



# Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
at the Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

## Minutes

121/23TC

### Attendees

Cllr Di Eastman (Chair)  
Cllr John Findlay (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr John Fisher (part of the meeting)  
Cllr Jeremy Smith  
Cllr Benjamin Gulliford  
Cllr Tim Lock  
Cllr Charlotte Hawkins  
Cllr Marianne Kiff  
Cllr James Sandbach  
Cllr Geraldine Barker

### Apologies

Cllr Elizabeth Clark

### Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)  
Two members of the public  
County Cllr Richard Smith  
District Cllr John Fisher (part of the meeting)

122/23TC

### Declaration of Interests

None.

123/23TC

### Open Forum

- a) A resident raised a concern that memorials placed by the plaque of her sponsored tree in the Memorial Garden were repeatedly removed and she asked for them to be returned to her. Cllr Charlotte Hawkins said that the plaque was in the middle of a flower bed which should not be walked on as the Green Team had spent many hours creating the garden and that it is not a memorial site. She said the Green Team has received negative comments and that commercially produced flowers were inappropriate. The Chair disputed this and said it is a garden of remembrance and that the family were entitled to lay flowers on special occasions. The Chair invited the resident to contact the Town Clerk to arrange a meeting to further discuss the issue.
- b) County Cllr Richard Smith reported that the Sizewell C Development Consent Order was triggered today but a Final Investment Decision is not expected until April or May. All works being undertaken by EDF prior to the FID are at their own financial risk. Cllr Smith said that, after 14 years of consultation, the project is finally here and we need to face the consequences of increased traffic on the rail and roads, new roads, and an increased workforce. The triggering of the DCO has released community funding and the details will be available in due course. EDF has set up forums for transport, main site, and community issues. Cllr Smith asked for the community forum to meet quarterly but EDF did not listen as these will only be held annually. He hopes we can channel complaints in other ways.

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

Cllr Smith further reported that the budget for next financial year was going through the democratic process with a proposed 4.99% increase to the precept which is the maximum without the need to hold a referendum. Cllr Smith said he will reluctantly vote in favour because he understands the situation Suffolk County, and other Councils, are in to meet the soaring costs of social care. He said the County Council cannot keep spending reserves at the current rate and the difficult decisions taken in the past are nowhere near as difficult as they are now. He was pleased to report there will be no reduction in the community transport scheme and the Leiston recycling facility will remain open. The government announced the local financial settlement and calculations show that the County Council is £2 million worse off. Cllr Smith said the Chancellor's Autumn Statement regarding the National Minimum Wage increase was welcome but there are consequences as staff contracts will cost the County Council £6.5 million extra. He concluded his report by saying that there needs to be a complete reset as to how local government operates under this present situation.

Cllr Jeremy Smith asked whether the County Council had any plans for the secondary school site following the closure of the school next year. He said the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group were assisting with the master planning of the proposed South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, parts of which are not in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, therefore there needs to be a commensurate advantage to the town. A consultation exercise for the Neighbourhood Plan identified that, after improved medical facilities, the second request was for an indoor sports centre and it struck the Steering Group that this could be located in existing premises or land and that the school could be a suitable site. Cllr Richard Smith replied that the County Council are unaware of the plans for the site as it is still within the Department for Education. He said he does not wish to see the site unoccupied for a long period of time and it is important that it is redeveloped to prevent vandalism. He said a whole range of options are being considered for the benefit of the community and he has raised with Officers the need for a further primary school and the pressing need for a special educational needs school but that the whole school site will not be necessary for these. Cllr Smith said he would provide the Town Clerk with details of a County Council Officer to further the discussion and that he welcomes community involvement.

The Chair informed Cllr Richard Smith that the Town Council had received a letter from The Art Station raising concerns about the County Council's proposed cut to arts funding and asked whether a letter of support should be addressed to him or sent elsewhere. Cllr Smith explained that the proposed cut to the facility's income was moderate in percentage terms however an underspend in a COVID budget has been identified so there may be funding for the arts for one more year. Cllr James Sandbach said this was welcome in the short term but the long term link between arts and public health, which is important to the community, is not easily seen or quantifiable in budget terms. Cllr Smith replied that it is a hard choice to balance adult and children's social care with arts but he is pleased to report that the proposed cut will be postponed for one year and the actual cuts are not large.

Cllr Benjamin Smith asked Cllr Smith whether the temporary speed limit restriction to 40 mph on the A12 at Friday Street was operational. Cllr Smith confirmed it was not as EDF's creation of a fen meadow habitat has been postponed due to inclement weather and would resume next spring.

124/23TC

### Minutes

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the draft minutes of the meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 as true and accurate records.

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

- b) The Council received the draft minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024.
- c) The Council received the draft minutes of the Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- d) The Council received the draft minutes of the Events and Communication Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The Chair explained the reasons why the Christmas Fayre has been moved to a Saturday. Cllr Jeremy Smith said that a budget for a Literary element may need to be added to the Arts Fest budget. The Chair invited Cllr Smith to attend the Events and Communications Committee meetings to discuss the plans for the Arts Fest.

**125/23TC**

**Reports**

- a) The Chair reported that she had only one item to raise which was the proposed cuts to the Country Council's funding for the arts. The Chair advised that she will communicate Cllr Richard Smith's response to The Art Station.
- b) The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Chair reported that the group had now commenced a series of workshops with the developer Pigeon and he outlined the workshops' content to date. Cllr Smith circulated and explained a 'Vision for the Garden Neighbourhood' created by the group and outlined the 'Important Issues for Saxmundham Town Council' agreed by the group, both of which will be circulated to Pigeon for further discussion. Cllr Smith said the group was pressing for a tripartite meeting with themselves, Pigeon and the District Council as the planning authority. Cllr Smith responded to Cllr Tim Lock's questions about traffic flows from the new development into the town, to Cllr Charlotte Hawkins' concerns about the availability of access to green spaces in the early stages of the development, to Cllr Marianne Kiff's observations regarding the amenity of a primary school and indoor sports centre for the existing and new residents of the town, and to Cllr James Sandbach's request for information about ongoing community engagement. Cllr Smith responded that Pigeon envisages holding a public exhibition in March and, following clarity during the workshops to be held in the next few weeks, the Town Council will decide how to communicate the issues of importance to the town.
- c) The Council received and noted a report from the Town Clerk, including a Crime Report.
- d) The Council received and noted an Energy Projects Report from the Town Clerk.

**126/23TC**

**Open Forum Resumed**

- a) District Cllr John Fisher arrived and apologised for being late. He reported that the District Council's balanced budget was lined up but there was no indication of the proposed precept increase at this time.
- b) A resident apologised for being late. She proposed a project to improve the River Fromus and its tributaries, firstly by removing litter, but hopefully more subject to receiving the necessary permissions. A brief conversation indicated that it might be more difficult than first thought, so it was necessary to conduct a fact-finding mission in the first instance. The Chair responded that the Town Council was very supportive and asked to be kept informed. Cllr John Fisher asked for the Gull from the A12 to be included in the project. The resident replied that the scope of the

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project could include flood mitigation. Cllr Charlotte Hawkins said education was needed to ensure prunings are not left on the banks of the Gull as it is washed in and creates blockages. The Town Clerk suggested that the Community Officer could circulate educational material on behalf of the River Fromus working group.

**127/23TC Finance Report**

- a) The Council noted the payments and receipts for December 2023.
- b) The Council noted the bank balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- c) The Council noted the budgeted versus actual income and expenditure report as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- d) The Council noted the forecast to the financial year end.

**128/23TC Financial Year 2024-2025**

Cllr John Findlay proposed, and Cllr Geraldine Barker seconded, that the following three items are resolved:

- a) To accept the Resources Committee recommendation to adopt the draft budget of £257,550 for the financial year 2024-2025.
- b) To accept the Resources Committee recommendation to set the precept at £254,050 for 2024-2025 which is a 4.99% increase to the 2023-2024 precept to meet necessary expenditure and level of reserves. The cost to a Band D property will be £158.03 per annum which is an increase of £7.73 per annum compared with last financial year.
- c) To accept the Resources Committee recommendation to transfer the surplus of £3,809 in the draft budget to the general reserve.

All voted in favour and the motion was unanimously approved.

**129/23TC Correspondence**

The Council noted the correspondence received since the last meeting. The Council agreed a response to a letter received from a resident regarding flood risk near Brook Farm Road. Cllr Geraldine Barker raised concerns about the safety of residents undertaking necessary clearing work at North Entrance to prevent properties from being flooded. The Council agreed that it was important to ensure that reports about blocked culverts and gullies are made to the County Council so that residents are not forced to take action that puts them in danger.

**130/23TC Memorial Field**

- a) The Council agreed, in principle, for the Saxmundham Music and Arts CIC to hold the Sax Music Fest on the Memorial Field in August 2024 if the school site is not available.
- b) The Council agreed, in principle, for CYDS to paint a mural on the wall of the Youth Booth as a promotional piece of public art, subject to the approval of the final design and materials by the Amenities and Services Committee.

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

**131/23TC      Next Meeting**

The Council agreed the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:45 pm.

**Sharon Smith**  
**Town Clerk/RFO**

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