



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on Monday 13th November 2023 at 7:00 pm at the Market Hall, 29 High Street, Saxmundham

Attendees:

Cllr Di Eastman (Chair)
Cllr John Findlay (Vice-Chair)
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Jeremy Smith
Cllr Benjamin Gulliford
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr Tim Lock
Cllr Charlotte Hawkins
Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr James Sandbach

Also present:

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)
Amy Rayner (Environment Coordinator)
Two representatives from Suffolk Energy Action Solutions
Two members of the public.

92/23TC **Apologies and Approvals of Absence**

None received.

93/23TC **Declarations of Interests and Consideration of Requests for Dispensations**

Cllr Di Eastman and Cllr John Fisher declared an interest in item 98/23TC b.

94/23TC **Public Forum**

- a) The Council received a briefing from Suffolk Energy Action Solutions regarding the National Grid Sealink proposals. A question-and-answer session followed.
- b) A member of the public raised concerns about flood risk brought to light by the recent storms. He reported that large amounts of storm debris were deposited as the waters rose and these are now blocking culverts and gullies. County Cllr Richard Smith said he was fully aware of the distress caused by flooding and the scale of the impact. He asked for all flooding issues to be reported to the County Council and that culverts and gullies are being cleared on a priority basis but often each problem needs a specific solution. Cllr Smith said the County Council can help with setting up a Flood Resilience Forum similar to Framlingham and Kelsale.
- b) The Council received a briefing from the Environment Coordinator regarding the recent Suffolk Climate Change Partnership event held at the Market Hall. The Environment Coordinator raised the idea of forming a 'River Working Group' to include the parishes of Benhall, Sternfield and Kelsale to address the flood risk of the wider river network. She suggested hosting a Suffolk Wildlife Trust course to kick-start this initiative. Cllr John Fisher asked County Cllr Richard Smith how the County Council acquired responsibility for the Gull from the Environment Agency. Cllr Smith responded that he did not know

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but he suspected that it did not have a choice. A member of the public said he had written to our MP asking that question.

- c) With regard to the National Grid Sealink proposals, County Cllr Richard Smith said he has not yet formed his position and needs to understand the views of the vocal part of the community. The proposal straddles the border with Sternfield parish therefore he will work with his counterpart to ensure a unified voice. Cllr Smith also reported that the County Council is having financial difficulties as social care takes 75% of its budget leaving 25% for everything else. The County Council are looking ahead to next year's budget but it will be difficult to balance. The level of central government support is expected to be announced on 22nd December and this will determine whether the County Council element of Council Tax will need to increase by 5%.
- d) The Council received a report from District Councillor John Fisher. The District Council has been responding to the recent flooding incidents and its support has rightly gone to where it is needed most.

95/23TC **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2023 as a true and accurate record.

96/23TC **Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings**

The Council received and noted:

- a) the minutes of the Resources Committee meetings held on 3rd and 12th October 2023.
- b) the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meetings held on 27th September 2023 and 18th October 2023.
- c) the minutes of the Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 18th October 2023.
- d) the minutes of the Market Hall Management Committee meeting held on 2nd October 2023.
- e) the minutes of the Gannon Institute Management Committee meeting held on 2nd October 2023.

97/23R **General Power of Competence**

- a) The Council confirmed that it meets the eligibility criteria for adoption of a General Power of Competence as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012.
- b) Following a proposal from Cllr John Findlay, which was seconded by Cllr Di Eastman, **it was unanimously RESOLVED** to adopt a General Power of Competence.

98/23TC **Consultations**

- a) With regard to the National Grid Sealink proposals, the Council noted that it recognised this important issue and, following attendance at the public information exhibitions and other consultations, it was agreed to determine the Council's response to the statutory consultation. A public meeting may be convened to hear the community's views.
- b) The Chair encouraged all library users to respond to Suffolk County Council's public

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library consultation. **It was unanimously RESOLVED** to submit a letter of support for the service and the benefits it provides to the community.

- c) The Council agreed that no response to the East Suffolk Council polling station review was necessary as the town's polling stations are satisfactory.

99/23TC

Neighbourhood Plan

- a) The Chair of the Steering Group reported that the proposed developer of the Garden Neighbourhood, Pigeon, had offered dates for a follow up meeting to begin to consider specific issues. All members of the Steering Group will take part in the discussions relating to the master planning and principles underlying the development. Interested members of the community are to be invited to take part in the other workshops offered by Pigeon.
- b) The application to East Suffolk Council for the designation of south-west Saxmundham (the area recently transferred from Benhall parish) as a 'neighbourhood area' has been submitted. A quotation has been invited from the existing consultants for support to produce a new separate Neighbourhood Plan for this area, or for a review of the existing with an amended neighbourhood area, to be determined following advice from East Suffolk Council.
- c) In response to a question from Cllr Tim Lock about addressing flood risk in the Neighbourhood Plan, Cllr Smith responded that, if the budget allows, the Council may engage additional expertise from consultants for specific issues.
- d) In response to a question from Cllr James Sandbach, Cllr Smith confirmed there was a desire to expand the terms of reference of the Steering Group to explore strategic and conceptual ideas for the town. Cllr Sandbach indicated he would be interested in joining that group.
- e) Following a proposal by Cllr Jeremy Smith, which was seconded by Cllr John Findlay, **it was unanimously RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Benjamin Gulliford as a member of the Steering Group.

100/23TC

Reports

- a) The Chair congratulated the Town Clerk for passing the Certificate in Local Council Administration qualification and recorded a vote of thanks to Cllr Charlotte Hawkins for her generous donation of a roundel to complete the Memorial Garden landscaping.
- b) The Council received and noted a report from the Town Clerk.
- c) The Council received and noted an energy projects' report from the Town Clerk.
- d) The Council received and noted a crime report from the Town Clerk.

101/23TC

Legal

Cllr Jeremy Smith reported that the conveyancing to acquire a section of land between the High Street and Fromus River was progressing, but negotiations were ongoing regarding the maintenance costs for the section nearest the High Street. This section will be retained by the transferors for vehicular access to properties with a permanent right of way granted to the Council and whomsoever it grants a right of way to (general populace on foot and bicycle).

Cllr Smith recommends that the Council requests a side letter to the transfer deed confirming:

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- a) that the transferors will put the retained section into good condition and repair at no cost to the Council; and
- b) that fair and reasonable costs for the shared ongoing maintenance will not be determined and demanded by the transferor or any subsequent owner, but that the Council will pay the transferor a fair and reasonable proportion of all costs properly and reasonably incurred by the transferor.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to request a side letter to the transfer deed on these terms.

102/23TC **Finance**

- a) The Council noted the payments and receipts for October 2023, including receipt of the second instalment of precept on 29th September 2023.
- b) The Council noted the bank balances as at 31st October 2023.
- c) The Council reviewed the budgeted versus actual income and expenditure report as at 31st October 2023. Cllr John Findlay reported that the forecasted income and expenditure to the end of the financial year was on track.

103/23TC **Correspondence**

The Council noted the correspondence received since the last meeting. Cllr Marianne Kiff informed the Council that she will attend the SALC conference later this month. The Town Clerk said she will try to attend the County Council Funding for Bus Network Improvements' meeting.

104/23TC **Admission to Meetings**

It was unanimously RESOLVED to exclude the public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

105/23TC **Staffing Matters**

The Council received a staffing update and agreed to the Town Clerk's increase to 35 hours per week from 6 November 2023.

106/23TC **Next Meeting**

The Council noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday 11th December 2023 at 7:00 pm. Cllr John Fisher asked for an item to be included on the next agenda to formally consider moving the date of the January 2024 meeting.

The meeting closed at 9:35 pm

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk

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