



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on
Monday 9th September 2024 at the Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

60/24TC Election of Chair

- a) The Town Council noted the resignation of Cllr Di Eastman and recorded a vote of thanks for her valued contribution.
- b) Nominations for Chair were invited. Cllr Elizabeth Clark nominated Cllr John Findlay. The motion was seconded by Cllr Geraldine Barker. Cllr James Sandbach asked Cllr John Findlay why he proposed himself for Chair and what were his credentials. Cllr Sandbach said it was important that the Town Council works cohesively as a team, including staff, and have respect for each other and that the Chair needs this perspective to move forward in this way. Cllr Findlay responded that the role is primarily as Chair of the Town Council but he recognised that a leadership role is also involved. He said there has been a worrying turnover of five Town Clerks in four years and recently there has been a lot of tension and misunderstandings. He said his intention was to draw everyone together to work more collegiately, with more Councillors involved, able to speak up in meetings and be heard, and that the Town Council directs policy, but the staff should be left to deliver it. Cllr Findlay then summarised his previous career as Chair of the National Association of Local Councils and as a magistrate for over 30 years. It was **unanimously resolved** to elect Cllr John Findlay as Chair for the remainder of the civic year 2024-2025.

61/24TC Attendees

Cllr John Findlay (Chair)
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Tim Lock
Cllr Geraldine Barker
Cllr Benjamin Gulliford
Cllr James Sandbach

Apologies

Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr Jeremy Smith

Also Present

County Councillor Richard Smith
Sharon Smith (Town Clerk/RFO)
18 members of the public

62/24TC Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations from members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable interest, or non-registerable interest.

63/24TC Open Forum

- a) A member of the public identified herself as Churchwarden of St John's Church. She informed the Town Council that she is producing a Welcome Pack for newcomers to the town to encourage their

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involvement with the existing community. The Town Council agreed to endorse this initiative and provide a copy of the latest Annual Report for inclusion in the Welcome Pack.

- b) A member of the public raised a concern that residents are still not informed about the proposed converter stations. She informed the Town Council that the East Suffolk Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Energy would be willing to attend an open public meeting.
- c) Members of the public identified themselves as members of the Community Garden and Greener Sax. They informed the Town Council of the benefits of the Community Garden at the old Fromus Centre which enables residents to grow their own crops to feed their families in a safe and supported environment and it provides a social environment supporting mental health and people with learning difficulties. The Chair explained that the proposal to lease the Community Garden from Suffolk County Council was not included on this meeting's agenda as the financial commitment had not yet been considered by the Resources Committee as the recent meeting was inquorate. The Chair asked the members of the public if they were concerned that the Town Council would not support the proposal. They responded that they were aware that there was an administrative issue, but they wanted to inform the Town Council of the well-being benefits and importance of the Community Garden which is 'a little gem tucked away but open to everyone'. They said the site has been neglected for 10 years by Suffolk County Council therefore a considerable amount of work needs to be done. The Chair responded that the Town Council is broadly supportive but needs to consider the proposal and take a formal decision.
- d) Two members of the public raised concerns about speeding in the town and the National Grid proposals. The Chair responded that speeding needs to be reported to the police who have responsibility for enforcing speed limits and that the Town Council is undertaking considerable work on behalf of the residents on the converter station proposals. The two members of the public then made derogatory comments about the town. County Cllr Richard Smith rose to the town's defence resulting in a confrontational exchange and the two members of the public left the meeting.
- e) County Cllr Richard Smith congratulated Cllr John Findlay on his appointment as Chair. Cllr Smith said he had lived in the town for 33 years and was delighted to live here. He said that none of us pretend there are not problems, but he wants to 'talk this town up'. Cllr Smith reported that he was pleased to provide a grant from his Locality Budget towards the Town Council's refurbishment work on the Gannon Rooms and that he was also pleased to financially support the ongoing activities of the Saxmundham Scouts Group. Regarding the Community Garden, Cllr Smith said the land was owned by the County Council and he was not aware that they wished to dispose of it. He said the County Council supports Greener Sax to manage it in the way that they have but he will investigate whether the County Council are willing to release the site before development has been given the go ahead. He said that the option for the Town Council to lease the land was not known to him, as the local Councillor. In other matters, Cllr Smith reported that the Gullwing Bridge in Lowestoft is now open; his attention will turn to the complications of setting a balanced budget for the next financial year; that the County Council will respond to the National Planning Policy Framework reform consultation which he suspects is likely to lead to an increase in housing targets and acceleration; and that the County Council have exhorted the government to rescind the decision to take away the winter fuel payment. The Chair thanked Cllr Smith for supporting the recent installation of a dropped kerb at Church Road from his Highways Budget.
- f) District Cllr John Fisher reported that the District Council are looking at the government's requirements on planning, but he is not yet aware of the detail. Cllr James Sandbach asked whether the Local Plan targets may need to change. County Cllr Richard Smith responded that his

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understanding is that the Local Plan will need to change, and District Cllr John Fisher responded that the changes would affect Local Plans and the use of some land.

64/24TC Minutes

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2024 and the extraordinary meeting held on 6th August 2024.
- b) The Council received the minutes of the Resources Committee meetings held on 2nd July 2024 and 3rd September 2024 and the extraordinary meeting held on 6th August 2024.
- c) The Council received the minutes of Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 18th July 2024.
- d) The Council received the minutes of the Events and Communications Committee meetings held on 4th July 2024.
- e) The Council received the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meetings held on 16th July 2024 and 29th August 2024.
- f) Cllr James Sandbach raised a concern about the quantity of Committee meetings which might be inquorate in future. He suggested that the Committee structure and frequency of meetings may need to be reviewed.

65/24TC Councillors

- a) The Town Council noted the resignation of Cllr Charlotte Hawkins as of 31st August 2024 and recorded a vote of thanks for her valued contribution.
- b) Cllr John Findlay proposed the co-option of Nicholas Jackson to fill the long-standing casual vacancy. Cllr John Fisher seconded the motion. It was **unanimously resolved** to co-opt Nicholas Jackson with immediate effect. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed and witnessed by the Town Clerk.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Nicholas Jackson as a member of the Events and Communications Committee and the Market Hall Management Committee.
- d) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr John Findlay as the Town Council's representative at the Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham Community Partnership.
- e) It was **unanimously resolved** to Cllr John Findlay as the Town Council's representative at the Suffolk Association of Local Councils.
- f) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Marianne Kiff as Footpath Warden.

66/24TC Reports

- a) The Town Council received a previously circulated report from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Nicholas Jackson as a representative of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- b) The Town Council received a previously circulated from the Chair of the Energy Projects Working Group. The Chair reported that she, Cllr Nicholas Jackson, Cllr John Fisher and the Town Clerk attended the recent public meeting held in Benhall and Sternfield parish. It was agreed to consider

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holding a similar public meeting in Saxmundham prior to the Sealink and Lion Link applications for Development Consent Orders.

- c) The Town Council received a previously circulated report from the Town Clerk, including recent crime statistics and a summary of East Suffolk Council's 'Simpler Recycling' proposals required by the Environment Act 2021.

67/24TC Consultations

It was **unanimously resolved** to ask Cllr Jeremy Smith to draft a response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework for circulation and comments. The Town Clerk was authorised to submit the final version.

68/24TC Community Engagement

It was **unanimously resolved** to support Councillor presence at the monthly markets to provide an opportunity for two-way engagement with residents and visitors. The Community Officer was instructed to circulate a rota.

69/24TC Communication

The Town Council noted the correspondence received since the last meeting.

70/24TC Next Meeting

The Town Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for 14th October 2024 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

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