

SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL, SUDBURY, ON TUESDAY 9TH JANUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM**

Present: Mrs J Osborne - Mayor of Sudbury, in the CHAIR.

Mrs M Barrett	Miss A Owen
Mr N Bennett	Mr T Regester
Mr S Hall	Mr A Stohr
Ms E Murphy	Mr A Welsh
Mr A Osborne	Mr N Younger

In attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mr P Beer, Ms J Carter, Mr M Olyver and Mrs J Rawlinson.

Councillor Mrs P Berry-Kilby was absent, but no apologies had been received.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mr Osborne, Miss Owen and Mr Regester declared they were Babergh District Councillors.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

No declarations of gifts or hospitality were made.

4 **REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

No requests for dispensation had been received.

5 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the extraordinary council meeting held on 2nd January 2024 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

6 **ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The Town Clerk confirmed that the action from the previous meeting, a letter to Babergh District Councillor stating the Town Council’s position on free parking, had been sent.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7 REPORTS

a) County Councillors' Report

Both County Councillors, Ms Jessie Carter and Mr Philip Faircloth-Mutton had sent their apologies and the Town Clerk was asked to read out their reports. These are attached at pages 32 to 33.

Members raised the following points and asked for them to be emailed to the respective county councillors.

Flooding in Suffolk – With reference to the motion passed by the County Council on 7th December for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding. Ask Cllr Jessie Carter what will determine the new frequency for this work in Sudbury for areas that are regularly flooded such as outside the Christopher Centre and the traffic lights on the Croft?

Grit Bin for the top of Windermere Road – Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton had agreed to fund a new grit bin at the top of Windermere Road as this area was sheltered and prone to ice. The nearest grit bin was at the junction with Ashmore Rise which involved residents carrying the grit uphill for some distance which was beyond the capability of some older residents. This was a well-used short-cut and local residents were concerned for their safety. Ask Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton to raise this again with Suffolk Highways.

Street Lighting – Members thanked Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton for getting the extended lighting for the area around the defibrillator in the Springlands Estate and asked that he continue to argue for more lights to remain switched on all night now that the new LED lamps required so much less energy.

RESOLVED

That Councillors Ms Jessie Carter and Mr Philip Faircloth-Mutton thanked for their reports.

b) Babergh District Council (BDC) report by Mr Tim Regester.

The Babergh District Council cabinet had discussed varying car parking charges in Sudbury and the other main towns and villages in their area at their meeting earlier in the afternoon. They had decided to go forward with a consultation which did not include any option to retain the current 3-hours free parking. As a result of a petition against increasing the parking charges, which has over 1,000 votes, there would be a debate of the full Babergh District Council in February, but members were unclear whether this would allow a majority of the full Babergh District Council to block an increase agreed by the cabinet. District Councillors were asked to look at their constitution and to answer this question.

The refurbished public toilets in Gaol Lane had officially been reopened on 5th January and this was very welcome.

Babergh District Council had agreed higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, following the introduction of new government rules. This could return more properties for use by local people and increase revenue for the council.

Members raised the success of the Christmas boxes handed out at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre, many of which had been funded by District Councillors A Owen and T Register through their locality funds.

The grit bin on the junction of Waldingfield Road and Park Road was currently propping up the road sign for Park Road. Over the years this grit bin had been moved from the patch of grass, that is believed to be public land, in front of 84 Waldingfield Road, where it can be seen on Google Maps as far back as April 2009. The road sign should be repaired so that it did not need to be supported by the bin. District Councillor A Osborne was asked to chase the repair to the road sign through the District Council officers. Once this was done, the Community Wardens could move the grit bin back into the correct position.

The charge by Babergh District Council for emptying the dog and litter bins owned by the Town Council had been increased by nearly 60% for the next year and Babergh District Council had stated that they wished to make this service cost neutral in the future. This would involve another 150% increase and the Town Council would need to make provision for this increase or reduce the number of bins. District Councillor T Register was asked to find out how soon this further increase was planned in future budgets.

The question of how many empty homes there were in Sudbury had been asked before but not answered by Babergh District Council. A few years ago Babergh District Council had offered grants to refurbish empty homes and were these still available? District Councillor J Carter was asked to find out the answers as housing was her portfolio. Bereaved relatives were granted some council tax relief for a period after the death of the owner if it was going through probate.

Members asked about the Town Clerk's meeting with Mark Emms, the Director of Operations and Regulatory Services at Babergh District Council who was responsible for the car parking policy. The Town Clerk confirmed that they had met on 3rd January to discuss the proposed changes in parking arrangements. As this meeting took place the day after the Town Council's Extraordinary meeting, the Town Clerk was able to relay the results and confirm that the Town Council had resolved that changing the current 3-hours free parking was non-negotiable.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Mr T Register be thanked for his report.

c) Policing report

No police office was available, but the Town Clerk reported back on a meeting that he had had with the Locality Inspector the previous week. Policing the town over the Christmas period had gone well and the police were reassured that funding for the town's CCTV system remained in the latest version of the draft budget. The police were interested in the Town Council's Community Wardens remaining in the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme and wished to discuss further training opportunities for them.

The Mayor reminded members that she and the Town Clerk had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Tim Passmore, on 7th December to enquire about progress with the automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) trial in tracking criminal movement through

Sudbury. It was hoped that he would reply in the near future. Although the original proposal had been for a trial in the Sudbury area, there were clear benefits for the whole of Babergh and Suffolk.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

- d) Mayor's Announcements – A list of the Mayor's announcements is at pages 34 and 35.

RESOLVED

That the Mayor be thanked for her report.

- e) Public Forum – No members of the public were in attendance at this meeting but the Mayor said how pleased she had been by the excellent turn-out by members of the public for the extraordinary meeting the previous week.

8 TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

Planning, Development & Highways Committees on 20th November, 4th December, 18th December and 2nd January – The Chairman advised that the committee had recommended refusal of an application for a new building on the corner of Church Street and Friars Street on the same grounds as when this application had been first considered on 6th November 2023. They had also recommended refusal for an additional block of flats at Belle Vue Place on the grounds that the overdevelopment of the site would have a negative impact on local amenity. They had recommended approval of the new garden centre building at Perrywoods and for the 3G artificial pitch at AFC Sudbury but were still concerned about the potential environmental pollution from 'rubber crumb' infill.

They had discussed concerns raised by the Sudbury Society over what might now happen to Belle Vue House now that the developer had put it back on the market.

The enforcement team at Babergh District Council had responded to reports from the Town Council about inappropriate shop and business signage in Sudbury and some of these had been resolved.

It was RESOLVED to note these minutes.

Leisure and Environment on the 28th November – The Chairman advised members that Mel Edwards had agreed to continue to run the monthly bingo sessions as a volunteer and would make up the time on other tasks.

It was RESOLVED to note the minutes.

Finance Committees on the 5th December and 2nd January – The Chairman advised that the committee had considered the draft budget at both meetings and that this would come forward for approval under item 9. The police locality inspector had briefed the committee

on the value of the town CCTV system and this had been included in the draft budget with a suitable increase for inflation.

The committee had also revised the grant aid policy so that there would be only a single distribution of grants each year. Bids would need to be received by the end of June for consideration by the Finance Committee in September. In exceptional cases, especially where the grant was required before September, grants may be considered outside the normal schedule at the discretion of the Finance Committee.

It was RESOLVED to note the minutes.

Policy and Resources on the 21st November – The Chairman advised that the committee had reviewed the delegation arrangements in accordance with Standing Orders and drafted criteria to define when it was appropriate to refer a final decision to full council rather than delegate to the committee. The final decision will rest with full council for;

- Significant changes in the town council's policies.
- The final version of the town council's business plan.
- Commenting on the district council's local plan.
- The town council's position on parking policy in Sudbury.
- The town council's position on the vision for Sudbury.

New terms of reference (TORs) would need to be drafted and approved for all committees in due course.

It was RESOLVED to note the minutes.

Human Resources on the 29th November – This would be discussed under Private and Confidential at the end of the meeting.

9. BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-2025

The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Councillor Bennett, advised members that over the previous few months, the committee had worked with the Town Clerk and the RFO to build the budget for FY2024/2025. A copy of the proposed budget is shown at minute page 36 and shows a net expenditure of £875,633.38, which took into account the national increases in staff pay scales.

Members considered the draft Budget and were advised that, in order to keep the increase in precept as low as possible, it would be necessary to allocate £54,995.38 from the General Reserves.

It was proposed that the precept for FY2024/2025 be set at £820,638. This would represent an increase of 5.00%, or £8.68 over the year on a Band D property.

RESOLVED

That a net budget of £875,633.38 for Financial Year 2024/2025 be adopted, as recommended by the Finance Committee.

10. TO SET THE PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-2025

Following the approval of the budget in item 9, members were requested to approve the proposed precept of £820,638 for FY2024/25.

RESOLVED

That the Precept for Financial Year 2024/2025 be set at £820,638.

11. EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £21,000 PER ANNUM ON A NEW ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CONTRACT

Members noted that the existing 5-year electricity contract would finish at the end of March. They were requested to consider the most appropriate length for a new electricity contract and approve expenditure of up to £21,000 per annum.

The budget approved under item 9 had allocated £20,000 per annum for electricity and the cheapest deals available were;

- 12 months £19,878 per annum
- 24 months £20,010 per annum
- 36 months £20,250 per annum

There was less than £400 difference between these options but members were asked to consider whether it would be safer to select a longer contract to lock-in the price for more than one year. Alternatively, if electricity prices were likely to fall, a 12-month contract would be better value. Members agreed that the middle ground of a 24-month contract would offer the best protection from short-term fluctuations in the market, but allow the council to take advantage of potentially lower prices in 2 years' time.

RESOLVED

That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.133, members approve expenditure of up to £20,010 excluding VAT per annum for a new electricity supply contract for 2 years.

12. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S RESPONSE TO A CHALLENGE CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk explained that the external auditor's report on the 2022/23 AGAR and the notice of completion of audit were required to be published on the Town Council's website by 30th September each year. The RFO had sent these to the appropriate member of staff with a request to publish them in good time, but no action had been taken. A member of the public had complained to the external auditor and they had informed the Council that it would have to respond 'No' to Assertion 4 on the 2023/24 AGAR, as a result of this failure to comply with Regulations in accordance with paragraph 1.29 of the Practitioners' Guide.

RESOLVED

JFO

That the external auditor’s correspondence be noted and that Assertion 4 on the 2023/24 AGAR be answered ‘No’.

12. DATE FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Town Clerk reminded members that the annual town meeting must be held between 1st March and 1st June each year. He asked members which day of the week had proved to be most effective in previous years for attracting members of the public to attend.

Members agreed that having an interesting subject for debate or a well-known speaker was the most important factor on attracting a large audience and the most popular day was Friday.

RESOLVED

That the annual town meeting should be held on a Friday in March before the local schools break up for the Easter holidays. The possible dates were 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd of March 2024.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

RESOLVED

That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified in items 8 and 14 as the publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

8 HR COMMITTEE MINUTES (CONTINUED) See CONFIDENTIAL report on page 37.

14. UPDATE FROM BELLE VUE WG (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Mayor reminded members that the Belle Vue Working Group that had been scheduled for December had been postponed and would now take place on 11th January 2024. She hoped that this next meeting would offer an opportunity for all sides to agree on a public position so that this matter would not need to continue to be discussed in private.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8:50pm.

J.F.Osl
Chairman.....

Report for January 2024 to Sudbury Town Council - From Jessie Carter (SCC Councillor)

Date: 08/01/2024

Email: jessie.carter@suffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 07955 434411

Free Water Refill:

The 'Free Water Refill Station' has now been installed on Goal Lane, this was mostly funded by my SCC Locality budget, not only is there an environmental benefit to having the station but it also needs that those in the town centre have 24-hour access to free, clean water.

ANPR – Newton Road:

As I believe the ANPR that was situation along ANPR took faulty readings I have asked for it to come back, thank you to everyone who contacted me regarding this.

Flooding in Suffolk:

Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents' homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to help prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county.

Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant:

As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures.

Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

SCC Proposed 2024/25 Budget Plan:

On the 3rd of January 2024 SCC published their budget proposal for the financial year 2024/2025

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities and home to school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The Budget Proposals will be discussed at the council's Scrutiny Committee and then presented at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January. At the Full Council meeting on 15 February, the proposals will be debated, with a vote taking place on the budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the two-year budget proposals.

Sudbury Town Council January 2024 - County Council Report by Phillip Faircloth-Mutton (SCC Councillor)

Common Sense Prevails with Springlands Street Lighting

Following the installation of a new defibrillator between First and Second Avenues, I fought hard and have succeeded in securing an opt out from the wider County Lighting policy so that the nearby lamp will now be switched on through the entirety of the night time rather than being switched off at 23:30.

This is the first time such an opt out has been secured and it is hoped this will be extended for similar schemes elsewhere in the county, including a second location on the Springlands estate.

Proposed County Council Share of Council Tax Increase

The Administration will propose that the County Council's 2024/25 budget include a 2.99% increase in the base rate and 2.00% in the Adult Social Care Precept. This equates to respective increases of:

- Band B: £1.12 a week
- Band D: £1.43 a week.

The proposed increase is a difficult one and not taken lightly, however we are mandated by law to provide care for our most vulnerable residents which continues to escalate in cost across the country.

Minded to be innovative, of the £72.6 million additional funding for vulnerable people's services, over £30.6 million of this will come from continued transformative means of compare such as the onward roll out of the successful Cassius system.

The County Council will meet on 15 February to vote on the proposal.

Keep Parking Free

Although not the responsibility of the County Council, I was delighted to hear the Town Council has unanimously backed Babergh District Councillor Paul Clover's Petition to keep parking free for three hours across Hadleigh, Lavenham and Sudbury. This is the most efficient subsidy for our High Street and promotes local enterprise and seasonal eating from our businesses which our supplied locally.

I continue to support free parking for residents and promoted the petition on the Springlands Facebook page, along with those in neighbouring villages over Christmas. I will call upon the Parish Councils within my division to back our efforts at their upcoming meetings this month. Forward together!

Mayor's Announcements – Sudbury Town Council January 2024

As referred to in my November announcements I have been very busy attending carol services and other events. It always gives me great satisfaction and pleasure in being part of these events. So much planning and hard work goes into making these events a success and well done to all those involved.

During the last few months, I attended the St John Cadets meeting session and gave a talk on being Mayor. There were some very interesting questions. Great to see so many young enthusiastic and budding nurses, doctors, and paramedics. They have many members and more on a waiting list, but the problem is suitable accommodation. Their current accommodation is now too small, and they are looking for other premises to enable them to train more young people.

The Halstead Torchlight Procession is always a cold, but pleasant evening and the one held in December was no exception.

On the 23rd of November I visited St. Gregories Church who hosted Christmas Through the Keyhole. The Church was set up in various sections, including Joseph's workshop etc. The artistic creation was amazing, and I know that the school children who visited the church really enjoyed themselves.

On the 26th November I attended the Sudbury Symphony Orchestra Autumn Concert. It was held in the church in Lavenham and was full to the beams. Wow what a wonderful evening of fantastic music. Thank you to all involved for a lovely evening.

Also, in November I attended the Christopher Centre AGM. The work they do is amazing, and I am so pleased to have them as one of my charities.

On the 24th November I was privileged to open the newly renovated Waitrose. It is very encouraging that Waitrose have made this commitment to Sudbury and a pledge to elevate our towns heart and soul.

In December I attended the Sudbury Choral Society for an evening of beautiful music and singing. It was a wonderful evening. They practice so hard to ensure that the evening is a success so well done to all. I also attended the library for a morning of carols with the Choral Society.

I was also invited to meet with the Chief Executive of Hourglass. Like myself I expect many of you will not be aware of this voluntary organisation. Although based in Sudbury they work with people nationally. Hourglass provides a specialist community response service for older people experiencing physical, mental, and financial abuse. We had a very interesting and mind provoking discussion.

As Mayor I was privileged to do the switching on of the Christmas lights. It was brilliant to see the town so busy. I was pleased to have Mel Edwards assist me with the switch on as she gives up so much of her free time to provide the Town Council Food Bank. An event like this takes a great deal of planning and organising and I would like to give a big thank you to Teresa Elford and all the other officers who made this evening possible.

On Christmas Eve I visited our Care Homes in Sudbury. A very rewarding and emotional time and had a great time talking to staff and residents.

On Christmas Day I attended the Town Hall to give out vouchers to our elderly residents as part of a long-standing tradition that goes back to 1668.

Last week on a very windy and wet morning, together with our Town Centre Manager, we presented the winners of the Christmas Window Display and the Mayors winning Choice. Well done to all those

who entered. I believe that entries were higher than other years and the standard was extremely high.

On Friday of last week, I was present for the official opening of the Goal Lane toilets. After waiting many years, it is great to have this brilliant facility in our town.

Approved Sudbury Town Council Budget for Financial Year 2024 – 2025.

Final Sudbury Town Council Budget						
CC	Cost Centre Name	Budget 2024/2025	Actual 2023-24 Mid-Year - month 8	Budget 2023-24	Actual 2022-23	Actual 2021-22
101	Corporate Management	(820,638.00)	(806,788.00)	(785,000.00)	(731,000.00)	(691,394.00)
102	Democratic Representation and Management	8,000.00	5,366.00	6,000.00	650.00	(1,814.00)
103	Grants - General Power of Competence	45,000.00	47,016.00	45,000.00	50,000.00	37,439.00
109	Central Services and Administration	270,855.60	174,912.40	258,493.58	250,540.31	204,204.00
199	Capital Projects	-	-	-	70,000.00	30,000.00
201	Markets	(15,909.09)	(28,687.76)	(16,661.48)	(21,253.67)	(34,237.00)
204	Street Fairs	1,533.40	(2,195.00)	1,554.00	1,837.75	(244.00)
205	Council Public Events	18,559.78	12,582.00	16,608.70	30,654.38	11,158.00
206	Town Economy	76,789.79	32,599.00	69,598.63	74,315.32	42,844.00
211	Town Hall Building	119,660.87	39,284.00	103,787.89	81,308.40	69,696.00
212	Public Clocks	2,500.00	-	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,158.00
213	Street Wardens	4,392.80	(6,433.00)	3,339.08	2,768.24	(2,140.00)
221	Allotments	(2.45)	(853.00)	-	380.52	(1,362.00)
239	Open Spaces and Closed Churchyards	41,595.73	8,415.00	34,504.17	23,317.50	17,111.00
241	Cemetery	65,546.02	(291.00)	69,825.87	41,467.50	34,888.00
243	War Memorial, Aelftrun and Gainsborough Statues	1,800.00	368.00	1,817.00	500.00	-
250	Information Centre	40,613.97	22,597.00	37,564.70	31,016.42	7,645.00
252	Christmas Lights	19,633.00	4,743.00	18,405.00	16,450.00	18,674.00
261	Museum	800.00	202.00	700.00	700.00	-
301	Street Lighting	12,000.00	-	11,962.00	4,620.00	4,350.00
302	Street Furniture	2,040.00	524.00	1,790.00	1,550.00	(100.00)
311	Highways	(1,850.00)	(1,586.00)	(1,550.00)	(1,200.00)	(1,400.00)
312	Footpaths	3,800.00	-	3,769.00	1,350.00	-
321	Floral Displays and Flower Beds Maintenance	24,113.56	15,041.00	22,406.14	21,568.30	20,043.00
341	Community Wardens	105,195.80	67,677.00	99,489.04	74,511.46	68,094.00
499	Lotteries, Bingo and Raffles	(12.00)	(83.00)	(12.00)	(672.00)	-
500	Delphi Club	-	-	-	-	2,774.00
502	Advice Centre	-	-	-	-	-
901	Civic Activities	28,976.60	16,034.00	27,291.23	27,117.14	18,959.00
Financial results		54,995.38	(399,556.36)	33,182.55	54,997.57	(142,654.00)
Budget support from General Reserves		(54,995.38)		(33,182.55)	(20,300.00)	-
Other support from General Reserve		-		-	(34,697.57)	-
Grants		-		-	-	(7,114.00)
Precept		(820,638.00)		(785,000.00)	(734,000.00)	(691,100.00)
Total Income		(875,633.38)	-	(818,182.55)	(788,997.57)	(698,214.00)
Financial results including precept and grants		(820,638.00)	(399,556.36)	(785,000.00)	(734,000.00)	(840,868.00)
CT base (-0.4% on last year)		4,500.52		4,520.45	4,437.62	4,470.46
Band D		(182.34)		(173.66)	(165.40)	(154.59)
Band D increase		5.00%				

