

**MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
held at **Felixstowe School**  
on **Wednesday 8 May 2024** at **7pm**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

From Felixstowe Town Council:

Cllr S Bennett (Mayor)

Cllr M Deacon (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr D Aitchison

Cllr S Bird

Cllr J Candy

Cllr A Folley

Cllr C Franklin

Cllr S Harkin

Cllr M James

Cllr M Morris

Cllr B Price

Cllr S Gallant

Cllr D Rowe

Cllr M Sharman

Cllr S Wiles

Mr A Tadjirishi (Town Clerk)

Mrs S Faversham (Civic Events Officer)

Mr S Congi (Financial Admin Assistant)

Miss H Miles (Communications Officer)

Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)

Mrs S Morrison (Planning Admin Assistant)

Mrs J Smith (Assets & Services Officer)

Approximately 135 members of the public were also in attendance.

**546. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

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

**547. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 10 May 2023 were confirmed as a true record by those present and the Mayor was authorised to sign them.

**548. MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mayor of Felixstowe presented the following report:

Dear Felixstowe Friends. Firstly, I would like to read you a message from the people of Knighton, in Powys, Wales, where our recent Mayor's charity bike ride was welcomed so warmly just 10 days ago, enroute from St David's home to Felixstowe, and on our way to raising £7,500 for the Mayor's charities in five incredible days of cycling 400 miles coast to coast. A traditional greeting from the town crier to all nations:

*"From Knighton, a paradise of gentle mountains and twisting rivers, we bring you a vision,*

*From our green valleys with old narrow houses, we bring you greetings.*

*From all tradesmen, craftsmen and industrialists, we bring you an open hand,*

*Our smiles come like music on the wind, our voices shout to you across the meadows.  
From our townsfolk and farmers, we bring you love.  
May you good people in these vast spaces know happiness and prosperity.  
God Save the King”*

This was one of many special moments on a tough 5-day 400-mile (nearly half of them ‘Welsh’!) ride, that challenged our superb team of six local riders and spread awareness and positive vibes about Felixstowe right across the country. It has been a fitting finale to an incredible year.

Being Mayor of my hometown has been a life-defining, life-changing and life-enhancing experience. And, mainly through the hard work of, and in partnership with, numerous people and organizations, I hope I leave the role having also enhanced the life of our beautiful, thriving town, my fellow residents, and our shared environment. After a ‘shaky’ start opening the new TIC, my ribbon cutting abilities have sharpened up nicely, and I am pleased to say solid cake-cutting skills have held up well under pressure, including a successful slicing of a glorious 27-layer chocolate sponge at the amazing Stennetts Community Café in Trimley last week.

Another spectacular cake by Jenny Holland, was the centrepiece of our recent reaffirmation of vows with our twin town, Wesel, after 50 years of partnership. In the glorious surroundings of Harvest House, we marked half a century of cooperation and connection with our European friends and colleagues. Thanks to the Wesel Association for organizing an exceptional weekend of events to celebrate this landmark.

When I was first elected to the Town Council in 2019, I saw our European twinning links as something to get involved with and nurture, so I’m very pleased to have been able to visit both our partner towns in my mayoral year, Wesel twice in fact, and see the links strengthen, based on mutual respect and positive personal relations – as well as dips in ‘fresh’ lakes and the sharing of a few cold beers. My recent trip to historic Salzwedel, twin of 30 years, in the old East Germany was another special highlight. I’d like to say ‘vielen dank’ to both my counterpart “Burgermeisters”, Ulrike Westkamp and Olaf Meining for their friendship and hospitality throughout the year.

Peace is priceless. And remembering and honoring those who have gone before us is something Felixstowe does beautifully. In November, standing with our schools for Poppies on the Prom, and laying the town’s wreath at the War Memorial were among the greatest honors of my life and I thank and applaud our Royal British Legion for organising this and the Festival of Remembrance so well. Another poignant moment was looking out over the waves and addressing a large, hushed audience at the Spa Gardens on a warm summer’s evening as part of Suffolk Remembers – the perfect, dignified place for the whole county to gather, reflect on and celebrate their loved ones’ lives. In January we also gathered on Langer Road at the Memorial Garden with children from Langer School to remember the 41 flood victims of 1953.

We were also greatly saddened, and Felixstowe is the poorer for it, by the sudden and untimely death of newly-elected but highly experienced Councillor, David Underwood, in August. David had been Mayor of Godmanchester and was all set to have been a valuable addition to the Town Council. Our thoughts remain with David's kind and resilient wife Wendy, who was instrumental in bringing us April's amazing Fashion Show.

A great idea was started in Sharon's mayoral year – Felixstowe's very own Charity Fashion Show. Now this wasn't obviously a forte of mine, so I left it to a brilliant local team to run with the idea and amazingly, within around three months an incredible, inclusive event was created, entertaining over 250 people, supporting and supported by numerous local businesses, including La Vida, and raising £5,500 for the charities. Stepping up as a model and styling it out may now need to be added to the Mayor's job description! Huge thanks to Brendon, Murray, Wendy and all the committee, as well as Coes and St John's Parish for hosting us. It wasn't so much a case of 'anything goes' but more one of 'everyone can come and play their part'.

And this is what I've tried to champion as Mayor, and what I hope these pictures and the ones to follow will show: the range of different activities and individuals doing great things for our town and the power of inclusive community action. We are a thriving and growing place. Yes, this can create some issues, but I think it's worth remembering that many places are struggling to grow and flourish, and as I learnt on those Welsh hills and valleys – it's always best to stay positive and generous, gather a varied team, work as a team and keep up forward momentum.

After this year, I now know more than ever, that as a town we have the energy and expertise to handle challenges and seize opportunities as they arise. And I would add another 'e' word here – empathy. What I've seen is that Felixstowe is at its best, and is indeed exceptional, when we reach out across the whole community and come together and focus on what unites us – whether it be swimming, knitting, bowls, art, fishing, cars, clothes, litter-picking – and consider and actively include all, harness everyone's potential. We have it all here in Felixstowe and it has been my privilege to be your lookout, your advocate and supporter for these last 12 fabulous Felixstowe months. I'd like to thank ALL the Members and staff of our award-winning Town Council. Being elected first as a Councillor and then as Mayor / Chair of the Council has been such an honour and privilege, as I know you all know, and one I appreciate and cherish every day.

Special thanks to my highly experienced and knowledgeable Deputy Mayor, Cllr Mike Deacon, who has been a great support throughout the year. Thanks for massive support and constant hard work of Ash, Debbie, Janine, Sarah, Shaun, Holly, Ross, Percy, Mark, Tom, Roger, Andy, Roy, Rob, Justin and of course our Civic Events Officer Sue Faversham for her amazing positivity and devotion to the cause!

And of course, the four charities – what an incredible year it's been! I couldn't decide on 1, 2, or 3 as is usual, so went for a not so obvious but definitely Fab

Four – Pitstop, NCI, Coast Patrol & Rescue, and Boost, who have stepped up and put their big hearts and generous souls into this year with me and for the town. The links, understanding and respect between you all now is a pleasure to see and I know will lead to more great things and good for the town in future.

#### **549. CIVIC AWARDS 2024**

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 2024

Laura Locke, for creating and being the driving force behind WAMFest - Women in Arts and Music. Laura also presents on Felixstowe Radio and uses her airtime to champion local people, issues, causes, charities and the arts.

David Martin, for his dedication to provide Judo and fitness, discipline and numerous benefits to the residents of Felixstowe.

Steve Porter, for his work in organising all the entertainment for the Carnival for the last 15 years.

Lyndon Hunt, for his commitment as coordinator for the Felixstowe Community 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Group, a volunteer group that responds to medical emergencies at the request of the East of England Ambulance Service. Over the years he has saved many lives.

Keith Horn, for his work with various organisations such as Old Felixstowe Community Association, where he was Chairman and the Felixstowe Society where he is currently Joint Vice Chairman. Keith and his wife Elizabeth have maintained the Garden of Remembrance in Old Felixstowe churchyard from 2007 to Sept 2023. Keith has been an active member of the Allotment Association and helped out with Rudolph and Father Christmas for a number of years.

##### b) HMS Ganges Youth Trophy

Jake and Logan Croarkin, for fundraising over £10,000 by running 100km in March. Their father has been struck down with Leukaemia for the third time.

##### c) The Community Award

Breast Friends CIC, for their work in supporting people in all stages of the breast cancer journey. 3 years ago Caroline Sturman and Janine Aldis met up after experiencing breast cancer, its treatment and recovery. They now provide comfort boxes, arrange support group meet ups, health and well being walks and offer expertise from professionals with specialist knowledge.

d) Special Commendations

Remus Chinery for “Selfless in Adversity”. Remus regularly litter picks with his younger brother with Litter Free Felixstowe. He actively fund raises in the community for Clic Sargent and children suffering with cancer, like him. Remus has been the youngest volunteer at Pushchair Pitstop.

Roy Gray, for outstanding contribution to community groups in Felixstowe. Roy has been chairman of Felixstowe Hospital League of Friends Charity for many years.

**550. PRESENTATION TO MAYOR’S CHARITIES**

The Mayor announced that so far, a total of £27,395 had been raised in support of his four chosen charities: BOOST Felixstowe, Felixstowe Coast Patrol and Rescue, Felixstowe NCI and Pushchair Pitstop. The final amount would be known and publicised once the Mayor’s Charity Ball had taken place.

**551. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS**

The following reports were noted as received:

- 356 (Felixstowe) RAF Air Cadets
- Art on the Prom
- Citizens advice
- Cuppa
- Dora Brown
- East Suffolk Council
- Emmaus
- Felixstowe & District Council for Sport and Recreation
- Felixstowe & Suffolk Bowling Club
- Felixstowe & Villages Carers Group
- Felixstowe Book Festival
- Felixstowe Carnival
- Felixstowe Coast Patrol
- Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club
- Felixstowe Museum
- Felixstowe Opportunity Group
- Friends of Felixstowe Hospital
- Friends of Felixstowe Library
- Harwich Harbour Ferry
- Headway
- Homestart
- Ipswich Skating Club
- Level Two
- Men's Shed
- Music in Felixstowe
- Old Felixstowe Nursery

- Salzwedel Association
- SARS
- St Andrews Pre-school
- St Phillips Community Hub
- Suffolk County Council
- Suffolk Mind- Felixstowe Counselling & Cost of Living Support Project
- The Lions Club of Felixstowe
- WAMfest
- Wesel Twinning Association

## **552. 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 member of the public, a former Mayor of Felixstowe who had served as a Councillor for many years, congratulated the Mayor on an excellent year and a remarkable fundraising total for his charities.

## **553. CLOSURE**

There being no other questions or comments the meeting was closed at 8.05pm. The Mayor invited all those present to join him in the school atrium for some light refreshments and an opportunity to browse the community stalls.

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_