

**MINUTES of the FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held at
Town Hall, Felixstowe on Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 7.30pm**

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

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

458. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There was none.

459. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

460. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird	All	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Other registerable interest (as a Member of Suffolk County Council)

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

461. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 15 January 2025 be signed by the Vice-Chairman as a true record.

462. BUDGET MONITORING TO 28 FEBRUARY 2025

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 28 February 2025, which highlighted variances exceeding 10% or £500 against budget estimates.

RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 28 February 2025 be noted.

463. INVOICING PROCEDURE REVIEW

Committee reviewed current procedures for chasing outstanding invoices and the current list of debtors.

It was agreed that the current 30 day payment term be reduced to 28 days and that the Finance Administration Assistant reviews invoices weekly and for those exceeding 35 days, refers them to the relevant officer who originally liaised with the client. A reminder and duplicate invoice are sent at this stage, following confirmation of the correct email address by phone.

Invoices more than one month overdue are then escalated to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. All invoices are sent via the Scribe system, which tracks when they are issued and received.

Members considered the introduction of late payment fees. The Clerk will look into the legalities of this.

It was RESOLVED that :

- i. the current procedures for chasing outstanding invoices be amended as above; and,**
- ii. the list of debtors be noted; and,**
- iii. the Clerk will look into the legalities of introducing late payment fees.**

464. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY UPDATE

Committee noted that £100,000 towards the play area had been paid to East Suffolk Council and the tender process has been completed, the designs will be announced soon. Procurement for the play areas will be completed after the consultation feedback. The gates at Allenby Park were in the process of being refurbished and up to £15,000 would be funded from CIL for these. £30,000 has also been ring-fenced towards the Level 2 Music and Entertainment Centre at Beach Street. This project is still awaiting planning permission.

With these projects being funded from CIL it, the next funds, currently in Earmarked Reserves, does not need to be spent until October 2027.

Members received a short update on the Cemetery extension project.

A member brought up the subject of litter bins, after a discussion at the earlier Public Realm meeting that evening. Litter bins will be brought to the next CIL Working Group meeting.

It was RESOLVED that :

- i. the CIL Working Group update report be noted; and,**

- ii. **litter bins be brought to the next CIL Working Group Meeting.**

465. INSURANCE REVIEW

Committee considered the report on a new three year Long Term Agreement to start on 1 April 2025.

There are not many insurance companies who specialise in council insurance, and despite contacting 3 other companies, Zurich remains the only viable option. Two other companies could not offer a competitive quote, and the third company was twice as high as Zurich. Zurich reduced their quote upon learning that attempts had been made by us to seek business elsewhere.

While their quote will leave us overbudget, this has already been reported to Full Council. Committee was also made aware Cyber Insurance was not offered by Zurich.

Committee discussed the quotes for Cyber Insurance and agreed to insure for £500,000 cover with Gallagher Insurance.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. **A 3 year Long Term Agreement (LTA) is taken out with Zurich; and,**
- ii. **£500,000 Cyber Insurance cover is taken out with Gallagher Insurance for the year 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026..**

466. TERMS OF REFERENCE 2025/26

Committee was informed the revised Terms of Reference includes the three Occasional Grant Rounds, as opposed to two from previous years.

There was also a revision to the Appeals committee to reflect If called, the Appeals Committee shall sit with three of the five Members. Should any Members of the Appeals Committee have an interest in any matters to be considered, they should be recused from sitting on the committee for those relevant meetings.

It was RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference for 2025/26 be recommended to Annual Council for adoption as presented.

467. STANDING ORDERS 2025/26

Committee considered no changes proposed to the new standing orders. The Chairman expressed concern over the procedures for calling an extraordinary meeting. The Clerk suggested adding an explanatory note explaining in normal circumstances, notice will be given.

It was RESOLVED that Standing Orders for 2025/26 be recommended to Annual Council meeting for adoption with an explanatory note explaining in normal circumstance, notice will be given on arranging an extraordinary meeting.

468. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 2025/26

Committee reviewed the Council's Financial Regulations for 2025/26 updated from NALC's most recent model. In accordance with Regulation 6.8, Committee reviewed the continued use of BACS.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Financial Regulations for 2025/26 be recommended to the Annual Council meeting for adoption as presented; and,**
- ii. the continued use of BACS also be recommended to Council.**

469. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY & FINANCIAL RISK REGISTER

Committee considered Council's Risk Management Policy and Financial Risk Register for 2025/26.

It was RESOLVED that the Risk Management Policy and Financial Risk Register be recommended to the Annual Council meeting for adoption as presented.

470. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2025/26

Committee reviewed the Council's Complaints Procedure for 2025/26.

Members were advised that one of the main recommended changes was to allow complaints to be resolved through a formal written response from an appropriate officer, with a right of appeal, rather than being referred immediately to the Appeals Committee. This step was incorporated into the revised Complaints Procedure.

It was also suggested that the words "as may be" be added to paragraph 7 to clarify that either the Town Clerk or the Mayor may acknowledge receipt of a complaint, depending on who received it.

An amendment was also made that it will be confirmed in writing within 7 working days, together with details to suggest any *necessary* action to be taken.

It was RESOLVED that Council's Complaints Procedure be recommended to Annual Council for adoption in 2025/26.

471. PUBLICATION SCHEME 2025/26

Committee reviewed the Publication Scheme based on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) model publication scheme, and the schedule of information available from Felixstowe Town Council.

RESOLVED that the ICO model publication scheme be recommended to Annual Council for re-adoption without change for 2025/26.

472. UPDATE ON PARISH BASIC ALLOWANCES

Committee received an update following the publication of the Independent Remuneration Panel's (IRP) latest report, which, for the first time, includes specific recommendations on Parish Basic Allowances (PBAs) for town and parish councils within East Suffolk. These recommendations are intended to provide a framework for any council considering the introduction of a basic allowance for elected members.

Members noted that Felixstowe Town Council has historically chosen not to provide any form of allowance, and the 2025/26 budget has been set on that basis. However, the IRP's recommendation that PBAs may be set at a percentage of the East Suffolk Council basic allowance provides a useful point of reference. Based on population, Felixstowe would likely fall within the 3% band.

It was noted that while there is no intention to introduce allowances at this stage, the Council now has a clear framework to refer to should it wish to consider the matter in future. Committee agreed that there would be an opportunity to review the provision of Members' allowances during the 2025/26 financial year, in advance of setting the 2026/27 budget.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. The Parish Basic Allowance recommendations in the Independent Remuneration Panel's report be noted; and,**
- ii. the provision of a Members' allowance is considered during the 2025/26 year, in advance of setting the budget for the year 2026/27.**

473. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.44pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 4 June 2025 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____