



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on
Monday 14th October 2024 at the Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

71/24TC Attendees

Cllr John Findlay (Chair)
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Tim Lock
Cllr Geraldine Barker
Cllr James Sandbach (part of the meeting)

Apologies

Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr Jeremy Smith
Cllr Benjamin Gulliford
Cllr Nick Jackson
County Cllr Richard Smith

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk/RFO)
7 members of the public

72/24TC 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.

73/24TC Open Forum

a) A member of the public informed the Council that he recently moved to Saxmundham and he is interested in the environment and how the energy projects are overshadowing everyone's life. He said he will be monitoring how all Councils address the community impacts. He thanked the Council for all its good work and indicated that he wished to support the Council in this regard.

b) A member of the public said she was pleased with the recent media coverage but slightly disappointed that it focussed mostly on housing. She questioned who will want to buy housing in this area if the converter stations come. The Chair responded by explaining that the Town Council has been engaging with the broker, Pigeon, to develop a masterplan for the Garden Neighbourhood but a draft has not yet been produced by Pigeon. The Chair explained that Pigeon will eventually sell parcels of the site to housing developers who will build houses according to demand. The Chair further explained that central government set national housing targets and East Suffolk Council are the planning authority. The Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently under review due to the boundary change, will include the Garden Neighbourhood and this will allow the Town Council some influence over the development.

The Chair acceded to a member of the public's request to vary the order of the agenda.

74/24TC Energy Projects

a) The Chair of the Energy Projects Working Group summarised her previously circulated report. Highlights included her attendance at the recent Benhall and Sternfield parish meeting and the Sizewell C community forum, the change of ownership of National Grid Electricity Systems Operator, Sizewell C

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traffic monitoring and the letter to, and response from, the Secretary of State for Net Zero and Energy Security. The Town Clerk was instructed to publish the letter and response on the energy projects section of the Town Council website. The Council noted that a standard response has been received however Cllr Elizabeth Clark advised that the Secretary of State will take notice if he receives many letters of concern about the same subject. It was also agreed to continue to raise matters of concern with our local MP.

b) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the Terms of Reference for the Energy Projects Working Group.

c) The Council noted that an Energy Projects Community Exhibition will be held in the Market Hall on 16 November 2024. Invitees include National Grid, EDF Energy, Scottish Power, Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council, Kelsale cum Carlton Parish Council, Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council, Friston Parish Council and Saxmundham Against Needless Destruction. In response to a question from a member of the public, the Town Clerk advised that the exhibition will be advertised on social media and local noticeboards. Following a discussion, it was agreed to print a quantity of leaflets for distribution, but the Town Clerk explained the difficulties with using Royal Mail to deliver to every address in the parish.

75/24TC Open Forum Resumed

District Cllr John Fisher said he did not have any matters to report but, if the members of the public had remained present, he would have informed them that the District Council has no say on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and the Garden Neighbourhood site is part of the Local Plan.

Cllr James Sandbach joined the meeting.

76/24TC Minutes

a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2024.

b) The Council received the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 1st October 2024.

c) The Council received the minutes of Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 3rd October 2024.

d) The Council received the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meetings held on 3rd October 2024.

77/24TC Vacancies

a) Cllr John Findlay proposed the co-option of David Humphreys to fill a casual vacancy. Cllr Geraldine Barker seconded the motion. It was **unanimously resolved** to co-opt David Humphreys with immediate effect. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed and witnessed by the Town Clerk.

b) The Council noted that the role of Vice-Chair was vacant, and nominations were invited. Cllr John Findlay proposed Cllr Geraldine Barker. Cllr Elizabeth Clark seconded the motion. It was **unanimously resolved** to elect Cllr Geraldine Barker as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the civic year 2024-2025. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed and witnessed by the Town Clerk.

78/24TC Committees

a) The Council noted that Cllr John Findlay has resigned as Chair of the Resources Committee and nominations were invited. Cllr John Findlay proposed Cllr Elizabeth Clark. Cllr John Fisher seconded the motion. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Elizabeth Clark as Chair of the Resources Committee for the remainder of the civic year.

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b) The Council noted that Cllr Benjamin Gulliford has resigned as Chair of the Events and Communications Committee and nominations were invited. Cllr John Findlay proposed Cllr Nick Jackson. Cllr Geraldine Barker seconded the motion. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Nick Jackson as Chair of the Events and Communications Committee for the remainder of the civic year.

c) The Council received a half-year report regarding members' attendance at Committee meetings. Cllr James Sandbach said it was difficult for him to attend Committee meetings held during the day due to work commitments, but that he still wishes to contribute to the Town Council. He said he does not support the proposed policy which he feels is discriminatory and Councillors should be asked to voluntarily stand down from Committees. Cllr John Fisher said he supported Cllr Sandbach's point of view and suggested that Committees could agree the date of the next meeting at each meeting. Following an explanation from the Town Clerk, the Council agreed that this was not a practical solution. Cllr David Humphreys said it seemed sensible to have a policy regarding attendance at meetings. It was **resolved by majority** to adopt a policy to remove members from Committees following six months of consecutive absences from Committee meetings and to review the policy in six months.

d) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Tim Lock and Cllr Nick Jackson to the Energy Projects Working Group.

79/24TC Outside Bodies

a) It was **unanimously resolved** to submit Cllr John Findlay's interest to become a representative at the ESC Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Working Group and to ascertain whether a rota of Councillors may attend subsequent meetings.

b) It was **resolved by majority** not to affiliate with the East Suffolk Planning Alliance at this time. The Town Clerk was instructed to obtain further information for the Council's reconsideration.

80/24TC Reports

a) The Chair summarised the matters considered at the recent ESC Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham and Villages Community Partnership meeting. The Chair gave thanks to Cllr Jeremy Smith for drafting the Council's response to the National Planning Policy Framework reform consultation and for devising the concept of 'Severe Impact Zones'. The Chair also gave thanks to Cllr Nick Jackson for suggesting the 'concrete tsunami' headline which was key to the successful press release and television news coverage.

b) The Council received a previously circulated report from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

c) The Council received a previously circulated report from the Town Clerk including Crime Statistics.

81/24TC Finance

a) The Council noted the payments, receipts and bank balances to 31st July, 31st August and 30th September 2024.

b) The Council received the budget versus actual income and expenditure report as at 30th September 2024.

c) The Council received the forecasted reserves and budget outturn report for 2024-2025.

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- d) The Council received the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for the year ended 31st March 2024 and noted the limited assurance opinion.
- e) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to hold three months' equivalent net revenue expenditure in General Reserves.
- f) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to allocate the Locality Budget grant of £10,000 for the Neighbourhood Plan to an Earmarked Reserve.

82/24TC Policies

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy. Cllr James Sandbach suggested that the Town Council members and staff undertake training to apply the policy practically. In response to a question from Cllr Sandbach, the Town Clerk confirmed that the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy applies to members and staff.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the Community Events Policy. Cllr James Sandbach stated that he does not endorse the Community Events Policy which he feels is disproportionate in all respects. The Chair ruled Cllr Sandbach out of order for making a speech whilst the vote was taken. Cllr James Sandbach responded that he is always constrained from speaking during meetings. The Chair further ruled Cllr Sandbach out of order and said that he did not appreciate his comments. Cllr Sandbach apologised to the Chair for being out of order.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the Investment Strategy.

83/24TC Scheme of Delegation

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to delegate authority to the Proper Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning and Development Control Committee, to use their discretion not to call meetings to consider and respond to notices of intent for proposed works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order or in the Conservation Area.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to delegate authority to the Proper Officer, in conjunction with the Chair of the Energy Projects Working Group, to endorse correspondence and proposals, on behalf of the Town Council, from the Anglian Energy Planning Alliance following email consultation and approval from a majority of members.

84/24TC Correspondence

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

85/24TC Confidential Matters

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to exclude the public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the following business.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the Operation London Bridge Protocol.

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c) The Council noted that a second report has been made by the Town Clerk to ESC's Monitoring Officer regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by one Councillor. Cllr James Sandbach expressed concerns about the distress caused by these reports and that he hopes other ways can be found to better deal with these matters.

86/24TC Next Meeting

The Town Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for 11th November 2024 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

Signed _____ Date _____