

FELIXSTOWE
TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



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@FelixstoweTownCouncil

Felixstowe Town Council

Town Hall

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Message
from the Mayor **01**

Councillors
2023-27 **02**

Staff Structure **03**

Finance &
Governance
Committee **04**

Planning &
Environment
Committee **05**

Climate
Emergency **06**

Assets &
Services
Committee **07**

Civic &
Community
Committee **08**

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Cllr Seamus Bennett

I am pleased to present the Annual Town Report for 2023–24, highlighting the accomplishments and efforts of Felixstowe Town Council over the past year.

It has been an honour to serve as Mayor of Felixstowe and Chairman of the Town Council. This report reflects our collective achievements and the dedication of our council, staff, and community partners.

While celebrating our successes, we also mourn the loss of David Underwood, who passed away shortly after being elected in May 2023. His experience as a long-serving Councillor and former Mayor of Godmanchester is greatly missed. We also acknowledge Cherrie MacGregor, who was unable to complete her term due to ill health. We look forward to filling the vacant seat early in the new Municipal Year.



I extend my sincere gratitude to Deputy Mayor Mike Deacon, my fellow Councillors, and the dedicated staff of Felixstowe Town Council for their support during my Mayoral Year.

Finally, I thank all the community groups, organizations, businesses, volunteers, and residents of Felixstowe for their contributions. Your support and commitment have been heart-warming and essential in shaping a brighter future for our town.

Best wishes,

Cllr Seamus Bennett
Mayor of Felixstowe 2023–24

Walton Ward

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Key

* Councillor is also a Member of East Suffolk Council

** Councillor is also a Member of Suffolk County Council

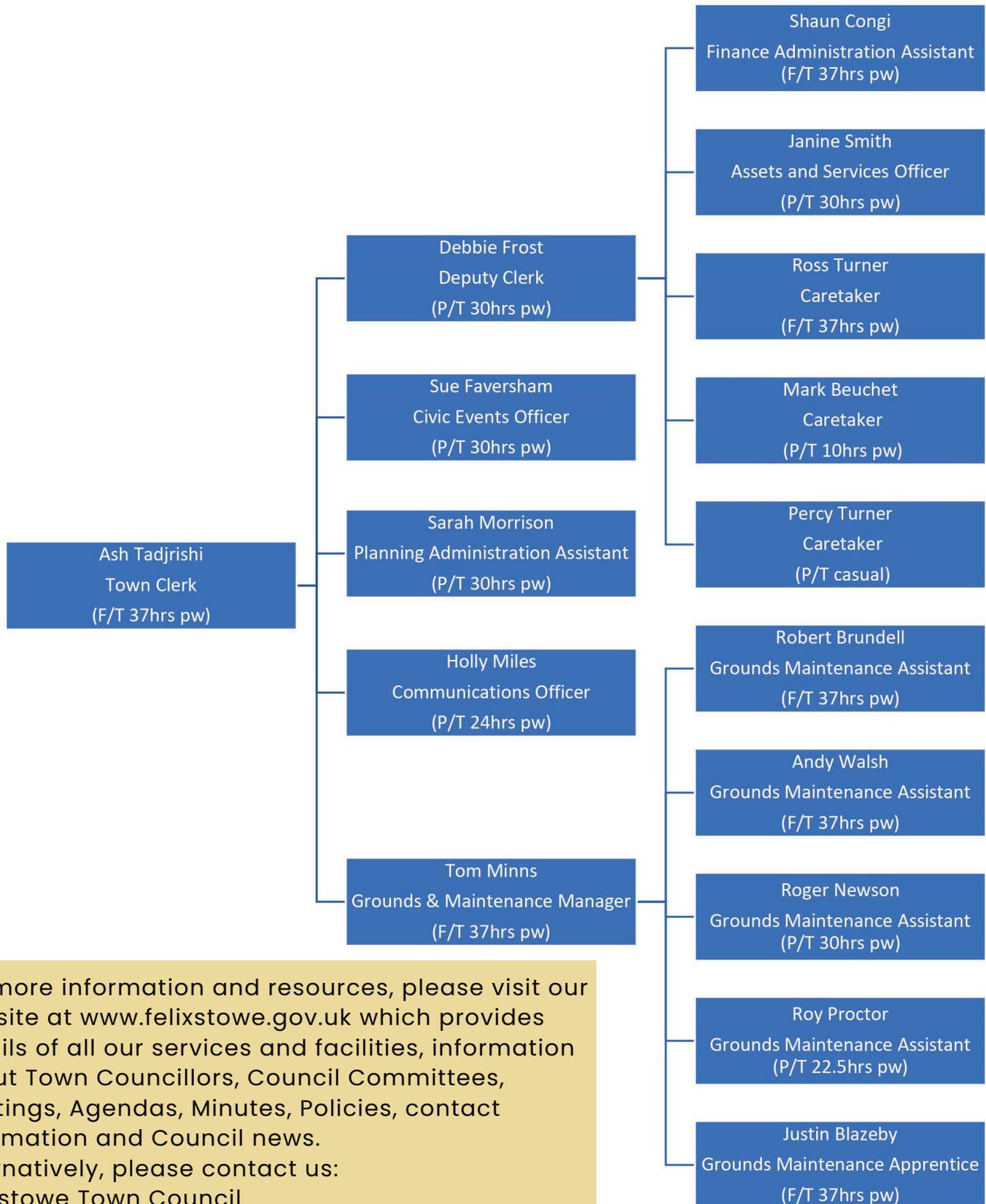
Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal:

Dr Therese Coffey MP

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020 7219 7164



STAFF STRUCTURE



For more information and resources, please visit our website at www.felixstowe.gov.uk which provides details of all our services and facilities, information about Town Councillors, Council Committees, Meetings, Agendas, Minutes, Policies, contact information and Council news.

Alternatively, please contact us:

Felixstowe Town Council

Town Hall

Felixstowe

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Tel: 01394 282086

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FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN 2023-24: CLLR MIKE DEACON

Considers and monitors the finances and governance of the Council.

Audit and Accounts

Council received a clear and unqualified audit return for the 2022/23 financial year. The 2023/24 Audit will again be undertaken by PKF Littlejohn LLP in July 2024, and the audited accounts for 2023/24 will be available from September 2024. Finance and Governance Committee received two Internal Audit reports in 2023/24 with the Auditor finding Council's procedures to be sound and in good order.

Business Plan 2024-28

Committee oversaw the process for the the creation of the Council's latest Business Plan, covering the years 2024-28, which was recommended to Annual Council and will be available from June 2024 at www.felixstowe.gov.uk/council-documents. Following Member workshops, the draft Business Plan was put to public consultation from 22 March to 26 April 2024, with all feedback reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the new plan.

Budget and Precept

At the end of the financial year, the income outturn for 2023/24 exceeded budget estimates at 101.1%, and

expenditure stood at 96.9% of budget, in spite of increased expenditure in items such as skip and digger hire and various utilities (e.g. Town Hall Electric, Allotment Water). After several years of a freeze to the Town Council's portion of the council tax (the 'precept'), for the forthcoming 2024/25 financial year, Council agreed that a 5.54% increase would be needed. This means that annual Band D equivalent cost would increase from £70.87 to £74.80 per annum. The Town Council's element of the total council tax bill is just under 3.7%, with the other 96.3% being split between Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council and Suffolk Constabulary.

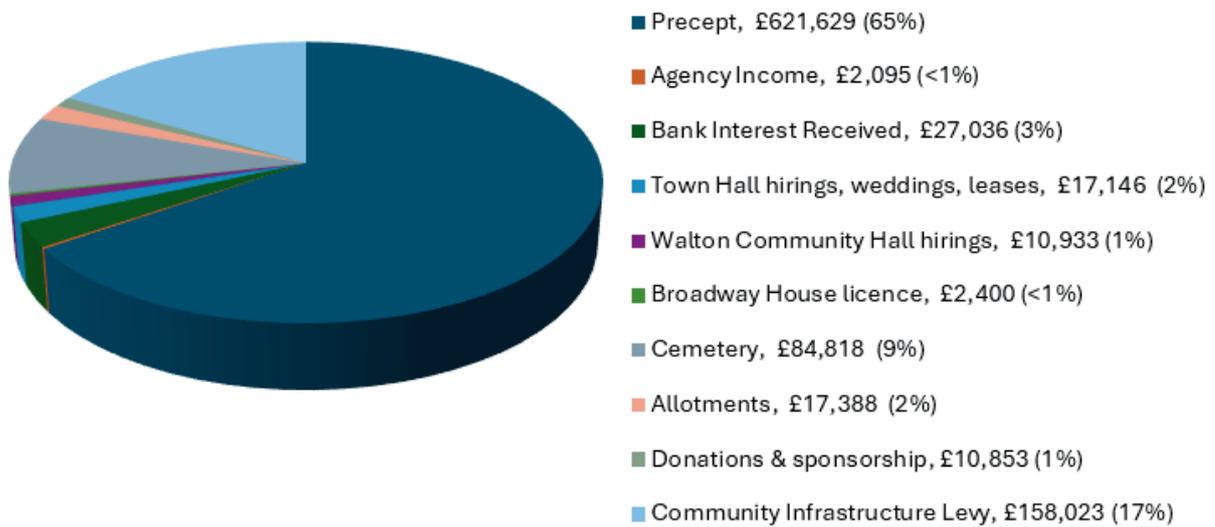


Council also holds ring-fenced funds for future projects and contingencies, known as 'Earmarked Reserves', and these are reviewed at least once annually to ensure appropriate provisions are in place.

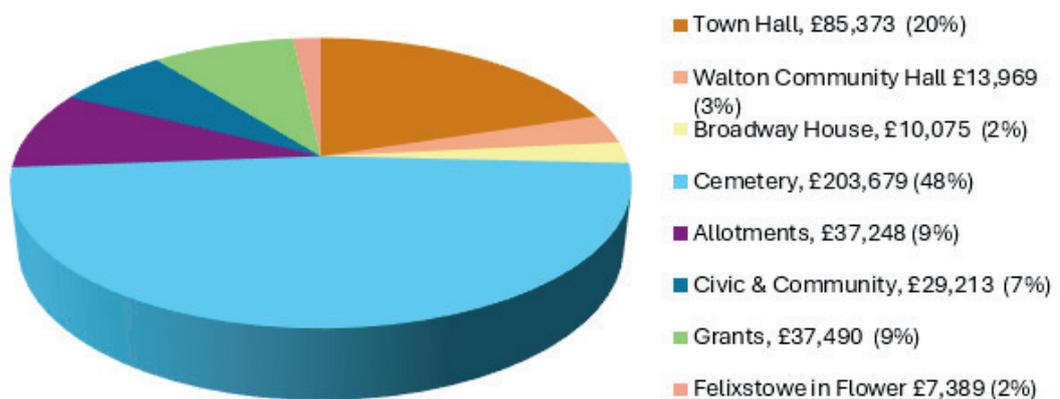
Summary of Council's Balances, income and expenditure:

	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget (Est.)
Balance at 1 April	£1,232,785	£1,264,677	£1,289,724
(of which Earmarked Reserves)	(£795,445)	(£873,849)	(£952,450)
Total Income	£893,407	£964,691	£827,411
Total Expenditure	£861,515	£939,643	£843,383
Closing Balance at 31 March	£1,264,677	£1,289,724	£1,196,794
(of which Earmarked Reserves)	(£873,849)	(£952,450)	(£953,006)

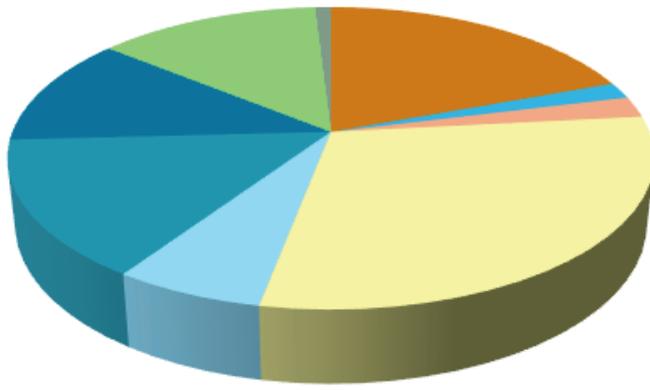
Sources of Income 2023/24



Net Expenditure 2023/24



Net Budget 2024/25 (Estimate)



- Town Hall, £66,017 (19%)
- Walton Community Hall, £6,007 (2%)
- Broadway House, £7,652 (2%)
- Cemetery, £101,352 (30%)
- Allotments, £21,925 (6%)
- Civic & Community inc Xmas Lights, £50,387 (15%)
- Parks and Recreation, £40,075 (12%)
- Grants, £44,950 (13%)
- Felixstowe in Flower £3,250 (1%)

Budget Estimates

Council's Finance & Governance Committee closely monitored and reviewed the financial position regularly. 2023-24 saw hirings and income return to pre-pandemic incomes. In calculating budget estimates for 2024-25 Council took a cautiously optimistic approach, being aware of increased costs due to the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis. Due to careful budgeting in recent years, the Council's reserves are able to offer some protection against unforeseen variables.

General Power of Competence

The "General Power of Competence" was included in the Localism Act 2011 (Part 1, Chapter 1, 1-8). This power was brought into force by SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 in April 2012. The power enables eligible councils to have "the power to do anything that individuals generally may do" as long as they are not prevented from doing so by other laws. The Town Council continues to meet the criteria for eligibility and adopted the use of the General Power of Competence at its Annual Council

Meeting on 15th May 2019, renewing this again on 17th May 2023.

Reserves

Council has both General Reserves and Earmarked Reserves. General Reserves ensure that there are adequate Financial Reserves to meet the needs of its operations and to ensure financial security (normally between 3 – 9 months of operational requirements). Earmarked Reserves are put aside for specified projects or for unexpected repairs which are not covered in the annual budget. Reserves can be ring-fenced for something specific i.e. CIL funds are put into specifically timed earmarked reserves or can be a standard earmarked reserve referring to the type of spending that may be requested to come from that reserve, i.e. Town Hall or Cemetery earmarked reserves.



PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN 2023-24: CLLR STUART BIRD

Makes recommendations to East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and other authorities on planning applications, proposals and policies affecting local development.

Planning Applications

During 2023/24 the Planning & Environment Committee considered a total of 195 local planning applications. Committee noted that on 60.5% occasions (118 of 195 reported decisions) East Suffolk Council has concurred with the Town Council's recommendation. Of those cases where there was contrasting view, a referral panel at East Suffolk Council reviewed the Town Council's recommendations before deciding whether to refer the application to the District Council's Planning Committee for determination. There were a total of 195 planning applications for the year 2023/24 out of these, 5 plans were refused by both East Suffolk and Felixstowe Town Council, 10 refused by East Suffolk but recommended for approval by Felixstowe Town Council and 12 East Suffolk approved while Felixstowe Town Council recommended refusal. 6 applications were withdrawn and 49 are still awaiting a decision from East Suffolk at this time.

Landguard Lodge

This Committee was instrumental in the prevention of a landmark building being

demolished. Confirmation was received from East Suffolk Council, after a request from the Planning Committee, that the Article 4 direction removing the permitted development right of demolition from Landguard Lodge, Manor Terrace, Felixstowe, was made permanent and that the building cannot be demolished unless a planning application is made and permission granted.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Council received CIL payments from East Suffolk Council totaling £158,023.77 in 2023/24. These funds are held in a separate Earmarked Reserve and are ringfenced to support appropriate projects within a five-year timescale allowed by legislation. Consultation has taken place to identify suitable projects and a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) has been drawn up to prioritise these in advance of delivery. This year £10,000 from previous CIL money received during the period 2019-20 has been granted to support the establishment of a new facility for the Lions Club to enable continuation of the provision of Christmas lights throughout the town, and £23,665 has been used to refurbish footpaths in both Allenby Park and Gosford Way Park.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Council requires Councillors and staff to consider climate, air pollution and nature plans in all their decision-making processes. Since Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, our dedicated Climate Emergency Working Group met regularly to review processes, services, products and actions and to raise awareness locally.

In addition, a wider 'Climate Action Group' with key stakeholders attending, including the Port of Felixstowe, BID, Chamber of Commerce, Felixstowe Community Nature Reserve and Litter Free Felixstowe to name but a few. The latest meeting included local developers, where progress on environmental benefits for new build developments was highlighted.

From this group the 'Love Green Felixstowe' campaign has been launched.

ACTION WE'VE TAKEN SO FAR...

Council had Energy Performance Certificates and Display Energy Certificates carried out in 2020 and have used these as a baseline for improvement, alongside regularly calculating its carbon footprint. In 2019, the Council's carbon consumption stood at 43.37 tonnes of CO₂, decreasing to 23.5 tonnes in 2020, and further down to 17.89 tonnes in 2023 this decrease was attributed to the adoption of electric vans and tools.

Source:

www.carbonfootprint.com/businesscarboncalculator.html

- Helped to launch 'Love Green Felixstowe' campaign and 'Edible Felixstowe' to encourage community planting around the town
- Single use Plastic Policy adhered to for all events
- Cycle to Work Scheme, with several employees now cycling to work
- Car Sharing and holding more meetings online.
- No Idling promotion in Schools
- Re-wilding in Langley Avenue
- Encouraging Wildlife at the Cemetery
- Reducing use of Herbicides and Pesticides
- Created a Green Management Plan improving the natural environment including creating new pathways in Town Council owned parks.
- Provided community allotments for the Grove Surgery and Level Two Youth Project to encourage participation in local food growing.



- Nursery created to help establish saplings and maintain plants
- Separating and recycling waste
- Replacing all lights at end of their life with LED
- Insulated to 270mm in uninsulated areas
- Replaced all garden tools with battery rechargeable power tools
- Use 100% renewable energy Suppliers
- Grey Water used for watering Felixstowe in Flower baskets
- Over 70 trees planted as part of the Queen's Jubilee, and over 300+ as part of the Woodland Trust scheme
- Electric van used as a first resort vehicle (except for towing)
- Refurbishment of Town Hall windows using highly efficient innovative glass with a very low thermal transmittance of 0.7 w/m².k.
- Grants available for local organisations who want to reduce their carbon emissions and carry out environmental projects.
- Created a community orchard (micro woodland) at Cowpasture meadow.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The Climate Emergency Working Group will be working with the Felixstowe Youth Forum, involving High School students in its Climate Action Group. It is working in partnership with BID and other members of the Climate Action Group to plan a 'Love Green Felixstowe' event in September 2024.



Council continues to work closely with community groups to support environmental projects. This year it has given grants to help set up the new Repair Café at Cuppa and is keen to hear from any organisations seeking funding to assist with local environmental projects. Council now has its own large compost and is helping the Felixstowe Allotment Association become a 'Champion' for composting.



Projects are underway to further reduce energy consumption within Felixstowe. Initiatives such as investigating additional insulation for buildings like Walton Community Hall, reconfiguring air conditioning units to be used as air source heat pumps, and exploring solar panels with battery storage. Explorations are also being made at the cemetery, such as green burials and the implementation of a borehole for water extraction, aligned with the broader goals of water conservation and responsible land use.

ASSETS & SERVICES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN 2023-24: CLLR DAVID ROWE

Oversees the provision of our assets and services such as our halls, allotments and cemetery.

Improving Energy Efficiency

Following the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration made in July 2019, EPCs (Energy Performance Certificates) were obtained for all Council building and a DEC (Display Energy Certificate) produced for the Town Hall. Since then, Committee has been working to reduce further the carbon footprint of its buildings. Insulation has been increased and Winter 2023 saw the refurbishment and fitting of highly insulated glass with a u-value of the lowest thermal transmittance of 0.7 w/m².k. The glass was chosen to offer optimal insulation properties, while respecting the heritage and outer appearance of Felixstowe's historic Town Hall, located in a conservation area. Council's energy suppliers use 100% renewable energy and a 3 year fixed contract was taken out in Summer 2022. A LED light replacement programme continues replacing all faulty lights with LEDs.

Hall Hire and Weddings

Both the Town Hall and Walton Community Hall remain competitively priced venues for hire. Walton Community Hall is used by many local community groups and also for one off hires for birthday parties and special occasions. The Town Hall remains a popular venue for local weddings and rooms are also hired out at a reasonable charge to local organisations.

Town Hall



Water ingress presented a few issues this year, causing part of ceiling of the Council Chamber to collapse above the bay window, which was promptly repaired. Damp is also being investigated in the front elevation of the building. Plans have been made to renovate the rear entrance which will have a new larger ramp to make it more accessible.

Broadway House

Council leases Broadway House, Orwell Road, to the Felixstowe Old People's Welfare Association (FOPWA) which continues to provide a highly popular drop-in service. This year, the bathrooms and rear hallway were redecorated.

Walton Community Hall

Floor renovation work has taken place this year, with the wooden floor being sanded and recoated with a polyurethane-based water lacquer. The floor has been revitalized and fortified against future damage. It will ensure the floor's longevity, preserving a key community asset for years to come.

A review is currently underway to make Walton Community Hall more energy efficient. Grants will be investigated to help fund this work which will take a holistic approach. It will ensure that the hall is well insulated and will also be looking at the possibility of using the existing air conditioning units as air source heat pumps and investigating solar panels, battery storage.

Grounds Team

The efforts of the Grounds Maintenance team over the past year demonstrate its steadfast dedication to enhancing public spaces, promoting sustainability, and preserving the assets of the Town Council. Through strategic interventions and collaborative partnerships, it remains committed to delivering high-quality services and maintaining pleasant environments, both indoors and outdoors, for the residents of our town.

Allotments

An area in the northwest corner of the Cowpasture site, once designated as an allotment plot, has transitioned into a biodiverse space. Due to its unsuitability for traditional allotment use, it had remained vacant and overgrown since the

last tenant vacated it in early 2022, and has now been repurposed to encourage biodiversity. The maintenance team ensures access to fruit trees within this area by keeping it trimmed, while also fostering a habitat for insects and birds. Measures such as removing windows from a large shed in the area aim to facilitate bird nesting, demonstrating a holistic approach to wildlife conservation within the allotment sites.



Cemetery

The Grounds Team continues to maintain Felixstowe Cemetery to a high standard, supporting funerals and interments throughout the year.

Work has been carried out on the cesspit at the cemetery, as it had been filling rapidly. Observing rainwater infiltration from downpipes on the Toilet block, compounded by increased usage prompted action. A two-fold solution was implemented. Firstly, a Soakaway was installed at the Toilet block, diverting rainwater away from the cesspit, then, a land drain with a final effluent pump was integrated into the cesspit system. These interventions have substantially decreased the frequency of cesspit emptying to 1-2 times annually, enhancing operational efficiency and reducing maintenance costs.

Pathway Renovations in Allenby Park and Gosford Way Park

In response to a concern raised by a member of the public and as part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing public spaces, the Grounds Maintenance team undertook improvements at Allenby Park to enhance accessibility from the pathway to the grassed area and play area. Furthermore, new pathways have been installed at both parks by a local contractor.

Tree Planting Initiatives

Continuing our annual tradition, the Grounds Team has undertaken extensive tree planting endeavours across various sites. Trees, supplied by the Woodland Trust, have been planted along Langley Avenue to bolster native hedges and in other locations including the Cowpasture Meadow and some local parks. Notably, a nursery has been established at one of our allotment sites to nurture some saplings, ensuring a sustainable supply of mature trees for future landscaping projects. Additionally, partnerships with local schools have facilitated the distribution of saplings, fostering environmental awareness and engagement within the community.

Two oak trees and an ash tree, on the Ferry Road Allotment site, needed to be felled due to their proximity to a house on the Laureate Fields development. Whilst unfortunate, this action was necessary for safety reasons. To mitigate the environmental impact, two oak trees were planted at Gosford Way Park, and one oak tree was planted at Allenby Park, contributing to the ongoing efforts to

maintain and enhance green spaces within the community



Compost Production

In pursuit of sustainability and cost-effectiveness, the Grounds Team have embarked on an initiative to produce high-quality compost in-house. Utilizing horse manure sourced from a local farm, along with fallen leaves and grass clippings collected from the cemetery, composting efforts are underway at the old Allotment site adjacent to the Cemetery. The first batch is expected to be ready by Spring 2025, with the aim of reducing expenditure on commercial compost and minimizing the Council's ecological footprint.

New Apprentice Post

Following the retirement of the Cemetery Supervisor, a new position, the Grounds & Maintenance Manager, was created to encompass both the previous responsibilities of the Cemetery Supervisor and the additional duties of the role.

This also created a vacancy within the team and, following on from the first successful Grounds Maintenance apprenticeship post, the Council recruited another apprentice to fill the vacancy.



CIVIC & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

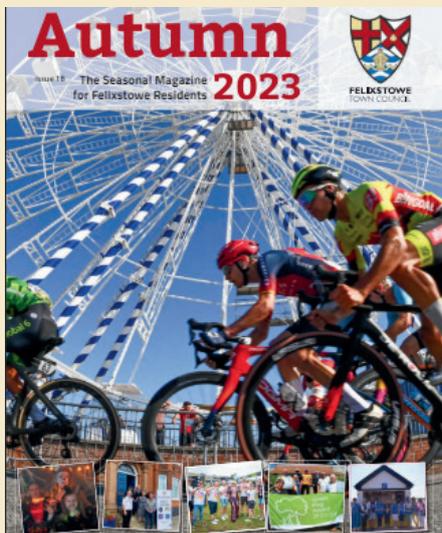
CHAIRMAN 2023-24: Cllr MICHAEL SHARMAN

Considers our civic functions, community engagement, partnership working and grants.

Council Communications and Meetings

The Council engages directly with its residents, via digital platforms such as the Council's website www.felixstowe.gov.uk, tweeting from its [@FelixstoweTC](https://twitter.com/FelixstoweTC) Twitter account and its Facebook page facebook.com/FelixstoweTownCouncil.

A quarterly seasonal magazine is delivered to all households in Felixstowe, giving a broader platform for community and council news as well as seasonal highlights throughout the year.



Details of all Town Council Meetings and forthcoming events are displayed on the noticeboard outside the Town Hall. Members of the public and press are welcome and regularly attend our Council and Committee meetings and a public question session is held at the beginning of each meeting. Members of the public who are unable to attend in person, can join the meeting online via a link provided on each agenda.

Civic Awards 2023/24

The Mayor presented the Civic Awards in May at the Annual Town Meeting. The Annual Town Meeting provides an opportunity for local electors to raise topics, ask questions and browse stalls hosted by local community groups.

Grants 2023/24

Felixstowe Town Council is committed to supporting and strengthening the many networks and community groups that help to make a positive difference to Felixstowe. Through its Annual and Occasional Grants scheme, the Town Council was able to support 37 local organisations and projects during 2023/24 with a total of £55,240.

These are just a few of the organisations helped this year:

- Felixstowe Library
Audio/visual Corner
- 356 (Felixstowe) Squadron RAF Air Cadets
Get Active and Life Saving Skills
- Felixstowe Men's Shed
Dinosaurs for the trail at Landguard Fort
- Lions Club of Felixstowe
Christmas Lights

Closing dates for Grant applications in 2024 are on 31 May and 30 November. Details on how to apply can be found on our website: www.felixstowe.gov.uk/council-services/grants.

Felixstowe in Flower

Council's Felixstowe in Flower initiative has contributed towards civic pride in the town since 1985. This year the launch is planned for Saturday 1st June from 10 – 12 noon at the Triangle. If you or your organisation would like to sponsor a basket or planter - or would like to enter one of our competitions - please contact the Town Hall.

The Town Council give thanks to the Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club for providing grey water run off, which is used to water the flowers, saving fresh drinking water.



Sustainable Bedding

With an aim to become more sustainable, the wooden planters in the town have been planted with perennial bedding plants. The flower beds at the Triangle and on the seafront have also been planted in this way, with vibrant plants which will become well-established over the long-term.



Christmas

Funding was awarded to the Felixstowe BID (Business Improvement District) for the third year running towards the provision of a Christmas Ice Rink. The Council continued to support the Lions Club with annual funding of £6,750 towards the provision of the Town Centre's Christmas lights.



Blue Flag

The Town Council was delighted that once again Felixstowe South and Pier were recognised as two of the country's best beaches and were awarded a Blue Flag and Seaside award by the environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy. In order to receive the Blue Flag award beaches must comply with several criteria covering environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management, safety, and services. Felixstowe consistently meets the criteria for 'excellent' international bathing water quality standards and, until January 2022, was the only beach in Suffolk to meet this exacting standard.

Remembrance

The Council and the Felixstowe Branch of the Royal British Legion supported several commemorative events in the town in 2023.

Leading up to Amistice Day on Friday 11 November the road sign project in partnership with Felixstowe Remembers and local businesses saw poppies installed throughout the town and signs erected in 66 roads to recognise the 212 residents that were lost because of war.

The Remembrance Sunday Service included a record number of wreath layers, being solemnly observed by hundreds of residents.



CCTV Review

The Town Council, together with East Suffolk Council and the Suffolk Constabulary, is reviewing the town's CCTV provision with a view to upgrade the quality and monitoring of the cameras.

Flood Memorial

The anniversary of the North Sea Floods was remembered on 31 January 2024 with a service held at the Felixstowe Flood Memorial to remember the 41 lives lost in the the 1953 tragedy.



Flag Flying

A variety of flags have been raised throughout the year on the flagpole outside the Town Hall, this included the inaugural raising of the Progress Pride Flag during June's Pride month, the Suffolk Day Flag on 21 June, the Armed Forces flag for Armed Forces Week and the Commonwealth Day flag on 8 March. A touching service was held for Ukraine with the raising of the flag on 24 August to mark Ukraine's Independence Day. The Blue Flag and Union Jack have also been flown throughout the year.

