



# Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024  
at the Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham at 12:00 pm.

## Minutes

**37/24RC**

### Attendees

Cllr John Findlay (Chair)  
Cllr Jeremy Smith  
Cllr Elizabeth Clark  
Cllr Di Eastman

### Apologies

Cllr James Sandbach – none received  
Cllr John Fisher

### Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)

**38/24RC**

### Declaration of Interests

None.

**39/24RC**

### Open Forum

None.

**40/24RC**

### Minutes

It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Jeremy Smith, addressing the Chair, referred to item 36/24RC which he sought to amend. The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the Town Clerk has the responsibility for considering and accepting any amendment to the minutes. Cllr Smith responded angrily that the Town Clerk controls everything. Cllr Smith then said he accepted the minute relating to his improper conduct which was caused by the processes adopted by the Staffing Sub-Committee which he said were completely biased as set out in his letter to the Staffing Sub-Committee. The Chair asked Cllr Smith to moderate his comments.

**41/24RC**

### Town Council

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the payments, and note the receipts, for June 2024.
- b) The Committee noted the bank balances as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- c) The bank reconciliations as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were not available therefore approval was deferred until the next meeting.
- d) The Committee reviewed the budget versus actual income and expenditure as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**42/24RC**

### Market Hall

- a) The Committee noted the payments and receipts for June 2024.
- b) The Committee noted the bank balance as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

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- c) The bank reconciliations as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were not available therefore approval was deferred until the next meeting.
- d) The Committee reviewed the budget versus actual income and expenditure as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**43/24RC**

**Gannon Institute**

- a) The Committee noted the payments and receipts for June 2024.
- b) The Committee noted the bank balance as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- c) The bank reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 was not available therefore approval was deferred until the next meeting.
- d) The Committee reviewed the budget versus actual income and expenditure as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**44/24RC**

**Grants**

The Committee considered a request from The Saxons Running and Fitness Club for a sponsorship package to support their race events. Cllr Elizabeth Clark noted that there is a difference between sponsorship and grants, however the Committee agreed to consider the request under the terms of the Grants Policy. It was **unanimously resolved** to approve a grant for £250.

**45/24RC**

**Policies and Procedures**

It was **unanimously resolved** to recommend to the Town Council to approve:

- a) the NALC revised Financial Regulations.
- b) a new Scheme of Delegation, following a minor amendment and additions to include references to the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, where necessary.
- c) the Complaints Policy, which was amended to include:

*Complaints about the conduct of Town Council staff shall be addressed to the Chair of the Town Council. Such complaints shall be considered, and any response agreed, by the Resources Committee at a properly convened meeting. Members shall not be permitted to personally respond on behalf of the Town Council to complaints regarding the conduct of Town Council staff.*

Cllr Jeremy Smith stated that he would respond to informal complaints raised by members of the public about the conduct of Town Council staff as he wished, as any such response would not be on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Clerk objected to this as Cllr Smith is known to members of the public as a Town Councillor and it would not be clear to them whether he was responding as a private individual or as a Town Councillor. The Town Clerk said the staff had a right of reply regarding any complaints made about their conduct and that these matters should be considered by a relevant Committee at a properly convened meeting.

- d) The unchanged Vexatious Contacts and Complaints Policy.

**46/24RC**

**Legal and Licences**

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that an application has been submitted to HM Land Registry regarding the first registration of the Memorial Field and Seaman Avenue. The Town Clerk explained

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that the Town Council could not apply for possession of the parcel of land adjacent to Seaman Avenue, known as the Wildlife Walk, until 2027 when the Town Council could demonstrate that it had been in possession of the land for 12 years. It was **unanimously resolved** to ratify expenditure of £392 for legal and land registry fees.

47/24RC

### Staffing Matters

- a) The Town Clerk informed the Committee that a Maintenance Officer had been appointed.
- b) The Committee received the minutes from the Staffing Sub-Committee meetings held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2024, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024.

Cllr Jeremy Smith noted that the Staffing Sub-Committee minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024 did not record that the Committee received a substantial rebuttal against the unjustified and serious allegations made by the Town Clerk against Councillors. Cllr Smith further noted that the minutes did not record whether Cllr Elizabeth Clark and Cllr John Findlay had dealt with Cllr Smith's opinion that they should recuse themselves from the Staffing Sub-Committee as they were biased in favour of the Town Clerk.

Cllr Smith also referred to his previous request to the Staffing Sub-Committee to receive a copy of the initial complaint made by the Town Clerk to Cllr Clark and Cllr Findlay. Cllr Smith said that the timescales were highly suspicious as to the way the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024 was called. The Town Clerk offered to call all the Staffing Sub-Committees again if Cllr Smith thought they were improperly convened. Cllr Findlay said that he did not consider this to be necessary. The Town Clerk agreed to forward a copy of the initial complaint to Cllr Smith and Cllr Eastman.

Cllr Smith objected to the Town Clerk calling the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at which her grievance report was to be received. Cllr Smith opined that the meeting should have been called by the Chair of the Staffing Sub-Committee. Cllr Findlay responded that it was proper procedure for the Town Clerk to call Committee meetings. Cllr Smith replied that the meeting could have been called by the Deputy Town Clerk. The Town Clerk responded that her grievance report was confidential between her and the Staffing Sub-Committee therefore it was not appropriate to involve the Deputy Town Clerk. The Town Clerk said that the Chair of the Staffing Sub-Committee asked her to call the meeting following receipt of her initial complaint.

Cllr Findlay and Cllr Clark explained why the rebuttal received from Cllr Smith and his opinion that they should recuse themselves from the Staffing Sub-Committee was not recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Prior to that meeting the Town Clerk had advised the Committee that as the grievance report concerned alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct it must lawfully be reported to the Monitoring Officer and not considered as a staff grievance. The Staffing Sub-Committee therefore concluded at the meeting that the whole matter must be handed over to the Monitoring Officer for an independent review. After further angry protests from Cllr Smith, Cllr Findlay agreed to amend the minutes to record that submissions had been received from Cllr Smith and Cllr Eastman.

Cllr Smith continued to say that the allegations made by the Town Clerk against him were unjustified and the difficulties with staff had not been dealt with in a proper manner. The Town Clerk agreed that they had not been dealt with in a proper manner as Cllr Smith and Cllr Eastman had repeatedly dismissed the staff's concerns. The Town Clerk asked Cllr

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Smith to confirm whether he had publicly accused the staff of lying, bias and excessive negativity and if he had publicly said that the Town Clerk's report to the Monitoring Officer was all part of a plot and a coup against the Town Council. Cllr Smith did not respond. The Chair asked the Town Clerk to moderate her comments.

Cllr Clark said it was not appropriate to discuss these matters at this meeting as they were before the Monitoring Officer, and she asked both Cllr Smith and the Town Clerk to stop the discussion.

Cllr Smith said the decision reached by the Staffing Sub-Committee at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024 was ultra vires as the Committee made a policy decision which is not within its Terms of Reference. The policy decision related to Town Council staff declining invitations to join community groups' steering committees.

Cllr Smith also objected to the Staffing Sub-Committee advising the Town Clerk to call an extraordinary meeting of the Events and Communications Committee to consider and approve the post-event analysis of the Art Fest, compiled by staff, which he considered was inappropriate and he accused the Staffing-Sub Committee of manipulation. The Town Clerk explained that the post-event analysis was a draft document which may include sensitive information. She said she was aware that Cllr Smith considered that the staff were biased, negative and hostile to the Art Station therefore she deemed it prudent for the post-event analysis to be reviewed by the Events and Communications Committee to ensure that it was tempered, fair, and factual. Due to the ongoing situation, the Town Clerk sought the advice of the Staffing Sub-Committee before proceeding.

Cllr Elizabeth Clark responded that the Staffing Sub-Committee advised the Town Clerk to call an extraordinary meeting of the Events and Communications Committee to ease a difficult situation while the Monitoring Officer was considering matters. Cllr Clark also said that the Staffing Sub-Committee sought to resolve an acute crisis with the possibility of losing staff by advising the staff not to attend the review meeting with the Art Station nor to submit any feedback without the Events and Communications Committee's approval.

Cllr Smith said the post-event analysis was being put forward as the formal view of the Town Council without the views of all Town Councillors. The Town Clerk disputed this and said the post-event analysis was never intended to be the formal view of the Town Council and that it was an internal document compiled by staff for the Town Council's information. She said she expected that perhaps one line from the post-event analysis might be communicated to the Art Station to share that there were some reputational and liability risks to the Town Council arising from the event.

The Town Clerk asked Cllr Smith if he had shared the internal post-event analysis publicly with the Art Station. Cllr Smith responded that he considered the post-event analysis to be a public document as it had been received by the Events and Communications Committee. The Town Clerk said that she had advised members of the Events and Communications Committee, by email, that it was an internal document that was not to be shared and if any members of the public had been present at the Events and Communications Committee she would have advised the Chair to close the meeting to the public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. The Town Clerk offered to publish the unapproved post-event analysis on the Town Council's website since Cllr Smith had already shared it publicly. Cllr Smith indicated that she could do so.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Cllr Clark again reminded those present that this matter should not be discussed at this meeting and the Chair closed the discussion.

- c) The Town Clerk withdrew consideration of the record of the staff responsibilities, and the calculation to inform any apportionment of the staffing budget, for the Town Council, Market Hall and Gannon Institute, until the next meeting.

**Sharon Smith**  
**Town Clerk**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_