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9 am to 4 pm Mondays to Fridays



TOWN HALL
FELIXSTOWE
SUFFOLK
IP11 2AG

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr M Deacon (Chairman)

Cllr David Rowe (Vice Chairman)

Cllr D Aitchison

Cllr S Bennett

Cllr S Bird

Cllr M James

Cllr M Sharman

Cllr D Underwood

Cllr S Wiles

You are hereby summoned to attend the **FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** meeting of the **FELIXSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL** to be held at the **Town Hall, Felixstowe** on **Wednesday 12 July 2023** at **7.30pm** for the transaction of the following business:

Public Attendance

Meetings of the Town Council and its Committees are open to the press and public who are welcome to attend. Members of the public are invited to make representations or put questions to the Committee during the public session.

There is a limit to the number of public attending in-person. If you wish to attend in person, please email townclerk@felixstowe.gov.uk to confirm capacity.

Members of the public are very welcome join via Zoom using the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83090518311> Alternatively, you may join via the meeting ID 830 9051 8311 or over the telephone by calling 0131 460 1196.

Our online meeting guidance can be found here: <https://www.felixstowe.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Remote-Meeting-Guidelines.pdf>

Council has a duty to pay due regard to preventing crime and disorder and to conserve biodiversity in its decision-making and Members are reminded to consider the Council's commitment to climate action.



The Council kindly asks that anyone planning to attend the meeting in-person to consider car-sharing or low-carbon modes of transport to the Town Hall.

Ash Tadjrishi
Town Clerk
7 July 2023

For information (via email):

All Town Councillors
Local Press



A G E N D A

- 1. Public Question Time**
Up to 15 minutes is set aside to allow members of the public (up to three minutes each) to make representations or put questions to the Committee on any relevant matters.
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 3. Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations of interest and to consider requests for dispensations from Members for matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
- 4. Confirmation of Minutes**
To confirm the Minutes of the Finance & Governance meeting held on 24 May 2023 as a true record. **(Pages 3-6)**
- 5. Budget Monitoring to 30 June 2023**
To receive budget monitoring report to 30 June 2023 and consider any actions deemed necessary. **(Pages 7-11 & Appendix A)**
- 6. Council Investments**
To consider the re-investment from the proceeds of a 1 year fixed-rate bond with Close Brothers. **(Pages 12-13)**
- 7. Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy 2023-27**
To review the Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy and consider whether to introduce a Basic Allowance for Members. **(Pages 14-17 & Appendix B)**
- 8. IT Equipment**
To consider provision of IT hardware and support for members. **(Page 18)**
- 9. Council and Committee Meeting Times**
To consider bringing the start time of Council and Committee meetings forward from 7.30pm to 7pm. **(Page 19)**
- 10. Business Plan 2024 - 2028**
To consider a schedule for creating Council's Business Plan 2024-2028. **(Page 19)**
- 11. Closure**
To close proceedings and confirm the date of the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 25 October 2023 at 7.30pm.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**MINUTES of the FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held at
Town Hall, Felixstowe on Wednesday 24 May 2023 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr D Rowe (Vice Chairman in the chair)
Cllr M Sharman
Cllr S Bird
Cllr M James
Cllr D Underwood

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

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

27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Deacon, Cllr Aitchison, Cllr S Bennett and Cllr S Wiles.**

29. 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 S Bird	All	Other registerable interest (as a 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.

30. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 23 March 2023 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

31. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: FULL YEAR 2022/23

Members considered the final Internal Audit Report for the year 1 April – 31 March 2023 as presented.

The Auditor's recommendation that Councillors should date their authorisations to demonstrate the authorisation took place before the payment occurred was noted and would be actioned.

The Town Clerk referred to the note on page 8 of the report where the Auditor drew Council's attention to the fact that using general reserves to support a freeze on council tax is a reasonable step to cover short-term increased costs, however Councillors should note that if increased costs are not temporary, achieving a balanced budget in subsequent years can become more challenging as the gap met by spending from reserves will at some point have to be covered as well as inflation.

The Town Clerk advised that the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, had raised that the Notice of Exercise of Public Rights for the previous year had an error on the written dates on the notice. Although it had been available online throughout the period, the paper copy was put on the noticeboard as of the date of the agenda going out to Councillors, with the six weeks counted from that point, whereas it should have been following the authorisation of the accounts at the Ordinary Council meeting a few days later. As requested by the External Auditors Assertion 4 on Section 1 'We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of elector's rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations is marked 'No' with an explanation being sent with the Annual Return.

Committee recorded a vote of thanks to the Finance Administration Assistant, and Deputy Town Clerk for their work in obtaining a clear audit.

RESOLVED that Committee noted that there were no significant actions arising from the final Internal Audit Report for the Financial Year 2022/23 and, therefore, no action plan is required to be submitted with the Annual Return 2022/23 to the External Auditor.

32. REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT EFFECTIVENESS

Committee reviewed the arrangements for, and effectiveness of, Council's internal audit.

Members considered the good service received from the SALC-appointed auditor and the benefit of an internal auditor with experience of working within the town council sector. It was proposed that the arrangement be recommended to continue on the same basis for 2023/24.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that:

- i. having reviewed the effectiveness of its internal audit, it be resolved that Council considers the arrangements to be effective; and,**

- ii. in being satisfied of the independence and competence of its internal auditor, Mr Colin Poole of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils be appointed to continue as the Council's internal auditor, undertaking a half-yearly and year-end audit on the basis of paras 4.14-4.17 of the "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioner's Guide 2023".

33. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ANNUAL RETURN 2022-23

Members considered the Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and Annual Return for the Financial Year 2022/23 as presented.

The Clerk confirmed that the Notice of Audit would be displayed on the Town Hall noticeboard in accordance with the statutory requirements.

It was RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that:

- i. the Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 (Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement) be approved and the Mayor and Town Clerk be authorised to sign the declaration on behalf of Felixstowe Town Council;
- ii. the Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 (Section 2 – Accounting Statements) as signed by the Town Clerk, as the Council's Responsible Finance Officer be approved, and the Mayor be authorised to sign the declaration on behalf of Felixstowe Town Council; and,
- iii. it be noted that there were no actions arising from the final Internal Audit Report for the Financial Year 2022/23 and, therefore, no action plan was required to be submitted with the Annual Return 2022/23 to the External Auditor.

34. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 APRIL 2023

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

RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 April 2023 be noted.

35. QUARTERLY BANK RECONCILIATION

It was confirmed that the Council's nominated Quarterly Bank Reconciliation Signatory (*Min #13 2022/23 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 2022 – 31 March

2023 had been reviewed and signed by the appointed bank reconciliation signatory.

36. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL 2023/24

Committee noted the requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for Council to ensure that it has a sound system of internal control.

Following consideration of the Council's policy and internal control statement document it was proposed that it be recommended to Council for approval and adoption with no further changes.

It was RESOLVED that the Internal Control Statement for the year ending 31 March 2024 be recommended to Council for formal adoption as presented.

37. ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Committee considered the Annual Report 2022/23. Members suggested a couple of minor amendments and corrections. The Clerk advised that he would update the report and circulate to all Councillors prior to inclusion on the next Council meeting agenda.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report be recommended to Council for approval and adoption for the Municipal Year 2022-23

38. CIL UPDATE REPORT

Committee received the report on CIL and appointed the following representatives to the CIL Working Group. The Deputy Town Clerk will arrange a meeting in the forthcoming weeks.

It was RESOLVED that the following representatives are appointed to the CIL Working Group:

- 1. Cllr M Deacon**
- 2. Cllr M Sharman**
- 3. Cllr M Morris**
- 4. Cllr D Rowe**
- 5. Cllr N Barber**
- 6. Cllr S Bennett**
- 7. Cllr D Aitchison**
- 8. Cllr D Underwood**
- 9. Town Clerk**
- 10. Deputy Town Clerk**

39. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.24pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 12 July 2023 at 7.30pm.

AGENDA ITEM 5: BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 JUNE 2023

A summary Income & Expenditure Report to 30 June 2023 is shown below with a detailed report provided at **Appendix A**.

1 April - 30 June 2023 (2023 - 2024)

Felixstowe Town Council Summary of Receipts and Payments Summary - All Cost Centres

Cost Centre	Receipts				Payments			
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	% Received	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	% Spent
101 Administration	637,129.00	359,518.85	-277,610	57.00%	332,113.00	88,350.82	243,762	26.60%
201 Town Hall	23,500.00	2,008.33	-21,492	9.00%	87,632.00	11,106.61	76,525	12.67%
202 Walton	8,000.00	1,501.58	-6,498	19.00%	12,875.00	2,797.43	10,078	21.73%
203 Broadway House	2,650.00	0.00	-2,650	0.00%	11,192.00	2,169.01	9,023	19.38%
204 Cemetery	82,792.00	16,966.63	-65,825	21.00%	209,982.00	46,799.08	163,183	22.29%
205 Allotment	17,000.00	113.92	-16,886	1.00%	40,692.00	8,946.36	31,746	21.99%
206 Parks & Recreation	0.00	2,520.00	2,520	N/A	11,400.00	3,268.55	8,131	28.67%
301 Civic & Community	4,191.00	1,000.00	-3,191	24.00%	33,828.00	14,783.08	19,045	43.70%
302 Grants	0.00	0.00	0	N/A	38,700.00	16,900.00	21,800	43.67%
303 Felixstowe in Flower	6,000.00	1,379.21	-4,621	23.00%	8,900.00	6,005.36	2,895	67.48%
304 Communication	8,000.00	760.00	-7,240	10.00%	21,000.00	4,903.00	16,097	23.35%
305 Community Projects	0.00	0.00	0	N/A	11,000.00	11,000.00	0	100.00%
NET TOTAL	789,262.00	385,768.52	-403,493.48	48.88%	819,314.00	217,029.30	602,284.70	26.49%

Created by  Scribe

In accordance with Council's Financial Regulations, Committee is to receive explanations of Material Variances for expenditure in excess of the estimated budget of 10% or £500, whichever is the lesser. As the Council's budgets are not produced on a phased basis, the expectation is, being three months into the year, for overall expenditure to be around 25%, with an explanation for any items overspent by £500 or 10% or over this level (i.e. 27.5%). Total expenditure for the first quarter stood at 26.5%. Explanatory notes and any recommended action for individual qualifying items in **Appendix A** are as follows:

Cost Centre 101 - Administration
<p>4460 Subscriptions (80%) Front loaded payments - SALC & ICCM subscriptions paid to year Recommendation: No action.</p>
<p>4464 Insurance (104%) Full year payment up front increased due to index linking higher than budgeted for. Recommendation: No action.</p>

<p>4481 IT Maintenance & Software (52%) Front loaded - Scribe Accounting Software & Microsoft 365 and online services Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis</p>
<p>1805 Bank Interest Received (12%) One Year Close Brothers Bond due in July Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 201 - Town Hall</p>
<p>4110 Rates (33%) Rates are paid over 10 months only. Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>4120 Gas (44%) Gas consumption anticipated to reduce after window refurbishment, increasing efficiency. Recommendation: Continue to monitor</p>
<p>1000 Hirings (0%) £785 (31.4%) Invoiced awaiting payment Recommendation: Continue to monitor</p>
<p>1300 Leases, Rents & Licences (0%) Invoices being prepared to shortly go out for full-year licence fees. Licence for Resort Office terminated. Recommendation: Continue to monitor</p>
<p>Cost Centre 202 – Walton Community Hall</p>
<p>4111 Rates (32%) Rates are paid over 10 months only. Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>4123 Water & Sewerage (34%) Commensurate with increased number of regular bookings. Recommendation: Continue to monitor</p>
<p>Cost Centre 203 – Broadway House</p>
<p>1031 Leases, Rents & Licenses (0%) Annual licence to be invoiced in July. Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 204 – Cemetery</p>
<p>4112 Rates (32%) Rates are paid over 10 months only. Recommendation: No action required.</p>

<p>4117 Water & Sewerage (52%) Increased usage for watering of new trees. Recommendation: Continue to monitor.</p>
<p>4173 Repairs & Maintenance (29%) Two septic tank emptying and general sundries. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>4262 Equipment Purchases (56%) Safety equipment and Tool purchases Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>4300 Vehicle Running Costs (32%) Some costs are front loaded e.g. Truck Tax & MOT paid for the year. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>4330 Fuel (34%) Fuel consumption higher in first half of year due to Felixstowe in Flower season. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>1032 Mobile Phone Mast (0.0%) Paid annually, invoiced in July. Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>1100 Interment Fees (22%) £9583 (38.3%) Invoiced awaiting payment Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>1032 Purchase of Graves (22%) £5,507 (15.7%) Invoiced awaiting payment Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>1032 Memorials (18%) £3,574.30 (22.3%) Invoiced awaiting payment Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>1140 Upkeep of Grave Spaces (0%) Annual invoices to be sent out in July. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>1140 Admin Fees (19%) £116 (14.5%) Invoiced awaiting payment Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 205 – Allotments</p>
<p>1080 Allotment Rents (1%) Allotment rent invoices are billed annually in September Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>4174 Repairs & Maintenance (65%) Repairs to water taps. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>

<p>4321 Vehicles/Tool Hire (32%) Cost of skips. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 206 – Parks and Recreation</p>
<p>4615 Street Furniture (82%) Defibrillator batteries and pads. Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 301 – Civic & Community</p>
<p>4471 Town Twinning (60%) Frontloaded Summer Twinning Catering & Events Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>4512 Engraving/Sign Writing (85%) Cost of update to Mayoral Board. No other expenditure expected Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>4513 Civic Events (67%) Front Loaded Civic Event Catering & Events Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>4645 Christmas Lights (100%) Paid in full for 2023. Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>1800 Agency Income (0%) CCTV contribution from ESC, invoiced, to be invoiced in July Recommendation: Continue to monitor.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 302 – Grants</p>
<p>4620 Annual Grants (97%) All Annual Grants paid Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 303 – Felixstowe in Flower</p>
<p>4290 Flowers & Containers (83%) Front-loaded, all invoices relating to FIF containers have been paid. Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>1812 Donations & Sponsorship (23%) £2,220.83 (37%) Invoiced awaiting payment Recommendation: Continue to monitor regularly.</p>
<p>Cost Centre 304 - Communication</p>

1812 Donations & Sponsorship (0%)

£580 (7.25%) Invoiced awaiting payment

Lull in new sponsors for recent editions

Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis.

Cost Centre 305 – Community Projects & Partnerships

4625 Felixstowe Harwich Ferry (100.0%)

Paid at start of Financial Year.

Recommendation: No action required.

4630 Level Two (100.0%)

Paid at start of Financial Year.

Recommendation: No action required.

Committee is requested to consider the budget monitoring report to 30 June 2023 and decide on any action it deems necessary.

AGENDA ITEM 6: COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

Committee is requested to note that the Council's 1-Year Investment Bond of £500,000 with Close Brothers Savings matures on 20 July 2023, receiving interest of £9,500. The interest rate for the year was 1.90%. The interest will be returned to the Town Council's bank account and recorded in the budget as revenue income. Committee is asked to consider the next investment vehicle for the sum of £500,000, in line with its Investment Policy and Strategy, which can be found [here](#). This sum is not expected to negatively impact on cashflow as it relates to earmarked reserves including the Cemetery extension project and is unlikely to be required in the next 12 months. Close Brothers has a Fitch 'A' credit-rating.

Last year, Committee agreed to change the other investment savings account with Barclays which only returned 0.1% on an investment of £410,894. This was moved into a 35 Day Saver account with Nationwide which currently returns 2.70 % interest. The account does permit withdrawals – but is subject to 35 days' notice. Nationwide are rated highly ethically, and details of why this is can be found at <https://www.nationwide.co.uk/about-us/responsible-business> . Nationwide has an A Stable Fitch rating.

In addition to the investments with Close Brothers and Nationwide, Council holds a further two accounts, each with Barclays bank:

1. Barclays Current Account

This account is used for daily business transactions and is automatically topped up each night to £50,000 from the Business Tracker Account (2).

2. Barclays Business Tracker Account.

This account receives the precept and currently stands at £408,227.29 (the balance has ranged from £215,456 to £526,271 over the past year) and currently has an interest rate of 1%.

It is good practice to hold between 3-12 months expenditure in General Reserves. Based on last year's accounts this would be £215,379 to £861,515. At close of business on 31 March 2023, Council held £390,828 in its General Reserves plus £873,849 in its Earmarked Reserves.

Close Brothers are offering 4.8% AER for a 1-Year bond or 4.6% for 2 years – although this fixed rate does change daily.

Barclays Bank are offering a 3.8% AER for a 1 year bond.

The CCLA Public Sector Deposit fund has also been investigated, which is unit linked and is therefore not a guaranteed investment, last year gave a return of 4.44%.

Last year, investigations were made with Close Brothers and Barclays as to whether they invest in Russian businesses.

Barclays confirmed that it exited its Russia-based business several years ago. Its direct exposure to Russia is very limited and it has no physical presence in the country. It continues to comply fully with any sanctions that the US, EU, UK and

other relevant bodies are applying and is actively monitoring the developing sanctions process.

The Close Brothers Group confirmed that it doesn't have operations, revenue or other business activities in Russia and are complying with all US and EU sanctions:

- While we recognise that there may be wider economic impacts on the UK economy as a whole, we do not anticipate any material direct impact commercially
- In Banking, as a largely UK based business, we lend primarily to UK SMEs who are predominantly focused on the UK market
- It is also worth highlighting that we have no direct lending exposure to mining or oil and gas extraction.

The current bond will automatically rollover for a period of two weeks from 20 July, awaiting instructions, after which the whole funds will be repaid direct to the Town Council main account.

Ethical banking options have also been researched. Triodos are one of the most ethical and eco-friendly banks available in the UK. However, Fitch Ratings (Fitch) has assigned Triodos Bank a Long-Term Issuer Default rating at 'BBB -' with a Viability Rating at 'bbb'. Unity Trust Bank is similar in that its rating is 'BB-' and it is also one of the top ethical business accounts.

Members may wish to consider reinvestment of £500,000 in a 1-year bond with the Close Brothers Group @ 4.8% as this offer a competitive yield from a high-rated investment vehicle.

Committee is requested to consider Council's current investments.

AGENDA ITEM 7: MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES & EXPENSES POLICY **2023-27**

On 12th January 2022, Council resolved that it would not introduce a Basic Allowance for its Members, and the office of Town Councillor was to remain unpaid for the year 2022/23; it was also reaffirmed that the Mayor's Allowance for 2022/23, for the purpose of defraying the costs associated with the office, would be £3,000 for the year.

Council's Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy enables the Mayor (and Deputy Mayor as required) and other councillors to be reimbursed for other tax-deductible out-of-pocket expenses.

Council also asked the Finance & Governance Committee to consider whether a Members' Allowance should be introduced in time for the new Council term following elections in 2023, and to report back to Council (*Minute #319 2021/22 refers*).

This was discussed in July 2022 at Finance & Governance Committee (*Minute #116 2022/23 refers*) and recommendation was made to Council to introduce a Parish Basic Allowance for its members to take effect from the start of the 2023 Council term. Following debate at full Council on 7 September 2022, it was decided that a Basic Allowance for Members would not be introduced at this time but that the policy should be reviewed again during this Council term (*Minute #169 2022/23 refers*).

The Members Allowances and Expenses Policy for the 2023-27 Council term was approved and is shown at **Appendix B**; it was agreed, however, that although a basic allowance was not introduced at this time, it should be reconsidered if felt appropriate in the future and the expenses policy also be reviewed by the Finance & Governance Committee to consider the most appropriate way to support Councillors from being out-of-pocket.

Members Allowances

In accordance with Part 5 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003¹, town and parish councils have the power to pay Members a Basic Allowance and reimburse expenses for travel and subsistence allowance.

The allowance is not a salary. It is a figure, which is calculated to cover the expenses, which are normally associated with the basic duties of being a local councillor. Travelling and subsistence allowances are treated separately, as are provisions for the Mayor's Allowance (see below).

Since its creation in 1974, and to date, Felixstowe Town Councillors have not requested to receive the Basic Allowance and are unpaid volunteers.

Where a parish or town council does propose to pay the parish Basic Allowance, in setting the level of that allowance, it must have regard to the recommendations which have been made in respect of it by the district council's parish remuneration

¹ https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/1021/pdfs/ukxi_20031021_en.pdf

panel. Whilst Council is not obliged to adopt the rate recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), it must have regard to the recommendations when considering a Parish Basic Allowance.

To date, the IRP had not given made any recommendation on a Parish Basic Allowance in East Suffolk. The Town Clerk has made enquiries with East Suffolk Council on the process and cost to convene the IRP which would be £600 + mileage. This cost could be shared with another town council which had been seeking a review before Covid.

Enquiries were made with the 12 other town councils in East Suffolk as to whether they pay a Basic Allowance to their members. The findings are as follows:

Town Council	Basic Allowance Paid (annual)
Aldeburgh	£0
Beccles	£100
Bungay	£0
Carlton Colville	£0
Framlingham	£0
Halesworth	£0
Kesgrave	£0
Leiston	£250 (though only 4 of the 15 councillors claim it)
Lowestoft	£0
Saxmundham	£0
Southwold	£0
Woodbridge	£0

Should the Council choose to pay an allowance to Members, as soon as reasonably practical after setting the levels at which the allowance is to be paid and to whom, it must arrange for the publication in a conspicuous place for a period of at least 14 days within the area of the Council, a notice containing the following information:

- any recommendation in respect of parish Basic Allowance made by the parish remuneration panel;
- the level or levels at which the authority has decided to pay parish Basic Allowance and to which members it is to be paid; and
- a statement that in reaching the decision, regard was had to the recommendation of the parish remuneration panel.

The Council must keep a copy of the information referred to in the notice available for public inspection on reasonable notice. Members should also note that the Basic Allowance is treated by HMRC as remuneration and is therefore subject to income tax rules.

Reimbursement of Councillor Expenses

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provides that a council may pay to both elected and co-opted members allowances in respect of travelling and subsistence, including an allowance in respect of travel by bicycle or

other non-motorised form of transport, undertaken or incurred in connection with the performance of any duty within the following categories:

- a) the attendance at a meeting of the council or of any committee or sub-committee of the council, or of any body to which the council makes appointments or nominations or of any committee or sub-committee of such a body;
- b) the attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the council is a member;
- c) the performance of duties in connection with a tender process;
- d) the performance of any duty which requires the inspection of any premises;
- e) the carrying out of any other duty approved by the council, or any duty of a class so approved, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or of any of its committees or sub committees.

Mayor's Allowance

Section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that Parish and Town Councils may pay its Mayor "*for the purpose of enabling [them] to meet the expenses of [their] office such allowance as the council think reasonable.*"

Felixstowe Town Council provides an allowance to the Mayor as a contribution towards total expenses to defray the costs associated with the office of Mayor of Felixstowe such as:

- Travelling to and attending functions that the Mayor has been invited to in his/her capacity as the Mayor of Felixstowe.
- Making monetary contributions to local charity and community organisations
- Supporting the Mayor's chosen charity/charities
- To cover other costs of attending functions (e.g. purchase of raffle tickets, poppy collections)
- To provide suitable outfits to wear to official functions
- Hospitality costs
- Christmas cards
- One off events held by the Mayor

Alongside other events, it is customary for the Mayor to support fundraising events to for the Mayor's Charity Fund, such as the Mayor's Ball.

The Mayor is free to administer the Mayoral Allowance as they consider appropriate. Once the Mayoral Allowance is paid to the Mayor, it is the Mayor's responsibility to account for its expenditure and not the Council's. The Civic Events Officer maintains a record of the civic engagements undertaken by the Mayor, which are reported to each Council meeting; and, at the discretion of the Mayor, is able to support the administration of their allowance.

From its own budget, the Council directly finances events which are deemed to be of a regular civic nature and not instigated by the Mayor. For example:

- Annual Council Meeting (refreshments following the Mayor making meeting)
- Annual Civic Service
- Mayor's Civic Reception

- Remembrance Services/Wreaths
- Civic Christmas Carol Service
- Christmas Refreshments at the Town Hall (usually held after the final Planning & Environment Committee meeting in December)
- Annual Town Meeting / Civic Awards
- Twinning events
- Other events with which the Council is actively involved.

Provisions made for the Mayor's allowance in the Local Government Act 1972 do not extend to the Deputy Mayor, who is treated the same in law as all other Town Councillors. However, it is acknowledged that the Deputy Mayor is likely to incur costs associated with officially substituting for the Town Mayor in his/her absence. The Council therefore advises that incoming Mayors be asked to reimburse any legitimate out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the Deputy Mayor while deputising for the Mayor, out of the Mayor's Allowance (*Min. #319 of 2021/22 refers*).

Committee is advised that, if a Basic Allowance were to be introduced, this would be subject to tax and paid under PAYE through the Council's payroll management software. Whilst adding a further 15 personnel to the 16 already on the system (15 staff, plus the Mayor who is already included by virtue of their allowance) would require all Councillors' personal, tax and banking details to be added to the system, this is not anticipated to become an ongoing administrative burden if the allowance is paid as a single annual payment.

It should also be considered that, increasing the number of personnel on the payroll management software above 20 will necessitate an increase in the licence fee for the software, doubling the annual cost from £82 to £164 (plus VAT).

Committee is therefore requested to review whether a Members' Allowance should be introduced and review the Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy.

AGENDA ITEM 8: IT EQUIPMENT

In July 2020, Members were offered support with IT and IT equipment to help with the change in meetings held online due to the Coronavirus. Following the elections in May, it is felt that it would be helpful to ascertain the requirements of all Members in terms of the provision of equipment for Town Council work.

To give an indication of costs for upgrading equipment to a good standard, the Deputy Clerk has made enquiries with Dell who have accepted the Town Council on Dell's government framework, as used by East Suffolk Council.

Equipment	Cost (ex. VAT)
Latitude 5340 2in1 BTS Configuration With 3 Year ProSupport. ProSupport Includes: Hardware & Software Support, 24x7 availability and Next Business Day Onsite Service	£943.78

A price for this model, without the SmartCard reader (which is not required) and reducing the hard-drive from 512gb to 256gb, has been sought and is to follow. A price for a 14" Chromebook as an alternative option has also been requested.

Some Members may prefer the form factor of a tablet, such as the Samsung Tab S7 at around £479 or the Tab S6 Light which can be purchased for around £300. Dell do not offer any tablets so this would have to be purchased elsewhere.

Committee may wish to consider a recommendation to Council to provide appropriate funds to invest in business laptops for Members use during their Council career.

Further to the hardware, Councillors are currently provided a felixstowe.gov.uk email address via Microsoft Exchange Online (Plan 1) at a cost of £3.30 per Member per month. This is a basic plan which does not include Microsoft Office 365. If Members are to be provided with a laptop for Council business and require MS Office software (Word, Excel, etc.) this basic plan should be upgraded to Microsoft Office 365 Business Standard at £10.30 per Member per month. Currently Council pays total of £1,483.20 for annual Microsoft 365 licences, including for 8 members of staff.

Council's IT Hardware Earmarked Reserve currently stands at £25,402.62.

Committee is requested to consider Council's IT requirements for Members and make any recommendation to Council it deems necessary.

AGENDA ITEM 9: COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETING TIMES

Members are asked to consider adjusting the start time of Council and Committee meetings, bringing the time forward by half an hour from 7.30pm to 7pm.

Staff have been consulted and would support a potential change on this basis. It is felt that commencing at 7pm would still allow time for staff and Members to take a break between the end of the working day and Council meetings. It is also hoped that this will enable some time during in the remainder of the evening, following the conclusion of meetings.

Committee is requested to consider bringing the start time of Council and Committee meetings forward from 7.30pm to 7pm, and make any recommendations to Council.

AGENDA ITEM 10: BUSINESS PLAN 2024 – 2028

The Town Council's Business Plan is a document which provides members of the public, staff and Councillors a clear understanding of what the Town Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver this.

The current Business Plan cover the period 2020-2024. This time span was set in order that the Business Plan would enter its final year during the first year of this new Council term and enable it to be reviewed for a new four-year period by the beginning of the next Municipal Year. i.e. each new Council would be able to see out a current plan and work towards setting a new one in its first year.

Committee is requested to consider the process of developing the next Business Plan for the years 2024 to 2028, which will articulate the Council's priorities for this term. Once adopted, the Plan will be used to steer Council activities and allocate resources from May 2024 onward.

To support the process, Members should consider opportunities for public engagement, Councillor workshops and consideration by the Assets & Services, Civic & Community and Planning & Environment Committees to coincide with the following timetable:

6 Dec 2023	Finance & Governance Committee reviews First Draft
17 Jan 2024	Finance & Governance reviews Final Draft
18 Jan – 29 Feb 2024	6-week public consultation
6 March 2024	Final Business Plan to go to Council for approval.

Consideration should also be given as to whether the process and the Councillor workshop(s) could be supported by a professional facilitator.

Committee is requested to consider a schedule for creating Council's Business Plan 2024-2028 and decide on any action it deems necessary.
