

MINUTES of the ORDINARY COUNCIL meeting held at FELIXSTOWE TOWN HALL on Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Cllr M Jepson (Mayor) Cllr S Gallant
 Cllr S Harkin (Deputy Mayor) Cllr M Morris
 Cllr D Aitchison Cllr G Newman
 Cllr S Bennett Cllr M Richardson
 Cllr S Bird Cllr A Smith
 Cllr M Deacon Cllr K Williams

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
 Mrs D L Frost (Deputy Town Clerk) *(via Zoom)*
 Mr S Congi (Finance Administration Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Cllr D Savage (via Zoom)
 Cllr S Wiles (via Zoom)
 Inspector Soraya Francis, Suffolk Constabulary
 Shez Hopkins, Level Two Youth Project (via Zoom)
 2 Members of the public (via Zoom)

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

The meeting was preceded by a moment of reflection delivered by Ms Shez Hopkins, Level Two Youth Project.

308. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

309. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from **Cllr N Barber, Cllr T Green, Cllr D Savage** and **Cllr S Wiles**.

310. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird Cllr M Deacon Cllr S Gallant Cllr M Jepson Cllr M Richardson	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as Members of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr S Bird Cllr G Newman	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as Members of Suffolk County Council)
Cllr G Newman	320	Local Non-Pecuniary (as Chairman of the East Suffolk Lines Group)

311. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR

Question:

The recent sporadic closures of flood gates along the promenade has raised again the issue of the sloped footway over the flood wall opposite Orford Road/Martello Park.

This footway has been closed off with Heras fencing for at least 12 months. The inability to use it causes great inconvenience to visitors, particularly those with mobility issues, when the flood gates are shut.

What action will this Council take to urge East Suffolk Council to reinstate this facility in time for the 2022 season, the opening of the new Martello restaurant and indeed the predictable higher tides & tidal surges of future winters?

Answer:

We have queried this with East Suffolk Council which has confirmed that the tender is out for the ramp, with a deadline of midday on Friday 21st January. A contractor will then be appointed and work will commence as soon as possible.

ESC has also advised that a permit from the Environment Agency is required and discussions are being had to expedite this.

312. CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 10 November 2021 be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council.

313. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor spoke of the recent engagements he had attended on behalf of the Town Council which, unfortunately, had been few and far between due to Covid. It was with great disappointment that the Christmas Day Dip had to be cancelled at the last minute due to weather conditions. The Mayor pledged to participate if it was rearranged during his mayoral year.

Highlights included the switching on of the Christmas lights, the judging at Beach Street, and Landguard at Christmas. Mayor thanked the Blue Naan for hosting his 'Curry and Conversation' event in November and confirmed that the Curry night at Bombay Nite due to take place on 17th January had been postponed due to covid but would be rearranged.

The Mayor then invited the Deputy Mayor to address the Council on the engagements she had attended on his behalf. The Deputy Mayor felt privileged to attend the Environmental Awards with Litter Free Felixstowe and enjoyed the Scout's Carol Service. Another highlight was the switch on of the Walton Christmas lights.

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor for those engagements attended on his behalf.

It was RESOLVED that the Mayor's announcements be noted.

314. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Chairman of the Planning & Environment Committee recorded thanks to the Committee Members for their commitment over recent meetings which had seen a significant increase in the number of applications being considered.

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the following meetings be received and, subject to their accuracy being confirmed by those committees, adopted:

- a) Planning & Environment Committee 17 November 2021**
- b) Assets & Services Committee 24 November 2021**
- c) Planning & Environment Committee 1 December 2021**
- d) Finance & Governance 8 December 2021**
- e) Planning & Environment Committee 15 December 2021**

315. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were none.

316. LOCAL POLICING MATTERS: INSPECTOR SORAYA FRANCIS

Council received a presentation from Inspector Soraya Francis, a police officer for the past 29 years, now covering a large area including Felixstowe, East and South East Ipswich, Woodbridge and out to Bawdsey. Inspector Francis carries out a lot of strategic work with PC Rachael Partridge and Sgt Russ Mason. It has been a difficult year with covid, but because of that there has been an uplift of responses in Felixstowe. Per shift there are 3 response officers based here in Felixstowe, there are another 6 officers at Martlesham who can attend. This means that during the day there can be 6 here and 3 or 4 in evening. This year there have been officers off with Covid but there are contingencies in place to cover those gaps, they adhere to Government guidance with PPE but it is difficult so a lot of officers have been off with symptoms. Two volunteers have been recruited from Ipswich, so they should be able to provide a more physical presence in the town.

There have been 6,000 incidents in the past year but these do include minor incidents as everything gets recorded. Less than 400 were related to anti-social behaviour, amounting to around 2 or 3 a day on average in Felixstowe and includes the Port. Inspector Francis would ask Sgt. Mason to get more detailed Felixstowe figures as the figures above are for the whole area.

There is a PSPO order at Landguard to protect that area and support the Rangers and that has been really successful. Last year saw two unauthorised encampments but the Police worked well with the councils and eviction notices were served and they were removed quite quickly. The white ribbon campaign

about domestic abuse has also been well supported and some good engagement work being carried out in schools.

A Member reported that the public were concerned about speeding and driving issues and asked whether schemes such as the Community Speedwatch would be reintroduced. Inspector Francis would get back to Council on this.

With regards to the recent Incidents on A14 which caused gridlock, this was a problem for traffic management, it was raised with the roads inspector, who covers the whole of Suffolk. Inspector Francis would investigate to find out if more could be done.

Council thanked Inspector Francis for attending the meeting and it was RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

317. CORONAVIRUS UPDATE AND EMERGENCY SCHEME OF DELGATION

Council considered the Coronavirus update and report on emergency delegated authority. In relation to the current absence of legislation to enable remote meetings, members agreed that the Town Clerk should use the model letter provided by NALC to highlight Felixstowe Town Council's support of remote council meetings to the local MP. The Clerk advised that individual Members could also consider contacting the Government Minister for Levelling Up Communities to urge the same.

NALC's guidance in respect of the latest coronavirus advice was that Councils should consider whether a meeting is necessary while there is no legislation in place to meet remotely. The Clerk reminded Council that in March 2020, Council gave additional delegated authority to the Town Clerk to enable key business decisions to be taken in the absence of being able to meet in person. Members agreed it would be prudent to similar arrangements in place to enable key business to be transacted should circumstances prevent Council from being able to hold timely meetings in future.

A Member highlighted that the government were encouraging employees to work from home but Councillors were still being required to meet in person to conduct business.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Coronavirus Operational update be noted;**
- ii. the Town Clerk uses the NALC model letters to write to the local MP to highlight Felixstowe Town Council's support of remote council meetings;**
- iii. in the absence of legislation, members consider individually responding to local MP and Kemi Badenoch, Minister for Levelling Up Communities to highlight their support of remote council meetings; and,**

- iv. the following provision be added to the Scheme of Delegation to the Clerk:

Should the holding of Council meetings be suspended as a result of a civil emergency, the implementation of Government advice, restrictions on direct contact in relation to national health, or other emergency, all functions of the Council, other than those matters specifically reserved by law to be determined by a meeting of the Council, to be delegated to the Clerk (as the Council's Proper Officer) in consultation with the Mayor (or the Deputy Mayor should the Mayor not be available), or Chairman of the appropriate relevant Committee (or the or Vice-Chairman if the Chairman should not be available) until the next Ordinary or Extraordinary Council meeting, at which time the delegation must be reviewed.

Such decision making to be in pursuance of the provision of ongoing Council services and business and in relation to new Council policy and functions arising from the circumstances that precipitated the suspension of Council meetings. Decisions made under such delegations to be noted at the next meeting of the Council.

318. BUDGET, RESERVES AND PRECEPT 2022/23

Council received the finalised version of the 2022/23 Budget and Precept.

It was noted that the budget had been prepared and presented in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance & Governance Committee meeting of 8 December 2021 (*Minute #285 of 2021/22 refers*).

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Felixstowe Town Council Budget for 2022/23, as set out in the report, be adopted and approved as follows:

Total Budgeted Expenditure:	£813,272
Total Budgeted Income:	£774,014

- ii. the 2022/23 Precept demand to East Suffolk Council of £612,735.64 (representing a 0% increase cost to Band D equivalent Council Tax payer), be made on the following basis:

Band D rate	£70.87
Multiplied by tax base x	8,645.91
Thus a Precept demand of:	£612,735.64

- iii. and, the Clerk be delegated the authority to take any necessary action due and instructed to submit any information required by East Suffolk Council in this matter.

319. MAYORAL AND MEMBER ALLOWANCES 2022/23

Council considered the report and policy relating to Members' Allowances, the Mayor's Allowance and reimbursement of expenses.

Following a brief discussion on the possible merits of introducing a small allowance for Members to mitigate the

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. Council will not introduce a Basic Allowance for its Members at this time, and the office of Town Councillor is to remain unpaid for the year 2022/23;**
- ii. the Mayor's Allowance for 2022/23 of £3,000 be paid for the purpose of defraying other costs associated with the office of Mayor, with payment made following approval at Annual Council, on the basis of PAYE through the Council's payroll system;**
- iii. the Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy incorporating the above and enabling the Mayor (and Deputy Mayor as required) to be reimbursed for tax-deductible out-of-pocket expenses be approved as presented; and,**
- iv. the Council's Finance & Governance Committee be asked to consider whether a small Members' Allowance should be introduced in time for the new Council term following elections in 2023, and report back to Council.**

320. REQUEST FROM EAST SUFFOLK LINES GROUP

Council considered a request from the Line Group East, East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership asking the Town Council for support in the administration of its funds. Members noted that the cost, in terms of officer-time, was relatively small but concerns were raised over setting a precedence for providing such a service which a great many community groups could also seek support with.

RESOLVED that the Deputy Town Clerk responds to East Suffolk Lines Group to decline the request for finance administration support.

321. DRAFT CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Members considered the recommended response to the East Suffolk Council Draft Cycling and Walking Strategy consultation as prepared by the Council's Cycling and Walking Working Group.

Members thanked the Working Group for the hard work in preparing the draft response.

It was noted that this was an exceptionally detailed consultation which had required a lot of officer and Member time.

Members asked if the Finance & Governance could give some consideration as to how much time the Town Council should dedicate towards responding to consultations, which were being received more regularly than ever.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the recommended response to the East Suffolk Council Draft Cycling and Walking Strategy consultation be submitted to East Suffolk Council as presented; and,**
- ii the Finance and Governance Committee should consider how the Town Council can balance timely and effective responses to consultations alongside meeting its other priorities.**

322. MEETINGS CALENDAR 2022/23

Council considered the draft meeting schedule for the 2022/23 Municipal Year as presented, which had been based on the current year's cycle.

The Clerk advised that he had reviewed the schedule for potential clashes with any currently published dates for East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council meetings. It was noted that there was only one (ESC) meeting that directly clashed with a Felixstowe Town Council Committee date at this time.

The Clerk gave thanks to the Finance Administration Assistant for collating the dates for the calendar.

RESOLVED that the 2022/23 Calendar of Meetings be adopted as per the schedule presented.

323. FTC/ESC JOINT LIAISON GROUP MEETING

Council received notes of the FTC/ESC Joint Liaison Group meeting held on 2 November 2021.

A question was raised regarding the town noticeboards, which ESC had deemed to be 'end of life'. It was noted that, with the introduction of the digital towns project, it was anticipated that this would inform any potential replacements, so there would be an absence in the meantime.

Clarification on the reason for the Beach Hut Village project being delayed was given – so as to avoid building work being carried out at that location over the summer season.

It was RESOLVED that the notes of the 2 November 2021 FTC/ESC Joint Liaison Group meeting be noted and Councillors were advised to let the Clerk know of any matters for the next meeting on 15 February 2022.

324. BLUE FLAG/SEASIDE AWARD 2022

Members discussed the continued application and cost of a combined Blue Flag and Seaside Award application for Felixstowe for the year 2022, subject to achieving the criteria requirements, with Felixstowe's bathing water continuing to be confirmed as 'excellent'. Following a discussion, it was agreed that the Town Council should continue to sponsor the combined award, with the cost of £799 (+ VAT).

It was noted that East Suffolk Council had agreed to carry out the administration of the application.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Council should sponsor the combined Blue Flag and Seaside Award application for 2022, with the cost of £799 (+ VAT) to come from the budget provision for 2022/23, subject to Felixstowe's bathing water being confirmed as 'excellent' once again.

325. EARMARKED RESERVES EXPENDITURE

In Council's Terms of Reference which were approved and adopted at Annual Council (*Minute #9a of 2021/22 refers*), an additional authority gives Committees the ability to approve expenditure from Earmarked Reserves relevant to their scope of business, up to a limit of £20,000 in each financial year, without requiring further approval from Council.

It was RESOLVED that Council notes the following spending from Earmarked Reserves approved by the Assets & Services committee on 24 November 2021:

Min #	Description	Net Amount	Earmarked Reserve
260 iii	Heritage advice for Town Hall Windows	£900	Town Hall
261 ii	New cooker for Walton Community Hall	£249.17	Walton Community Hall
262 ii	Repair for boiler at Broadway House	tbc	Broadway House
263 ii	Essential work from Tree Survey work	tbc	Cemetery
263 iii	Bike Shelter for Cemetery	£725	Cemetery

326. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

It was **RESOLVED** that the following schedule and payment of accounts be received and approved:

Date	Voucher Nos.	Total Payment
16/11/2021	261 - 287	£36,046.05
30/11/2021	288 - 304	£56,579.75
15/12/2021	305 - 327	£10,712.83
31/12/2021	328 - 334	£41,580.85
	TOTAL	£ 144,919.48

327. CLOSURE

The Council gave congratulations to Cllr Darren Aitchison for the recent award of the British Empire Medal.

The meeting was closed at 9.10pm. It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 9 March 2022 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Town Mayor: _____