



Saxmundham Town Council



Annual Report
2024-2025

Chair's Report

Introduction

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2024–2025, summarising our achievements over the past year and setting out our strategic direction for the years ahead.

This year has seen the Town Council step up its leadership role - strengthening partnerships, responding to major infrastructure proposals, and investing in long-term community wellbeing.



We have worked hard to ensure residents' voices are heard and local priorities guide our decisions, so Saxmundham continues to grow as a resilient, inclusive and forward-looking town.

Community Engagement

Strengthening community engagement has been at the heart of our work this year. We are committed to creating opportunities for residents to share views, shape decisions, and help guide Saxmundham's future. Regular Council meetings, targeted community surveys, and consultation events have enabled residents to raise concerns and contribute ideas.

Our support for cultural programmes and local festivals has strengthened community identity and pride, bringing people together and celebrating Saxmundham's distinct character.

Continued financial support for a range of community organisations has helped sustain essential activities across the town. Volunteer-led initiatives - including the Green Team, BlueSpaces~Saxmundham, IP17 GNS, the Community Fridge, the Saxmundham Judo Club and other local groups - have made an important contribution to environmental stewardship and community wellbeing.

Energy Infrastructure Projects

Saxmundham remains a focal point for nationally significant energy infrastructure proposals. While these projects contribute to national sustainability goals, they raise serious local concerns about their impact on landscapes, the environment, and community wellbeing and identity.

The Town Council strongly opposes the siting of converter stations on the edge of Saxmundham, and our responses to the energy project developers have consistently reflected this position. At the same time, we are taking a pragmatic and constructive approach. Through our Empowering Nature initiative, we continue to advocate for proposals that, if consented, enhance rather than diminish local character and biodiversity. We believe infrastructure projects should contribute positively to nature recovery and deliver genuine community benefits.

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

The Garden Neighbourhood, allocated in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, will deliver around 800 new homes and an employment area west of the A12. A separate proposal for a new service area is also under consideration.

Key challenges include ensuring the new neighbourhood integrates seamlessly with the existing community and infrastructure, securing adequate provision for education, healthcare, and recreation, and promoting sustainability through green space, active travel, energy efficiency, and high-quality design. We have actively engaged with the site promoter, Pigeon, to influence the emerging masterplan. Our aim is to ensure the development delivers meaningful, long-lasting benefits for both current and future residents, while protecting and enhancing the character of our town.

Strategic Priorities 2025–2030

The next five years will be pivotal as we manage population growth, evolving infrastructure needs, and a changing local government landscape. Our Strategic Plan 2025–2030 sets out a clear vision to meet these challenges and deliver tangible outcomes. Key priorities include:

- **Town Centre Regeneration:** revitalising the High Street and town centre, supporting local businesses, improving accessibility, and enhancing public spaces to encourage community use and economic vitality.
- **Population Growth and Community Development:** managing a projected 40% population increase linked to the Garden Neighbourhood, expanding essential services, and strengthening social cohesion through inclusive community initiatives.
- **Energy Projects and Environmental Sustainability:** promoting responsible onshore infrastructure, safeguarding landscapes and habitats, and investing in environmental projects that build climate resilience and support biodiversity.
- **Local Government Reorganisation:** preparing for the move to a new unitary authority, ensuring continuity of services, protecting local democratic representation, and building strong partnerships to advocate for Saxmundham's interests.

Conclusion

I would like to thank all our Councillors, our Town Clerk and Officers, the volunteers and community organisations, and above all, our residents for their shared commitment to Saxmundham. Through continued collaboration, shared ambition, and a strong sense of community spirit, I am confident that Saxmundham will rise to future challenges and continue to thrive as a progressive and welcoming town.

Cllr John Findlay
Chair - Saxmundham Town Council

The Three Tiers of Local Government

Local government in Suffolk is organised in three tiers - county, district/borough, and town/parish. Each is a democratically elected body with its own budget and legal powers. The County Council sets direction across the wider area; the District Council focuses on the locality; and the Town and Parish Councils are the most local, working closest to residents. They collaborate so services align, and responsibilities can be devolved by agreement. The infographic below summarises how responsibilities are shared across Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council, and the Town Council.

1



Responsible for:

- Benches and street furniture
- Chantry Road and Seaman Avenue play parks
- Delivery of civic events and community activities
- Christmas lights and celebration flags
- Community grants
- Implementing the Strategic Plan
- The Market Hall and Gannon Rooms
- The Memorial Field
- Markets
- Purchasing and siting litter and dog waste bins
- Tree maintenance
- Saxmundham Green Team
- Memorial Field Orchard
- The Wildlife Walk
- Town walking trails
- Local planning consultee
- Hanging baskets and planters
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Advocating for Saxmundham with principal authorities
- Monitoring and responding to NSIPs
- Supporting local voluntary groups and environment initiatives

2



Responsible for:

- Planning and building control
- Licensing
- Council tax and benefits administration
- Business rates
- Environmental health
- Domestic waste and recycling collection
- Street care and cleansing
- Sports and leisure facilities
- Housing and homelessness support
- Nuisance and abandoned vehicles
- Tree maintenance
- Tourism and the visitor economy
- Tree and hedge management
- Parking enforcement
- Footpath maintenance
- Local Planning
- Monitoring and responding to NSIPs
- Dog warden
- Fly-tipping
- Thurlow Close play park
- Fromus Green and play park

3



Responsible for:

- Highways maintenance
- Social services
- Public transport
- Education and school transport
- Blue badge scheme
- Recycling centres
- Trading standards
- Registration of births, marriages and deaths
- Libraries
- Fire and rescue services
- Bus passes
- Countryside conservation and public access
- Leisure and culture
- Emergency planning
- Public rights of way maintenance
- Inclusive growth
- Road safety
- Support for arts and museums
- Archives
- Monitoring and responding to NSIPs
- Adult education
- Youth clubs
- Higher education grants
- Mental health support

Local Government Reorganisation

Suffolk has been fast-tracked by government to move from the current two principal authority system. The current district, borough and county councils will be abolished and a new single unitary authority will be created, alongside a new Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority.

Competing Unitary Models

One Suffolk

Suffolk County Council's model abolishes districts to create a single county-wide authority, simplifying accountability and integrating county/district services. Promises the largest, quickest efficiencies, with locality arrangements and partnership with town/parish councils to keep decisions close to communities.



Three Councils for Suffolk

The District and Borough Councils' model creates three unitary authorities centred on Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Lowestoft. Emphasises community identity and responsiveness, aligning with travel-to-work areas. Seeks efficiencies through shared services while retaining strong local leadership and engagement.



Local Implications

Town and parish councils are not part of the reorganisation but are identified as key stakeholders. Under either unitary model, there may be opportunities to devolve local assets and services by agreement, alongside clearer routes to influence strategy through the new mayoral structure. Continued liaison will be essential so that local voice and place-based delivery are protected and strengthened.

The Town Council is monitoring both options to safeguard local voice, service quality and access; engaging with the principal authorities and the Suffolk Association of Local Councils during the proposal and consultation stages; and preparing a shortlist of assets/services suitable for local management, to enable the Town Council to act swiftly if devolution opportunities arise.

Timeline

Government has confirmed a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority with a May 2026 mayoral election, and has postponed the May 2025 county elections to May 2026. Suffolk councils must submit their final unitary business cases to the government by 26 September 2025.

Culture and Community

Town Council Events and Community Engagement

The Town Council delivers its own varied programme of events throughout the year, as well as supporting and participating in events led by others through grants, practical support, collaboration, and venue provision.

The Town Council is responsible for organising Saxmundham's popular Christmas Fayre. This is a major highlight of the town calendar, transforming the town centre for festive celebrations which support the local community, boost footfall, and showcase the town to crowds of visitors. The 2024 Christmas Fayre was subject to last-minute changes due to adverse weather, with the outdoor programme curtailed. Despite this, the Market Hall became the heart of the festivities, hosting stalls and performances, while the Fromus Centre became a community hub, with live music and children's activities on offer. The event highlighted the resilience and adaptability of all involved, ensuring the community could still come together to celebrate the festive season.

Arts and Creative Identity

Saxmundham has a lively creative spirit and is home to artists, writers, photographers, and musicians. At its centre is The Art Station which hosts exhibitions, studios, workshops, and offers community projects such as photography groups, walks, and free family cooking sessions, making creativity part of everyday life. In June 2024, the Art Station, with support from the Town Council hosted Sax Arts Fest, a free community arts festival providing opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with a wide range of cultural activities.

Music and performance are also a big part of life in Saxmundham. The Market Hall regularly hosts Britten Pears Arts "Participate" sessions, relaxed music-making gatherings that bring people together over song, stories and a slice of cake. Meanwhile, Saxmundham Library is more than just a place for books – it runs writing groups, book clubs, craft sessions, and offers regular literary talks.

In August 2024, the Saxmundham Community Music Festival (Sax Fest) brought two days of free live music to the Memorial Field. The festival created opportunities for all ages to enjoy performances, participate in creative activities, and connect with local groups, while also supporting the town centre by drawing in visitors and increasing footfall. Beloved by residents of all ages, the festival fosters a friendly, relaxed atmosphere where people can dance, enjoy live music, and catch up with friends.

Together, these activities create a cultural scene that feels friendly, welcoming, and rooted in the town's identity – where arts and heritage sit alongside wellbeing, learning, and a genuine sense of community. Alongside these cultural activities, Saxmundham is supported by community groups and facilities that provide vital services and enhance wellbeing.

Saxmundham Judo Club

Alongside their regular lessons at the Market Hall, Saxmundham Judo Club continues to contribute to community wellbeing. In partnership with the charity Legend on the Bench, the club installed a suicide-prevention bench on Memorial Field. They also spearheaded the installation of a publicly accessible defibrillator in the town centre. Additional initiatives, including a veterans' breakfast, highlight the club's commitment to supporting health, resilience, and community spirit.

Community Fridge

Sax Community Fridge collects surplus food, which would otherwise go to waste, from local shops and growers and makes them freely available to anyone in the community. To date, the project has prevented nearly 12 tonnes of food from being discarded and served around 1,500 visitors. In addition to being a food-waste project, the twice-weekly sessions are open to all for coffee and conversation, helping to tackle loneliness and foster community bonds.

IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme

IP17GNS has continued to provide vital support to Saxmundham and nearby villages through its network of volunteers providing a broad range of services for people facing financial instability, isolation or wellbeing challenges. The charity organises regular social and wellbeing activities - from dancing, baby and toddler groups, games, quiz nights and a warm hub in winter. Alongside this, volunteers have delivered initiatives such as Christmas meals for isolated residents, a family pantomime, and children's craft sessions.

Community Orchard

Saxmundham's Community Orchard, which can be found on the Memorial Field, is a welcoming green space where residents are encouraged to pick and enjoy fresh, seasonal fruit free of charge. With 56 trees including quince, apple, pear, plum, and medlar, the orchard offers a simple way for the community to access fresh, locally grown produce. The trees are cared for by the Saxmundham Green Team, a volunteer group led by the Town Council, helping to support biodiversity and community wellbeing.

Children and Young People

The CYDS Youth Booth on the Memorial Field provides a safe, welcoming space for young people to access support, guidance, and a range of engaging activities. Open and free to all, it offers opportunities to get involved in arts, crafts, music, and social projects, while giving young people a voice in shaping local youth initiatives. Saxmundham is home to a strong network of Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Brownies, Guides, and Rainbows. Run by volunteers, these groups provide opportunities for young people to build confidence, learn skills, enjoy outdoor activities, and develop teamwork and resilience.

The Environment

Saxmundham Town Council is committed to protecting the natural environment and balancing the needs of people and wildlife. We extend our thanks to the Green Team and Blue Spaces volunteers for their vital work in maintaining and enhancing Saxmundham's open spaces and waterways for the benefit of both the community and local biodiversity.



An Update from the Town Council's Environment Coordinator:



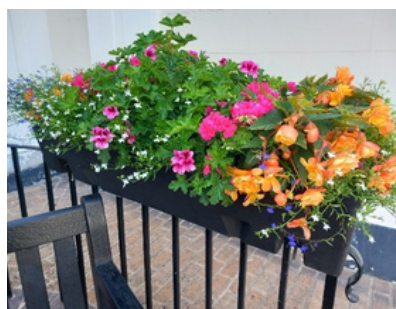
In the past year, Green Team volunteers contributed over 340 hours to projects across the town, including bulb planting at Chantry Road play park, maintenance and planting at the Memorial Garden and Memorial Field, care of the Community Orchard, litter picking, making bug boxes, and running the annual Seed and Plant Swap Stall at the Market. They also planted seasonal displays in the Town Council's planters, installed new planters with reclaimed materials (with help from the Men's Shed), and supported tree watering and the mural bed.

Collaborations have included working with Saxmundham Primary School Eco Team, the Saxmundham Mens Shed, Community Payback Service and IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme.

We always enjoy hearing feedback when we are out and about. If you would like to know more or get involved with the Green Team, just stop for a chat or email environment@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk.

As Environment Coordinator, leading working parties is just a fraction of my role. I have also worked on the Thermal Imaging Project, Volunteer and Biodiversity policy, green space maintenance schedules, seeking volunteer feedback, supporting Blue Spaces and contributing to the Sea Link DCO process.

Future projects in the pipeline will include working on rain harvesting solutions to make our flowering displays more environmentally sustainable.



Blue Spaces Saxmundham

BlueSpaces Saxmundham is a citizen science and community action group operating independently. The Town Council is proud to offer financial and practical support to enable BlueSpaces to carry out their activities for the benefit of the town.



An Update from Laura Bonnett, BlueSpaces founder:

Our aim since launching in March 2024 has been for the River Fromus to be a thriving habitat for wildlife, a natural safeguard against flooding, and a place of relaxation, recreation, and reflection for the Saxmundham community.

We have responded to community requests in many ways. A key priority has been improving access to the river while protecting the floodplain, both central to the Fromus Green Boardwalk proposal. We also promote rainwater storage and water butt use to help manage stormwater, and share advice on the correct disposal of fats, oils, and grease, which impact the efficiency of drainage systems. In addition, we raise awareness of how to report blocked drains and regularly monitor and report areas where drainage is compromised.

Over the past year, we have tackled two areas of persistent littering to reduce waste entering the River Fromus. We have also forged strong community links by speaking at public events and working with groups such as the local Scout troop and Saxmundham Primary School.

Health and safety is a priority for us. We take precautions against contamination (e.g. E. coli) by wearing protective PPE, changing out of it at the water's edge, and sanitising equipment after every working party. We also liaise with the Safer Communities police team when items found in the river or on the banks raise concern.



To keep residents informed, we publish a monthly newsletter called 'Dripfeed' which shares details of our twice-monthly working parties, photos, progress reports, and results from water testing (logged with the Freshwater Watch national database). It also provides updates on our activities, including culvert and outfall clearance, Himalayan balsam control, litter picks, species surveys, and invasive species management.

To sign up to Dripfeed, join a working party, or to find out more about BlueSpaces, please email bluespaces@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

Modified Neighbourhood Plan

Saxmundham's Neighbourhood Plan, originally 'made' in 2023, is currently being modified to address major changes affecting the town's future. The work is being led by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – a dedicated community-led body supported by the Town Council.

The primary reason for the modifications is to reflect the revised settlement boundary, which now includes land allocated for the proposed South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. Although the development of this site for around 800 new homes is already designated in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and cannot be overturned through the Neighbourhood Plan, the modified Plan will give the town a stronger voice in shaping how the development is delivered.

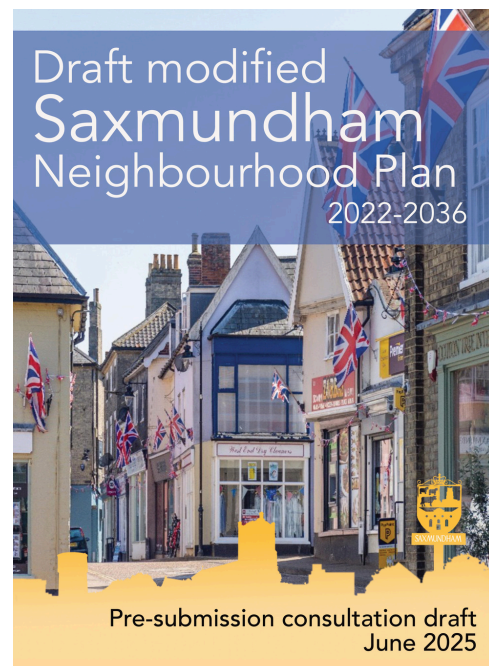
Incorporating the Garden Neighbourhood within the Neighbourhood Plan will enable the Steering Group to set more locally focused policies that influence the layout, design, sustainability, and infrastructure provision for the new community. Crucially, it will also ensure that Saxmundham receives a larger proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (from 15% to 25%) which can be used to support local improvements and services.

The modified Neighbourhood Plan also addresses other emerging developments – including the potential impacts of major energy infrastructure. New policies have been proposed to help reduce the adverse effects on the town in the event that the Sea Link and/or Lion Link converter stations receive development consent. The aim is to ensure any development brings with it meaningful mitigation and, where possible, long-term community benefit.

Public consultation on the draft modified Neighbourhood Plan took place during summer 2025. The Town Council invited all residents and stakeholders to review the draft policies and provide their views via an online consultation form or by collecting hard copies at Saxmundham Library or the Town House.

Following the close of consultation, the Steering Group will review all comments received and consider any necessary revisions. The final draft will then be submitted to East Suffolk Council for further statutory consultation and independent examination.

If successful, the modified Neighbourhood Plan may be subject to a local referendum before being formally adopted.



South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

The Town Council continues to engage constructively but critically with proposals for a major new development to the south of the town, known as the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. The site is allocated for up to 800 homes, employment land, and supporting infrastructure in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

The Town Council cannot override the site's allocation in the Local Plan. However, through its Neighbourhood Plan and sustained engagement with both the developers and East Suffolk Council planners, it is seeking to influence the design and delivery of the proposed Garden Neighbourhood.



The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, a dedicated community-led body supported by the Town Council, has participated in a series of meetings and workshops with the developer, Pigeon Investment Management, over the past two years, scrutinising emerging plans and advocating for a landscape-led, high-quality development that delivers long-term benefits for Saxmundham. While the Town Council cannot guarantee that all of the town's priorities will be reflected in the final plans, it continues to press for improvements and to represent the community's interests as the proposals evolve.

A key focus of the Town Council has been to influence the form, layout, and infrastructure of the new neighbourhood to reflect community needs. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has prepared a Modified Neighbourhood Plan which includes new policies specific to the Garden Neighbourhood. These cover sustainable transport, green infrastructure, connections, and community facilities.

During summer 2025, Pigeon held a public consultation at the Market Hall, presenting an emerging masterplan that includes new homes (including affordable housing and custom-build plots), a new primary school, community hub, employment space, and significant areas of open space. Around 200 people attended the exhibition to feedback their views to Pigeon. Residents can view further details about the proposed development at the developer's dedicated website: www.saxmundhamsouth.co.uk.

Alongside its engagement with the developers, the Town Council has held regular meetings with East Suffolk Council planning officers to ensure the proposed development supports the needs of both new and existing residents.

The next step will be for Pigeon to submit an outline planning application to East Suffolk Council, expected in autumn 2025. The Town Council will be a statutory consultee to the application and intends to make a detailed formal response once it has been submitted.

Proposed Energy Projects

Sea Link – Council Representation

The Sea Link project is a major proposal by National Grid Electricity Transmission to build a new high-voltage electricity transmission line between Suffolk and Kent, including a large converter station sited on the edge of Saxmundham, in the parish of Sternfield.



The Town Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process, therefore over the past year we have strengthened our technical capability - enabling us to interpret complex application documents and provide impartial, factual updates. As a result, we are a trusted source of information and actively support residents to understand the proposals, the process, and how to engage effectively.

We submitted a detailed Relevant Representation to register as an Interested Party in the Development Consent Order examination. The proposed development site lies close to residential areas, on high, open ground to the east. If consented, it would dominate views from across the town and surrounding countryside.

The Relevant Representation, published in full on our website, **strongly opposes the siting of the converter station** due to its severe and irreversible impacts on the town's environment, economy, and identity. The Town Council's submission identifies the following key areas of concern:

- **Proximity to a rural market town**, with lasting effects on landscape character and amenity.
- **Visual and landscape harm**, especially from elevated viewpoints and historic routes.
- **Traffic and construction disruption**, including a new permanent access road and bridge over the River Fromus.
- **Operational and construction-phase noise**, with limited mitigation detail to date.
- **Wellbeing and socio-economic impacts** on residents and local businesses.
- **Reputational damage** that could deter inward investment and tourism.
- **Environmental degradation**, including habitat fragmentation and species loss.
- **Cumulative impact** with other energy projects and the Garden Neighbourhood.
- **Lack of meaningful community benefit** or mitigation appropriate to the scale of harm.

Once the examination formally begins, the Town Council will continue to participate fully - making further written representations, attending hearings, and holding the developer to account. The examination process is expected to conclude in summer 2026, with a decision by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero anticipated around September 2026.

Lion Link – A Second Converter Station Proposed for Saxmundham

National Grid Ventures (NGV) is progressing proposals for Lion Link, a second major interconnector project that would bring further high-voltage electricity infrastructure to the outskirts of Saxmundham. Like Sea Link, Lion Link proposes to site a large converter station east of the town. The Town Council is a statutory consultee and will participate fully in the forthcoming public consultation, which is expected to take place in autumn 2025.

The Town Council is deeply concerned about the cumulative impact of multiple converter stations in close proximity to residential areas, landscapes, and habitats. We will work to ensure that local voices are heard and that Saxmundham is not subjected to disproportionate environmental, social, and economic harm. Further updates will be shared via our website and social media.



A view of Viking Link converter station in Lincolnshire

Sizewell C: Night-Time Freight Trains Through Saxmundham

With the final investment decision secured for Sizewell C, the project is moving into full construction. Freight operations are expected to begin in early 2026, with up to four return freight trains per night (eight movements) passing along the East Suffolk Line through Saxmundham once the green rail route is fully operational.

To reduce noise at source, continuous-welded rail has been installed on the Saxmundham–Leiston branch line, and a night-time speed limit of 10 mph is in place along the local sections through Woodbridge, Campsea Ashe, and Saxmundham.

While these measures are welcome, the Town Council remains vigilant and will continue to monitor noise levels and resident concerns. As a member of the Southern Transport Forum, the Town Council uses this platform to raise issues directly with Sizewell C representatives and advocate for additional noise mitigation where necessary.

Empowering Nature - Protecting Saxmundham

The Empowering Nature initiative is a proactive, community-led vision designed to mitigate the impacts of the proposed converter stations and create lasting environmental and social benefits. It sets out ideas led and supported by the local community and would be subject to detailed design and ecological assessments. We call on National Grid companies to work with us to deliver infrastructure that enhances rather than damages the landscape. This aligns with CPRE's Greening the Great Grid Upgrade report, which advocates for infrastructure that balances energy needs with ecological and social priorities.

Our Vision

- A green corridor from Saxmundham to the coast, with hedgerows, wildflower margins, and routes for walking and cycling.
- A Fromus boardwalk and nature trail, linking Fromus Green to the High Street to boost local footfall and sustainable tourism.
- A community fund providing wildlife-friendly improvements for households, such as bat boxes, ponds, and water butts.
- Community food projects, including allotments and a permaculture-based orchard near the converter station.
- Water harvesting and flood mitigation through landscaped ponds, swales, and bio-retention systems.
- Restoration of the Great Wood with native tree planting for biodiversity.
- Art, green walls, and solar panels on converter stations to create environmental and cultural benefits.
- Jobs and training for local people in conservation, project management, and green space maintenance.

Since its adoption, the Empowering Nature initiative has built strong momentum and is attracting support from principal authorities, planning experts, environmental groups, and political leaders. It has been promoted through targeted discussions with key figures including representatives from Suffolk County and East Suffolk Councils, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, local MPs, peers in the House of Lords, and neighbouring town and parish councils. National Grid Electricity Transmission and National Grid Ventures has met with the Town Council to discuss the proposals, and further engagement is planned with Scottish Power Renewables and Sizewell C to ensure the initiative is both deliverable and well-resourced.



Community Buildings

The Gannon Rooms

The distinctive cupolas have returned to the roof of the Gannon Rooms on Station Approach, beautifully recreated by Peggs of Aldeburgh using the original design.

These features are an important heritage asset in Saxmundham's Conservation Area and help restore the building's historic character and strengthen its potential as a welcoming and versatile community space in the heart of the town centre.



The front flower bed has also been transformed with new planting thanks to the Green Team's efforts. Now passers-by on this key route between train station and town centre can enjoy a colourful display that changes with the seasons and brightens the space year-round.

The Market Hall

Recently, the Town Council took the opportunity of support from the Community Payback team to repaint the railings and benches outside the Market Hall, giving the area a much-needed refresh. One bench was painted using materials kindly donated by a local resident, with a memorial plaque provided free of charge by the High Street jeweller, in honour of a much-missed local who loved to sit and watch the world go by.



Following a flood in the Market Hall earlier this year, a full flooring replacement has been recommended by the insurance loss adjuster. Due to this the Market Hall has undergone periods of closure while the damage has been assessed and repairs are made. The Town Council is liaising with contractors to swiftly and sympathetically complete repairs to this heritage asset.

Hire the Market Hall for parties, performances, markets, exercise classes, clubs and community events

- Generous main hall
- Large stage
- Meeting room
- Sound & lighting systems


Market Hall
SAXMUNDHAM

www.saxmarkethall.co.uk
01728 604595
bookings@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

- Fully equipped kitchen
- Accessible
- Competitive local rates
- Central location



Community Investment and Public Realm Improvements

Saxon Road Allotments: Growing community, food, and wellbeing

The Town Council is exploring the delivery of a community allotment project at Saxon Road, transforming an unused parcel of land into a thriving community growing space.

The Town Council has successfully negotiated a provisional agreement with the plot's owner, Flagship Housing, subject to community consultation outcomes. The site may be leased to the Council at a peppercorn rent for at least 10 years, creating a long-term asset for local residents.



A targeted public consultation will help shape the project's design which will be supported by a grant from East Suffolk Council's Field to Fork fund. The project will deliver up to 23 growing plots, a communal shed with lockers for small tool storage, and a rainwater harvesting system to ensure environmental sustainability. This marks the first step in the Council's ambition to create more small, accessible growing spaces across Saxmundham for community use.

Securing the Community Garden for future generations

The Town Council has agreed to lease the community garden at the former Fromus Centre site, protecting it as a valuable green space for residents. Run by local group Greener Sax, the garden supports local food growing and sustainability.

As part of the lease proposal from Suffolk County Council, an additional triangular piece of land will be included for future improvements. Once finalised, the land will be licensed to Greener Sax at a nominal rent, enabling the group to continue their excellent work without interruption. This commitment safeguards an important community asset and supports Saxmundham's ambitions for greener, more accessible shared spaces.

New bridge improves access

The Town Council completed an exciting project to improve access between the Memorial Field and Seaman Avenue play park.

The new bridge replaces the old, narrow structure that was unsuitable for wheelchairs, pushchairs, and mobility aids.



Fabricated and installed by Saxmundham-based Dark Arc Engineering, the bridge mirrors the design of the Memorial Field entrance gates. At 2 metres wide, it provides a safe, welcoming, and accessible route for all visitors, reflecting the Town Council's commitment to inclusive public spaces.

Memorial Garden roundel completes entrance

A new roundel has been installed at the centre of the Memorial Garden, marking the final piece in the refurbishment of the Memorial Field entrance. This beautifully crafted feature, funded by a private donation, enhances the garden's sense of place and provides a fitting welcome to this much-loved community space.



Play park improvements guided by community

Revitalising Seaman Avenue Play Park remains a long-term priority. A community survey helped shape the final design, aiming to create a safe, inclusive, and exciting space.

A preferred design has been selected which includes climbing towers, a trim trail, a climbing net, an accessible roundabout and in-ground trampoline, and farmyard springers all designed to increase the play value for children of all ages.

The Town Council is ready to bring this project to life subject to funding approval.

New benches support connection and wellbeing

The Town Council was proud to support Saxmundham Judo Club and charity Legend on the Bench by giving permission for a special new bench to be installed in the Memorial Field, featuring a QR code linking to mental health resources.

Following requests from residents, a new bench was also installed at the bus stop on Brook Farm Road and Heron Road.



Tackling litter together: community clean-ups and new solutions



The Town Council led two successful community litter picks as part of Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean. Around 15 residents joined councillors and staff over two days, collecting 24 bags of rubbish.

Meanwhile, our Station Adopters successfully lobbied for new lidded bins at the station to prevent litter from being blown or scavenged, helping keep this important gateway clean and welcoming.

Communication and Engagement

With nearly 5,000 residents, good communication and regular engagement are vital to ensuring the Town Council reflects local priorities and makes informed decisions. Residents are offered frequent opportunities to share their views through meetings, consultations, surveys, and informal conversations, while the Council stays connected with local news and community life. The Council also works to raise Saxmundham's profile, encourage civic pride, and promote parish activities across local, regional, and online platforms.



Public Meetings

All Council and committee meetings are open to the public, with dates published annually on our website. Agendas and supporting papers are issued three days in advance of meetings and minutes uploaded afterwards. Each meeting includes a public forum for residents to ask questions, raise issues, or suggest topics for discussion, and local organisations may also share updates.

Website

The Town Council's website (www.saxmundham.org) provides a trusted source of information, including:

- News and articles on local matters and initiatives
- Information on services, consultations, and Council activity
- An up-to-date calendar of events
- Visitor highlights such as walking trails, history, and directories

News and Updates

Each month the Town Council contributes to Saxmundham News, which is delivered free to most households and available online. Articles provide clear updates on Council priorities and often cover complex topics such as NSIPs and energy proposals, presented in plain language to support resident participation. They also highlight local initiatives, events, and achievements. As well as publishing frequent articles and blogs on saxmundham.org, the Council is also building an email mailing list to provide updates directly to residents' inboxes. Visit the saxmundham.org homepage to join.



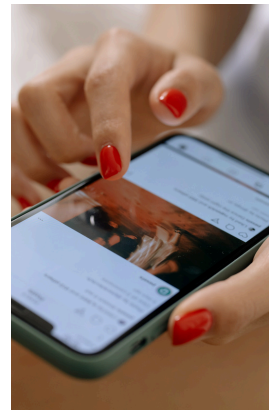
Public Consultations

Residents have increasing opportunities to influence local decisions through consultations on projects such as Empowering Nature, Sea Link, Lion Link, Seaman Avenue Playpark, and the Saxon Road Allotment Garden. Using surveys, meet-and-greets, and formal meetings, the Council ensures people can engage in ways that suit them best. It also shares District and County consultations, encouraging residents to make full use of their right to be heard.

Social Media

Social media provides a quick, accessible way to share news across a wide range of demographics. The Council's Facebook page is a well-established platform for local updates, event promotion, and highlighting community organisations. It also enables informal dialogue with residents and serves as a barometer of local priorities.

A new Instagram account broadens reach and showcases visual highlights of Saxmundham life.



Media and Public Relations

The Council works with press, radio, and television to share information, raise awareness of local issues, and represent Saxmundham positively. These channels extend the town's voice beyond the parish and highlight community achievements.

Noticeboards

Formal notices, agendas, and minutes are displayed outside the Town House and Market Hall, with community updates and event posters also shown at Fromus Square and the Memorial Field.

Diary Dates

- **Town Council Meetings:** Second Monday of each month at 7:00pm at the Market Hall.
- **Committee meetings:** At the Town House, various dates and times published online.
- **Markets:** Every Wednesday (all year round) and the second Saturday of each month (April-November) in Fromus Square.
- **Christmas Fayre:** Saturday 6 December at 3:00pm to 7:00pm throughout the town centre.

We welcome residents to share their concerns, ideas, or feedback.

Ways to keep in touch:



01728 604595



townclerk@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

Our Office hours are:

Monday - Thursday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

📍 The Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham, IP17 1BW

Town Council Finances

Budget and Council Tax

The Resources Committee is responsible for managing the Town Council's finances effectively and ensures that lawful financial practices are followed. Each year the Resources Committee prepares an annual budget for approval by the Town Council. Most of the budget is financed by the precept which is the Town Council element of Council Tax.

For the financial year 2025-2026, the precept is £278,037. The amount increased by 4.5% in recognition of the need to keep the figure as low as possible whilst still delivering essential services and community priorities.

The Town Council's element of Council Tax for a Band D property in 2025-2026 is £165.14 a year, just £3.18 a week which is an increase of 14p a week compared with last year.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge on developers administered by the District Council during the planning process. The purpose of CIL is to pay for infrastructure necessitated by new development.

A proportion of CIL goes to parish and town councils, this is normally 15%, but since July 2023 this rose to 25% for Saxmundham as it has an approved Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Council's CIL pot at the end of the financial year 2024-2025 was £46,833. A further £9,799 was added in April 2025. These funds will be considered for eligible projects detailed in the Town Council's Strategic Plan.

Governance and Audit

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 set out the responsibilities of all local councils in respect of their accounting and auditing procedures. Each year, the Town Council's financial accounts and statements are examined by an independent internal auditor appointed by the Town Council. For the year 2024-2025, this was the Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

The Town Council is also required to complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return which includes the findings of the Internal Auditor, together with the Governance Statements and Financial Statements. The Return, which is available on the Town Council's website, is submitted to an independent external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission for examination.

The Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet are unaudited at the time of printing but represent fairly the financial position of the Town Council as at 31 March 2025.

Budget 2025-2026

Income	
Precept	£278,037
Markets and Open Spaces	£2,403
Bank Interest	£4,000
Total	£284,440
Expenditure	
Staff Salaries and Related Costs	£128,634
Administration and Consultancy	£34,253
Community Grants	£34,500
Events	£16,700
Loan Repayments	£13,603
Communication and Promotion	£6,400
Maintenance	£3,550
Parks and Recreation	£26,100
Charitable Trusts' Contingency	£10,000
Transfer to General Reserves	£10,700
Total	£284,440

Annual Accounts 2024-2025

Income	
Precept	£254,050
Markets and Open Spaces	£3,230
Bank Interest	£5,280
Grants	£10,000
Community Infrastructure Levy	£1,046
Transfer to General Reserves	£4,699
Total	£278,305
Expenditure	
Staff Salaries and Related Costs	£114,873
Administration and Consultancy	£41,672
Community Grants	£50,776
Events	£14,954
Loan Repayments	£24,389
Communication and Promotion	£4,908
Maintenance	£3,042
Parks and Recreation	£18,347
Total	£272,961
Opening Balance	£81,880
Plus Income	£278,305
Less Expenditure	£272,961
Closing Balance	£87,224

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025

Current Assets	
Debtors	£160
VAT Control Account	£4,006
Prepayments	£3,589
Unity Trust Bank - Current	£9,762
Unity Trust Bank - Savings	£10,164
Cambridge Building Society	£85,000
CCLA - Public Sector Deposit Fund	£60,000
Total	£172,681
Current Liabilities	
Charitable Trusts' VAT	£2,083
Creditors	£9,892
Accruals	£350
Receipts in Advance	£1,000
Total	£13,325
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	£159,356
Represented By	
General Reserves	£87,222
Earmarked Reserves	£72,134
Closing Balance	£159,356

Community Grants 2024-2025

Market Hall Trust	£16,000
IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme	£7,500
Saxmundham Community Fest	£5,000
Young People Taking Action	£5,000
Citizens Advice Service	£2,000
The Art Station	£1,500
Saxmundham Museum	£1,250
Britten Pears Arts	£1,000
Communities Together	£500
Suffolk Accident Rescue Service	£500
Saxmundham Sports Bowls Club	£445
Alde Valley Family History Society	£250
Saxon Running Club	£250
East Suffolk Travel Association	£120
Saxmundham Judo Club	£100
French Dance Music Club	£61
	£41,476

Town Councillors



Cllr John Findlay – elected in May 2023

I have lived in Saxmundham since 2016. With extensive experience in local government at national level and 30 years' service as a magistrate. I am Chair of the Town Council and of the Charitable Trusts. I am particularly interested in developing the town centre and making the High Street more welcoming for pedestrians.

Contact: john.findlay@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Cllr Geraldine Barker – co-opted in Dec 2023

I have lived in Saxmundham for 28 years. After a career in finance, administration and health and safety, I now focus on community volunteering. As Vice-Chair of the Town Council and Lead on Energy Projects, I am passionate about the town's development for the benefit of everyone.

Contact: geraldine.barker@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Cllr Tim Lock – elected in May 2023

I have lived in Saxmundham for over 6 years. As Chair of the Amenities and Services Committee, I have led improvements to the Memorial Field. I am passionate about making Saxmundham a better place to live and work. I hope to encourage new businesses and create a welcoming café culture by reducing traffic in the town centre.

Contact: tim.lock@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Cllr Elizabeth Clark – elected in May 2023

I moved to Saxmundham over 20 years ago after holidaying in the area since childhood. Although I travelled widely for work, my heart always belonged to Saxmundham. I am Chair of the Resources Committee and became a Town Councillor to give back to the community that has always made me feel welcome.

Contact: elizabeth@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

**Cllr John Fisher – elected in May 2023**

I grew up above Fishers Ironmongers, my family's business, and went to school locally before studying in London and working abroad. I returned to Saxmundham in 1990 and joined the Town Council in 1994, serving now as Chair of the Planning and Development Control Committee. I have also been a District Councillor since 2015.

Contact: john.fisher@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

**Cllr Georgina Burns – co-opted in Mar 2025**

I have lived here since 2015 and absolutely love our town. I previously ran a retail business before founding and running a performing arts school. I hope my skills as a business owner and my dedication to working with children can help me make a positive contribution to our community.

Contact: georgina.burns@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

**Cllr Jeremy Smith – elected in May 2023**

An Essex/Suffolk boy, I have lived here since 2001. As Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, I want to help Saxmundham grow well, strengthen the town centre, and secure better services for all, drawing on over 30 years' local government experience.

Contact: jeremy.smith@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

**Cllr Laura Purina – co-opted in Mar 2025**

After 15 years living across East Suffolk, I adore the area and want to help make the grass even greener for us all. Coming from an immigrant Latvian working-class background, I bring strong values of resourcefulness and supporting one another. My diverse life experiences and broad interests help me take an inclusive, community-minded approach to everything I do.

Contact: laura.purina@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Cllr James Sandbach – elected in May 2023

I moved here in 2012. With its excellent transport links and vibrant community, I see real potential for Saxmundham to become a hub for local business and services. A Town Councillor since 2015, I am politically engaged and work in the voluntary sector as Director of a national charity.

Contact: james.sandbach@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Cllr Marianne Kiff – elected in May 2023

I moved from Essex to Saxmundham in 2020 and quickly felt at home. I became active in the community and now volunteer with the Community Fridge and Homestart Suffolk, supporting families in need. I am particularly interested in education, child welfare, and helping to strengthen local connections.

Contact: marianne.kiff@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Cllr David Humphreys – co-opted in Oct 2024

A regular visitor since the 1970s, I am now delighted to be settled here. After a career as a Headteacher, and Chief Executive of a national Schools Trust, I hope to use my passion for education and community life to help enhance the town. I currently serve as Chair of the Staffing Committee, where I ensure our staff structure is effective and well-supported.

Contact: david.humphries@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk



Councillor Vacancy:

Thinking about how you can give back to your community? Becoming a councillor is a great way to get involved and help shape the future of your town. It's your chance to make a real difference, support the things that matter most to residents, and play an active role in building a stronger community.

The Town Council has a vacancy - to find out more, email townclerk@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk

Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Following consultation with residents, the Town Council's Strategic Plan was formally adopted in May 2025. It sets out our clear vision and core priorities for the next five years.

Our Vision and Values

Serving Our Community: We are dedicated to making Saxmundham a place where everyone feels they belong, fostering inclusivity and a strong sense of community pride.

Openness and Transparency: We are committed to clear, accessible decision-making and open dialogue.

A Strong and Respected Voice: We will continue to champion Saxmundham's priorities and protect its unique character.

Delivering Quality and Value: We strive to provide high-quality services that represent good value for money and careful use of public funds.

Collaboration and Partnerships: We believe in working with local groups, authorities, and volunteers to achieve shared goals.

Creativity and Innovation: We celebrate our town's heritage and embrace new ideas to build a vibrant, future-ready community.

Our Strategic Themes

A Thriving and Prosperous Town

We will foster economic growth and support local businesses through better infrastructure, strong promotion, and a welcoming town centre environment. Our plans include creating a more pedestrian-friendly High Street, improving connectivity between the train station, Market Place, and Fromus Square, and making the town more accessible for everyone. By revitalising Fromus Green and encouraging a mix of independent shops, services, and cultural venues, we aim to increase footfall and make the town centre a more inviting destination.

We will form a collaborative stakeholder group to strengthen partnerships with local businesses, community organisations, and statutory authorities. Partnerships with supermarkets and other major retailers will be explored to encourage shoppers to explore beyond the main retail areas and support smaller, independent businesses. Investment in marketing Saxmundham's strengths will help build a strong local identity and attract visitors, new businesses, and future investment.



A Safe and Healthy Town

We are committed to improving health and wellbeing for all. We will advocate for high-quality healthcare services, improved community facilities, and access to well-maintained outdoor spaces that encourage active, healthy lifestyles.

Developing safe, accessible walking and cycling routes, including wider footpaths, improved signage, and safe connections to neighbouring parishes, will encourage active travel and help reduce car dependency.

We will support traffic-calming measures, promote road safety, and work with partners to address congestion in the town centre. Our approach to community safety will include enhanced street lighting, support for neighbourhood watch initiatives, and partnerships with emergency services to improve preparedness and resilience.

We want Saxmundham to be a town where people feel safe, connected, and supported at all stages of life.

An Attractive and Distinctive Town

Celebrating and protecting Saxmundham's unique character and heritage is central to our vision. We will restore and enhance historic buildings such as the Market Hall, transforming it into a vibrant cultural and community hub. Continuing improvements to the Gannon Rooms will further strengthen its role as a welcoming, multi-purpose space in Station Approach which is a key route connecting the train station with town centre.

We will work to ensure the new Garden Neighbourhood integrates seamlessly with the existing town, creating a cohesive and inclusive community that reflects Saxmundham's character and values.



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Investing in high-quality public spaces and supporting creative and cultural initiatives will help strengthen community identity and provide opportunities for social interaction and expression. We will continue to protect Conservation Area aesthetics, promote high-quality urban design, and turn potential challenges into opportunities that enhance community pride and resilience.

A Biodiverse and Sustainable Town

Environmental sustainability lies at the heart of our plan. We will protect and expand green spaces and waterways to support biodiversity and offer accessible nature-rich areas for recreation and relaxation.

Promoting environmentally responsible building practices and energy-efficient development will help ensure that future growth respects the environment. We will encourage sustainable transport choices through expanded cycling and walking infrastructure and the installation of electric vehicle charging points.

We are committed to improving waste reduction, circular economy practices, and encouraging sustainable event management.

Community involvement will be central to these efforts, with opportunities for residents, schools, and local groups to engage in conservation and local sustainability projects. Strengthening flood resilience, water management, and climate adaptation measures will ensure Saxmundham remains robust in the face of future environmental challenges.

Delivering the Plan

The Strategic Plan will be delivered through clear, measurable annual delivery plans that set priorities and allocate responsibilities. Committees and working groups will monitor progress, report transparently to the community, and adjust plans as needed to address new challenges and opportunities.

Community engagement remains at the heart of our approach. We will maintain regular communication through public consultations, newsletters, social media, and public meetings to keep residents informed and involved.

Funding will be secured through a mix of Town Council budgets, external grants, and collaboration with partners and volunteers to ensure projects are both achievable and sustainable. We will remain flexible and committed to continuous improvement, allowing us to adapt as Saxmundham grows and evolves while staying true to our core values and vision.

The Staffing Team



Town Clerk - Sharon Smith

The Town Council's full-time qualified Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer. Responsible for corporate governance, strategy, finance, personnel, energy projects, and operational oversight. Provides clerical support to the Town Council, Resources Committee, and Gannon Institute Trust.



Deputy Town Clerk - Lisa Hamon

Part time with responsibility for the public realm and the Market Hall. Provides clerical support to the Amenities and Services Committee, the Planning and Development Control Committee, and the Market Hall Trust. Deputises for the Town Clerk.



Community Officer - Jess Palmer

Part time with responsibility for strategic and operational delivery of events, communication using all forms of media and community liaison. Provides clerical support to the Civic and Community Committee.



Environment Coordinator - Amy Rayner

Part time with responsibility for improving the Town Council's open spaces and meeting its biodiversity duty. Leads the Green Team and supports the Blue Spaces Team volunteers.



Assistant Town Clerk - Michelle Allen

Part time with responsibility for finance administration, markets' administration and Market Hall bookings.



Maintenance Officer - Robert Ross

Part time with responsibility for health and safety and maintaining the Town Council's and Charitable Trusts' land and property portfolio.

