Each charity was presented with a cheque for £7,500.00.

A donation to Ukraine for £550 had also been made in addition to the Mayor's charities.

519. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

The following reports were noted as received:

- Army Cadets Felixstowe Detachment
- BID Felixstowe Business Improvement District
- Boost Felixstowe
- Citizen's Advice
- Disability Advice Service
- East Suffolk Council
- FACTS
- Felixstowe Book Festival
- Felixstowe Coast Patrol
- Felixstowe Hockey Club
- Felixstowe Men's Shed
- Felixstowe Museum
- Felixstowe Sea Angling Society
- Hamilton MAS artYsPaceS
- Level Two
- Police Crime Commissioner
- Royal British Legion
- SARS Suffolk Accident Rescue Service
- Save the Children
- Suffolk County Council
- The Lions
- WAMFest

520. PUBLIC SESSION

The Mayor reminded the meeting that this was the Annual Town Meeting for the civil parish of Felixstowe at which local electors could speak on any issue that they wished. The Mayor enquired whether any member of the public wished to raise any matters.

A Councillor thanked the Mayor and recognised the community in what had been a difficult two years with the pandemic.

The Chairperson from the Felixstowe Society spoke about the historical value of the Beach Huts, being aware that it was an East Suffolk Council project and a meeting was due to be held on May 25. The Chairperson urged attendees to sign the petition on [change.org](https://www.change.org)

A member of the public asked how Felixstowe Town Council were going to respond to the fact that with energy prices and food prices rising, many people

cannot afford to live. The Mayor confirmed that the Community Partnership at East Suffolk Council are currently looking at the developing situation and there are strategy meetings currently taking place.

521. CLOSURE

There being no other questions or comments the meeting was closed at 8.21pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____