



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on
Monday 13th May 2024 at the Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

14/24TC Election of Chair

Nominations for Chair were invited. Cllr John Findlay nominated Cllr Di Eastman. The motion was seconded by Cllr Jeremy Smith. It was **unanimously resolved** to elect Cllr Di Eastman as Chair for the year 2024-2025.

15/24TC Election of Vice-Chair

Nominations for Vice-Chair were invited. Cllr Di Eastman nominated Cllr John Findlay. The motion was seconded by Cllr Charlotte Hawkins. It was **unanimously resolved** to elect Cllr John Findlay as Vice-Chair for the year 2024-2025.

16/24TC Attendees

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

Apologies

County Cllr Richard Smith

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk/RFO)
1 member of the public

17/24TC Declaration of Interests

Cllr John Findlay declared a non-registerable interest in item 26/24TCb.

18/24TC Open Forum

a) A member of the public identified herself as the District Councillor for the Yoxford and Kelsale-cum-Carlton Ward and the parliamentary prospective candidate for the Liberal Democrat Party. She said she was attending the meeting in listening mode to identify ways she may be able to help the Saxmundham community.

b) District Councillor John Fisher reported that the recent application from National Grid to extend the permission for LionLink boreholes at Wood Farm was not referred to the District Council's Planning Committee but determined under delegated authority. Cllr Jeremy Smith raised a concern about the paucity of the District Councillor's reports and asked if East Suffolk Council produce any reports to inform the Town

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Council about District matters, including key policy decisions not necessarily relating to Saxmundham. Cllr Fisher responded that the support officer for the Green/Liberal Democrat/Independent Group produces lengthy reports, but these are often not timely, and the last report was issued in the pre-election period. Cllr Smith replied that he would be happy to receive this report but perhaps it would not have wide enough coverage. Cllr Di Eastman said she would be happy to receive this report even if it was considered out-of-date. Cllr James Sandbach said the Town Council was not aware of District Council decisions affecting Saxmundham nor were they receiving any relevant reports from the Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham and Villages Community Partnership Board, which Cllr Fisher chairs, that should form part of the Town Council's discussion. Cllr Di Eastman explained that she attends the Community Partnership quarterly meetings and reports to the Town Council. Cllr Sandbach responded that the Town Council needs to know what resources are available to Saxmundham and how to leverage these from the District Council.

19/24TC Minutes

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th April 2024 as a true and accurate record, following acceptance of an amendment to item 5/24TC proposed by Cllr Elizabeth Clark and an amendment to the attendance record of Cllr James Sandbach.
- b) The Council received the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 7th May 2024.
- c) The Council received the minutes of the Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 18th April 2024. Cllr Jeremy Smith noted that the Town Council adopted a resolution and mechanisms regarding the weekly market at its last meeting, and that item 7/24AS of the Committee minutes proposed a postponement of the decision to charge stallholder fees in order to conduct a community consultation. Cllr Smith advised that the Town Council resolved to charge fees from 1st August 2024 therefore, if the Committee considers this decision to be incorrect, it must be brought back to the Town Council to reconsider (which may require a suspension of Standing Orders). Cllr Smith opined that charging stallholder fees is not a matter for community consultation but a financial decision of the Town Council and, in any case, the decision of the Committee to postpone is not valid, as the Town Council decision does not take effect until 1st August 2024. Cllr James Sandbach explained that the motion was discussed at length and making charges to stallholders was a question of optics and timing and, given all the issues, it was considered that consultation needs to be built into the process. However, Cllr Sandbach agreed that proposals for operatively running the weekly market should be brought to the Town Council. Cllr John Findlay noted that Cllr Smith made a valid procedural point.
- d) The minutes of the Events and Communications Committee meeting held on 2nd May 2024 were not available.
- e) The Council received the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meetings held on 18th April and 7th May 2024. With reference to item 5/24PDb, Cllr Jeremy Smith said that any applications for signage should be consistent with the Neighbourhood Plan policies for the Conservation Area. The Town Clerk was instructed to add an additional comment in this regard to the Town Council's observations regarding planning application DC/24/1025/LBC.

20/24TC Committee Membership 2024-2025

- a) The Town Council noted the Town Clerk's illustrative Committee succession plan and reviewed the Committees and Working Groups structure. Cllr James Sandbach asked for the structure to be kept under review as there were many Committees and the Councillors were spread quite thinly. Cllr Di Eastman responded that most Town Councils have a similar structure. Cllr Sandbach said he did not have a particular proposal, but he envisaged a crossover between certain Committees such as the Events and Communications Committee with the Market Hall Management Committee. Cllr Jeremy Smith responded that this could be

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managed if the Committees wished to come together for events.

b) It was **unanimously resolved** to create a new Energy Projects Working Group. Cllr Jeremy Smith noted that the draft Terms of Reference for the Energy Projects Working Group should permit the members to vote to make recommendations to the Town Council.

c) The Town Council reviewed the membership of the Committees and Working Groups as follows:

i) No changes were made to the Resources Committee. Cllr James Sandbach and Cllr John Fisher said they may not be available to attend all meetings unless the date and time is changed.

ii) No changes were made to the Amenities and Services Committee.

iii) Cllr Di Eastman proposed that Cllr Geraldine Barker is appointed as an additional member to the Planning and Development Committee. Cllr Benjamin Gulliford seconded the motion. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Geraldine Barker to the Planning and Development Committee for the year 2024-2025.

iv) No changes were made to the Events and Communications Committee. Cllr Marianne Kiff offered to assist with events.

v) No changes were made to the Staffing Sub-Committee.

vi) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Geraldine Barker, Cllr Di Eastman, Cllr Jeremy Smith, Cllr James Sandbach and Cllr Marianne Kiff to the Energy Projects Working Group.

c) The Town Council appointed Chairs to the Committees and Working Group as follows:

i) Cllr Di Eastman proposed Cllr John Findlay as Chair of the Resources Committee. The motion was seconded by Cllr Elizabeth Clark. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr John Findlay as Chair of the Resources Committee for the year 2024-2025.

ii) Cllr Marianne Kiff proposed Cllr Tim Lock as Chair of the Amenities and Services Committee. The motion was seconded by Cllr Charlotte Hawkins. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Tim Lock as Chair of the Amenities and Services Committee for the year 2024-2025.

iii) Cllr Benjamin Gulliford proposed Cllr John Fisher as Chair of the Planning and Development Committee. The motion was seconded by Cllr Elizabeth Clark. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr John Fisher as Chair of the Planning and Development Committee for the year 2024-2025.

iv) Cllr Geraldine Barker proposed Cllr Benjamin Gulliford as Chair of the Events and Communications Committee. The motion was seconded by Cllr Di Eastman. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Benjamin Gulliford as Chair of the Events and Communications Committee for the year 2024-2025.

v) Cllr Di Eastman proposed Cllr Elizabeth Clark as Chair of the Staffing Sub-Committee. The motion was seconded by Cllr Geraldine Barker. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Elizabeth

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Clark as Chair of the Staffing Sub-Committee for the year 2024-2025.

vi) Cllr Benjamin Gulliford proposed Cllr Geraldine Barker as Chair of the Energy Projects Working Group. The motion was seconded by Cllr Elizabeth Clark. It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Geraldine Barker as Chair of the Energy Projects Working Group for the year 2024-2025.

21/24TC Councillors

- a) The Councillors noted the requirement to conduct the annual review of the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct.
- b) The Councillors noted the requirement to conduct the annual review of their Registers of Interest.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr John Fisher as Tree Warden and Cllr Charlotte Hawkins as Footpath Warden.

22/24TC External Bodies

The Town Council appointed Councillors as representatives as follows:

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Jeremy Smith, Cllr Di Eastman, Cllr John Findlay, Cllr James Sandbach and Cllr Geraldine Barker as representatives to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Cllr James Sandbach raised the previous discussion around the wider strategy group. It was agreed to add this to the review of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's Terms of Reference.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Di Eastman as representative to the Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham and Villages Community Partnership.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Di Eastman as representative to the Suffolk Association of Local Councils.
- d) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr John Fisher as representative to the East Suffolk Travellers' Association.
- e) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Geraldine Barker as representative to the Sizewell C Forums.

23/24TC Community Engagement

- a) The Town Council agreed the format of the Annual Town Meeting.
- b) The Town Council reviewed and approved the draft Annual Report for 2023-2024 and noted that it was due to be printed on 22nd May 2024. The member of the public present asked for a copy of the Annual Report.
- c) The Town Council agreed to attend a monthly surgery in the library with the District and County Councillors, subject to their availability. The Town Clerk was instructed to circulate a proposed rota of Councillors.
- d) The Town Council agreed to attend the Sax Music Fest at an activity stall in the information tent.

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24/24TC Reports

- a) The Town Council received an Annual Report from the Chair.
- b) Cllr Jeremy Smith reported that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was asked by Pigeon to review the latest version of the Masterplan in preparation for wider community engagement proposed for June 2024. The NPSG looked at other examples of masterplans for similar developments and felt they were better in content and structure. The NPSG spent time pulling together comments to give guidance to Pigeon. Pigeon agreed, in principle, to the suggestions but a new version of the Masterplan has not yet been produced. The NPSG are pressing Pigeon to provide a justification for the site they have chosen which mostly agrees with the Local Plan, but not all. The NPSG are seeking land for the provision of an indoor sports centre which brings into question the playing field land at the secondary school. The NPSG say they cannot have an illustrative Masterplan, they need assurances that the key structures, in terms of cycleways, footpaths, hedges, and connections are not commutable and they will be adhered to. The NPSG also asked for indicative ideas about the design of houses. A date has been fixed to meet with the East Suffolk Council planners.

Cllr Smith also reported that the new Neighbourhood Plan Area received approval from East Suffolk Council which gives the NPSG the opportunity to add new polices for the Garden Neighbourhood and the proposed converter stations. Cllr Smith noted his update on these matters to social media generated concerns from members of the public mostly about the perceived impact on medical facilities. He said East Suffolk Council needs to take responsibility for decisions about supportive infrastructure as the Town Council are not experts. Cllr John Findlay said this was an NHS decision therefore he suggested approaching the surgery in the first instance. Cllr Charlotte Hawkins proposed that Dr Havard is invited to the Annual Town Meeting to speak about his views on the Garden Neighbourhood, the likely impact to the surgery, what possibilities exist for them, and to let him know that the Town Council supports him. It was agreed to invite Dr Havard to speak at the Annual Town Meeting and to publicise this to the community. The Town Clerk was also instructed to enquire about the Patient Participation Group and to add the appointment of a Town Council representative to the next agenda.

- c) The Town Council received a previously circulated report from the Town Clerk, including a Crime Report.
- d) The Town Council received a previously circulated Energy Projects Report from the Town Clerk. Cllr Geraldine Barker also informed the Town Council about the Greening the Great Grid Upgrade Report which advocates for earlier community engagement and the incorporation of green elements which may increase acceptance of proposals. The author, Dr Andy Tickle, quoted 'Saxmundham is a zone of sacrifice' and outlined his concern that Saxmundham and Friston will become 'cluster points' which he advocates against. He is also concerned that Saxmundham will become a 'stranded asset' as other areas will enjoy an offshore grid while Saxmundham will be stuck with outdated converter stations. Cllr Barker also referred to a recent Ofgem report which advocates for offshore hybrid assets where offshore windfarms can pool energy which will lead to the eventual creation of offshore grids, but it will be too late for Saxmundham. Cllr John Fisher said he was concerned about the speed limit reduction from Yoxford to Leiston which may increase 'rat-running' in other parishes.

25/24TC Finance Report

- a) The Town Council noted the payments, receipts and bank balances as at 30th April 2024, including the first instalments of the Precept and Community Infrastructure Levy.

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b) The Town Council noted the budget versus actual income and expenditure report as at 30th April 2024.

c) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee recommendation to delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in conjunction with two authorised signatories, to transfer funds to and from the current and savings bank accounts held at Unity Trust.

26/24TC Community Support

a) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Amenities and Services Committee's recommendation to enter into a three-year contract with Target Animations Ltd to provide Christmas lights on the High Street for £6,100 per annum.

b) The Town Council noted the previously circulated report from IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme. It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee recommendation to commit the budgeted amount of £7,500 to IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme. Cllr John Findlay, who previously declared a non-registerable interest, took no part in the discussion or vote.

27/24TC Financial Year 2023-2024

Cllr John Findlay proposed that the Town Council accepts the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the following list of documents. The motion was seconded by Cllr Jeremy Smith. It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the:

- a) Income and Expenditure Accounts for the financial year 2023-2024.
- b) Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2024.
- c) Bank Reconciliation for the year ended 31st March 2024.
- d) Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year 2023-2024.
- e) Accounting Statements (Section 2) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year 2023-2024.
- f) Period for the exercise of public rights from 3 June 2024 to 12 July 2024.
- g) Community Infrastructure Levy Report for 2023-2024.

28/24TC Policies and Procedures

It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the:

- a) Privacy Policy
- b) Data Protection Subject Access Request Procedure

29/24TC NALC Local Council Awards Scheme

Following an amendment to the frequency of the publication of Town Council e-newsletters and articles to third party newsletters proposed by Cllr Jeremy Smith, it was **unanimously resolved** that the Town Council meets the criteria to qualify for the Foundation Award of the NALC Local Council Awards Scheme.

30/24TC Communication

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

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31/24TC Staffing Matters

The Town Clerk informed the Town Council of the Caretaker's resignation due to his intention to retire. The Town Council recorded a vote of thanks to the Caretaker for his service and noted that his resignation was a great loss. It was **unanimously resolved** to instruct the Town Clerk to appoint a Maintenance Officer on the same terms as the Caretaker.

32/24TC Next Meeting

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the meetings schedule for 2024-2025.
- b) The Town Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for 10th June 2024 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 9:25 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

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