

Our Ref: 30/LJM

16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to a meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee of Felixstowe Town Council** to be held at the **Town Hall, Felixstowe** on **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 at 7.00 p.m.**, for the transaction of the following business:

## **A G E N D A**

**1. Apologies.**

To receive apologies

**2. Declarations of Interest**

*Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.*

**3. To consider requests for dispensations for Councillors with a Pecuniary Interest.**

*Any Councillor with a pecuniary interest in a matter who wishes to be granted a dispensation to remain and speak during, or vote on, that matter, may apply for a dispensation in writing to the proper officer of the Town Council as soon as possible before the meeting which the dispensation is required. Applications may also be made at the meeting itself.*

**4. To Approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014. (attached).**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014

**5. To Consider a Request for Funding from Quiet Lanes Suffolk - attached**

To consider a request for funding from Quiet Lanes Suffolk

**6. To Consider A Presentation to Felixstowe Hockey Club to Denote the Award of England Hockey's "Club of the Year" Award – attached**

To consider a presentation to Felixstowe Hockey Club to denote the award of England Hockey's "Club of the Year" award

**7. To Note the Current Financial Position for the Town Council Administration and Civic Budgets – attached**

To note the current financial position for the Town Council Administration and Civic Budgets

**8. To Consider Possible Changes to Meeting Room layout and Other Mechanisms for Increasing the Audibility of Council Meetings – attached**

To consider possible changes to meeting room layout and other mechanisms for increasing the audibility of Council meetings

**9. To Consider a Policy for the Handling of Enquiries and Complaints - attached**

To consider a policy for the handling of enquiries and complaints

**10. To Consider Whether to Establish a Budget for Youth Forum Projects in the 2015/2016 budget - *attached***

To consider whether to establish a budget for Youth Forum projects in the 2015/2016 budget

**11. To Consider Proposals for the Use of 91-95 Undercliff Road West and Make Appropriate Recommendations to Full Council**

To consider proposals for the use of 91-95 Undercliff Road West and make appropriate recommendations to Full Council

**12. Closure**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A.S.', written in a cursive style.

TOWN CLERK

## **ITEM 5**

### **To Consider a Request for Funding from Quiet Lanes Suffolk**



**Quiet Lanes Suffolk**  
*C/o 44 Ferry Road,*  
**Bawdsey**  
**WOODBIDGE, Suffolk IP12 3AS**  
*01394411660*  
[christine.block@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](mailto:christine.block@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk)

April 2013

***Dear Chairman and Members of Felixstowe Town Council,***

The Quiet Lanes Suffolk Group is writing to let you know that this community initiative is going well and we are pleased to be able to update you on the steady progress made so far.

The lengthy statutory process which the County Council must go through before any of the lanes can be designated as a 'quiet lane' is moving towards its conclusion. The most recent period of consultation has closed and only one objection was received from a resident in one parish. The next step will be for the County Council's Rights of Way Committee to assess the proposals, consider the objection against likely benefits and then, if they are content to give the green light to go ahead, the scheme will be launched at the beginning of March..

In the meantime the Highways Authority will look at where the modest sized, Quiet Lane signs might be positioned at the end of each lane and give each Parish an opportunity to express their view. The Quiet Lanes Group will concentrate on preparing to publicise the campaign and explain that the designation does not preclude anyone from using the road but asks for all vehicle owners to drive with care and remember that they may meet walkers, cyclists and horse riders enjoying a quiet rural route.

It is also time to review the overall budget. You may be aware that the finance for this initiative has not come from the County Council's budget. The QL Group have been able to draw in money from a number of grant sources, including the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and the Big Lottery Awards for All scheme. Each of the County Councillors who have a Quiet Lane within their County Division has made a contribution from their Local Transport Budget. Your help towards the costs of the signs in your area will make all the difference and so we are approaching each of the Parishes and Towns involved to ask for a modest donation ( £200 or £250 would be helpful but any contribution will be very welcome. This could be via a cheque payable to '*Quiet Lanes Suffolk*' and send it to my address above.)

We trust that the Quiet Lanes scheme will make a difference to the daily lives of people living in your area. We also hope that knowledge of the quieter, safer lanes may encourage visitors to come into the countryside - to enjoy our special landscape and support our rural pubs and businesses.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

*Christine Block*

Cllr Christine Block  
Chair, Quiet Lanes Group  
Tel 01394 411660

## **ITEM 6**

### **To Consider A Presentation to Felixstowe Hockey Club to Denote the Award of England Hockey's "Club of the Year" Award**

A number of Members have expressed a wish to denote the achievement of Felixstowe Hockey Club being awarded England Hockey's "Club of the Year" Award by Felixstowe Town Council making some form of award, possibly by way of a plaque.

The cost of having a plaque made and engraved is estimated at less than £20.

## **ITEM 7**

### **To Note the Current Financial Position for the Town Council Administration and Civic Budgets**

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% of Budget
<u>101</u> <u>Town Council</u>							
4000 Employee Salaries	12,095	33,562	159,125	125,563		125,563	21.1 %
4001 Employer National Insurance	692	1,131	19,100	17,969		17,969	5.9 %
4002 Employer Pension Contributions	1,831	5,520	35,500	29,980		29,980	15.5 %
4030 Training	600	2,236	1,500	-736		-736	149.1 %
4040 Employee Travel	53	53	500	447		447	10.6 %
4070 Protective Clothing/First Aid	0	0	150	150		150	0.0 %
4080 Staff Membership Fees	0	376	0	-376		-376	0.0 %
4095 Honoraria	0	0	250	250		250	0.0 %
4170 Repairs and Maintenance	0	403	0	-403		-403	0.0 %
4260 Purchase New Tools/Equipment	0	0	250	250		250	0.0 %
4262 Lease Tools/Equipment	0	0	2,100	2,100		2,100	0.0 %
4330 Fuel	0	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0 %
4400 Stationery	72	836	2,600	1,765		1,765	32.1 %
4420 Newsletter Print	0	604	2,250	1,646		1,646	26.8 %
4421 Newsletter Distribution	0	283	1,750	1,468		1,468	16.1 %
4425 Postage	0	762	3,300	2,538		2,538	23.1 %
4426 Hand Books	12	12	200	188		188	6.0 %
4440 Telephone Rental	625	0	0	0		0	0.0 %
4441 Telephone Calls	-172	803	2,000	1,197		1,197	40.2 %
4445 Mobile Phone Rental	0	-45	0	45		45	0.0 %
4446 Mobile Phone Calls	0	45	410	365		365	10.9 %
4460 Subscriptions	0	2,126	2,300	174		174	92.4 %
4461 External Audit	0	0	1,300	1,300		1,300	0.0 %
4462 Internal Audit	0	138	660	522		522	20.9 %
4464 Insurance	0	7,464	15,429	7,965		7,965	48.4 %
4465 Information Commission Reg	0	0	35	35		35	0.0 %
4466 Catering Sundries	15	70	500	430		430	14.0 %
4467 Newspapers	0	0	50	50		50	0.0 %
4468 Miscellaneous	0	0	250	250		250	0.0 %
4470 Books and Publications	0	0	100	100		100	0.0 %
4480 IT Hardware Provision	0	1,602	3,610	2,008		2,008	44.4 %
4481 IT Hardware Maintenance	0	4,006	4,500	494		494	89.0 %
4482 IT Software Licences	64	1,250	1,140	-110		-110	109.7 %
4490 Legal Fees	1,802	1,802	0	-1,802		-1,802	0.0 %
4505 Mayoral Allowance	-7,000	0	0	0		0	0.0 %
4511 Town Twinning	0	1,066	4,500	3,434		3,434	23.7 %
4512 Engraving/Sign Writing	60	60	0	-60		-60	0.0 %
4513 Civic Awards	0	193	875	682		682	22.1 %
4550 Bank Charges	309	309	750	441		441	41.3 %
4551 Card Merchant Charge	34	82	300	218		218	27.3 %

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## Felixstowe Town Council

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Detailed Income &amp; Expenditure by Budget Heading 15/07/2014

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Month No : 3

## Cost Centre Report

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% of Budget
4552 Barclaycard Fee	0	0	35	35		35	0.0 %
4600 CCTV	7,185	7,185	6,980	-205		-205	102.9 %
4611 Bus Shelter Maintenance	0	0	750	750		750	0.0 %
4612 Bus Shelter Cleaning	62	185	750	565		565	24.7 %
4620 Languard Partnership	1,000	1,000	1,000	0		0	100.0 %
4625 Felixstowe Bawclsey Ferry	200	200	200	0		0	100.0 %
4630 Level 2	1,000	1,000	1,000	0		0	100.0 %
4645 Christmas Lights	0	6,750	7,250	500		500	93.1 %
4650 Events	0	5,109	5,000	-109		-109	102.2 %
4655 Grants	3,600	4,600	0	-4,600		-4,600	0.0 %
Town Council :- Expenditure	<b>24,138</b>	<b>92,778</b>	<b>291,249</b>	<b>198,471</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>198,471</b>	<b>31.9 %</b>
1800 Agency Income	0	0	1,500	-1,500			0.0 %
1805 Bank Interest Received	199	523	3,750	-3,227			14.0 %
1810 Donations	0	0	500	-500			0.0 %
1850 Miscellaneous Income	-49	2,357	0	2,357			0.0 %
1900 Precept	0	254,221	508,420	-254,199			50.0 %
1901 Transition Grant	0	26,072	52,166	-26,094			50.0 %
Town Council :- Income	<b>150</b>	<b>283,173</b>	<b>566,336</b>	<b>-283,163</b>			<b>50.0 %</b>
<b>Net Expenditure over Income</b>	<b>23,988</b>	<b>-190,395</b>	<b>-275,087</b>	<b>-84,692</b>			

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**Felixstowe Town Council**

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**Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 15/07/2014**

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**Month No : 3****Cost Centre Report**

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% of Budget
<u>102</u> Civic							
4500 Election Expenses	0	0	3,500	3,500		3,500	0.0 %
4505 Mayoral Allowance	7,000	7,000	7,000	0		0	100.0 %
4510 Civic Regalia	0	0	250	250		250	0.0 %
4511 Town Twinning	0	0	4,500	4,500		4,500	0.0 %
4512 Engraving/Sign Writing	0	8	250	242		242	3.2 %
4513 Civic Awards	0	300	875	575		575	34.3 %
4530 Civic Service	0	0	300	300		300	0.0 %
4531 Remembrance Day	0	0	300	300		300	0.0 %
Civic :- Expenditure	<b>7,000</b>	<b>7,308</b>	<b>16,975</b>	<b>9,667</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,667</b>	<b>43.1 %</b>
<b>Net Expenditure over Income</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>7,308</b>	<b>16,975</b>	<b>9,667</b>			

## **ITEM 8**

### **To Consider Possible Changes to Meeting Room layout and Other Mechanisms for Increasing the Audibility of Council Meetings**

For some time complaints have been received from members of the public that they are unable to fully hear discussions at Full Council meetings. Whilst it is acknowledged that the hearing loop in the Council Chamber has limitations, the complaints, in the main, have come from those members of the public who do not rely (or should rely !) on hearing aids.

Whilst no Council can legislate for the ability of members to project their voices, there are some measures which the Town Council might wish to consider to improve the ability of the public to hear the debates. The first is relatively easy to achieve, and involves the Council sitting in an open-ended U-shape, rather than a closed square as at present. The (non-dias) end of the closed square acts as a barrier to sound travelling to the general public and its removal would improve audibility. To accommodate the changes the Deputy Mayor's position would be changed so that they occupied a space on the dias, with seven Members each side of the U.

It is proposed therefore to vary the room layout for Full Council, and Finance & General Purposes Committee (the largest Committee) to provide for an open U layout, and to review public comments as to audibility after six months. Should the public still comment on their inability to follow the debate then consideration will need to be given to electronic measures to enhance audibility.

**Recommended: That the room layout changes be implemented and reviewed within six months.**

## **ITEM 9**

### **To Consider a Policy for the Handling of Enquiries and Complaints**

The Town Council has, for forty years, received enquiries and complaints at the Town Hall. Initially these were received from personal callers, post or by telephone; more recently these have been received by email (using the [enquiries@felixstowe.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@felixstowe.gov.uk) account and since May the [lofefelixstowe@felixstowe.gov.uk](mailto:lofefelixstowe@felixstowe.gov.uk) account). Most of these enquiries relate to the services provided by other organisations.

The long-established practice for dealing with such enquiries, which range from the enquiries about availability of services to complaints about services, has been to refer the individual to the most appropriate organisation, which might include Tourist Information, the Police, another local authority or Trading Standards.

Not all of the enquiries come from residents of Felixstowe but from visitors who either notice the Town Council offices or who have been directed to them. Those residents who enquire directly of the Town Council do so even though they have the opportunity to speak directly to their Councillor. When dealing with their enquiry we may be aware that theirs is not the first such enquiry on that subject, and will advise them accordingly. If asked for their local Councillor's contact details we offer those.

There is a Freephone in the Town Council reception which links directly to Suffolk Coastal District Council offices and personal callers are offered use of it to refer their enquiries/complaints there.

It has not been the policy of the Council to date that all enquirers are referred solely to their local Councillor, nor that Councillors are notified of any enquiries made by residents of their area. Occasionally (very occasionally) we may notify an appropriate Councillor (not necessarily the Ward Member) if the matter is extreme and urgent; since September 2013 the only such instance being when the failure of the public toilets to open after the time change in March was the source of numerous complaints on the following Monday morning, and then only because Councillor Smith happened to call into the office.

There have been no comments made by Councillors on the operation of this process previously, which has seemingly worked well since 1974. Since the introduction of the lovefelixstowe email account however, some Members are asking that enquiries are not dealt with by Town Council staff but are referred to individual Councillors to address. The rationale behind this request seems to be:-

- a) The local Member is then aware of the enquiry
- b) It may avoid duplication of enquiries
- c) Individual Members are able to use their informal networks to get matters addressed quicker

There are however matters which need to be considered if this is to become the official policy for dealing with enquiries received at the Town Hall, which include:-

- a) Should the enquirer simply be supplied with the Councillor list, with no attempt by staff to resolve the enquiry ?
- b) Will not duplication of enquiries still occur if the enquirer contacts all their Ward Members ?
- c) How will enquirers react when staff refuse to assist other than offering a Councillor list – this is particularly pertinent when enquiries are received by way of a personal caller ?
- d) As Members leave the Town Council, new Members will not have the advantage of those informal contacts, so will have to rely on the official contact route with other organisations to address enquiries – and the introduction of centralised contact centres by those other organisations can impact upon long-established contact methods
- e) Not all Members will have the resources to deal with enquiries - there is no requirement upon a Councillor to deal with casework, and some Members (particularly those still in full-time employment) may not have the time to do so
- f) Other organisations base their resource allocation on the number of complaints or enquiries (etc.) received; reducing duplication of these enquiries may do Felixstowe a disservice as resources may then be cut
- g) Responding to enquiries from the general public is part and parcel of the day to day operation of the Town Council, and how it deals with those contributes to the public perception of the Council. With an in-house operation by staff the quality and speed of responses can be monitored and appropriate action taken to ensure a uniformity of action. Members are accountable only to their electorate

**Members are to consider whether they wish to amend the policy that enquiries received at the Town Hall are dealt with by staff**

## **ITEM 10**

### **To Consider Whether to Establish a Budget for Youth Forum Projects in the 2015/2016 budget**

At the meeting of Full Council held 19<sup>th</sup> June it was agreed that the Finance & General Purposes Committee should consider establishing a budget for the Youth Forum, in order that youth-focussed projects could be supported. The establishment of a separate budget head would also give encouragement to the Youth Forum, whose work has been recognised across Suffolk.

For the Youth Forum to be able to develop projects for funding, the budget needs to be appropriate, and based on the experience of other youth projects, an initial budget of £5,000 would be required. This would enable it to be sufficient to deliver small projects or to lever in larger grant support for projects.

**Members are to consider whether to establish a budget, and for what sum, for the Youth Forum in the 2015/2016 budget process**

## **ITEM 11**

### **To Consider Proposals for the Use of 91-95 Undercliff Road West and Make Appropriate Recommendations to Full Council**

As Members are aware the property adjacent to the Town Hall has been registered as an asset of community value, and although not currently on the open market, the process towards its disposal by Suffolk Coastal District Council has commenced, and this Council has until 24<sup>th</sup> October to submit "an acceptable offer" to that Council should the Town Council decide to acquire it.

The property guide price is c£350,000, although as a Town Council we would have it independently valued by the District Valuer. Further likely terms of transfer are unknown. The Town Council's Consultant Architect has inspected the premises and has reported that they are in a poor state of repair, particularly the upper floors.

The Planning Officers have indicated that some form of seafront/tourism-related business would be acceptable, particularly at ground floor level; this could include retail, catering, or even rental accommodation.

However the original intention of expressing an interest in the property was to try to maximise the Council's existing business model for the Town Hall, by offering the full wedding/conference package to include catering, hospitality, and dancing, as well as limited overnight accommodation. Accordingly the Council's Architect has drawn up a suggested layout to provide for:-

#### **Ground Floor**

An independent retail unit

A dance floor, bar, toilets and new entrance lobby with lift access to the first floor

## First Floor

A function suite (125 covers), kitchen, reception/seminar suite, toilets

## Second Floor

Two independent apartments which can be accessed from within or independently of the rest of the building

The estimated cost of these changes to the internal, and for the second floor, external, structure of the property is estimated at c£1 million, but this would provide the style of wedding function suite capable of attracting a premium rate, as well as much needed conference facilities (now omitted from the Pier development). With the Premier Inn development offering affordable quality accommodation nearby the development will add to the overall Felixstowe offer. But only if the income can be guaranteed.

The Suffolk Wedding Planner of the Year has provided input in respect of likely ability to attract weddings, and potential rates. In Suffolk there are 22,000 weddings per annum, and a venue such as this will be of interest to brides within an hours' drive, possibly longer in the London direction, offering the only seafront venue in Suffolk and North Essex. In addition she has suggested (a suggestion which could be proceeded with independently of the acquisition of 91-95 Undercliff Road West, that the Council purchase a beach hut enabling it to offer "beach" weddings with the ability to transfer to the Town Hall in the event of inclement weather.

So the viability rests with the finances, which have been estimated as follows:-

### Fixed Costs

Purchase Repayments	£	12,795
Refurbishment Repayments	£	36,556
Annual Ongoing Maintenance	£	50,000
Energy Costs	£	3,000
Insurance	£	5,000
Cleaning Costs	£	8,000
Advertising/Promotion	£	5,000
Shop rent	-£	5,000
	<b>£</b>	<b>115,350</b>

### Variable Costs per event

Venue Hire	-£	4,000
Co-ordinator - Commission Basis	£	1,000
Contribution from Catering/Bar Contractors	-£	100
Door staff	£	1,000
	<b>-£</b>	<b>2,100</b>

Breakeven is therefore (based on weddings alone) over 50 weddings per annum, which is probably unrealistic to expect/achieve – a figure of 25 Saturday weddings in the period April –September is more realistic, with a small number of mid-week weddings.

**Likely Costs of Wedding - 100 guests                      £ 6,000      venue plus catering for 100**

Is this a realistic figure ?

**Comparable Costs**

Jimmys Farm	£ 1,750	venue only
The Manor	£ 2,950	for 50 daytime/100 evening inc food
Smeetham Hall	£ 5,000	for 50 daytime/100 evening inc food
Woodhall Manor	£ 3,500	for 50 guests inc food
Wherstead Park	£ 4,000	venue only
Bruisyard Hall	£ 15,000	100 guests (includes overnight accommodation for up to 24)

On this basis therefore the likely charges (venue plus food) are at the top end of the market, although some of the other venues only offer marquee accommodation as distinct from a purpose-built venue.

How else could the financial shortfall be met ? Is there a market, existing or potential, for a seafront conference venue ? With the advent of the Premier Inn development within easy walking distance offering budget-priced accommodation, there is certainly an opportunity to offer a facility for mid-week conferences but again insufficient to assure the Council of secure future funding.

In the light of this inability to provide some surety of funding Members are asked to consider whether to proceed with the acquisition of these premises.