MINUTES of the **FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** meeting held at **Town Hall, Felixstowe** on **Wednesday 14 October 2026** at **7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr M Deacon (Chair)
Cllr D Rowe (Vice-Chair)
Cllr S Bennett
Cllr S Bird
Cllr T Gale
Cllr M James
Cllr M Sharman
Cllr S Wiles

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Two members of the public (*via Zoom*)

207. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There was none.

208. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr W Underwood**.

209. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Other Registerable Interests were noted. Where a specific item on the agenda was directly related to any Members' declared interest, their participation was restricted in accordance with the Code of Conduct:

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr M Deacon Cllr S Bennett	All	Other Registerable Interests (as Member of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr T Gale	All	Other Registerable Interests (as Member 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.

210. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 3 June 2026 be signed by the Chair as a true record.

211. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Committee reviewed the income and expenditure position for the six months to 30 September 2026. Overall expenditure stood at 52% of the annual budget, with Members noting that expenditure was not evenly distributed throughout the

year and that a number of variances reflected annual payments or expenditure incurred earlier in the financial year.

Areas with continued monitoring included Town Hall equipment purchases; Cemetery training, equipment, vehicle and fuel costs; allotment water usage and repairs; recovery of allotment recharges; and engraving and civic event expenditure. The exceptionally dry summer had contributed to increased allotment water consumption despite the hosepipe ban. The Committee also noted lower-than-anticipated sponsorship income for Felixstowe in Flower and outstanding invoices relating to the Town Magazine and Broadway House.

It was RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 September 2026 be noted.

212. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/26 – EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

Committee considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26, including the External Auditor's Report and Certificate.

Members noted that the external audit had been completed on 9 September 2026 and that PKF Littlejohn LLP had found the information to be in accordance with proper practices. No matters had been identified giving cause for concern regarding compliance with relevant legislation or regulatory requirements, and no further action had been required.

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been displayed at the Town Hall from 10 September 2026 and was available on the Council's website, together with the audited accounts and related documents.

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025/26, including the External Auditor's Report and Certificate, be commended to Council, and that the publication of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit be noted.

213. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: INTERIM 2026/27

Committee considered the Interim Internal Audit Report for the six months to 30 September 2026, undertaken by Ms Julie Lawes of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils on 8 October 2026. The audit examined 15 core areas of governance and financial control, including financial regulations, budgetary controls, payment controls, risk management, asset control and data protection.

Members noted that the report contained no recommendations and commended the positive findings regarding the Council's governance, financial management, transparency and cooperation from officers.

It was RESOLVED that the Interim Internal Audit Report for the period 1 April to 30 September 2026 be noted and recommended to Full Council for receipt and adoption.

214. QUARTERLY BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Committee noted that Cllr M Deacon, as the Council's appointed quarterly bank reconciliation signatory, had reviewed and signed the reconciliations between the bank statements and the Council's accounting records for the period 1 April to 30 September 2026.

It was RESOLVED that the completed bank reconciliations for the period be noted.

215. BUDGET REVIEW WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Committee considered the Budget Review Working Group's report and recommendations, together with responses from the Assets & Services and Civic & Community Committees and the officer assessment of the recommendation concerning IT support.

Members discussed the response from the Superintendent Registrar on the availability of registration services at Felixstowe. It was agreed that the Clerk would forward the correspondence to the County Councillor for their information.

Committee considered the officer assessment of the Council's existing IT support arrangement with Centradata, costing £162.50 plus VAT per month. Although support requests had been relatively infrequent, Members noted that the current service included proactive maintenance, security updates, endpoint protection and backup monitoring, in addition to reactive technical support.

Members agreed that a comparison with alternative providers was appropriate, provided that any proposed change maintained adequate cyber security, network maintenance, responsiveness and business continuity. The comparison would consider the services included, response arrangements, security provision and any minimum or additional charges, rather than relying solely on the number of support calls.

It was RESOLVED that:

i. **the Budget Review Working Group's report and recommendations, together with the responses from the Assets & Services and Civic & Community Committees, be noted;**

ii. **the officer recommendation to compare the current IT support arrangement with alternative providers be endorsed; and**

iii. **the findings of the IT support review be reported back to the Finance & Governance Committee before any decision is taken to change the existing arrangements.**

216. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES POLICY

Committee reviewed the Members' Allowances and Expenses Policy and considered the East Suffolk Council Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations for town and parish councillors.

Members noted that the Council had historically chosen not to pay a Parish Basic Allowance (PBA). Felixstowe's electorate remained within the IRP's 10,001 - 20,000 band, for which the indicative annual allowance in the January 2025 report was £281.37 per eligible Member.

Committee noted that the IRP's recommendations must be taken into account when setting an allowance but do not require the Council to introduce a PBA or adopt the indicative rate.

The implications of introducing a PBA were discussed, including the requirement to publicise the decision, the tax treatment of allowances and the additional payroll software costs. Members also considered the distinction between the Mayor's Allowance and civic expenditure met directly by the Council.

The review identified matters requiring clarification or updating in the policy, including mileage rates, subsistence arrangements and their tax treatment, care-cost reimbursement, supporting evidence and authorisation of claims.

Members noted that the legal basis and tax treatment of any proposed care-cost reimbursement arrangements should be confirmed before implementation. Provisions relating to employee benefits would be more appropriately addressed through the relevant staff policies.

It was suggested that the mileage reimbursement being limited to outside the parish be amended to include travel within the parish.

It was RESOLVED that the Members' Allowances and Expenses Policy be reviewed and updated to address the matters identified in the report, with any proposed amendments brought forward for consideration by Full Council. The Council's existing decision not to introduce a Parish Basic Allowance would remain unchanged unless and until a separate decision was made.

217. PROTOCOL ON MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Committee considered the proposed Protocol on Member Representation on Outside Bodies and the accompanying Member Guidance Note.

Members noted that the Protocol would clarify the role and responsibilities of Councillors appointed to outside bodies, including the limits of their authority to commit Council resources, the management of interests, reporting expectations and the distinction between representing the Council and acting in an independent capacity within an organisation.

Committee also considered the proposed arrangements for the Town Clerk, as the Council's Proper Officer, to determine dispensations under Standing Order 13(e) where a Council-appointed representative would otherwise be prevented from participating in relevant Council business solely by virtue of an Other Registerable Interest.

Members noted that such arrangements would not override a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other separate legal or ethical requirement to withdraw.

It was RESOLVED that, subject to a couple of minor grammatical changes:

i. **the Protocol on Member Representation on Outside Bodies be recommended to Ordinary Council for adoption;**

ii. **the accompanying Member Guidance Note be recommended to Ordinary Council for approval and issue to Councillors appointed to outside bodies; and,**

iii. **the proposed arrangements for the Proper Officer to determine appropriate dispensations under Standing Order 13(e), subject to the limitations set out in the Protocol, be noted.**

218. BUSINESS PLAN/ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Committee considered the revised Business Plan, Action Plan and associated Financial Forecast, prepared following feedback from the Local Council Award Scheme Gold Award assessment.

Members noted that the revisions provided greater detail on the Council's strategic objectives, community engagement, proposed actions, responsibilities, timescales, financial implications, funding sources and measures of progress. The financial forecast had been incorporated into the same document to provide a clearer link between the Council's priorities, planned activity and longer-term financial planning.

It was agreed that some clarification would be helpful in the Action Plan as to whether funding requirements were annual or one-off.

It was RESOLVED that the revised Business Plan, Action Plan and associated Financial Forecast be recommended to Council for adoption as the framework for delivering the Council's agreed priorities and informing future budget and financial planning.

219. COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

Committee reviewed the Council's investment position, including its fixed-term investments with Close Brothers and Virgin Money, the Nationwide 35-Day Saver Account and the Barclays operational and tracker accounts. Members

noted the importance of maintaining sufficient working capital while maximising returns on surplus funds in accordance with the Council's Investment Policy and Strategy.

Committee considered the forthcoming maturity of the £250,000 Virgin Money bond and the comparative investment options set out in the report, taking account of interest returns, credit ratings, liquidity and alignment with the Council's investment policy.

It was RESOLVED that:

i. **the Council's current investment position be noted;**

ii. **the reinvestment of £250,000 with Virgin Money for one year be approved, subject to the Council's Investment Policy and Strategy; and,**

iii. **transfers of surplus funds from the Barclays Business Tracker Account to the Nationwide 35-Day Saver Account be approved, in accordance with the Investment Policy and Strategy and subject to maintaining sufficient funds for the Council's working capital requirements.**

220. CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 8.46pm. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 9 December 2026 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____ Chair: _____