

**MINUTES of the ORDINARY COUNCIL meeting held at Felixstowe Town Hall on
Wednesday 8 January 2025 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr D Rowe (Mayor) Cllr M Deacon
Cllr C Franklin (Deputy Mayor) Cllr A Folley
Cllr D Aitchison Cllr S Harkin
Cllr N Barber Cllr M James
Cllr S Bennett Cllr M Sharman
Cllr S Bird Cllr W Underwood
Cllr J Candy Cllr S Wiles

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE: 3 members of the public (*in person*)
4 members of the public (*via Zoom*)

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

The meeting was preceded by a moment of reflection from Capt. Paul Williams, Church Leader, Salvation Army.

341. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions were received.

342. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Morris** and **Cllr B Price**.

343. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Registerable Interests, were noted:

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird Cllr S Bennett Cllr S Wiles	All	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Other registerable interest (as Members of Suffolk County Council)
Cllr S Bennett Cllr J Candy Cllr M Deacon Cllr A Folley	All	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Other registerable interest (as Members of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr S Harkin	All	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Other registerable interest (as an employee of East Suffolk 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.

344. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR

None.

345. CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 6 November 2024 be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council.

346. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor addressed the Council, providing an update on recent Mayoral engagements.

The Mayor highlighted a busy festive period during which he had attended all but one of the local care homes and the Christmas Day Dip with around 650 'dippers'. The Mayor also attended Felixstowe Community Hospital to distribute Christmas gifts to staff and patients before visiting the Salvation Army to acknowledge their Christmas community work.

It was RESOLVED that the Mayor's communications be noted.

347. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the following meetings be received and, subject to their accuracy being confirmed by those committees, adopted:

- a) Planning & Environment Committee 13 November 2024**
- b) Assets & Services 20 November 2024**
- c) Planning & Environment Committee 27 November 2024**
- d) Finance & Governance Committee 4 December 2024**
- e) Planning & Environment Committee 11 December 2024**
- f) Civic & Community Committee 11 December 2024**

348. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr S Bennett presented a report on the Ukraine 2 Felixstowe initiative as one of the Town Council's representatives to this organisation.

Cllr Bennett corrected the fund amount written in the agenda, which should have read 'Around £10,000 held in the U2F bank account (held with the Lions).' Currently, there are plans to utilise this fund for the benefit of Ukrainians by hosting language classes at Harvest House.

RESOLVED that the Outside Body report from Cllr Bennett be noted.

349. ESC RESPONSE TO NFGN MASTERPLAN CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Council received East Suffolk Council's response to the Town Council's submission to the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood Masterplan Consultation.

Members expressed disappointment with the response.

It was RESOLVED that the ESC response to the NFGN Masterplan consultation submission be noted.

350. DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER

The Council considered the report on the Devolution White Paper which set out the Government's vision for devolving greater powers to local areas in England. The Mayor confirmed that further debate can be had when more is known.

A member confirmed that Suffolk County Council was holding an Extraordinary Meeting the following evening, where a transparent debate would help inform discussions. Suffolk County Council is being asked to endorse the Leader's response to the Minister expressing a clear commitment to the most ambitious timeframe rather than leave it to 'devolution by default.'

Concerns were raised about the lack of public communication and awareness, with Members feeling that the process was being rushed. Members agreed that there were likely to be opportunities but also losses, and there is an important role for councillors in raising awareness. There were also concerns that a unitary authority of such scale (c. 750,000 people) would become more remote, increasing the importance of town and parish councils as the most responsive tier of local government.

It was RESOLVED that the Council will:

- i. Monitor developments and engage with Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council to ensure Felixstowe's interests are represented in devolution discussions;**
- ii. Identify opportunities to influence decision-making on localised public services and funding priorities;**
- iii. Consider the potential implications of new governance models on Felixstowe Town Council's role and responsibilities; and,**
- iv. Assess any further actions required to prepare for the potential impacts of devolution.**

351. BUDGET, RESERVES AND PRECEPT 2025/26

Council received the finalised version of the 2025/26 Budget and Precept. It was noted that the budget had been prepared and presented in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance & Governance Committee meeting of 4 December 2024 (Minute #307 of 2024/25 refers).

An amendment was proposed that the original recommendation of the Civic & Community Committee for the Twinning Budget to be set at £5,000 for 2025/26 be restored, but with £1,500 being taken from General Fund Reserves rather than via an increase to the tax charge. Following a vote the amendment was passed.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. **the Felixstowe Town Council Budget for 2025/26, as set out in the report, be adopted, subject to the amendment above being incorporated, and was therefore approved as follows:**

Total Budgeted Expenditure:	£913,616
Total Budgeted Income:	£191,601

- ii. **the 2025/26 Precept demand to East Suffolk Council of £717,436 (representing a 3.2% increase cost to Band D equivalent Council Tax payer), be made on the following basis:**

Band D rate		£77.19
Multiplied by tax base	x	9294.42

Thus a Precept demand of: £717,436

- iii. **and, the Clerk be delegated the authority to take any necessary action due and instructed to submit any information required by East Suffolk Council in this matter.**

352. MEETING SCHEDULE 2025/26

Council received the draft meeting schedule for 2025/26.

It was noted that concerns were raised about the Council meeting scheduled for 5th November due to potential conflicts with Bonfire Night. Members discussed the feasibility of moving the meeting to another date to accommodate those who may be engaged in community events or prefer to be at home due to pets and fireworks.

Members also discussed whether Planning & Environment Committee meetings should be moved to evenings to allow greater public participation. The Chair of Planning & Environment, Cllr S Bird, explained that this had been considered previously but was deemed impractical due to the length of

meetings, which could extend late into the evening. However, for particularly significant planning matters, such as those related to the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood, an alternative meeting time could be considered to encourage broader public engagement.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. The Meetings calendar for 2025/26 be adopted as presented;**
- ii. The date of the 5th November Council meeting be reviewed; and,**
- iii. Larger-scale Planning and Environment meetings, such as for the NFGN, be considered for evening meetings.**

353. EARMARKED RESERVES EXPENDITURE

Council noted the report on Council's Committees approved Earmarked Reserve spending.

It was RESOLVED that the Earmarked Reserve Expenditure be noted.

354. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

It was RESOLVED that the schedule and payment of accounts be received and approved as follows:

Date	Voucher Nos.	Total Payment
15/11/2024	267 - 281	£8,003.17
30/11/2024	282 - 301	£69,974.87
13/12/2024	302 - 326	£114,796.35
20/12/2024	327 - 352	£57,927.79
	TOTAL	£250,702.18

355. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.35pm. It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting was scheduled for 6 March 2025 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Town Mayor: _____