

SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 14TH JANUARY 2025 AT 7.00PM**

Present: Miss A Owen – Mayor of Sudbury, in the CHAIR
Mrs M Barrett Ms E Murphy
Mr P Beer Mr A Osborne
Mr N Bennett Mrs J Osborne
Mr K Graham Mr T Regester
Mr S Hall Mr A Stohr
Mr J Jeagar Mr A Welsh

In attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk
Mr D Deeks – Administration Manager and RFO
Ms L Smith – Babergh District Councillor
Mr P Faircloth-Mutton – Suffolk County Councillor

1. APOLOGIES AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms J Carter and Mr N Younger.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillors Mr P Beer, Mr A Osborne, Miss A Owen and Mr T Regester declared that they were also Babergh District Councillors.

Councillors Mr P Beer declared that he was also a Suffolk County Councillor.

Councillors Mr P Beer declared that he was also a Great Cornard Parish Councillor.

3. DECLARATIONS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

No declarations of gifts or hospitality were received.

4. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

No requests for dispensations had been received.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 12th November 2024 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

6. TO REVIEW THE ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

RESOLVED

The Town Clerk confirmed that the actions had been completed.

7. REPORTS

a) County Councillor's Reports – Both County Councillors had sent in their reports prior to the meeting, which are included at pages 37 to 39. The following points were raised.

- Sudbury in Bloom roundabout signage – Cllr Faircloth-Mutton confirmed that he was expecting a proposal for a solution from Suffolk Highways. This would be reviewed by SCC Cllrs Carter and Faircloth-Mutton and then briefed to Sudbury in Bloom.
- Cllr Faircloth-Mutton confirmed that SCC intended maintain the current free on-street parking in Sudbury, including Market Hill, Acton Square and North Street.

RESOLVED

That County Councillors Ms J Carter and Mr P Faircloth-Mutton be thanked for their reports.

b) Babergh District Council (BDC) Report – District Councillor Mr T Regester had sent in his report prior to the meeting, which is included at pages 40 to 42. The following points were raised;

- Work was still in progress to establish a scheme for Roys customers to get a refund of their parking charges for visits of up to 2 hours.
- Did BDC have structural engineer's reports on the Kingfisher Leisure centre for the period before the roof section came loose?
- What additional parking charges were made by the parking app providers?
- What was the current position with the 48 North Street enforcement action?
- How could parents at St Joseph's School get a short-term parking permit to drop-off and pick-up children? Cllr Regester confirmed that the school had permits to issue to parents.
- Cllr S Hall declared that he had a personal vested interest in residents' parking and then asked the following 3 questions.
 - Did BDC consult directly with local residents on the changes to parking charges?
 - Did BDC consider the overnight parking permits to be adequate?
 - Did BDC consider that they had properly notified the public of the changes?
- How would those attending medical and dental appointments be able to afford to park?

RESOLVED

That District Councillor Mr T Regester be thanked for his report.

c) Policing report – Sgt Olly Williams and PC John Moore, from the Community Police Team for Sudbury, attended the meeting to give a verbal report on current policing issues.

RESOLVED

That Sgt Olly Williams and PC John Moore be thanked for their report.

d) Mayor's Announcements

- There were no Mayor's announcements.

e) Public Forum – Three members of the public asked questions.

- The first member of the public raised the same issue that he had spoken about at the previous meeting. He would not accept that the Town Council officers had given him full

and honest replies to his enquiries about a previous employment issue. The Town Clerk and the Administration Manager reminded him that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) had investigated his concerns and concluded that the Town Council had complied with data protection regulations. There was nothing more that could be provided.

- The second member of the public explained the work by the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce to gather data on the economic impact of parking charges. The Chamber intended to produce a report after a year to show the changes.
- The third member of the public raised his concern with the governance of the council. After he had listed a number of different issues, the Town Clerk asked him to put these in an email so that they could be considered in detail.
- The fourth member of the public expressed his concern over the proposed change of the start time for full council meetings. He felt that the current 7:00pm start time allowed those working away from Sudbury to return in time to attend.

The Mayor decided to move item 11 forward as the team from Dobson Grey had been waiting to give their presentation.

Councillors Mr P Beer and Mr A Osborne made late declarations that they were both on the Planning Committee at Babergh District Councillor.

11. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE PROPOSED ORMISTON SUDBURY ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT

The Managing Director of Dobson Grey, Keri Dobson, explained the plans for the redevelopment of Ormiston Academy. She was assisted by Kieran Healy, the project manager from the Department for Education. They explained that the specifications for the sports facilities were dictated by the sports curriculum. Use by the local community out of hours would have to be governed by a separate agreement with the Ormiston Academy Trust and this could be one of the planning conditions set by the district council.

RESOLVED

To note the plans for the new Ormiston Academy.

8. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

Planning, Development & Highways Committees on 18th November 2024, 2nd and 16th December 2024 and 13th January 2025 – The Chairman recommended noting the minutes

It was RESOLVED to note the minutes.

Finance Committees on 3rd December 2024 and 7th January 2025– The Chairman recommended noting the minutes.

It was RESOLVED to note the minutes.

Leisure and Environment Committee on 26th November – The Chairman recommended noting the minutes.

It was RESOLVED to note the minutes.

9. TO APPROVE THE BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026

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 FY2025/2026. The recommended budget had a net expenditure of £906,468, which took into account the increase in staff costs due to changes in employer national insurance.

Members considered the draft Budget and were advised that, in order to keep the increase in precept at 2%, it would be necessary to allocate £48,068 from the General Reserves. This should be covered by an anticipated underspent in the current financial year of about £69,000, with the balance allocated to the general reserve.

Therefore, it was proposed that the precept for FY2025/2026 be set at £858,400. This would represent an increase of 2.00%, or £3.65 over the year on a Band D property.

There was a proposal to amend the draft budget that had been recommended by the Finance Committee by increasing the funding allocated to grants from £45,000 to £50,000 and taking the additional funding from the general reserve. This would bring the net expenditure up to £911,468 and the allocation from the general reserve up to £53,068.

RESOLVED

To increase the budget allocation to grants from £45,000 to £50,000

That a net budget of £911,468 for Financial Year 2025/2026 be adopted as shown on page 43.

To extend the meeting by 30 minutes so that it could continue until 9:30pm.

10. TO SET THE PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026

Following the approval of the budget in item 9, members were requested to approve the proposed precept of £858,400 for FY2025/26, with an allocation of £53,068 from the general reserve.

RESOLVED

That the Precept for Financial Year 2025/2026 be set at £858,400

That £53,068 be allocated from the general reserve to balance the budget.

12. TO APPOINT 3 MEMBERS TO ATTEND A LOCAL POLICE BRIEFING

RESOLVED

To request that 4 members be allowed to attend the local police briefing, with the following members being appointed;

- Cllr A Owen (The Mayor)
- Cllr K Graham
- Cllr E Murphy
- Cllr A Osborne

13. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE RENOVATION AND REPAIR OF THE TOWN HALL

The Town Clerk informed members that the heating engineers had visited earlier that day and should soon submit detailed options for future heating systems. They had been asked to put forward options for both a gas fired heating system and an air-source heat pump system, so that members could consider the pros and cons of each. This should allow the full council to select a new heating system in early spring 2025 and to let a contract for installation in late spring or early summer. The new heating system should be ready for the start of cooler weather in autumn 2025.

RESOLVED

To note the timescale for the new heating system.

14. TO CHANGE THE START TIME FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS TO 6.30PM

Member debated the benefits of a 6:30pm or a 7:00pm start time for full council meetings.

RESOLVED

Not to change the start time of ordinary full council meetings, which remains at 7:00pm.

15. TO AUTHORISE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £20,000 EXCLUDING VAT FOR THE FABRICATION AND INSTALLATION OF THE NEW GATEWAY SIGNAGE FOR SUDBURY, NOTING THAT THE PROJECT IS FULLY FUNDED FROM THE SHARED PROSPERITY FUNDING.

RESOLVED

That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.144, members approved the expenditure of up to £20,000 excluding VAT for the fabrication and installation of the new gateway signage for Sudbury, noting that the project is fully funded from the shared prosperity funding.

RESOLVED

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

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 item 16 as the publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

16 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ANY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS.

See CONFIDENTIAL Annex A **page 44**.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 9:45pm.

Chairman

**Report for January 2025 to Sudbury Town Council -
From Jessie Carter (SCC Councillor)**

Date: 14/01/2025

Email: jessie.carter@suffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 07955 434411

Extraordinary Council and Cabinet Meeting – 09.01.2025 – Fast Track for Devolution

On January 9th, Suffolk County Council (SCC) held an extraordinary council and cabinet meeting to discuss a proposal to fast-track Suffolk's inclusion in the government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). If approved, this would result in the creation of a directly elected Mayor, potentially overseeing both Suffolk and Norfolk, and the replacement of current council structures with a streamlined unitary council.

The motion was approved by the full council and received unanimous support during the subsequent cabinet meeting.

SCC has now formally written to the government, expressing its intention to be prioritized for devolution and local government reorganization. A decision is anticipated by Government by the end of the month.

Motions Passed - December Full Council

At Council on Thursday 12 December, three motions were passed by councillors. The first motion was opposing government's changes to Agricultural Property Relief, which mean that from April 2026, Suffolk farmers will only have relief from inheritance tax for up to £1m of combined agricultural and business property. Above this £1m, they will have to pay inheritance tax at half the usual level (20% rather than the usual 40%). The change has inspired protests since it was announced by the government, including farmers driving hundreds of tractors into Westminster and in Suffolk, along the A14 from Ipswich to Felixstowe at 5mph.

The second motion also related to solar farms, specifically the need to prioritise rooftop solar over solar farms and lobby for changes to planning so that new housing and commercial developments have solar panels, and priority is given to retrofitting solar to buildings or brownfield sites over new solar farms which take good quality farmland out of food production. For example, in France solar panels are often mounted on canopies above car parks to maximise space. As well as contributing to the country's net zero targets, solar panels could significantly reduce energy bills for Suffolk schools and libraries.

The final motion was on knife crime and proposed that a knife crime action plan for Ipswich be discussed at the next meeting of the Safer, Stronger Communities Board in March 2025.

Suffolk Economic Strategy

At Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December, a new economic strategy was tabled which followed the creation of the Suffolk Business Board earlier in 2024. The Board produced a strategy for the county for the next five years, listing the areas which are most important to the Suffolk economy, including clean energy, agriculture, tourism, and ports and logistics. It

also outlined how the Board hopes that digital innovation, AI and robotics can help drive improvements and growth in these areas, along with plans to support startups, provide business mentoring and skills projects with young people. The plan was approved by the council's Cabinet, and the Suffolk Business Board will now finalise how it plans to deliver the strategy and will report back to Cabinet every year on their progress.

Children's Services Improvement Plans

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 5 December to review the plan for improvement following the Ofsted inspection of the council's children's social care provision earlier in the year. The Ofsted report was published in August 2024 and the council learned it had dropped two grades, from being rated Outstanding in 2019 its current grade of Requires Improvement. The council had to produce an action plan for improvement which it has submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education. The Cabinet member for children's services and officers from the department attended the committee meeting to outline the actions they have taken so far, including recruitment of extra staff members to drive improvement, and arranging peer reviews with other councils. There will also be a new Strengthening Services for Children and Families Board, which will chaired by the council's Chief Executive, Nicola Beach. The council particularly needs to improve services for care leavers and consistency of practice and quality assurance - this means reviewing interactions with children and families to make sure the council is doing the best it can to help them. This work is separate to the council's improvement work for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which is subject to a separate inspection process by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

DRAFT

County Councillor's Report to Sudbury Town Council Meeting 13 January 2025

A happy new year to you! I hope you enjoyed some well earned rest over Christmas after a busy year for the village.

Suffolk Seeks to Embark on Fast-track Devolution Route

The County Council was convened for an extraordinary meeting on Thursday 9 January.

Following an invitation from ministers, Suffolk County Council agreed to recommend Suffolk for inclusion in the government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), which would see the creation of a directly elected Mayor (likely covering Suffolk and Norfolk) and the replacement of existing council structures with a streamlined unitary council being set up.

If successful, this would secure new funding for integrated public transport systems and road networks, as well as greater local control over tax receipts to best serve our residents' aspirations and needs.

This was subsequently ratified by the Cabinet.

If successful, it is possible that the scheduled elections for the County Council on 1 May could be delayed, as has been normal procedure in other counties such as Buckinghamshire, North Yorkshire and Somerset. This will ensure an orderly formation of a business case for consideration by the Government in the autumn.

Any decision on the future timing of elections will be a decision for the Minister of Local Government and English Devolution.

I will be seeking the Town Council's opinion on what form a future unitary system of government should be later in the year.

Draft Budget Proposed to Protect Suffolk Frontline Services

The administration is to recommend a 2.99% increase in Suffolk County Council's tax precept and 2.00% for Adult Social Care for 2025-26. This will ensure that the authority's statutory responsibilities, such as care for our older and younger residents and education can be maintained and necessary investment in improving our SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) provision. Furthermore, our highways programmes such as resurfacing and flood prevention will continue.

Subsequently, no significant changes will be made to the Council's service offering in the upcoming tax year.

Sudbury in Bloom Signage

As promised at November's Town Council meeting, I convened a meeting held in the Mayor's Parlour between Sudbury in Bloom and Suffolk Highways to agree a pathway forward whereby Sudbury in Bloom's signage can be returned to the various roundabouts they maintain across Sudbury.

The Highways Team will report back to Cllr Carter, Cllr West (Cabinet Member for Operational Highways) and I later this week with a proposed solution. If we are content with this, it will be communicated to Sudbury in Bloom. I will keep the Town Council abreast of this.

Philip Faircloth-Mutton
January 2025

Babergh District Council report for Sudbury Town Council full council on 14th January 2025 by Councillor Tim Regester

Devolution

The Government published its White Paper on Devolution on 16 th December. Devolution has been Labour policy for years so that wasn't a surprise. What was a surprise was the addition of Local Government Reform which had not been included in its election manifesto.

This is going to have far-reaching implications for every council and community in Suffolk. It is critically important that we have a strong system of local government that can represent the interests of our communities, businesses, and residents.

The Government wants every region of England to have a combined authority led by a directly elected mayor and will give them powers over housing, transport, education, and employment to help drive economic growth. County and district councils will be abolished and replaced by unitary councils who will take on all their responsibilities. The Government thinks bigger is always better and believes these councils should be responsible for 500,000 people. Suffolk has a population of over 768,000.

The Minister responsible for devolution has said it will be unacceptable for regions not to have a mayor and wants larger areas to be governed by the mayor. So, Suffolk and Norfolk will probably be bought together .

The Government invited areas to apply by last Friday, 10 January to be part of its Devolution Priority Programme – a fast-track process with additional support, which would see Mayors for selected regions elected in May 2026.

Suffolk County Council met on Thursday and decided to formally request to be part of this priority programme – and to request a delay to the county council elections that are due to take place in May this year, to allow them to focus on preparations for the future. They voted to “postpone,” the elections even though the minister said that wasn't necessary. Although I am broadly supportive of the creation of a mayor, I am totally against cancelling the elections. It is quite possible that county councillors will be in post for seven years. Deciding not to hold an election damages the legitimacy of the decisions the County leadership takes when it makes decisions about reorganisation that impacts everyone. So far there has been very little consultation with district councils and I can only hope there will be public consultation.

We should know from the Government whether Suffolk and Norfolk are on the Devolution Priority Programme, and whether or not Suffolk County Council's elections will go ahead in May 2025, by the end of this month.

by the end of January 2025, the Government intends to send us an ‘invitation’ setting out their criteria for designing the size, principles and geography of new unitary councils and asking all two-tier councils to work together to develop such unitary proposals.

We know that we will be required to provide our initial thoughts to the Government in March 2025 and then final proposals by either May 2025 or Autumn 2025, depending on whether or not we are on the priority programme.

The Government then intends to introduce the new unitary councils in two phases. The first councils would be implemented in April 2027 and the remainder in April 2028.

Bigger is not always better – and a ‘one size fits all’ approach is unlikely to meet the needs of our rural communities and market towns.

The New National Planning Policy Framework.

This is another major change affecting planning that does various things:

It increases the number of homes Babergh is expected to have built by 86% to 775 per year. Despite Babergh exceeding its targets in recent years that ‘excess’ is not going to be calculated in the future target. Consequently, both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have to review the Joint Local Plan.

Each year, planning authorities must demonstrate they have a five-year land supply for the required number of homes. Under existing requirements, this has been exceeded in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

But the higher figures, set by the Government in December’s National Planning Policy Framework review, mean this may become more challenging in future years. If we can’t meet a five-year land supply for these increased Government figures, we could start to lose control over where new homes are built, i.e. the Government will step in.

There is a virtual Town and Parish Liaison Meeting on Monday 20th January 9.30am- 11am, where the implications of the potential changes in national planning policy and its implications will be discussed in more detail. We will also update on the implications of the Government’s plans for devolution.

It sets new weights on the value of Neighbourhood plans in the planning process.

It also reduces the power of planning authorities (Babergh for now, but eventually it’s Unitary replacement) to block housing planning applications.

This will impact the Joint Local Plan part 2 which is being drafted especially in relation to the call for sites.

Use of CIL for footpaths and cycle paths.

Up to now CIL funding could not be used to create or improve footpaths and cycle paths. A Cabinet decision has changed this and will hopefully allow CIL funding to be used for this purpose. Notably this may fund improvements to the Kingfisher to Bakers Mill route.

Well People, Healthy Places Fund

The Council has established funding for projects which make lives and places healthier. The fund will support a community-led approach to improving health and wellbeing. Village Halls, sports clubs, parish councils and charities can apply.

Up to £5,000 is available in parishes with either a Neighbourhood Plan, People & Place Plan, Parish Infrastructure Plan, or similar.

Open for applications until Monday 10 February 2025

For further information email the Grants Team: BMSDCGrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Energy Efficiency Advice

Any householder who lives in a house with an EPC of less than C can claim a voucher to have a qualified retrofit assessor come to their home and give them a plan as how to increase the energy efficiency of their home. More information here. All funded by Suffolk Councils

Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Voucher Scheme in Suffolk - Suffolk County Council

Sustainable Travel Working group.

This is a body I sit on alongside our Mayor Alison Owen. The main impact is that we are looking at Section 106 funds from Chilton Woods to both improve Bus Services and invest in Active Travel in Sudbury.

The Eezy bike hire hub will be installed outside Kingfisher Leisure Centre when the scaffolding is removed, (currently happening in February).

Kingfisher Repair works

Investigations have revealed further problems which has delayed the reopening of the Swimming Pool.

Final	Sudbury Town Council Budget	Approved		
CC	Cost Centre Name	Budget 2025/2026	Actual 2024-25 Mid-Year	Budget 2024-25
101	Corporate Management	(858,400.00)	(820,638.00)	(820,638.00)
102	Democratic Representation and Management	8,000.00	6,328.00	8,000.00
103	Grants - General Power of Competence	50,000.00	44,078.00	45,000.00
109	Central Services and Administration	256,500.00	150,656.50	270,855.60
201	Markets	(490.00)	(11,970.30)	(15,909.09)
204	Street Fairs	-	(1,002.00)	1,533.40
205	Council Public Events	39,400.00	1,713.00	18,559.78
206	Town Economy	41,240.00	(13,527.00)	76,789.79
211	Town Hall Building	103,760.00	66,353.00	119,660.87
212	Public Clocks	2,500.00	-	2,500.00
213	Street Wardens	-	4,392.80	4,392.80
214	Street Cleaning	8,460.00		-
215	Public Toilets	8,200.00		-
221	Allotments	1,020.00	(1,530.00)	(2.45)
239	Open Spaces and Closed Churchyards	44,022.00	24,138.00	41,595.73
241	Cemetery	108,790.00	41,069.00	65,546.02
243	War Memorial, Aelfhun and Gainsborough Statues	2,500.00	2,090.00	1,800.00
250	Information Centre	47,890.00	23,839.00	40,613.97
252	Christmas Lights	26,670.00	4,780.00	19,633.00
261	Museum	850.00	334.00	800.00
301	Street Lighting	8,500.00	3,000.00	12,000.00
302	Street Furniture	1,350.00	1,014.00	2,040.00
311	Highways	(1,700.00)	(1,395.00)	(1,850.00)
312	Footpaths	3,000.00	1,100.00	3,800.00
321	Floral Displays and Flower Beds Maintenance	27,480.00	22,040.00	24,113.56
341	Community Wardens	93,936.00	67,324.00	105,195.80
499	Lotteries, Bingo and Raffles	-	(138.00)	(12.00)
901	Civic Activities	29,590.00	9,451.00	28,976.60
	Financial results	53,068.00	(376,500.00)	54,995.38
	Budget support from General Reserves	(53,068.00)		(54,995.38)
	Other support from General Reserve	-		-
	Grants	-		-
	Precept	(858,400.00)		(820,638.00)
	Total Income	(911,468.00)	-	(875,633.38)
	Net Budget for Full Council Approval	911,468.00		875,633.38
	Financial results including precept and grants	-	(376,500.00)	0.00
	CT base (+2.6% on last year)	4,615.34		4,500.52
	Band D	(185.99)		(182.34)
	Band D increase	2.00%		5.00%