



TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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 W Underwood
Cllr S Wiles

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** to be held at **TOWN HALL, FELIXSTOWE** on **Wednesday 14 October 2026** at **7.30pm** for the transaction of the following business:

Public Attendance

Meetings of the Town Council and its Committees are open to the press and public who are welcome to attend. Members of the public are invited to make representations or put questions to the Committee during the public session.

There is a limit to the number of public attending in-person. If you wish to attend in person, please email townclerk@felixstowe.gov.uk to confirm capacity.

Members of the public are very welcome to join via Zoom using the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83090518311> .

Alternatively, you may join via the meeting ID 830 9051 8311 or over the telephone by calling 0131 460 1196

Our online meeting guidance can be found here:
<https://felixstowe.gov.uk/remote-meeting-guide>

Council has a duty to pay due regard to preventing crime and disorder and to conserve biodiversity in its decision-making and Members are reminded to consider the Council's commitment to climate action.



The Council kindly asks that anyone planning to attend the meeting in-person to consider car-sharing or low-carbon modes of transport to the Town Hall.

Ash Tadjrishi
Town Clerk
9 October 2026

A G E N D A

- 1. Public Question Time**
Up to 15 minutes is set aside to allow members of the public (up to three minutes each) to make representations or put questions to the Committee on any relevant matters.
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 3. Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations of interest and to consider requests for dispensations from Members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest.
- 4. Confirmation of Minutes**
To confirm the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee meeting held on 3 June 2026 as a true record. **(Pages 4-8)**
- 5. Budget Monitoring to 30 September 2026**
To receive budget monitoring report to 30 September 2026 and consider any actions deemed necessary. **(Pages 9-12 & Appendix A)**
- 6. Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2025/26 – External Auditor’s Report**
To receive the External Auditor’s Report and Certificate on the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the Financial Year 2025/26. **(Page 13 & Appendix B)**
- 7. Internal Audit Report: Interim 2026/27**
To receive the Interim Internal Audit report for 2026/27. **(Page 14 & Appendix C)**
- 8. Quarterly Bank Reconciliations**
To note that the appointed Councillor has confirmed the reconciliations between the bank statements and accounts statements for the period 1 April – 30 September 2026. **(Verbal confirmation)**
- 9. Budget Review Working Group Update**
To receive the report from the Budget Review Working Group. **(Pages 15-19 & Appendix D)**
- 10. Members’ Allowances and Expenses Policy**
To review, and recommend to Council, the Members’ Allowances and Expenses Policy 2026-27. **(Pages 20-23 & Appendix E)**
- 11. Protocol on Member Representation on Outside Bodies**
To consider and recommend to Council the adoption of a formal Protocol, Guidance Note, and dispensation arrangements for Members appointed to represent the Council on outside bodies. **(Pages 24-26 & Appendices F & G)**

12. Business Plan/Action Plan review

To review the revised Business Plan, Action Plan and associated Financial Forecast following feedback received through the Council's LCAS Gold Award application. **(Pages 27-28 & Appendix H)**

13. Council Investments

To consider the investments of the Town Council. **(Pages 29-31)**

14. Closure

To close proceedings and confirm the date of the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 9 December 2026 at 7.30pm.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

MINUTES of the **FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** meeting held at
Town Hall, Felixstowe on Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Cllr D Rowe (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr S Bennett
Cllr S Bird
Cllr M James
Cllr M Sharman
Cllr S Wiles
Cllr W Underwood

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

IN ATTENDANCE: One member of the public (*via Zoom*)

27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There was none.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Deacon** and **Cllr T Gale**.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following 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 S Bennett	All	Other Registerable Interests (as Member of East Suffolk 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.

30. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 18 March 2026 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

31. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: FULL YEAR 2025/26

Members considered the final Internal Audit Report for the year 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 as presented, noting one typographical error on page 22 that states the internal control was reviewed on 4 June 2026, instead of 2025.

Committee noted that the Auditor recommended keeping and regularly publishing a Contracts Register to detail all contracts, tenders, and commercial arrangements exceeding £5,000 in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. Committee was pleased to note that work on compiling this register is already underway.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. committee reviewed and noted the final Internal Audit Report for 2025/26;**
- ii. the proposed action plan to publish the compliant Contracts Register directly to the Council's website to meet the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 be approved; and**
- iii. Committee recommends to Council that it formally receives and adopts the Internal Report for the year ending March 2026.**

32. REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT EFFECTIVENESS

Committee reviewed the arrangements for, and the effectiveness of, the Council's internal audit.

Members acknowledged the Deputy Town Clerk's new role as an auditor with the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC), satisfied this represents no conflict of interest as she will not be carrying out audits of Felixstowe Town Council specifically. It was agreed that SALC provides a good service, noting the value of engaging an auditor with experience in the town council sector. It was proposed that the existing arrangement be continued for 2026/27.

It was RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that:

- i. following a review of the effectiveness of its internal audit, Council confirms the current arrangements to be effective; and**
- ii. in being satisfied with the independence and competence of the internal auditor, the Suffolk Association of Local Councils be appointed to continue as the Council's internal auditor for 2026/27 to carry out interim and year-end audits in accordance with the statutory Practitioner's Guide.**

33. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025-26

Members considered the Annual Governance Statement and Accountability Return for the financial year 2025/26 as presented.

Councillors expressed their thanks to the Town Council team for their work in preparing the accounts and supporting documentation.

It was RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that:

- i. the Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 (Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement) be approved and the Mayor and Town Clerk be authorised to sign the declaration on behalf of Felixstowe Town Council;**
- ii. the Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 (Section 2 – Accounting Statements) as signed by the Town Clerk, as the Council’s Responsible Finance Officer be approved, and the Mayor be authorised to sign the declaration on behalf of Felixstowe Town Council; and,**
- iii. it be noted that there were no recommendations arising from the final Internal Audit Report for the financial year 2025/26 and, as such, no action plan was required to be submitted with the Annual Return to the External Auditor.**

34. ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Committee considered the draft Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2025/26. Members expressed positive feedback on the format, readability, and content of the Report.

Members were encouraged to take their time and look over the report for any misprints or suggested amendments, with a single misspelling noted and corrected during the meeting.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendments discussed, the Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2025/26 be recommended to Council for approval and adoption.

35. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 MAY 2026

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 30 May 2026. A report of any variance to budget estimates for the period greater than 16.7% or £500 was considered.

RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 May 2026 be noted.

36. QUARTERLY BANK RECONCILIATION

It was confirmed that Cllr David Rowe, as the Council’s nominated Quarterly Bank Reconciliation Signatory (Min #15 of 2025/26 refers), had signed the reconciliation between the bank statement and Scribe accounts to confirm the amounts agreed each month.

RESOLVED that it be noted that the reconciliations between the bank statement and accounts statements for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March

2026 had been reviewed and signed by the appointed bank reconciliation signatory.

37. COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

Committee considered a report on Council investments and discussed the upcoming maturity of a £500,000 fixed-term deposit.

Members noted the current 'Negative Watch' status of the BBB+ rated Close Brothers Group due to an ongoing sector investigation. However, following full consideration and due diligence, the Committee expressed confidence in maintaining the investment, noting that alternative options failed to offer a comparable balance of security and return on investment.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that it renews its investment of £500,000 with Close Brothers upon maturity.

38. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL 2026/27

Committee noted the statutory requirement under Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for local authorities to conduct an annual review of their system of internal control.

Following a review of the Council's current Internal Control Statement and associated policy documents, Members were satisfied that the existing arrangements remained robust, effective, and required no further amendment.

It was RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that the Internal Control Statement for the financial year ending 31 March 2027 be formally adopted as presented.

39. ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Committee reviewed progress on the Town Council's Action Plan in delivering the key priorities identified within the broader Business Plan. The Clerk advised that the Action Plan is maintained as a 'living document', regularly reviewed by the Committee to reflect the ongoing delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.

Members discussed the content of the current plan and agreed on the following amendments to provide better clarity and context:

- **Item BP 3.1 (Grants):** Expand the scope to explicitly include Annual Grants alongside Occasional Grants.
- **Grant Conditions:** Update the criteria to require, rather than request, that ongoing grant recipients formally acknowledge financial contributions from Felixstowe Town Council.
- **Partnerships:** Remove all references to the Business Improvement District (BID) following its formal dissolution.

- **Civic Achievements:** Make past support for the Blue Flag Beach Award and Seaside Award more prominent, alongside other historic project achievements.

It was RESOLVED that the Action Plan be updated in line with Members' comments and kept under regular review as part of the Committee's strategic oversight.

40. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.12pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 14 October 2026 at 7.30pm.

AGENDA ITEM 5: BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

A summary Income & Expenditure Report to 30 September 2026 is shown below with a detailed report provided at **Appendix A**.

1 April - 30 September (2026-27)

Felixstowe Town Council Summary of Receipts and Payments Summary - All Cost Centres

Cost Centre	Receipts				Payments			
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	% Received	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	% Spent
101 Administration	762,786.00	839,554.24	76,768	110.06%	393,300.00	201,890.61	191,409	51.33%
201 Town Hall	21,351.00	23,836.86	2,486	111.64%	97,574.00	46,660.20	50,914	47.82%
202 Walton	15,000.00	7,267.26	-7,733	48.45%	15,938.00	6,755.16	9,183	42.38%
203 Broadway House	2,950.00	0.00	-2,950	0.00%	14,050.00	6,511.94	7,538	46.35%
204 Cemetery	78,595.00	64,931.18	-13,664	82.61%	196,203.40	100,520.04	95,683	51.23%
205 Allotment	20,000.00	4,350.95	-15,649	21.75%	42,632.00	25,469.89	17,162	59.74%
206 Parks & Recreation	0.00	0.00	0	N/A	41,442.00	17,669.48	23,773	42.64%
301 Civic & Community	0.00	0.00	0	N/A	30,802.00	17,031.43	13,771	55.29%
302 Grants	0.00	0.00	0	N/A	59,545.00	33,284.00	26,261	55.90%
303 Felixstowe in Flower	7,500.00	1,850.05	-5,650	24.67%	9,250.00	7,527.42	1,723	81.38%
304 Communication	7,500.00	980.00	-6,520	13.07%	21,310.00	9,058.00	12,252	42.51%
305 Community Projects	0.00	0.00	0	N/A	11,000.00	11,000.00	1,000	100.00%
NET TOTAL	915,682.00	942,770.54	27,088.54	102.96%	933,046.40	483,378.17	449,668.23	51.81%

Created by  Scribe

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, explanations are provided for material variances where expenditure exceeds the approved budget by more than 10% or £500, whichever is the lower threshold. As the Council's budgets are not phased, expenditure would be expected to be around 50% at the six-month point, although individual budgets will vary according to the timing of expenditure. Total expenditure for the first six months stood at 52%. Explanatory notes and recommended action for the relevant items in **Appendix A** are set out below:

Cost Centre 101 - Administration
4425 Postage (66%) Includes franking top-ups, allotment letter posting Recommendation: No action.
4460 Subscriptions (100%) All annual subscriptions for 2026/27 now paid. Recommendation: No action.
4461 External Audit (125%) External audit fee has been incurred. Expenditure is above budget at this stage. Recommendation: No further action; review the budget provision for 2027/28.

4464 Insurance (93%)

Full year payment made up front.

Recommendation: No further action; review the budget provision for 2027/28.

4481 IT Maintenance & Software (67%)

Frontloaded costs – Scribe Accountancy Software Annual Fee

Recommendation: No action.

4490 Professional Fees (59%)

Sum-Up charges from card transactions

Recommendation: No action.

Cost Centre 201 - Town Hall

4031 Training (57%)

Manual handling safety compliance training workshops

Recommendation: No action.

4110 Rates (58%)

Rates are paid over 10 months only.

Recommendation: No action.

4155 Cleaning Materials (64%)

Increase in cleaning material orders

Recommendation: No action.

4180 Licences (100%)

Annual licence costs have been paid in full.

Recommendation: No further action.

4260 Equipment Purchases (102%)

Footrests, branded clothing for caretaker staff

Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis

Cost Centre 202 – Walton Community Hall

4111 Rates (57%)

Rates are paid over 10 months only.

Recommendation: No further action

Cost Centre 203 – Broadway House

1031 Leases, Rents & Licenses (0%)

Annual invoice is outstanding, awaiting payment

Recommendation: Chase outstanding invoice

Cost Centre 204 – Cemetery
4032 Training (78%) Safety compliance training course Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis
4262 Equipment Purchases (78%) Safety equipment & PPE purchased, wheelbarrow, safety bollards Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis
4300 Vehicle Running Costs (64%) Front loaded costs such as MOT, Road Tax, also work to bowser. Purchase of dashcam and safety features (reversing alarm, hi-vis stickers, etc.) Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis
4330 Fuel (64%) Increase cost in fuel, 199.9p per litre compared to 142.8p this time last year Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis
Cost Centre 205 – Allotments
1080 Allotment Rents (22%) Majority of Allotment rents are billed annually end of September Recommendation: No further action.
4118 Water & Sewerage (121%) Despite the hosepipe ban, the exceptionally dry summer resulted in significantly increased water usage. Recommendation: Continue to monitor closely and investigate the level of usage and any further cost implications.
4174 Repairs & Maintenance (62%) Purchase of water trough. Recommendation: Continue to monitor monthly.
4321 Vehicle/Tool Hire (111%) Expenditure is expected to be recovered through invoicing the allotment tenant for damage and clearance of the plot. Recommendation: Monitor recovery of the recharge.
Cost Centre 301 – Civic & Community
4512 Engraving & Sign Writing (212%) New Mayoral Board engraving; no further expenditure is expected for 2026/27. Recommendation: Continue to monitor monthly.
4530 Civic Events (72%) Mostly front-loaded expenditure Recommendation: Continue to monitor on a monthly basis

4645 Christmas Lights (100%)

Paid in full June 2026.

Recommendation: *No further action.*

Cost Centre 302 – Grants

4620 Annual Grants (88%)

Annual grants processed & paid.

Recommendation: *No further action.*

Cost Centre 303 – Felixstowe in Flower

1811 Donations & Sponsorship (25%)

Loss of main sponsorship and lower-than-anticipated income generally.

Recommendation: *Explore alternative basket sponsorship opportunities.*

4290 Flowers & Containers (100%)

Flowers & containers purchased for 2026/27

Recommendation: *No further action*

Cost Centre 304 – Communication

1812 Donations & Sponsorship (14%)

2026/27 began with the Summer Edition; £780 remains outstanding (29%).

Recommendation: *Chase outstanding invoices.*

Cost Centre 305 – Community Projects & Partnerships

4625 Harwich Harbour Ferry Services (100%)

Paid in full

Recommendation: *None*

4630 Level 2 (100%)

Paid in full

Recommendation: *None*

Committee is requested to consider the budget monitoring report to 30 September 2026 and determine whether any further action is required.

AGENDA ITEM 6: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/26

To present the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the Financial Year 2025/26, including the External Auditor's Report and Certificate, for review by the Finance & Governance Committee and recommendation to full Council.

The external audit of the accounts of Felixstowe Town Council for the Financial Year 2025/26 was completed on 9 September 2026. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), including the External Auditor's Report and Certificate, is presented at **Appendix B**.

The Council's External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, has stated that, based on the annual return, in their opinion, the information provided is in accordance with proper practices. No matters came to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. No other matters were identified that required further reporting or action by the Council.

In accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Notice of Conclusion of Audit was displayed on the Town Hall noticeboard from 10 September 2026 and is available on the Council's website. The notice confirms the conclusion of the audit and provides information on the availability of the audited accounts and related documents for inspection.

The AGAR for 2025/26 will remain available online alongside returns for the preceding eight years.

Committee is requested to:

- i. **note and commend to Council the Annual Governance and Accountability Return including the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for 2025/26, as presented at Appendix B; and**
 - ii. **note that, in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and associated regulations, the Notice of Conclusion of Audit was displayed on the Town Hall noticeboard from 10 September 2026 and is available on the Council's website.**
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AGENDA ITEM 7: INTERIM AUDIT REPORT: YEAR 2026/27

Committee is asked to consider the Interim Internal Audit Report for the half-year ending 30 September 2026 for review by the Finance & Governance Committee and subsequent receipt by full Council.

Background and Context

The primary objective of the internal audit is to review, appraise, and report on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control systems, financial management, and governance arrangements.

Following the Committee's review of internal audit effectiveness in 2024/25 (*Minute #41 2024/25 refers*), and in line with the Council's decision to use different auditors for the interim and year-end audits, the interim audit was undertaken by Ms Julie Lawes of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC).

Ms Lawes, Clerk to Capel St Mary Parish Council, has over five years' experience carrying out audits for SALC and this is the third occasion on which she has audited Felixstowe Town Council. The Interim Internal Audit for the period 1 April 2026 to 30 September 2026 was conducted on Thursday 8 October 2026. The full report is presented at **Appendix C**.

Key Audit Findings and Financial Position

The internal audit evaluated fifteen core governance and financial control areas, including Financial Regulations, Budgetary Controls, Payment Controls, Risk Management, Asset Control, and Data Protection/AGAR Assertion 10 compliance.

There were no recommendations arising from the report which concluded as follows:

"I would like to thank the staff members of Felixstowe Town Council for their assistance and cooperation throughout the audit process. The clear, comprehensive and timely information provided was extremely helpful in supporting the review and enabled the audit work to be completed effectively."

"The Council continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to good governance, sound financial management and transparency, and remains an excellent example of good practice within the sector."

Committee is recommended to:

- i. **note the Interim Internal Audit Report for the period 1 April 2026 – 30 September 2026, as presented at Appendix C; and,**
- ii. **recommend to full Council that the Interim Internal Audit Report be received and adopted.**

AGENDA ITEM 9: BUDGET REVIEW WORKING GROUP REPORT

The Budget Review Working Group met on three occasions between March and July 2026 to review the Council's budgets and identify opportunities to improve value for money, manage service costs and strengthen longer-term financial sustainability. Its report and recommendations, circulated to all Members of the Finance & Governance Committee, are included at **Appendix D**.

The recommendations were subsequently considered by the relevant Committees in September. Their responses, together with the officer assessment of the recommendation concerning IT support, are set out below.

Assets & Services Committee

Town Hall & Walton Community Hall

- **Recommendation A&S 1:** That the Assets & Services Committee consider reviewing wedding fees, including the potential for an increase (e.g. circa 10%), benchmarked against comparable local providers.

A&S considered this recommendation and benchmarked the Town Hall against other local providers. Members noted that the Town Hall was currently the only wedding venue in Felixstowe and agreed to recommend a 5% increase in wedding fees for 2027–28.

- **Recommendation A&S 2:** Increase the promotion of Registrar Services and the Town Hall's wedding and room hire offer online.

A&S discussed the recommendation and asked the Clerk to contact Suffolk County Council regarding the provision of registrar services in Felixstowe.

The Superintendent Registrar confirmed that residents can request an appointment at the Town Hall when contacting the Registration Service by telephone or email, subject to operational requirements and staff availability. Although Felixstowe is not currently a selectable location on the online booking form, the Registration Service recognises the importance of maintaining local access and has offered to help promote the service locally.

Officers will continue to promote weddings and room hire through the Council's magazine, website and social media.

- **Recommendation A&S 3:** Continue to monitor Town Hall leases in the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Although leases will no longer be affected by the Local Government Review,, officers will continue to monitor the Town Hall leases with East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council.

Broadway House

- **Recommendation A&S 4:** That, subject to consultation with FOPWA and a review of current lease and caretaking arrangements by the Assets & Services Committee, the Civic & Community Committee consider whether FOPWA may be eligible for an Annual Grant (similar to that provided to Level Two Youth Project) to support a transition towards greater financial sustainability.

Members discussed the current leasing arrangements with FOPWA and the potential for an annual grant. The Town Clerk confirmed that early discussions had taken place and that the arrangements could be reviewed by mutual agreement during the current lease period, which runs until 2030, or as part of the lease renewal process. No decision has been taken to introduce an annual grant.

Cemetery & Parks

The Working Group made no formal recommendations beyond continuing the annual review of the relevant budgets.

Allotments

- **Recommendation A&S 5:** Initiate early engagement with the Felixstowe Allotment Association regarding the Council's longer-term aim of moving towards a more cost-neutral position.

Discussions took place with the FAA before the A&S meeting, and two FAA representatives attended the meeting to raise their concerns.

- **Recommendations A&S 6 and 7:** (6) Consider implementing a 10% annual rent increase over a 5–10 year period to gradually reduce the service subsidy. (7) Revise concessionary arrangements to remove age-related (pensioner) discounts and replace them with a discount for residents in receipt of Universal Credit or Pension Credit, updating the Council's Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) accordingly to allow simple verification without data retention.

The FAA raised concerns about the potential impact of significant rent increases and changes to concessionary arrangements, including the risk that plots could be vacated. The Association also suggested that stronger enforcement against non-compliant plots could reduce maintenance and clearance costs associated with poorly maintained or abandoned plots.

Members considered these representations alongside the level of subsidy provided by the Council, the costs of administering and maintaining the service, and the wider social benefits of allotments.

Following discussion, A&S agreed that the existing concessionary arrangements should remain unchanged. Members considered a 10% annual rent increase excessive but agreed that a percentage-based uplift, rather than a flat-rate increase,

would help rents keep pace with rising costs. A&S therefore set a 5% increase in allotment rents for 2027–28.

- **Recommendation A&S 8:** Investigate the feasibility and installation of a borehole producing up to 20,000 litres of water per day, alongside introducing a policy restriction on water butts larger than 80 litres to regulate consumption.

A&S considered the proposal and agreed to commission a Hydrogeological Risk Assessment (Minute #179 2026/27 refers). The assessment will evaluate local geology, anticipated water yields and quality, potential contamination risks and an appropriate borehole design. Its findings will inform any subsequent decision on installation.

Civic & Community Committee

Mayoral & Civic Budgets

- **Recommendation C&C 1:** Maintain the Mayoral Allowance at £3,000 for the 2027–28 financial year.

The Committee agreed that the Mayoral Allowance should remain at £3,000 for 2027–28.

Town Twinning & Youth Forum

- **Recommendation C&C 2:** Encourage the twinning associations to find innovative ways to increase public awareness and promote wider community participation in town twinning.

The Committee agreed that promoting public awareness of town twinning and encouraging wider community participation would be made an express condition of the annual grants to the twinning associations.

Grants & Community Support

- **Recommendation C&C 3:** Maintain existing grant levels for 2027–28, but note that if future cost-saving pressures arise to protect the precept, these codes must be targeted for review once Earmarked Reserve funding ceases.

Members considered the recommendation and agreed that existing grant provision should be maintained as far as possible without relying on reserves. The Committee's objective is to retain a minimum Occasional Grants Budget of £30,000–£35,000, subject to available funding.

The Community Fund Earmarked Reserve can support this provision in the short term, but the position will need to be reviewed as part of the 2028–29 budget-setting process.

Felixstowe in Flower

- **Recommendation C&C 4:** Review and improve sponsorship opportunities for Felixstowe in Flower (including utilising "In support of..." branding) to move the scheme closer to a cost-neutral position.

Members supported reducing the net cost of Felixstowe in Flower and noted that a review of the scheme was already on the Committee's agenda.

Communication: Town Magazine

- **Recommendation C&C 5:** Reduce the publication and distribution frequency of the town magazine from quarterly to twice yearly.

The Committee agreed to plan for two printed editions each year, in summer and winter, from 2027–28, supported by digital editions or other bulletins. The format and arrangements for implementation will be considered at a future Civic & Community meeting.

Finance & Governance Committee

IT Support Services

- **Recommendation F&G 1:** Officers to review the IT support services provided by Centradata and assess whether savings can be achieved without compromising cyber security, network maintenance, support responsiveness or business continuity, reporting findings back to the Finance & Governance Committee.

The Council currently pays Centradata £162.50 plus VAT per month (£1,950 plus VAT annually) under its existing support arrangement. The service has been used relatively infrequently in recent years, with approximately one to three support requirements per year.

Officers have considered whether moving to an ad-hoc support arrangement could reduce costs. Centradata has indicated that ad-hoc support is available at £70 plus VAT per hour for remote support and £75 plus VAT per hour for on-site support, with a three-hour minimum for on-site attendance. At the remote support rate, approximately 28 hours of support annually would equate to the existing annual fee. This is a comparison of headline costs only and does not account for differences in the services provided.

The current arrangement provides more than reactive technical support. It also incorporates elements of proactive maintenance and monitoring, including software and security updates, endpoint protection, backup monitoring and general maintenance. These services would need to be taken into account when comparing the existing arrangement with an ad-hoc alternative.

Officers consider that there may be scope to reduce routine IT expenditure, but the number of support calls alone is not sufficient to establish that an ad-hoc

arrangement would offer better value. Any alternative would need to provide an appropriate level of cyber security, system maintenance, responsiveness and business continuity, while avoiding unnecessary expenditure.

Officers therefore recommend a proportionate comparison of the current arrangement with alternative IT support options. This should include obtaining proposals from other providers and comparing the services included, response arrangements, security and maintenance provision, and any minimum or additional charges.

The findings will be reported back to the Finance & Governance Committee before any decision is taken to change the existing support arrangements.

Budget Review Working Group Summary

The Budget Review Working Group's review provided an opportunity for Members to examine the Council's budgets in greater detail and identify opportunities to improve value for money, manage service costs and strengthen longer-term financial sustainability.

The recommendations have been considered by the relevant Committees, with a number of proposals taken forward, adapted or identified for further investigation. These include proposed increases to wedding and allotment fees, retaining existing concessionary arrangements for allotments, reviewing sponsorship opportunities for Felixstowe in Flower and moving towards a reduced publication frequency for the town magazine.

The review has also identified areas requiring further consideration, including the longer-term financial sustainability of the Broadway House arrangements, the potential for improvements to allotment water provision and the value for money offered by the Council's IT support arrangements.

Overall, the exercise has provided a useful opportunity for Members and officers to consider the relationship between service delivery, costs and the Council's financial priorities. The resulting actions and further investigations will help inform future budget-setting decisions.

Committee is requested to consider the report of the Budget Review Working Group, note the responses from the Assets & Services and Civic & Community Committees, and endorse the officer recommendation to compare the current IT support arrangement with alternative providers, with the findings to be reported back to the Finance & Governance Committee before any decision is taken to change the existing arrangements. Any further recommendations to Council or other Committees may be made as appropriate.

AGENDA ITEM 10: MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES & EXPENSES **POLICY**

The Council has historically chosen not to pay a Parish Basic Allowance (PBA) to its Members. The current Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy is attached at **Appendix E** for review.

The East Suffolk Council Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) reviewed allowances for town and parish councillors and presented its report to East Suffolk Council's Full Council on 22 January 2025. The review had been initiated in 2019 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent local elections. The January 2025 report remains the latest guidance available to inform the Council's consideration. The IRP process would ordinarily be revisited on a four-year cycle.

Parish Basic Allowance

The East Suffolk Council Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) recommended indicative Parish Basic Allowance (PBA) levels linked to electorate size, expressed as a percentage of East Suffolk Council's basic allowance at the time of its January 2025 report (£9,379).

Electorate	Standard member rate	Indicative annual allowance
1–5,000	1%	£93.79
5,001–10,000	2%	£187.58
10,001–20,000	3%	£281.37
20,001–30,000	4%	£375.16
Over 30,000	5%	£468.95

The electorate figures supplied for Felixstowe are:

Date	Eastern Ward	Western Ward	Total
May 2023 local elections	10,638	8,800	19,438
July 2024 general election	10,750	8,766	19,516
Estimated May 2027	—	—	19,600–19,800

On these figures, Felixstowe remains within the IRP's 10,001–20,000 electorate band. The current estimate suggests that the electorate is unlikely to exceed 20,000 by May 2027, although this should be kept under review.

The IRP's recommendations are guidance to inform the Council's decision; they do not require the Council to introduce a PBA or to adopt the recommended rate.

Under regulation 25(2) of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, a parish council proposing to pay a PBA must have regard to the relevant parish remuneration panel's recommendations when setting the level. The Council may therefore decide not to introduce a PBA or, if it does, set a different level, provided it has properly considered the recommendations and complies with the applicable statutory requirements.

Using the January 2025 IRP baseline, the indicative annual PBA for Felixstowe would be £281.37 per eligible Member. If a PBA were introduced, it would apply to the 15 Councillors other than the Mayor, giving an illustrative annual total of **£4,220.55**. The Mayor would not receive a PBA, and no additional Chair's allowance would be introduced, as the Mayor's Allowance is already provided separately under a distinct legal framework. These figures would need to be recalculated using the applicable East Suffolk Council allowance at the time.

If the Council decided to pay a PBA, regulation 25 also requires it to publicise its decision. The Council must publish a notice for at least 14 days stating the IRP's recommendation, the allowance it has decided to pay and to whom, and that it has had regard to the recommendation. The relevant information must also be made available for public inspection. These requirements apply even if the Council decides to adopt a rate different from the IRP's recommendation.

Any PBA would be a gross allowance subject to PAYE and income tax. The amount retained by each Member would depend on their individual tax position and other taxable income.

The Council has historically chosen not to introduce a PBA, and no proposal to do so is made in this report. The information is provided to help Members understand the IRP's recommendations, the financial implications and the associated statutory requirements should the Council wish to revisit the matter in future.

Administrative implications

The Council has 16 Councillors, with the Mayor already included in the Council's Moneysoft payroll system. Adding the remaining 15 Councillors would increase the number of people covered by the software from 16 to 31.

The current licence costs £95 per year for up to 20 people; the next licence band costs £190 plus VAT per year. Adding the additional Councillor records would therefore increase the annual licence cost by £95 plus VAT. This would be an additional administrative and financial consideration if the Council were to introduce a PBA.

Mayor's Allowance and civic expenditure

The Mayor's Allowance remains £3,000 for 2026-27, and is due to be kept at that level for 2027-28. It is administered by the Council through its payroll software and is subject to PAYE. The allowance contributes towards the costs associated with undertaking the Mayoral role. The Mayor is not required to account to the Council for individual expenditure from the allowance.

Certain civic events and associated costs are met directly by the Council and are not the Mayor's responsibility to fund from the allowance. These normally include:

- Refreshments following the Annual Council Meeting and Mayor-making.
- The Annual Civic Service.
- The Mayor's Civic Reception.

- Remembrance Services and wreaths.
 - The Civic Christmas Carol Service.
 - Christmas refreshments at the Town Hall following the final Planning & Environment Committee meeting in December.
 - A contribution towards the Mayor's Ball, subject to available budget.
 - The Annual Town Meeting and Civic Awards.
 - Civic Twinning events.
- Other events with which the Council is actively involved.

These arrangements should remain clear within the policy so that the distinction between the Mayor's Allowance and expenditure paid directly by the Council is understood.

Travel and mileage

The IRP recommended a mileage rate of 45p per mile. HMRC's approved mileage rates changed from 6 April 2026: the car and van rate is 55p per mile for the first 10,000 qualifying business miles in a tax year and 25p thereafter; the motorcycle rate is 24p per mile and the bicycle rate is 20p per mile. These are tax-approved rates, rather than compulsory reimbursement rates.

The Council should review the mileage rate it wishes to adopt and ensure that the policy clearly explains eligible journeys, the details required for claims, and the treatment of parking and tolls. The existing passenger supplement should also be reviewed against the applicable tax rules.

Subsistence

The current policy provides for an overnight payment of £25 for each 24-hour period, day payments of £5, £10 or £15 depending on the duration of an absence, an additional £10 dinner allowance where the claimant returns after 8pm, a £5 allowance for all-inclusive events, and reimbursement of up to £45 where receipts are provided. Accommodation, where required, is arranged directly by the Town Hall.

These provisions would benefit from a review to ensure that the different payment options are clear, proportionate and applied consistently. In particular:

- **Tax treatment:** the policy describes the £25 overnight payment as non-taxable. This should not be assumed simply because the policy labels it as such. The tax treatment of subsistence payments depends on the circumstances and the arrangements used to support the claims. The Council should confirm the appropriate treatment with before retaining any assertion that a payment is non-taxable.
- **Actual expenditure and evidence:** the policy should distinguish between reimbursement of actual, evidenced expenditure and any agreed scale-rate arrangement. Where scale rates are used, the Council should confirm that the necessary conditions and checking arrangements are met.

- **Overlapping allowances:** the relationship between the overnight payment, day rates, dinner allowance, all-inclusive event allowance and the £45 receipt-based limit should be made explicit. The policy should avoid unintentionally allowing more than one payment for the same meal or expense.
- **All-inclusive events:** the £5 payment should be reviewed to establish whether it is intended to reimburse incidental expenses or subsistence costs not otherwise covered, and how it should be treated for tax purposes.
- **Accommodation:** the policy should continue to distinguish accommodation costs, arranged directly by the Town Hall, from subsistence expenses.

The IRP also recommended against a separate subsistence allowance on the basis that a PBA would cover such costs. This was a recommendation within its proposed allowance framework, rather than a requirement that the Council must adopt. The Council should therefore consider its own arrangements in light of the fact that it does not currently pay a PBA.

Care costs

The policy provides for reimbursement of actual care costs incurred to enable a Councillor to attend formal Council meetings or other approved official events. Reimbursement is capped at the prevailing Real Living Wage hourly rate, with a maximum of 15 hours per week. Provision is also made for exceptional cases involving specialist care costs.

The intended approach is reimbursement of reasonable costs actually incurred, rather than payment of an automatic allowance. For example, where a Councillor incurs the cost of three hours of care to attend a meeting, reimbursement would be limited to the actual cost, up to three times the applicable hourly rate.

Before this provision is adopted or amended, the Council should confirm the legal basis for making such payments, including the extent to which the General Power of Competence may be relied upon, and obtain appropriate advice on the tax and National Insurance treatment.

Other policy amendments

The policy also contains provisions relating to eye tests, spectacles and flu vaccinations that concern employees rather than Councillors. These would be more appropriately addressed in the relevant staff policies.

The revised policy should also clarify the evidence required for claims, the requirement to submit claims within two months, arrangements for authorising claims (including the Clerk's own claims), and how late claims or expenses reimbursed by another organisation are to be treated.

Committee is recommended to review the Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy at Appendix E and recommend any amendments to Full Council, taking account of the matters identified in this report.

AGENDA ITEM 11: PROTOCOL ON MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Committee is requested to consider and recommend to Ordinary Council the adoption of a Protocol on Member Representation on Outside Bodies (**Appendix F**), together with an accompanying Member Guidance Note (**Appendix G**).

The report also sets out arrangements for the use of the Proper Officer's power under Standing Order 13(e) in relation to dispensations for Council-appointed representatives where an Other Registerable Interest would otherwise prevent participation in relevant Council business.

Background

The Town Council appoints Councillors to represent it on a range of outside bodies, community organisations and partnership arrangements. These appointments provide an important link between the Council and organisations working within and for the town.

However, the role of a Council-appointed representative can sometimes be unclear, particularly where a Councillor also has an independent role within the organisation concerned, for example as a trustee, director or committee member.

There can also be uncertainty regarding the extent to which an appointed representative may speak or participate in Council discussions concerning the outside body, how interests should be declared, what information may be shared, and the limits of the representative's authority to commit the Council.

The Council's existing arrangements rely in part on established practice. A formal protocol would provide greater clarity for Members and outside organisations, while establishing a consistent and proportionate approach to reporting and accountability.

Council Representation and Capacity

The proposed Protocol distinguishes between:

- a Councillor formally appointed by resolution of the Town Council to represent the Council on an outside body; and
- a Councillor who participates in an organisation independently of their Council appointment.

A Council-appointed representative acts as a link between the Town Council and the outside body, but does not have delegated authority to commit Council funds, resources, staff time or other corporate commitments unless such authority has separately been given.

The Protocol also recognises that some appointments may involve a Councillor serving as a trustee, director or other office-holder of the outside body. In such circumstances, the Member's legal duties to the outside organisation must be respected alongside their responsibilities as a Councillor.

Interests and Participation

Where a Council-appointed representative is a member of, or in a position of general control or management of, the outside body, the appointment will normally fall within the Other Registerable Interest provisions of the Council's Code of Conduct and must be registered accordingly.

The Council's Code of Conduct provides specific rules concerning participation where an Other Registerable Interest directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of the organisation. The LGA guidance also confirms that Council-appointed representatives are acting on behalf of the authority when sitting on an outside body.

The Town Council's Standing Order 13(e) provides for the Proper Officer to determine requests for dispensations. The Council proposes to use this provision to establish an appropriate standing arrangement for Council-appointed representatives, enabling legitimate participation in Council business concerning their designated outside body where the Member would otherwise be prevented from participating solely by virtue of that Other Registerable Interest.

This arrangement would not override a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, a separate non-registerable interest, or any other legal or ethical requirement requiring a Member to withdraw.

Matters such as specific planning applications, individual cases, or other matters giving rise to a separate personal interest will therefore continue to be considered on their individual circumstances.

Reporting and Accountability

The proposed Protocol establishes proportionate expectations for representatives, without requiring routine reports after every meeting.

Members will not be expected to report routinely on every meeting they attend. However, where there is substantive business, a significant development or a matter relevant to the Council, representatives will be expected to provide a short written update to the Town Clerk for consideration through the appropriate Council or Committee process.

The Protocol also makes clear that appointments are personal to the Councillor appointed by Council resolution and that substitutes are not normally permitted.

Financial, Legal and Resource Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the proposed Protocol.

The Protocol is intended to improve governance and provide greater clarity regarding Members' roles, authority and responsibilities. It does not confer delegated authority to commit Council resources and does not alter the Council's existing financial or decision-making arrangements.

The Protocol does not seek to replace the Council's Code of Conduct or the advice of the relevant Monitoring Officer where a Member is uncertain about an interest.

Committee is recommended to:

- i. recommend to Ordinary Council that the Protocol on Member Representation on Outside Bodies, attached at Appendix F, be adopted;**
 - ii. recommend to Ordinary Council that the accompanying Member Guidance Note, attached at Appendix G, be approved for issue to Councillors appointed to outside bodies; and,**
 - iii. note the arrangements for the Proper Officer to issue appropriate dispensations under Standing Order 13(e) in respect of Council-appointed representatives, subject to the limitations set out in the Protocol.**
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AGENDA ITEM 12: BUSINESS PLAN / ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Following feedback received through the Council's LCAS (Local Council Award Scheme) Gold Award application, the Business Plan and Action Plan have been reviewed to provide greater clarity around community engagement, financial implications and longer-term financial planning. The revised Business Plan, Action Plan, associated Financial Forecast and consultation information are presented at **Appendix H**.

The recommendations from the NALC panel were as follows:

- Creating an action plan and related budget responding to community engagement and setting out a timetable for action and review - This information should be presented/collated on just 1 action plan document clearly showing the budget information for each relevant action with details of any community engagement included. The current action plan can be amended to include an additional column for detailed costings where relevant and more detail added against actions that are in response to engagement.
- A business plan covering a financial forecast for at least three years linked to revenue and capital plans for the council and its community - Would like to see a properly considered business plan and financial forecast in the same document (not separated). The plan is also very brief and needs more depth. For example, more detail needs to be added to the objectives. A sample business plan was provided for guidance.

Review undertaken

The Business Plan and Action Plan have been reviewed in response to the feedback received from the NALC Local Council Award Scheme Gold assessment panel.

The revised documents retain the Council's existing strategic objectives, developed following public consultation between 22 March and 26 April 2024 and Member workshops. The Business Plan provides additional detail on the Council's commitments and priorities, while the Action Plan has been updated to demonstrate more clearly how community engagement informs proposed actions.

The revised Action Plan identifies the relevant engagement response, proposed actions, responsible parties, timescales, financial implications, funding sources and measures of progress. A summary of the consultation and the amendments made to the Business Plan is also included.

The financial forecast has been incorporated into the same document as the Business Plan and Action Plan, providing a clearer link between the Council's strategic priorities, proposed activity and financial planning.

These changes provide a more integrated approach to business and financial planning, while retaining the priorities established through engagement with the public, community organisations and Members. They also provide a clearer basis for

monitoring progress, reviewing actions and considering the financial resources required to deliver the Council's objectives.

Committee is recommended to consider the revised Business Plan, Action Plan and associated Financial Forecast and, subject to any amendments arising from its consideration, recommend their adoption to Council as the framework for delivering the Council's agreed priorities and informing future budget and financial planning.

AGENDA ITEM 13: COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

To provide Members with an update on the Council's current investment position and to seek a decision on the proposed reinvestment and transfer of surplus funds, in accordance with the Council's Investment Policy and Strategy.

At its June meeting, the Finance & Governance Committee approved the reinvestment of £500,000 with Close Brothers for one year (*Minute #37 2026/27 refers*). The investment is at a gross interest rate of 4.45% p.a./AER, equating to £22,250 gross interest over the term.

The Finance & Governance Committee previously approved an investment of £250,000 with Virgin Money for one year (*Minute #221 2025/26 refers*). Staggering the Council's fixed-term investments provides a rolling maturity schedule and improves access to capital. Full Council had previously delegated authority to the Committee to consider this investment further (*Minute #78 2025/26 refers*).

Current Investment Accounts:

Close Brothers 1-Year Bond

- Current principal: £500,000
- Interest rate: 4.45% gross PA/AER
- Maturity: 22 July 2027

Virgin Money 1-Year Bond

- Current principal: £250,000
- Interest rate: 4.0% gross PA/AER
- Maturity: 12 November 2026

Nationwide 35-Day Saver Account

- Current interest rate: 2.4% AER
- Notice period for withdrawals: 35 days
- Current balance: £480,901.01
- Nationwide Building Society has a Fitch long-term credit rating of AA- with a Stable outlook (May 2026).

Barclays Accounts

- **Current Account**
Used for daily operations and automatically topped up to £50,000 daily from the tracker account.
- **Business Tracker Account**
Receives precept payments; balance has ranged from £47,709.58 to £551,674.69 in the past year.
Current balance: £551,674.69 *
- Interest rate: 1.05% AER

The Tracker account receives the Council's precept twice a year. Most recently, £374,936.50 was received on 30 September. This provides funds for the Council's day-to-day running expenses.

At the October meeting last year, Members agreed to maximise interest returns from the Nationwide 35-Day Saver Account and delegated authority to the Committee to make appropriate transfers between the Barclays Business Tracker Account and the Nationwide Saver Account, in accordance with the Council's [Investment Policy and Strategy](#) (*Minute #78 2025/26 refers*). When the Tracker account became low on 27 February 2026 a transfer of £180,000 was made from the Nationwide account to the Tracker account.

Council Reserve Position (as at 30 September 2026):

General Reserves: £826,314.15 (*recommended range: £247,333 – £989,332, representing 3–12 months net expenditure*)

Earmarked Reserves: £1,001,899.98 (of which CIL: £509,247)

Comparison Table for Reinvestment of £250,000 on Maturation of Virgin Money Bond:

Investment Vehicle	Rate / Yield (AER)	Projected 12-Month Net Return	Fitch Credit Rating	Liquidity Profile	Ethical / Policy Check
Virgin Money	4.35% (Fixed)	£ 10,875	A (Stable)	Locked for 12 months	High ethical/sector alignment
Close Brothers Bond	4.45% (Fixed)	£11,125	BBB+ (Negative Watch)	Locked for 12 months	High yield; requires quarterly monitoring
State Bank of India	4.65% (Fixed)	£11,625	BB+ to BBB-equivalent	Locked for 12 months	Highest yield; non-traditional counterparty
CCLA Public Sector Fund	~ 3.85% (Variable)	£9,625 (Indicative)	AAAmmf	Instant (Daily) Access	Maximum security & liquidity alignment
Barclays Corporate Bond	3.85% (Fixed)	£9,625	A+ (Stable)	Locked for 12 months	Consolidates clearing; lower yield

Unity Trust Bank	4.06% (Fixed)	£10,150	BBB+ (Stable)	Locked for 12 months	High ethical/sector alignment
Triodos Bank Bond	3.60% (Fixed)	£9,000	BBB (Stable)	Locked for 12 months	High ESG alignment; 100% transparent sustainable lending

Committee is requested to:

- i. consider the Council's current investment position;**
- ii. consider the reinvestment of £250,000 for one year, subject to the Council's Investment Policy and Strategy; and,**
- iii. approve transfers of surplus funds from the Barclays Business Tracker Account to the Nationwide 35-Day Saver Account, in line with the Council's Investment Policy and Strategy, subject to maintaining sufficient funds for the Council's working capital requirements.**