

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS of a MEETING held at TOWN HALL,
Felixstowe, on Friday 22 January 2026 at 6pm**

PRESENT: Cllr C Franklin (Mayor of Felixstowe)
Cllr D Aitchison (Deputy Mayor) Cllr S Harkin
Cllr S Bennett Cllr M James
Cllr S Bird Cllr M Sharman
Cllr M Deacon Cllr W Underwood
Cllr A Folley Cllr S Wiles

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE: 2 members of the public (*in person*)
12 members of the public (*online*)
1 member of the press (*in person*)

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public, a parent of a student at the school, expressed significant concern regarding the unilateral nature of the decision made by Unity Schools Partnership (USP) and questioned how a private organisation could make a decision of such magnitude for the community without a public consultation process.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr J Candy, Cllr M James, Cllr B Price, and Cllr D Rowe.**

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Other Registerable Interests were declared and noted:

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bennett Cllr A Folley	All	Other registerable interests (as Members of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr S Bennett Cllr S Bird	All	Other registerable interests (as Members of Suffolk County Council)
Cllr D Aitchison	4	Other registerable interest (as Chair of Governors at Felixstowe School)
Cllr S Wiles	4	Other registerable interest (as Member of Suffolk County Council Cabinet)

4. **FELIXSTOWE SIXTH FORM**

Councillors considered the withdrawal of post-16 provision at Felixstowe School and the subsequent impact on the community.

Cllr Aitchison updated the meeting, noting that the local MP had raised the matter in Parliament that morning.

Councillors expressed deep frustration, focusing on:

- **Economic Impact:** Estimated travel costs exceeding £1,000 per annum for students forced to study outside of Felixstowe.
- **Community Ambition:** The decision was viewed as damaging to local skills development and student aspiration.
- **Governance:** It was noted that while the school has an experienced Governing Body, under the Academy Trust model, operational decisions rest with the Trust rather than local governors.

The Mayor relayed a statement from the local MP echoing these concerns. Members noted that although USP described the move as a 'pause,' the practical effect was a closure for current Year 11 students.

The meeting expressed a strong consensus that the Mayor should write to the Department for Education, Suffolk County Council, and Unity Schools Partnership to convey the following position (Resolution 1):

Felixstowe Town Council is deeply concerned at the unilateral decision of Unity Schools Partnership to pause entry into Felixstowe Sixth Form from September 2026.

This sudden decision is contrary to the Trust's declared desire to support the unique needs of each community.

This Council strongly holds that the best possible provision for post-16 education students in Felixstowe must include a dedicated sixth form in the town. It strongly calls upon the Department for Education to ensure that this happens.

5. **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL – FUTURE SCHOOL PROVISION**

Councillors discussed the forthcoming SCC Cabinet decision regarding the commissioning of a new primary school in North Felixstowe.

Cllr Wiles outlined the background of the Cabinet paper and the procurement process.

Due to his declared interest, Cllr Wiles abstained from further participation on this item.

It was acknowledged that, whilst local Town Councillors have no authority over school procurement, they were free to comment on place-based impacts.

Members expressed concern that, whilst the recommendation to award the contract to USP will have followed due process, recent events regarding the Sixth Form had undermined local confidence in the Trust's commitment to the town.

Consensus View (Resolution 2):

The meeting recorded a vote of no confidence in Unity Schools Partnership. Consequently, it was requested that the Mayor write to SCC to request a deferral of the contract award for the North Felixstowe primary school in light of the Trust's failure to meet the unique needs of the community.

6. CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 6:52pm.

Clerk's Note: *These proceedings are recorded as an informal expression of the consensus of Town Councillors present, pending formal ratification by the Town Council.*