MINUTES of the **ORDINARY COUNCIL** meeting held at **Felixstowe Town Hall** on **Wednesday 17 June 2026** at **7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr D Aitchison (Mayor of Felixstowe)
Cllr D Rowe (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr N Barber
Cllr S Bennett
Cllr S Bird
Cllr J Candy
Cllr A Folley
Cllr T Gale
Cllr S Harkin
Cllr B Price *(to end of item 69)*
Cllr M Sharman
Cllr S Wiles
Cllr W Underwood

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr M Hadwen (Leader, Suffolk County Council)
Cllr T Love (Suffolk County Councillor)
4 members of the public *(in person)*
4 members of the public *(via Zoom)*

60. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor welcomed the Leader of Suffolk County Council, Cllr M Hadwen. Cllr Hadwen addressed the Council, highlighting that, for the first time in the county's history, Felixstowe was represented both within the leadership of the County Council and via all three Felixstowe division members serving on the SCC Cabinet.

Cllr Hadwen further expressed his concerns regarding the proposal by Unity Schools Partnership to close Felixstowe School's Sixth Form. He advised that he had requested an urgent meeting with the multi-academy trust and the Department for Education (DfE), affirming his commitment to securing long-term post-16 state education within the town.

A member of the public enquired as to the status of the Visit Felixstowe brand, which had been dormant since the dissolution of the Felixstowe BID. It was confirmed that conversations were taking place with East Suffolk Council (ESC) to investigate a long-term solution.

A member of the public spoke regarding the SCC notice regarding the cancellation of the 20mph zone, expressing their dismay and concern that this would lead to an increased risk of accidents on the roads. The Mayor confirmed that this would be discussed during the meeting and welcomed the member of the public to stay to listen to the debate.

A member of the public spoke to express their agreement with the previous speaker and raised concerns around the increased density of traffic due to growth in the town and the abrupt notice of the cancellation.

61. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Deacon, Cllr C Franklin** and **Cllr M James**.

62. 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 T Gale	All	Other Registerable Interest (as Member of Suffolk County Council)
Cllr S Bennett Cllr J Candy Cllr A Folley	All	Other Registerable Interest (as Members of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr S Harkin	All	Other Registerable Interest (as an employee of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr D Aitchison	#69	Other Registerable Interest (as a Chair of Governors of Felixstowe School)
Cllr T Gale	#69	Non-Registerable Interest (Parent of a Yr8 student at Felixstowe School) *Dispensation granted by the Proper Officer under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to speak and vote, valid until May 2027.*

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.

63. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR

There were none.

64. CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on Wednesday 20 May 2026 be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council.

65. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council received and noted the schedule of Mayoral engagements undertaken since the previous meeting. The Mayor drew particular attention to his recent visits to local charities and community events, expressing his gratitude to local volunteers.

The Mayor spoke of the launch of the summer season for Swimscapes, which was attended by hundreds of swimmers from all over the region and beyond.

The Mayor enjoyed attending the Ipswich Borough Council AGM and the appointment of the new Mayor of Ipswich, who subsequently visited the Mayor's Civic Reception.

The raising of the Progress Pride flag, marking the start of Pride month, had been particularly well supported.

The Mayor thanked those who supported his Civic Reception, which had also been attended by local dignitaries and local organisations. Referring to the forthcoming Civic Service on 12 July, the Mayor encouraged all Councillors to attend.

The Mayor spoke of his excitement and nerves for his forthcoming charity skydive in September.

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

66. 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 27 May 2026
b) Finance & Governance Committee 3 June 2026
c) Planning & Environment Committee 10 June 2026
d) Civic & Community Committee 10 June 2026

67. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

68. CANCELLATION OF PROPOSED 20MPH SCHEME

Council received and noted the formal decision of Suffolk County Council not to proceed with the proposed 20mph speed restriction scheme within the Felixstowe Central Conservation Area.

Members expressed disappointment and concern at the abrupt decision to not proceed with the scheme, citing evidence from other regions, such as Wales, regarding the effectiveness of 20mph limits in reducing accidents, injuries, and fatalities by up to 20%, as well as lowering insurance premiums. It was noted that SCC had cited insufficient support for the scheme, however Members were aware that 60% of residents within the proposed zone had responded in favour during SCC's informal consultation.

Members considered that the introduction of a 20mph limit would have promoted a perception of security, reduced pollution, and protected vulnerable road users, including the elderly population, visitors to Felixstowe Hospital, and children walking to school.

It was noted that there was common ground with the County Council on the need to reduce vehicular speed. Members welcomed the potential introduction of alternative speed-reducing measures, such as Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs), and called upon the County Council to reconsider its decision.

Conversely, some Members observed that the Town Council had not been unanimous in its original support for the scheme. It was highlighted that the location of the proposed 20mph zone had not been put forward based on direct local evidence of need, despite technically meeting the criteria for such a zone.

It was noted that the final determination ultimately rested with the County Council as the highways authority. Members expressed hope for constructive future collaboration with the County Council on local highways matters.

RESOLVED that the cancellation of the proposed 20mph scheme for the Felixstowe Central Conservation Area be noted with disappointment.

At this point in the meeting, at 8.28pm, it was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders 3(f) and (g) to allow County Councillor M Hadwen to briefly address the Council.

Cllr Hadwen addressed a number of the points raised by Members and confirmed that the County Council remained committed to road safety initiatives across the county.

The Mayor directed the resumption of Standing Orders at 8.32pm.

69. FELIXSTOWE SCHOOL SIXTH FORM PROVISION – STATUTORY CONSULTATION

Pursuant to the Other Registerable Interest declared earlier in the meeting, the Mayor, Cllr D Aitchison, withdrew from the meeting and vacated the Chamber at this point (8.32pm) for the consideration of, and voting on, the following item.

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr D Rowe, took the Chair for the duration of this item.

Council considered an official corporate response to the Unity Schools Partnership statutory consultation on the proposed permanent closure of Felixstowe School's Sixth Form.

Members expressed severe concern that a critical lack of communication and engagement by the Trust was damaging the reputation of the school. It was urged that action be taken to ensure local children - some of whom reside in areas of significant socio-economic disadvantage - are not further failed by a reduction in educational provision.

Members questioned the clear lack of collaboration with the community and other stakeholders to find a solution that would preserve post-16 provision. Concerns were raised that the absence of local post-16 education would deter families from choosing Felixstowe as a place to live, thereby creating negative socio-economic barriers.

Members discussed the importance of making local education sustainable by ensuring that the curriculum offer is current and tailored to employment opportunities within the town, working alongside local partners such as Level Two and the Port of Felixstowe.

Deep concern was expressed that while the Unity Schools Partnership previously operated eight schools with sixth forms, this number had now been reduced to only two.

Council agreed that a robust stance must be taken against the proposal, requesting support from Suffolk County Council to oppose the closure. Some Members felt that the Department for Education (DfE) should consider whether the Unity Schools Partnership remains the appropriate trust for Felixstowe School.

Members sought clarity as to why the Trust's strategy had shifted from an initial operational "pause" of the sixth form to a permanent closure, questioning why maintaining a temporary pause was not deemed viable. It was noted, however, that pausing entry ultimately forced a closure due to a resulting lack of student enrolment.

It was acknowledged that Felixstowe School had achieved notable improvements over recent years; however, progress could be severely undermined by a lack of continuity in local educational provision. It was felt to be unacceptable for a town of Felixstowe's size to have no post-16 state education provision.

Disappointment was expressed that the Trust had failed to engage with partners a few years prior to taking this decision, when collaborative solutions could have been explored. Further disappointment was raised regarding the statutory framework of academies, which prevents the County Council from taking direct control of the school, meaning it can only ever be transferred to an alternative multi-academy trust.

During the ensuing debate, Members expressed their deep disappointment and concern, highlighting a number of critical factors regarding the impact of the proposal on the town. The following key points, which formed the basis of the Council's agreed representation, were recorded:

Principle of Opposition: Council expressed strong opposition to the reduction of the school's age range from 11-18 to 11-16. It was noted that the transition from a temporary "operational pause" to a permanent structural closure confirmed the Council's initial fears and represented a fundamental retreat from educational obligations to local young people. The chamber reaffirmed that excellent post-16 provision must include a dedicated local sixth form within Felixstowe itself.

Critique of Stakeholder Engagement: Deep frustration was recorded regarding the unilateral approach taken by the Trust. Because the original suspension of entry was presented as a fait accompli, local stakeholders and regional partners were entirely excluded from early-stage strategic planning. Members agreed that this statutory consultation must not be treated as a retrospective box-ticking exercise, and that the Trust must engage transparently to find alternative solutions.

Impact on Local Families and Socio-Economic Barriers: It was emphasised that a permanent closure removes the only state post-16 provider in the town, forcing students to commute outward and introducing heavy travel costs, estimated to exceed £1,000 per student per year. This places a direct financial penalty on continuing education for lower-income households and undermines local "Pride in Place" initiatives.

Furthermore, the absence of post-16 education will reduce the attraction of Felixstowe as a place to live.

Impact on Staff Recruitment and Retention: Members highlighted that losing 11-18 status significantly diminishes the professional appeal of the school. Offering sixth-form and A-Level teaching is a vital mechanism for attracting and retaining top-tier subject specialists. For a school situated on a peninsula with an inherently restricted geographical catchment area for commuting staff, this structural loss risks degrading the overall quality of education across all key stages.

Educational and Geographical Isolation: Council noted that forcing teenagers into daily long-distance commutes is detrimental to student well-being and severely reduces independent study time. Whilst it was acknowledged that community stakeholders are beginning to explore alternative long-term local models, any such framework would take multiple years to establish, leaving current cohorts completely isolated in the interim.

Call to Action: Reaffirming the Council's previous vote of no confidence, Members concluded that Unity Schools Partnership must be urged to completely withdraw the closure proposal and work constructively with the Town Council, the community, and the Department for Education to create a sustainable, long-term business case to retain post-16 education within the town.

Following full consideration of the discussion paper and debate, it was RESOLVED that:

i. **the Town Council submits a formal, robust objection to the Unity Schools Partnership consultation based on the detailed framework of representation outlined in the narrative above; and,**

ii. **the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Civic & Community Committee, be authorised to finalise and submit the official representation ahead of the public consultation deadline on 30 June 2026.**

At 9.04 pm, Cllr D Aitchison returned to the Chamber and retook the Chair from the Deputy Mayor.

70. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: FULL YEAR 2025/26

Council received the final Internal Audit Report for 2025/26, which had been previously circulated to all Members and recommended for adoption by the Finance & Governance Committee *(Minute #31 of 2026/27 refers).*

Members noted with satisfaction that the report confirmed that the Council's systems and controls across core areas were operating effectively, and the associated action plan to publish a fully compliant Contracts Register to the Council's website by the next quarter was approved.

It was RESOLVED that the final Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31 March 2026 be formally received and adopted, and the action plan to publish a compliant Contracts Register to the Council's website be approved.

71. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ANNUAL RETURN 2025/26

Council considered the Annual Governance Statement and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the financial year 2025/26.

Members recorded a vote of thanks to the Council’s staff for their hard work in completing the audit documents.

Following the recommendation of the Finance & Governance Committee (*Minute #33 of 2026/27 refers),* it was RESOLVED that:

i. **Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 be approved, and the Mayor and Town Clerk be authorised to sign the declaration on behalf of the Council;**

ii. **Section 2 (Accounting Statements) as signed and certified by the Town Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer be approved, and the Mayor be authorised to sign the declaration on behalf of the Council; and,**

iii. **it be noted that no material recommendations arose from the final Internal Audit Report, meaning no supplementary action plan was required for submission to the External Auditor.**

72. ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

Council received the final draft of the Annual Report for 2025/26 as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee *(Minute #34 of 2026/27 refers)*. Members commented on the document's readability and quality, noting that the publication serves as a key mechanism for local accountability, highlighting the Council's financial performance, civic achievements, and progress on major community projects over the past year.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Council's Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2025/26 be approved and adopted for public distribution in print and digital formats.

73. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS: PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Council considered a variation to committee memberships. Members paid tribute to Cllr Barber for his service on the Planning & Environment Committee.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr S Wiles be appointed to the Planning & Environment Committee to replace Cllr N Barber.

74. REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT EFFECTIVENESS 2026/27

Following the recommendation of the Finance & Governance Committee (*Minute #32 of 2026/27 refers*), Council conducted its annual review of its audit provisions.

It was RESOLVED that:

i. **having reviewed the competency, independence, and structural scope of the internal audit, the Council confirms the current system of internal audit control to be fully effective; and,**

ii. **the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) be formally re-appointed to conduct the interim and year-end audits for the 2026/27 financial year in strict accordance with the Practitioner's Guide.**

75. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL 2026/27

Following the recommendation of the Finance & Governance Committee (*Minute #38 of 2026/27 refers*), Council reviewed its corporate risk management arrangements.

It was RESOLVED that the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31 March 2027 be approved and formally adopted as presented.

At this point, 9.28pm, in accordance with Standing Order 3(x), Council agreed to extend the meeting beyond the two hour time limit.

76. COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

Council considered a strategic report regarding the maturity of capital investments, noting that the Finance & Governance Committee had recommended the renewal of the investment with Close Brothers Group *(Minute #37 of 2026/27 refers).*

Members noted recent changes to Close Brothers' credit rating and considered the implications for investment risk, whilst observing that no financial institution could guarantee the complete absence of investment risk.

Suffolk Building Society was considered as a later, alternative option, supporting local and ethical considerations. It was noted that smaller regional building societies such as Suffolk do not typically maintain formal commercial credit ratings from agencies such as Fitch or Moody's.

The Clerk advised that investment decisions must adhere to the SLY principle (prioritising Security, then Liquidity, before finally seeking Yield). The Clerk further advised that because the Council's Investment Policy and Strategy 2026/27 establishes formal credit ratings as a key determinant for deposits, selecting an unrated institution would require Council to knowingly overrule its own adopted policy for this specific transaction.

Following full consideration of the due diligence, security assessments, and the original committee recommendation, it was RESOLVED that the Council renews its fixed-term investment of £500,000 with Close Brothers Group upon its maturity.

77. CIL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Council considered a comprehensive report from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Working Group detailing its recent meetings held on 27 April and 8 June 2026, alongside recommendations for new capital project allocations from the local CIL Earmarked Reserve.

Members reviewed the progress of several ongoing public realm initiatives, including the Cavendish Park play equipment procurement, proposed Cemetery Road boundary gates, and a town-wide strategic review of smaller play facilities.

The Town Clerk confirmed the CIL Working Group's desire to see the town centre considered for a new enhancement project. The Clerk reported that his recent attendance at the Felixstowe Place Board, where the CIL Working Group's support for a project in the Triangle area was formally communicated. The Clerk had also contacted the Chair of the Pride in Place Board, noting that an improvement to the town centre would directly benefit residents in the Western Felixstowe area.

It was noted that the previously approved feasibility study for a potential pump track was currently on hold until East Suffolk Council (ESC) confirmed its structural support for the proposed sites.

In considering new allocations, Members noted that, whilst preliminary statutory survey work for the Felixstowe Cemetery Extension costing £18,715 + VAT had been authorised by the Assets & Services Committee, this urgent expenditure had effectively exhausted that Committee's £20,000 annual delegated spending threshold for the Cemetery Earmarked Reserve. To ensure subsequent planning, design, and environmental survey phases advanced without delay, Council supported utilising the local CIL fund as an alternative strategic funding mechanism, thereby preserving the primary Cemetery Earmarked Reserve for future capital works.

Following the recent unauthorised encampment at Gosford Way Park, Members evaluated options to enhance physical perimeter security to safeguard the open space. It was proposed to approve the appointment of Company A to supply and install 160 metres of low steel perimeter railings and two secure access gates, noting their proven standard of workmanship on similar infrastructure at Cavendish Park.

A review of the financial summary tables confirmed an unallocated cash balance of £361,114.92, which accounted for the return of the £12,000 match-funding from the cancelled conservation area 20mph scheme.

It was RESOLVED that:

i. **the comprehensive project updates, monitoring of CIL expenditure against the applicable five-year repayment provisions, and financial reconciliation reports from the CIL Working Group be formally received and noted;**

ii. **an allocation of up to a maximum cap of £80,000 be approved from the local CIL Earmarked Reserve to fund the initial £18,715 and all subsequent statutory planning, design, and environmental survey phases of the Felixstowe Cemetery Extension project; and,**

iii. **the contract for the supply and installation of low perimeter railings and access gates at Gosford Way Park be awarded to Company A at a cost of £10,260 + VAT, and that a 10% operational contingency be authorised, creating a maximum total project budget of £11,300 to be funded from the CIL Earmarked Reserve.**

78. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Council considered the schedule of accounts for payment.

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

Date	Voucher Nos.	Total Payment
14/05/2026	37-73	£34,922.63
31/05/2026	74–86	£53,972.03
	TOTAL	**£88,894.66**

79. CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 9.50pm. It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council would take place on Wednesday 2 September 2026.

Date: ____________________ Town Mayor: ____________________