

**MINUTES of the FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held at
Town Hall, Felixstowe on Wednesday 25 October 2023 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr M Deacon (Chairman)
Cllr D Rowe (Vice-Chairman) Cllr M James
Cllr D Aitchison Cllr M Sharman
Cllr S Bird Cllr S Wiles

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)
Mr S Congi (Financial Administration Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE: One member of the public (*via Zoom*)

245. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

246. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr S Bennett**.

247. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Other Registerable Interests, to which no matters on the agenda were directly related, were noted:

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr M Deacon	All	Other registerable interests (as Members of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr S Bird Cllr S Wiles	All	Other registerable interests (as Members of Suffolk County Council)

Members were advised that, should any matters arise in the meeting that directly relate to any of their interests, they should make appropriate declarations at that time.

248. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 12 July 2023 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

249. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 30 September 2023. A report of any variance to budget estimates for the period greater than 10% or £500 was considered.

The Financial Administration Assistant highlighted that water consumption and equipment purchases at the Cemetery were higher than anticipated on budget for this point.

It was RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 September 2023 be noted.

250. QUARTERLY BANK RECONCILIATIONS

It was confirmed that Cllr D Rowe, as the Council's nominated Quarterly Bank Reconciliation Signatory (*Minute #15 2023/24 refers*) had signed the reconciliation between the bank statement and Scribe accounts to confirm the amounts agreed each month.

RESOLVED that it be noted that the reconciliations between the bank statement and accounts statements for the period 1 April - 30 September 2023 had been reviewed and signed by Cllr D Rowe.

251. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

Committee noted that the External Audit for the Financial Year 2022/23 had been completed on 1 September 2023, with the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn, having expressed the view that the information was in accordance with proper practices and no matters had come to attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

Members recorded a vote of thanks to the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, and Finance Administration Assistant for their work in achieving Council's ongoing unqualified audits.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, including Audit Certificate, be approved and accepted as presented; and,**
- ii. it be noted that, in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 as defined by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been put on the Town Hall noticeboard from 13 September 2023 and is available to view on the Financial Page of the Town Council website.**

252. IT EQUIPMENT UPDATE

Committee noted the report on the provision of IT equipment for Councillors.

It was RESOLVED that the report; and, expenditure of £4,974.53 from the IT Replacement Fund Earmarked Reserve which had been committed under Delegated Authority to the Town Clerk, be noted.

253. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) ANNUAL REPORT

Committee considered the report on the Community Infrastructure Levy and the CIL Annual Report for 2022/23.

RESOLVED that the Community Infrastructure Levy Annual Report for 2022/23 be approved as presented, published on the Council's website before 31st December 2023, and sent to East Suffolk Council.

254. BUSINESS PLAN 2024–28

The Town Clerk confirmed the dates and times of the two workshops taking place to help develop the Council's next 4-year Business Plan being held at Broadway House on Tuesday 7th November 7 – 9 pm and Wednesday 15th November 7 – 9pm.

The Clerk advised that the Business Plan Steering Group had a met with the appointed outside facilitator who would be supporting the workshops. All staff, as well as Councillors, were invited to attend these sessions. Anyone unable to attend can provide feedback on the questions that were attached to the agenda and had been circulated by email.

RESOLVED that the report on the Business Plan 2024 – 28 be noted.

255. NOTICE OF ELECTION FOR FELIXSTOWE SOUTH WARD

The election will take place on Thursday 23 November 2023, the Polling stations will be at St. John's and St. Edmunds with the Town Hall being used for the count afterwards.

The cost of the By-Election will come from the Elections Expenses Earmarked Reserves. The cost was currently unknown but would be reported in due course.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the report on the Notice of Election for Felixstowe South Ward be noted; and,**
- ii. The cost of the by-election be taken from the Elections Expenses Earmarked Reserve, the amount to be reported in due course.**

256. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES & EXPENSES POLICY 2023–27

The Town Clerk updated members on the Parish Basic Allowance and the District Council's independent remuneration panel. The panel has been asked to consider suggesting an allowance for Parish Councillors. This is currently with SALC and the Town Clerk will update committee when there is more information on this. This is not urgent as it had been decided that a Member's allowance was not to be taken at this time, but if it is decided to investigate a

member's allowance in the future then Council can consider the District Council's independent remuneration panel's recommendation.

Committee reviewed the updated Member's Allowance & Expenses Policy. Under eye tests if someone requires spectacles to use specifically for computer work then this cost could be reimbursed.

Under Subsistence, this should be amended to be set at HMRC level without receipts. Where receipts are provided, then the amount should be of up to £45. These expenses to be separate from the cost of overnight accommodation which, if required, would be arranged directly by the Town Hall.

Members discussed the email received regarding allowing mileage claims inside of the Parish of Felixstowe. Members discussed the small amounts that would be claimed and the work involved in processing the claims and agreed that the policy should not be amended to include this.

Under mileage, it was agreed that the rates be changed to standard rate.

It was RESOLVED that the Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy be recommended for approval at Ordinary Council as presented with the above amendments.

257. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.12pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____