



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on Monday 12th January 2026
at the Fromus Centre, Street Farm Road, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

102/25TC Attendees

Cllr John Findlay (Chair)
Cllr Jeremy Smith
Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Laura Purina
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr Geraldine Barker

Apologies

Cllr Steve Peck - accepted
Cllr Tim Lock - accepted
Cllr Georgina Burns - accepted
Cllr James Sandbach – not accepted

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)
County Cllr Richard Smith
1 member of the public

103/25TC Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations from members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable interest, or non-registerable interest.

104/25TC Open Forum

- a) County Councillor, Richard Smith, provided an update to the Council on a range of matters.

He reported on a recent Cabinet meeting relating to Local Government Reorganisation and the County Council's response to the government's request for views on whether the local elections scheduled for May 2026 should be postponed for one year. This request relates to the significant workload involved in restructuring local government into either two or three unitary authorities, the final structure of which has yet to be determined and is expected to be announced towards the end of March. The government is seeking councils' views on whether they have the capacity to deliver this work alongside a full election cycle. It was noted that only the government has the power to decide whether elections will be postponed. Cllr Smith advised that an election could potentially divert up to three months of officer and member capacity, due to pre-election processes, member induction following the election, and the establishment of a new administration, and that this would be sub-optimal during a major reorganisation. Suffolk County Council has written to the government outlining its capacity constraints and advising that its ability to deliver the required work would be severely affected if elections proceed as planned. A response from government is expected in early February. It was also noted that mayoral elections have already been postponed for two years, and that a significant amount of preparatory work undertaken to date will now not be required for that period.

Cllr Smith also advised that the County Council's Scrutiny Committee is currently considering the draft

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budget for 2026/27. The proposed council tax increase is 4.99%, which represents the maximum increase permitted without the need for a referendum. He reported that the government has indicated that councils are expected to maximise local fundraising powers, with an implication that failure to do so could result in reduced government funding. Cllr Smith informed the Council that approximately 2% of the County Council's council tax income is allocated to social care, with the remainder funding all other services.

An update was provided on aspirations for a SEND school in Saxmundham, which Cllr Smith reported were progressing. He advised that detailed negotiations are underway with the Department for Education and that prospects are looking more optimistic. An additional £6 million has been allocated by government for SEND provision in Suffolk, although it is not yet clear how much of this funding will be directed to Saxmundham. Cllr Smith confirmed that he would do all he could to advocate for local provision. He also emphasised the importance of repurposing existing buildings on the former school site rather than constructing new buildings where possible.

Cllr Smith further advised that there is a proposal to develop a new children's home on the same site, to be jointly funded by Suffolk County Council and the Department for Education. At present, no further details are available. He stated that he is attending a further briefing later in the week and would seek to ensure that the Town Council is fully informed and consulted as details emerge. In response to question from Cllr Marianne Kiff, Cllr Smith confirmed that the proposed children's home is demand-led, noting an 11% increase in demand, rather than being driven solely by a shortage of adoptive or foster parents.

In response to a question from the Town Clerk regarding the County Council's new 20mph speed limit policy, Cllr Smith advised that he does not support the introduction of a 20mph limit in Saxmundham and confirmed that this remains his position while he is the County Councillor for the area.

In response to a further question from the Town Clerk regarding recent media reports suggesting that Suffolk is among the poorest-performing counties for pothole repairs, Cllr Smith advised that he considers the report to be factually incorrect. He confirmed that the County Council has spent all Department for Transport funding allocated to highways, in addition to £10 million from its own budget. He stated that expenditure has not been recorded accurately in the report and that the County Council is formally challenging the findings.

- b) District Cllr John Fisher advised that, unlike Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council operates on a different election cycle, with elections not due until 2027.

105/25TC Minutes

It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2025.

106/25TC Committee Minutes

The Council received the draft minutes from the:

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- a) Resources Committee meetings held on 2nd December 2025 and 6th January 2026.
- b) Staffing Committee meeting held on 28th November 2025.

107/25TC Casual Vacancy

- a) The Chair reported that one application had been received from an eligible candidate for the vacant Town Councillor seat. It was **unanimously resolved** to co-opt Joe McGarvey to fill the vacancy. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed and witnessed by the Town Clerk.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint Cllr Joe McGarvey as a member of the Resources Committee and the Amenities and Services Committee.

108/25TC Modified Neighbourhood Plan

- a) **The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group** summarised his written report, outlining the progress and process undertaken to modify the Neighbourhood Plan to date.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to:
 - i. Accept the recommendation from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to approve the Submission Version of the Modified Neighbourhood Plan for submission to East Suffolk Council.
 - ii. Approve the following supporting documents as required under Article 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, for submission to East Suffolk Council:
 - Consultation document, including the map of the designated area for the Modified Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Basic conditions statement.
 - A statement that, having regard to the Screening Opinion of East Suffolk Council dated October 2025, the Town Council considers that the Modified Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, and adopts the reasons contained in that Opinion for this determination.
 - A statement that, for the reasons set out in the statement, the Town Council as qualifying body does not consider that the modifications contained in the Modified Neighbourhood Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the existing Neighbourhood Plan, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion.
 - iii. Delegate to the Town Clerk:
 - to work with the relevant neighbourhood planning liaison officer of East Suffolk Council to ensure that all the documentation for submission is in place and in correct form.
 - in consultation with the Chair of the Council and of the Steering Group, to make any minor changes or improvements to the approved documents for submission.
 - to submit the finalised approved documentation, including the Submission Version of the Modified

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109/25TC South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group updated the Council on progress to date in relation to the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. He advised that the Steering Group has had sight of the latest draft masterplan framework and agreed that it broadly meets their expectations. Pigeon Investment Management is proposing to finalise the masterplan over the coming weeks, with the submission of an outline planning application to East Suffolk Council anticipated next month. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for the Planning and Development Control Committee to meet with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to consider the outline planning application.

110/25TC Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

Cllr Geraldine Barker presented her written report on the energy projects, which had been circulated in advance and is available on the Town Council's website.

Cllr Barker also reported that the statutory consultation for the LionLink project is due to commence tomorrow. She advised that this consultation provides an important opportunity for the Town Council to express concerns on behalf of residents and to suggest appropriate mitigation measures. The Council's role in the process is to remain aware of local issues and to ensure that both the developer and the Examination Authority are fully informed of the impacts on the town.

Cllr Barker also highlighted that the LionLink statutory consultation overlaps with the Sea Link examination, creating a cumulative and significant burden of work for residents, businesses and local councils. The Chair recorded a vote of thanks to Cllr Barker for her assiduous work in addressing the substantial volume and complexity of information associated with these projects.

Cllr Barker further updated the Council on recent correspondence with a resident regarding early-morning HGV movements through Church Street. She reported that the matter had been raised with East Suffolk Council, following liaison with Suffolk County Council Highways, who confirmed that HGVs associated with ScottishPower Renewables, the Sizewell C project and National Grid are subject to strict routing and time restrictions and should not be operating through Saxmundham at that time. ScottishPower Renewables was also contacted directly and advised that it was very unlikely that the vehicles in question were associated with their works. It was acknowledged that, while this does not lessen the disturbance experienced by residents, the Council will continue to raise concerns with the relevant authorities where appropriate.

Finally, Cllr Barker reported that she and the Town Clerk will be meeting with the Sizewell C Transport Coordinator to discuss arrangements for monitoring construction traffic, including consideration of baseline monitoring before the commencement of Sea Link and LionLink construction, should consent be granted.

111/25TC SEND School Campaign

It was **unanimously resolved** to formally support the Suffolk Coastal MP's campaign urging Suffolk County Council to proceed with the opening of the planned SEND school in Saxmundham.

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112/25TC Reports

The Council received a written report from the Town Clerk providing an update on staff activities.

113/25TC Finance

- a) The Council noted the schedule of payments and receipts together with the bank balances as at 31st December 2025.
- b) The Council received the budget versus actual income and expenditure report to 31st December 2025, including the year-end forecast.
- c) The Council received the forecasted general and earmarked reserve report to 31st March 2026.

114/25TC Policies

Following a further minor amendment, it was **unanimously resolved** to approve the Open Space Policy.

The Council considered ongoing instances of unauthorised parking on the Memorial Field. It was agreed that this matter be referred to the next meeting of the Amenities and Services Committee for further consideration.

115/25TC Next Meeting

The Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for 9th February 2026 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk

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