



# FELIXSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL

## Local Council Award Scheme Statements

### **Felixstowe Town Council (FTC) – LCAS “Ensures that the council delivers Value For Money”**

#### **Statement:**

Felixstowe Town Council considers economic, environmental and social value each time it reviews its services. Feedback from residents is welcomed in many ways; through the contact pages on the Felixstowe Town Council website, email, telephone and in person at the public sessions at every committee meeting, as well as opportunities for engagement through Council’s partnerships. Council’s place-based partnership, Felixstowe Forward, hosts regular public forums seeking feedback on services delivered by its three parent authorities and to determine priorities for action. Felixstowe Forward reports to each Ordinary Council meeting on progress with its action plan in order that Council may further direct priorities.

Best value is not simply based on ‘Value For Money’ but also the additional benefit that can be created by procuring or commissioning goods and services, above and beyond the benefit of merely the goods and services themselves. Value For Money is defined as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness (LGA 1999) and attaining best Value For Money means achieving a balance between all three. Best Value is a useful concept but no longer applies in law to Town Councils. The Council seeks to attain maximum benefit from the management of its assets and ensures that hire rates and service costs for both the Cemetery and Allotments are competitive and deliver value for money. The Council provides assurance that the public money managed by the Council is spent in accordance with governance rules and regulations. Council’s adopted Standing Orders (Financial Controls & Procurement page 16) and Financial Regulations (Orders for work, goods and services & Contracts pages 14-16) sets out procedures for proposed purchases and contracts which support this ‘Best Value’ approach. For example obtaining 3 quotes on items or contracts purchased above £500.

At each Council Meeting the spending from the previous period is reviewed and consideration is given to any out of budget expenditure which may be appropriate to come from Earmarked Reserves.

Arrangements with other local authorities are reviewed regularly to ensure best value and the contracts for maintenance, services and utilities are reviewed regularly and compared with other market providers to ensure best value for money.

Felixstowe Town Council is committed to an effective efficient service delivery and believes in developing strong working relations with its partners such as Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Felixstowe Forward, Landguard Partnership and other statutory bodies and voluntary/not for profit organisations. These partnerships have secured substantial grant funding for various community projects. The Council has its own Annual Grant and Occasional Grant budget where grants are available to local voluntary/not for profit organisations using Section 137.

Felixstowe Town Council seeks to set a fair and reasonable annual Parish precept, every year the Finance & General Purposes Committee give careful consideration to the previous year’s spend and any anticipated future budget requirements, where Value for Money is a major consideration. The findings of the meeting are placed before Full Council as part of the precept request and budget setting process.

## **Felixstowe Town Council (FTC) – LCAS “Meets its duties in relation to biodiversity and crime & disorder”**

### **Statement:**

In accordance with Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, Felixstowe Town Council has regard to conserving biodiversity as part of its policy or decision making.

The Council is a member of the ‘Landguard Partnership’ which is responsible for Landguard Peninsula, a large area of land lying south of the town. The partnership aims to ensure that Landguard Peninsula is managed in a sustainable manner, contributing to the nationally important environmental conservation, cultural heritage, educational resources and economic prosperity of the area and adds to the quality of life and enjoyment of the local community and visitors. The nature reserve at the peninsula is priority habitat and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Partnership considers quality goals for the prioritisation of better wildlife habitats.

Felixstowe Town Council owns 5 Allotment sites providing over 420 allotments available for hire by residents. The Council works in partnership with Felixstowe Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners (FSALG) to ensure that waiting lists are kept to a minimum, and allotment holders are able to obtain advice and information. Income generated through allotment rents goes towards the maintenance of the sites.

The Council also owns Peewit Hill, a small area of woodland of 0.2 ha (0.54 acre). The site acts as a green buffer between the commercial operations of the Port and the residential properties, and is a haven for the local flora and fauna. The Town Council is working with a local community enterprise to explore a management plan for this site.

Council operates and maintains Felixstowe Cemetery in a sympathetic manner to encourage appropriate wildlife and nesting birds.

Through its local initiative, Felixstowe in Flower, Felixstowe Town Council challenges the community to participate in a diverse range of floral competitions and schools to consider environmental projects.

Applications for local developments, strategic policy reviews and consultations affecting the local environment in Felixstowe are considered by the Town Council’s Planning & Environment Committee.

In accordance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Felixstowe Town Council recognises its duty to consider the impact of its functions and decisions relating to crime and disorder in its community. To support this further, the Council is a key partner with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), liaising regularly to review challenges and explore opportunities. The Town Council hosts regular SNT meetings at the Town Hall and Town Councillors attend. The SNT supports community groups to tackle a wide range of environmental and social community safety issues within Felixstowe. SNT keeps residents updated on progress related to priorities in the local area. They do this in a number of ways, including regular updates on their local website pages and by regularly reporting at Council Meetings. The Council has also been instrumental in encouraging participation from the Community Payback Scheme to deliver community projects in the town. Felixstowe Town Council supports the provision and maintenance of the town CCTV cameras in joint partnership with the District Council and Suffolk Constabulary.

Guidance is given to Members during meetings and training sessions in regard to their duties concerning crime, disorder and bio-diversity.

## **Felixstowe Town Council (FTC) – LCAS “Provides leadership in planning for the future of the Community”**

### **Statement:**

Felixstowe Town Council will continue to work proactively with local community groups, organisations, businesses and other statutory bodies with the aim to improve and enhance the quality of life for the residents of Felixstowe by ensuring that the town is a desirable, thriving and sustainable place in which to live.

The Council does this in a number of ways:

- Encourages open dialogue with residents to understand their needs, and endeavour to address these within the resources and powers available to the Town Council.
- Where services are provided directly they are managed to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost.
- Where services are provided by others Felixstowe Town Council endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community.
- Felixstowe Town Council provides a democratic and representational voice for the community.
- Felixstowe Town Council informs residents of its activities through its website, its bi-monthly newsletter, notice boards and the local press.

The Planning and Environment Committee meet every 2 weeks with an advertised agenda detailing all planning applications to be considered, these considerations are then submitted to the Principal Planning Authority (Suffolk Coastal District Council). Each meeting agenda is posted on the noticeboards and published on the website. Members of the public are encouraged to participate in any strategic planning consultations which impact upon their neighbourhood.

Felixstowe Town Council comment on all key strategic planning documents and consultations that affect Felixstowe, to ensure that the Council's knowledge and understanding of the local context is taken into account in planning decisions.

Felixstowe Town Council is a key partner in the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan Working Group, which has input and acts as a sounding board for the preparation of the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan. The Council continues to establish close working relations with Suffolk Coastal District Council, in particular the Officers and Members on the Planning Committee, in order to ensure that the needs and best interests of Felixstowe are taken into account in planning decisions.

Felixstowe Town Council will focus its resources on what matters to our residents and those that visit the area.

## **Felixstowe Town Council (FTC) – LCAS “Manages the performance of the Council as a Corporate Body”**

### **Statement:**

Felixstowe Town Council understands its responsibilities as a Corporate Body and manages its performance in a number of ways. The Council adheres to strong financial and governance practices as set out in its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners Guide (England) 2014 and deals with matters set by legislation within a statutory framework. In providing services the Town Council uses its statutory powers to the benefit of electors in the town. These powers currently cover all that is required of the Council to operate to the benefit of the community, and Felixstowe Town Council is qualified to adopt the Power of Competence by Council should it so wish. All procedures and policies are regularly reviewed by Council at least annually and key documents are published on the Council website.

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by a qualified Clerk who is appointed by Council, as the ‘Proper Officer.’ The Clerk, who is also the Council’s Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), is responsible for supporting and executing decisions of the council. As the Council’s Chief Executive Officer, the Clerk has responsibility for ensuring the Council’s functions are carried out within local government law and in accordance with the council’s policies and procedures. The Council currently employs a total of 12 staff, (4 full-time, 8 part-time). Payroll and Human Resource issues are undertaken by the Personnel Committee and referred to Full Council were necessary. The Appeals Committee exists as a second stage in grievance or disciplinary hearings for staff. It is also set up to receive any complaints from the public and external organisations regarding the Councils administration.

The Business Plan provides a framework for the Council to operate in a more consistent and co-ordinated way. It has been developed with community engagement and involvement and has been designed to allow the Town Council to become more confident and proactive in its decision-making. An Action Plan linked to the Business Plan provides short, medium and long term aims and objectives and is regularly reviewed to monitor progress against Council’s objectives. The Action Plan is linked to Council’s budget forecast which identifies resource and monetary requirements required to achieve its goals.

Felixstowe Town Council uses RBS Omega accounting software to produce financial reports on a monthly basis, these are presented to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and are published online.

Health and Safety, risk assessments and fire risk assessments are undertaken by the Clerk and/or nominated staff. Advice regarding these comes from HSE and our Insurance advisers. The Council’s insurers annually visit the Council offices to ensure that policies and procedures are adequate for the organisation.

The Town Council’s vision is for Felixstowe to be a successful, vibrant, attractive town, where people want to live, work, study, visit and play. It aims to meet the needs and aspirations of the community by being responsive, progressive, efficient and effective. Where services are provided by others, Felixstowe Town Council endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community, to create an inclusive, sustainable, healthier and more prosperous community.

**Felixstowe Town Council (FTC) – LCAS “Manages the performance of each individual staff member to achieve its Business Plan”**

**Statement:**

The Business Plan which runs the span of 4 years, provides Felixstowe Town Council with a framework to work within and provides a statement of the Council's Corporate Vision and Objectives for the Town. Along with the Action plan it sets out the Council's purpose, values, objectives and key priorities and details what the Council intends to focus on during the next four years. Both the Business Plan and Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated accordingly. The Plan gives residents a clear understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its services.

Felixstowe Town Council employs 12 members of staff, Town Clerk (FT), Estates Officer (PT), Mayor's Secretary (PT), Cemetery and Allotments Officer (PT), Finance Administration Officer (PT), Administration Assistant (PT), Cemetery Supervisor (PT), 3 Grounds Maintenance Assistants (FT), Caretaker (PT), Cleaner (PT). Regular Team meetings are held and recorded both for the administration team and the Cemetery team. At these meetings the Business Plan is used as guide to ensure actions are on track to be completed. An appraisal system is in place, which is designed to promote both the development needs of the Council and development needs of staff. It reviews staff's past priorities and achievements and sets future objectives and achievable targets which are linked to the Business Plan. Appraisals are carried out by the Clerk, with the exception that the Clerk's Appraisal is carried out by the Personnel Committee. Any issues identified are reported to Personnel committee.

The Council has developed an Annual Training plan which is based on the needs identified from appraisals. The Appraisal system ensures that staff are given appropriate support and access to training to enable them to efficiently carry out their duties and also to progress within the organisation. The Council sets out to reward the commitment of its staff, by providing a satisfying, flexible working environment with opportunities for personal development. Staff are provided with essential Health & Safety training, sector-specific training on IT, Cemetery and Council administration complemented by a wide-range of individual courses tailored to their individual needs.

All members of staff are issued with a Staff Handbook, containing details policies such as Anti-Harassment and Bullying, Capability, Disciplinary, Equal Opportunities, Flexible Working, Grievance, Stress and Whistleblowing Policy. Felixstowe Town Council adheres to its corporate duty in respect of the welfare of its employees.

All Felixstowe Town Council Councillors receive induction training which includes Code of Conduct, Corporate Governance etc. As local government and the business world are fast changing Members are encouraged to undertake training such as seminars & workshops to raise general awareness of topical issues, briefings and awareness sessions prior to making a key decision or policy changes and skills development for individual members or groups of members. The majority of Councillors participate in a member development programme. A record of all training received is held and regularly updated.

To ensure best levels of corporate performance, a full review and rationalisation of the Council's committee structure was undertaken in 2015/16 which introduced a new governance structure, Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference. This has given greater authority to Council's committees to consider the business of the Council on a thematic basis.

The Town Clerk and the Finance Administration Officer both hold the Certificate in Local Council Administration. The Town Clerk records CPD points in accordance with SLCC guidance.