

SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2025 AT 6.30PM

Committee members present: Mr S Hall – Chair
Mr N Bennett
Mr J Collier
Mrs J Osborne

Officers in attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk

1. **SUBSTITUTES AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Miss A Owen, Mr J Jeagar and Mr A Welsh. Councillor N Bennett was the substitute for Mr A Welsh.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **DECLARATION OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

There were no declarations of gifts or hospitality.

4. **REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

No requests for dispensations had been received.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Leisure and Environment Committee held on the 28th November 2025 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

6. **TO REVIEW THE OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Committee reviewed previous actions.

- The Babergh District Councillors representing Sudbury had been asked to give an update on Belle Vue Park, but this meeting coincided with a Babergh meeting, and they were unable to attend.

7. TO DISCUSS MAINTENANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN FIRST AVENUE

A member had submitted an email raising issues with the state of the paths and car parks in First Avenue. There were also concerns that the overgrowing brambles needed to be cut back as they were providing cover for drug dealing. Members were conscious that the responsibility for the maintenance of these areas was shared between the district and county councils, but there was insufficient detail on the locations to allow these specific problems to be reported to them.

RESOLVED

To ask the councillor who reported this to provide photographs showing the exact locations.

To ask Babergh District Council to cut back the overgrowing brambles and repair their car parks.

To ask Suffolk County Council to repair the paths and their car parks.

To report the drug use to the police.

8. TO DISCUSS MAINTENANCE OF PRIORY WALK FOOTPATH

Two residents of Priory Walk attended the meeting to ask for action to resolve an ongoing problem of two dangerous sycamore trees overhanging the footpath alongside Priory Walk. These residents had previously reported the problem by email to their district councillor, who had established that that this path was maintained by Suffolk County Council, but that these sycamore trees appeared to be growing in private gardens and were not a public responsibility. Members looked at the district council map of tree preservation orders (TPO) to try to establish if these trees were protected and noted that there was a TPO from 1981 at the location of these trees, but that it was for a walnut tree, not a sycamore tree. There were other TPOs from 1981 for sycamore trees in the vicinity and it was possible that these had been recorded incorrectly.

RESOLVED

To ask Babergh District Council to send their tree officer to inspect these trees to confirm their TPO status and assess the risk that they posed to the public using Priory Walk.

9. TO REVIEW THE OPTIONS FOR A REPLACEMENT TO THE TREE THAT WAS IN FRONT OF THE TOWN HALL

A small ornamental tree that had been planted in the middle of Old Market Place in front of the Town Hall in about 2002 had withered and died over the last couple of years. The strong winds on 15th September had blown it over and the roots appeared to have rotted away. Although the tree was not on Town Council land and not owned by them, their operations team had cordoned the fallen tree and cleared the debris to reduce the public hazard. It appeared that this part of Old Market Place was owned and controlled by Suffolk Highways in common with all other areas of road and pavement.

A resident had asked the Town Council for an expression of support for a replacement tree to be planted in the same location. The Town Council's Business Manager had circulated a number of points which members considered.

- The tree that fell at the front of the Town Hall was dead, so much so that it had no root system hence its instability. There was no guarantee that a new tree planted in the same location would get sufficient nutrients for it to thrive.

- The Town Hall was an iconic part of Sudbury's architecture, especially now that the exterior had recently been refurbished to such a high standard. From a townscape perspective, anything that interrupted the sightline of the Town Hall when approaching from King Street should be discouraged.
- Town planners were certainly being encouraged to have more planting / trees in town centres, but this should be thought of more schematically rather than simply replacing like for like. Large, moveable tree planters were a far better solution, some had integral seating to provide much needed shade in summer and rest spots in town centre areas. Some designs could be moved with pallet lifts for easy reconfiguration.
- The front of the Town Hall / Old Market Place was heavily used for the twice-weekly market and special events like the Christmas Fair and the tree did restrict stall set ups.
- Planting a tree in this location would not come without costs, it would require qualified operatives trained in cable scanning and street works ground excavation as well as some kind of tree guard.

It was clear that the Town Council could not support anyone planting a new tree in this location without permission from Suffolk Highways who owned and controlled the site. The location and state of the underground services would have to be confirmed as no records had been found from when the tree was originally planted. The actual cost of providing a new tree sapling was likely to be only a very small part of the overall cost of obtaining the permissions required and having a qualified contractor excavate the old roots and install a new tree.

RESOLVED

To ask Suffolk Highways to replace the tree in Old Market Place with another small, decorative tree on a 'like-for-like' basis.

To ask Babergh District Council if their tree office could help identify the tree species.

To ask Suffolk Highways to ensure that the hole in the pavement where the tree had stood was safe and did not present a short-term hazard.

The meeting concluded at 7:20pm.

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Chairman