



Saxmundham Town Council

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

Minutes

99/24TC Attendees

Cllr John Findlay (Chair)
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Tim Lock
Cllr Geraldine Barker
Cllr Nick Jackson
Cllr Benjamin Gulliford
Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr David Humphreys
Cllr James Sandbach (part of the meeting)

Apologies

Cllr Jeremy Smith

Also Present

County Cllr Richard Smith
Sharon Smith (Town Clerk/RFO)
4 members of the public

The Council noted the resignation of Cllr Benjamin Gulliford with effect from 31st December 2024. The Chair proposed a vote of thanks to Cllr Gulliford, for his valued service to the town, which was unanimously endorsed.

Cllr James Sandbach arrived at 7:05 pm.

100/24TC Declaration of Interests

None.

101/24TC Open Forum

a) A member of the public raised a concern about illegal parking, inappropriate speeds, and the increasing frequency of HGVs, in the High Street. He said this has led him to conclude that too many individuals and businesses are failing to respect the integrity of the town centre, and he asked the Town Council to take the following action:

- Request haulage companies and local landowners to instruct their contract drivers to respect the town and use alternative routes between their land and the storage/processing facilities.
- Lobby Suffolk County Council to declare a ban on HGVs and similar vehicles using the town as a cut-through from the A12 to the Carlton Park industrial estate.
- Request the East Suffolk Council parking warden to patrol the High Street at suitable times to provide a deterrent to anti-social drivers who are blocking the street.

The Chair agreed that the Town Council could make the suggested representations.

b) A member of the public reported that he had professional experience in highways matters. He offered to draw up a feasibility study to enable the High Street to be free of traffic for several days of the week,

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without inconveniencing motorists, which would alleviate many of the problems. The Chair thanked the member of the public for his offer and explained that the Town Council had commissioned a feasibility study from AECOM for the Neighbourhood Plan. He explained that the study considered options for a one-way, pedestrian-friendly system or to close the High Street in its entirety with delivery access only. Cllr David Humphreys added that the Town Council had formally addressed these matters in its response to the Suffolk County Council's recent Local Area Transport Plan which, surprisingly, was silent on these matters. County Cllr Richard Smith said that the County Council had professionals employed to consider these matters and if the County Council does not agree with alternative suggestions then nothing will be done. Cllr Smith agreed there is a problem with illegal parking, but he is not personally aware of issues with HGVs.

c) A member of the public asked if the Council intends to hold a public meeting about the Sealink proposals. Cllr Geraldine Barker responded that the Fromus Energy Projects Team was busy preparing for the imminent Development Consent Order application. A public meeting was mooted for January 2025 but, as Saxmundham Against Needless Destruction have arranged to hold a meeting at the Church, there does not appear to be merit in holding an additional one.

d) County Cllr Richard Smith thanked Cllr Benjamin Gulliford for all that he has done, he welcomed the two new members to the Town Council, and congratulated the beguiling Christmas decorations inside and outside the Market Hall. Cllr Smith said he had considerable concerns about the proposed converter stations to be sited on Leiston Road and he advised all to take advantage of the next stage of consultation expected in January 2025. Cllr Smith noted that even if the Planning Inspectorate refuses recommendation, it is likely that the Secretary of State will nod the plans through to meet the government's net zero targets by 2030. He added that everyone should be aware of this even though there is merit in the arguments that the onshore infrastructure should go elsewhere. Cllr Smith reported on possible local government reorganisation, to be set out in a white paper which is expected to be published later this month. Town and Parish Councils will not change however the government wishes to bring unity to the national model therefore it is likely that a unitary authority will be proposed for Suffolk and Norfolk, with mayoral oversight. Cllr Smith said the minimum population for a unitary authority is 500,000, but as the combined population of Suffolk and Norfolk will be 870,000, there may be two authorities in Norfolk. It is expected that the District Councils will lobby against the proposals. The proposed mayoral office may also assume the role of Police and Crime Commissioner. Cllr Smith stressed that these matters were merely speculative until the government's white paper is published.

e) District Cllr John Fisher reported that he agreed with County Cllr Richard Smith's report on proposed local government reorganisation, and he had no further matters to report.

102/24TC Minutes

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2024.
- b) The Council received the draft minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 3rd December 2024.
- c) The Council received the draft minutes of Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 21st November 2024.
- d) The Council received the draft minutes of the Events and Communications Committee meeting held on 7th November 2024.
- e) The Council received the draft minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meeting held

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on 3rd December 2024.

103/24TC Reports

- a) The Chair recorded a vote of thanks to the staffing team for the success of the Christmas Fayre following the move indoors at short notice due to the inclement weather forecast. The Chair also gave a report on his attendance at the recent Community Partnership meeting. Funding was approved to support the provision of Men's Breakfasts by IP17 GNS and to provide DIY bicycle repair stations to be stationed in various locations including Saxmundham. The exact location in town has not yet been determined.
- b) The Chair gave a verbal update regarding the ongoing work to revise the Neighbourhood Plan to incorporate the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, following the alteration to the parish boundary.
- c) The Council received a previously circulated report from the Town Clerk including Crime Statistics. The Chair recorded a vote of thanks to County Cllr Richard Smith for his contribution of £1,000 towards the restoration of the Gannon Rooms cupolas. Cllr Tim Lock asked the Town Clerk to ensure the cupolas are insured. Cllr Marianne Kiff noted Saxmundham Judo Club's successful fundraising campaign for a defibrillator which has now been installed on the exterior of The Bell Hotel.

104/24TC Energy Projects

- a) The Chair of the Fromus Energy Projects Team summarised her previously circulated report which will be published on the Town Council website.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the response to the NGET Sealink targeted consultation which will be published on the Town Council website.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to endorse a proposal from the Environment Coordinator entitled 'Environmental Excellence: a new era for Saxmundham'. Cllr Geraldine Barker explained that the proposal was raised at a meeting of the Fromus Energy Projects Team and it supports the ideas put forward in the 'Greening the Great Grid Upgrade' report previously circulated to the Town Council.

105/24TC Digital Review

It was **unanimously resolved** to accept earmarked funding of £3,000 from the ESC Digital Towns initiative to undertake a review of the Town Council's website.

106/24TC Finance

- a) The Council noted the payments, receipts and bank balances to 30th November 2024.
- b) The Council received the budget versus actual income and expenditure report as at 30th November 2024 including a forecast to the financial year end.

107/24TC Draft Budget 2025-2026

The Council considered the draft budget for the financial year 2025-2026 including a recommendation

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from the Resources Committee to increase the precept requirement by approximately 4% compared with last financial year. It was agreed to circulate the draft budget to each Committee for their views and for the Resources Committee to make a final recommendation for the Town Council's consideration in January 2025.

108/24TC Committee Restructuring

It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee recommendation to consider proposals regarding Committee restructuring. It was agreed to circulate the draft proposal to each Committee for their views and to make a final recommendation for the Town Council's consideration at the Annual Meeting in May 2025.

109/24TC Correspondence

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

110/24TC Confidential Matters

a) It was **unanimously resolved** to exclude the public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the nature of the following business. The Town Clerk offered to leave the meeting but was invited to remain.

b) Following a full discussion, it was **resolved by majority** to endorse a report by the Chair into the conduct of the Town Council.

c) It was **unanimously resolved** to confirm the Town Council's confidence in the Town Clerk and its full support for her and her staff.

d) It was **resolved by majority** that the Town Council writes to the Chief Executive of East Suffolk Council to express its concerns about the process for addressing complaints submitted to the Monitoring Officer.

e) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee recommendations to adopt the:

- i) Civility and Respect Pledge
- ii) Model Councillor-Officer Protocol
- iii) Model Dignity at Work Policy

and to adopt a zero tolerance of any disrespectful behaviour, with a duty on all councillors and staff to comply in practice.

f) It was **resolved by majority** to arrange a training and development seminar on proper conduct and working together, hosted by an external facilitator, for all councillors and staff.

111/24TC Next Meeting

The Town Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for 13th January 2025 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 9:20 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

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