



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on
Monday 8th July 2024 at the Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

43/24TC Attendees

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

Apologies

Cllr Tiim Lock
Cllr James Sandbach – none received
County Cllr Richard Smith

Also Present

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

44/24TC Declaration of Interests

Cllr John Findlay declared a non-registerable interest in item 53/24TCb.

45/24TC Open Forum

- a) A member of the public identified herself as the Director of the Art Station. She showed a video of people attending the Arts Fest providing positive feedback. She said this was necessary as the Town Council had not shared its internal post-event analysis document with the Art Station nor had the Town Council staff attended a review meeting therefore she could not address delivery issues. The Director of the Art Station then publicly disrespected the Town Council staff by insinuating that problems with the two parties working in partnership had only recently arisen.
- b) Cllr Geraldine Barker responded to the Art Station Director to say that her remarks were uncalled for, and the public meeting was not the time to discuss these matters.
- c) Members of the public provided positive feedback about the Arts Fest.
- d) The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution. She said the Councillors had received many positive emails from members of the public and Town Council staff feedback about the delivery of the event which included good constructive comments for improvements. The Chair responded to the Art Station Director's repeated request about whether the internal post-event analysis document will be endorsed and shared by the Town Council, by explaining that this was a decision of the Town Council.
- e) Cllr Jeremy Smith said the post-event analysis document should be made available as he cannot find a law which allows it not to be published and the discussion about the document should be included in the public part of the agenda.
- f) The Vice-Chair said he was puzzled by the volume of the response from members of the public in support of the Arts Fest as it appears that the Art Station are under the impression that the Town

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Council is planning to withdraw its support. He said this was never the Town Council's intention and it will continue to be supportive of the Art Station and the Arts Fest, however there were tensions between the Art Station staff and the Town Council staff and operational issues which needed to be addressed. He added that the Town Council staff had compiled feedback, including their own views, about the event, without prejudice. Due to the tensions, the Town Council staff asked for the document to be considered by the Events and Communications Committee before it was shared with the Art Station. The Events and Communications Committee agreed to refer the document, with a recommendation for endorsement, to full Council, and this will be considered later in this meeting. The Vice-Chair added that the post-event analysis contains some positive feedback and some negative feedback, and it has been blown out of all proportion.

- g) Cllr Benjamin Gulliford said the post-event analysis document was not controversial, but it was necessary for the Town Council to agree the document, by majority vote, before it is shared. He added that this was explained to the Art Station Director when she attended the Events and Communications Committee.
- h) A member of the public identified himself as a Trustee of the Art Station. He said he was pleased to hear that a future Arts Fest will go ahead as it is an important event for the town and surrounding villages. He said he was concerned about tensions at an operational level which he hopes the Trustees will be informed of, so that they can be part of the discussions in due course.

Cllr Marianne Kiff arrived and apologised to the Chair for being late.

- i) District Cllr John Fisher, referring to item 35/24TCd from the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 8th June 2024, clarified that Philip Ridley was appointed to a new post to specifically deal with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. This role vacated his position as Head of Planning which was taken by Ben Woolnough.

46/24TC Minutes

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2024.
- b) The Council received the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 2nd July 2024.
- c) The Council received the minutes of Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 19th June 2024.
- d) The Council received the minutes of the Events and Communications Committee meetings held on 6th and 26th June 2024.
- e) The Council received the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meeting held on 18th June 2024.

47/24TC Blue Spaces Saxmundham Proposal

The Blue Spaces Saxmundham Coordinator presented a proposal regarding the creation of a boardwalk along the River Fromus for the benefit of the community. She explained that one of the key aims of Blue Spaces Saxmundham is for the blue spaces in the town to be places of reflection and relaxation. A boardwalk would provide such a space; it would communicate that the town not only recognises the importance of the river but celebrates it as an asset of the town. The boardwalk's proximity to the High Street would also draw more visitors to the town centre and thereby support trade located there. The

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Town Council agreed there was widespread support for the project and that they look forward to hearing further developments.

48/24TC Reports

- a) The Chair acknowledged County Cllr Richard Smith's compliments about the Annual Town Council Report. The Chair gave thanks to the Town Council's Caretaker and Cllr Charlotte Hawkins who are stepping down and gratefully acknowledged their support and contribution. The Chair read out highlights from her previously circulated report including her attendance at the recent Suffolk Association of Local Councils' AGM and her thoughts regarding the three main events in the Saxmundham calendar, namely the Arts Fest, the Sax Community Fest, and the Christmas Fayre, which collectively raise the profile of the town, particularly with the District and County Councils. The Chair also expressed her view that a recent meeting with East Suffolk planners to discuss the new South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood had been far more positive and constructive than previously experienced which gave her great confidence for the future. Cllr Jeremy Smith expressed his own thanks for the work the Caretaker had done in the Market Hall and the Gannon Rooms.
- b) Cllr Jeremy Smith, as Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG), reported that the meeting with Pigeon to consider the latest version of the masterplan was further delayed. It is likely that the public exhibition will be held in September 2024. The NPSG and the Neighbourhood Plan consultants are due to meet next week to extend the scope of the Plan to cover all of Saxmundham including the proposed Garden Neighbourhood, service/employment area, and a plot of land for biodiversity net gain. Cllr Smith said it is necessary to draft policies for the housing and commercial elements, and it may be possible to include protective policies to address the converter stations.
- c) Cllr Geraldine Barker, as Chair of the Energy Projects Working Group (EPWG), referred to her previously circulated report. She also reported that the Sealink statutory consultation has been pushed back but a project update document was published today. Cllr Barker reported that National Grid propose that the access road to the converter station site will not be via Kelsale, but via Sternfield and Benhall and that construction working hours will be extended to include Sundays. Cllr Barker said she will convene the first meeting of the EPWG to consider these proposals and she will attend the National Grid Sealink webinar next week. In response to a suggestion by Cllr Jeremy Smith, Cllr Barker agreed to draft, and circulate for comments, a letter to the new Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and our new MP to put down a marker that the Town Council is seeking a sharp review of the energy projects to demonstrate that there is proper public interest, not just a private interest, and to reiterate the offshore alternatives. In addition, the letter will ask whether there is any compensation and mitigation with the electricity transmission network upgrade, which provides no benefit to the local community, and are there any financial and environmental protections which may inform our Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- d) The Council noted a crime statistics report from the Town Clerk.

49/24TC Markets

The Council considered the following recommendations from the Amenities and Services Committee, pursuant to Standing Order 7a, which states 'a resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least four councillors to be given to the Proper Officer, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee'.

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Cllr Elizabeth Clark reported that the Amenities and Services Committee wished to be pragmatic and move forward with the weekly market therefore it was agreed to recommence charging stallage fees from 1st September 2024 to give the stallholders sufficient notice and to change the criteria to remove the fresh only option to be offered by stallholders.

- a) It was **unanimously resolved to reverse** the following policies adopted by the Town Council on 8th April 2024:
- i. the Wednesday market should give priority to stalls that wholly or mainly sell fresh food or plant products;
 - ii. from 1st August 2024, the principle of making a charge for a stall be reintroduced, with an additional charge for a stall exceeding a defined standard width, given the limited space in Fromus Square;
 - iii. stalls wholly or mainly selling fresh food or plant products should, for the time being, continue to be exempt from such charge, such exemption to be reviewed in early 2025.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve revised Market Regulations for the weekly and monthly markets.

50/24TC Finance Report

- a) The Council noted the payments, receipts and bank balances as at 30th June 2024.
- b) The Council noted the budget versus actual income and expenditure report as at 30th June 2024.

51/24TC Policies and Procedures

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee's recommendation to approve the:
- i. revised Model Financial Regulations
 - ii. new Scheme of Delegation
 - iii. revised Complaints Policy
 - iv. unchanged Vexatious Contacts and Complaints Policy.
- b) The Council requested that the new Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy is first considered by the Resources Committee.

52/24TC Communication

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

The Chair left the meeting and, in her absence, the Vice-Chair took the chair.

53/24TC Confidential Matters

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- 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) The Council noted a report from the Vice-Chair regarding three matters concerning Councillor conduct, all of which had been referred to the Monitoring Officer of East Suffolk Council as required.

Following a speech, Cllr Jeremy Smith left the meeting.

- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the recommendation from the Events and Communications Committee to endorse the Arts Fest 2024 Post-Event Analysis compiled by Town Council staff and to share the document, in confidence, with the Art Station.

54/24TC Next Meeting

The Town Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for 9th September 2024 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 9:15 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

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