

**SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026 AT 7.00PM**

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

In attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk  
Mr P Faircloth-Mutton – Suffolk County Councillor  
Ms L Smith – Babergh District Councillor

1. APOLOGIES AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Apologies were received from Councillors Mr J Collier, Miss A Owen and Mr N Younger.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillors Mr P Beer, Ms J Carter, Mr A Osborne and Mr T Register declared that they were also Babergh District Councillors.

Councillor Mr P Beer and Ms J Carter declared that they are also Suffolk County Councillors.

3. DECLARATIONS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

No declarations of gifts or hospitality were made.

4. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

No requests for dispensations had been received.

5. TO CONFIRM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025 are an accurate record and are to signed by the Chairman.



6. QUESTIONS AND REPORTS

## a. Public Forum –

- A representative of the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce asked the Town Council to consider the damage that would be caused to independent businesses in Sudbury by the District Council's decision to increase parking charges by 20%.
- A representative from the Quay Theatre expressed their concern over the proposal for the Town Council to fund a visit by the Moving Cinema to Sudbury during the February half term holidays.

b. Policing Report – The police had sent their apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed that he was being well supported by the local police team who had recently investigated incidents of arson and anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre.

c. Mayor's Announcement – The Mayor confirmed that he would be holding a charity event on the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> March and he hoped many members would be able to attend. He would also be walking a 26 mile route from the Abbey at Bury St Edmunds to Sudbury Town Hall on 8 April and was looking to raise as much money as possible through sponsorship for his charities.

d. County Councillors' Reports – Councillors Ms J Carter and Mr P Faircloth-Mutton had sent in their reports, which had been circulated before the meeting, and are included at pages 38 to 41. The following points were discussed.

- The possible postponement of county council elections due to a strain on resources.
- How the funding for the Melford Road junction changes could be better used on alternative active travel projects, such as improving the route from Kingfisher to Bakers Mill, a crossing on Friar Street, or Ingrams Well Road.
- The potential benefits of filling all potholes in an area of road at the same time.
- The priorities for the new funding for bus schemes.
- The need for better consultation by SCC on road schemes so that the Town Council has the opportunity to help avoid unnecessary costs.

**RESOLVED**

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

e. District Councillor's Report – Councillor L Smith had sent in her report, which had been circulated with the agenda, and is included in pages 42 to 43. The following points were discussed.

- There was a request for confirmation of the current completion date for the new toilet block and café in Belle Vue Park, as there was little obvious progress.
- There was a request that Belle View Park could be opened over public holidays, such as the Christmas holidays.

**RESOLVED**

**That District Councillor L Smith be thanked for her report.**

7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES

**Planning, Development and Highways Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025 and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026** - The Chair summarised the minutes.

**Finance Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 and 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026** – The Chair summarised the minutes.

**Leisure and Environment Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025** – The Chair summarised the minutes.

**Human Resources Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2025** – The Chair said that they would give a summary of the HR minutes during the private and confidential section.

8. TO APPROVE THE BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026-2027

The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Councillor Bennett, advised members that over the previous few months, the committee had worked with the Town Clerk to build the budget for FY2026/2027. This had been one of the hardest budgets in recent years. The recommended budget had a net expenditure of £1,140,292.

Members considered the draft Budget and were advised that, in order to keep the increase in precept down to 5%, it had been necessary to scrutinise the earmarked reserves to see what money could be moved back to the general reserve, and about £20,000 had been identified from the Town Hall heating. The likely underspend in the current year should add another £50,000 to the reserves, but the balance would need to come from the General Reserve. This would bring the general reserve below the level of half the annual precept recommended in the Governance and Accountability guidance. However, the Finance Committee recommended that the level of the general reserve be restored using the funds recovered when Flint Lodge was sold.

Therefore, it was proposed that the precept for FY2026/2027 be set at £909,400. This would represent an increase of 5.00%, or £9.30 over the year on a Band D property.

**RESOLVED**

**That a net budget of £1,140,292 for Financial Year 2026-2027 be adopted as shown on page 44.**

9. TO SET THE PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026-2027

Following the approval of the budget in item 8, members were requested to approve the proposed precept of £909,400 for FY2026/2027, with the balance of funding coming from reserves.

**RESOLVED**

**That the precept for Financial Year 2026-2027 be set at £909,400. This would be a 5% increase, which for a band D property is about £9.30 extra over the year.**

**That £230,892 be allocated from the reserves to balance the budget.**

10. TO AUTHORISE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £6,800 EXCLUDING VAT ON BRINGING THE MOVING CINEMA TO SUDBURY IN FEBRUARY 2026.

The Mayor introduced this item by explaining that the visit from the Moving Cinema was funded in the current budget and had been approved by the Leisure and Environment Committee. However, as the total cost was over £5,000, the full council had to authorise the expenditure. The Business Manager explained the way the moving cinema operated. The moving cinema was owned and operated by the Abbeygate Cinema in Bury and had previously visited in Sudbury in 2023 and 2024, with these visits subsidised by the council to gauge the level of interest in having a cinema in Sudbury. The main options were a 'dry hire' for £10,000 with the council setting the ticket prices and keeping



the income, or the 'hybrid model' for £5,000 with a subsidised ticket price with the income being retained by the operator. The proposal was for a 10-day hybrid hire over the February half term with a programme of films targeted at family audiences.

**RESOLVED**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s144, members agreed to approve expenditure of up to £6,800 for bringing the Moving Cinema to Sudbury in February 2026.**

**11. TO DISCUSS SENDING A LETTER TO BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL EXPRESSING THE TOWN COUNCIL'S VIEW ON THE INCREASE IN CAR PARKING CHARGES**

Members discussed the decision by the Babergh District Council Cabinet to increase charges for the car parks in Sudbury by 20% in 2026. Babergh District Council had also adopted a policy of total cost recovery for car parks, so it appeared likely that car parking charges would increase in future years.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Town Clerk send a letter to Babergh District Council expressing Sudbury Town Council's disappointment at the increase in charges for the car parks. The following points were to be covered.**

- **That, when charges were introduced last year, Sudbury Town Council had been assured that there was no intention to increase the car parking charges for at least 2 years.**
- **Full cost recovery would be likely to drive additional increases in car park charges in future years.**
- **That administrative overheads charged to car parks were unreasonably high and appeared to treat car parks as a 'cash cow' to support general council costs.**
- **That there had been no consultation with Sudbury Town Council or local businesses.**
- **The option to transfer the car parks to the Town Council was mentioned in the Cabinet discussion, but this option had never been formally raised with the Town Council.**
- **That the study by the University of Suffolk had not been asked to question local business on the impact of parking charges, so appeared to be a 'smokescreen' to support their intent to increase charges.**
- **That the amendment to retain free parking on Sundays was appreciated but would not benefit small businesses that did not trade on Sundays.**
- **That concerns about increased parking and congestion in residential streets were dismissed.**
- **That on street parking had increased to a dangerous level.**
- **That trust between the members of the District and Town Councils had been damaged by this behaviour, which would have a detrimental effect on future collaboration.**
- **Has the District Council's own economic team conducted an economic impact assessment on the increased parking charges and was this considered when drafting the budget?**

**12. TO DISCUSS PRODUCING AN OPEN LETTER SUPPORTING A PASSENGER LIFT ATTACHED TO THE FOOTBRIDGE AT MARKS TEY RAILWAY STATION FOR ACCESSIBLE RAIL TRAVEL ON THE BRANCH LINE TO SUDBURY**

Councillor J Jeagar had circulated a proposed draft letter to the Secretary of State for Transport asking that central government give urgent consideration to the funding of passenger lifts and their installation, on both sides of the footbridge at Marks Tey railway station in Essex. Marks Tey station was the sole interchange between the Gainsborough Line and the Great Eastern Main Line. It was a critical transport hub for the residents of Sudbury, and for all communities served by this branch line.

There was unanimous support for a passenger lift over the main railway line at Marks Tey and members were cognisant of an existing campaign by the local MP for South Suffolk for the same purpose. Many members thought that it would be most effective if the Town Council gave its support to the existing campaign, rather than starting a new parallel approach.

Members noted that passenger numbers on the Gainsborough line had increased significantly in recent years and there was now a much stronger economic case for improving access for less able passengers at Marks Tey station.

Members were advised that the letter might be best directed to the Minister of State responsible for rail, Lord Hendy of Richmond.

**RESOLVED**

**That Sudbury Town Council supports the installation of a passenger lift over the main railway line at Marks Tey so that all passengers can use the rail network safely, independently, and with dignity.**

**That the Town Clerk write to the Minister of State for Rail asking that central government give urgent consideration to funding passenger lifts and their installation, on both sides of the footbridge at Marks Tey railway station in Essex.**

**RESOLVED**

**That the meeting be extended by 30 minutes so that it could continue until 9:30pm**

**13. TO ADOPT THE REVISIONS TO THE PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY RECOMMENDED BY THE HR COMMITTEE**

The Mayor asked the members of the HR Committee to confirm that they were clear on the meaning of the recommended changes to the wording of the Press and Media Policy.

**RESOLVED**

**To approve the changes to the wording of the Press and Media Policy recommended by the HR Committee and shown in the revised policy document at minutes pages 45 to 49.**

**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 items 14 and 15 as the publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.**

**14. TO AUTHORISE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £30,000 EXCLUDING VAT ON FURTHER BUILDING WORKS AT FLINT LODGE AND APPROVE THE NEXT SERIES OF LEGAL ACTIONS**

**RESOLVED**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s133, members agreed to approve expenditure of up to £30,000 for further building works at Flint Lodge.  
See CONFIDENTIAL Annex A, minute page 50.**



15. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL LEGAL, CONTRACTUAL AND HR MATTERS

**RESOLVED**

See **CONFIDENTIAL Annex A, minute pages 51 to 52.**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 9:23pm.

Chairman .....





## **Report for January 2026 to Sudbury Town Council - From Jessie Carter (SCC Councillor)**

Date: 08/01/2026

Email: [jessie.carter@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jessie.carter@suffolk.gov.uk)

Phone: 07955 434411

### **Election Delay?**

On Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> of January SCC has an emergency meeting to discuss our LGR response regarding the possibility of another election delay, there is an emergency cabinet meeting to follow this. I will be able to update this more at full council.

### **Melford Road Scheme**

I am please to announce that after a question to Cllr Chambers and a meeting following that the plans scheduled for January 2026 along Melford Rd / York Rd have been cancelled and a further meeting will be scheduled later in the year (but as soon as possible) to discuss where the funds can be spent to promote active travel.

### **Locality Budget**

In December I was able to help fund a poly tunnel for Sudbury in Bloom and money towards a defibrillator for Sudbury Defibrillators from my locality budget.

### **Handrail**

After a long delay I am happy to say a safety handrail will be installed on Hillside Road by mid-march.

### **Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan**

At Cabinet on Tuesday 2 December, preparation arrangements were agreed for the county's Minerals and Waste plan, which is now five years old and due for renewal. The plan looks at the county's needs and decides what planning measures need to be taken to meet them – for example, aggregates such as sand and gravel which are necessary for housebuilding. As the government has announced high targets for housing in Suffolk, the amount of these materials needed will be higher than before. As the Local Government Reorganisation process means that Suffolk County Council will likely not exist by the time the plan is due to be adopted, the decision made by Cabinet was to undertake all the prep work and gather evidence for it so that the new authority/ies who have to publish the plan will be well-placed to do so once established.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JC".

**Review of SEND progress**

On Thursday 4 December, the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee convened to scrutinise progress on the action plan for improvement to Suffolk's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services. The action plan was developed following a poor inspection report from Ofsted and CQC in November 2023. Council officers and Cabinet members for children's services joined the meeting and acknowledged that although progress had been made to clear the backlog of EHCPs and improve the waiting times to produce them and review them annually, many families had not yet felt the benefit of improvements the council and health partners were trying to embed. The Cabinet member for Education and SEND apologised at the meeting for this. It was noted that some issues, like the shortage of speech and language therapists, were a national issue rather than specific to Suffolk. The council is also working closely with the Department for Education and in partnership with Bedford Borough Council on best practice and support with strategy. The government's Schools white paper, which is expected to include an overhaul of the SEND system nationally, is expected soon in 2026. Members of the committee included education professionals and parents of children with special educational needs who expressed their concern that the council was still not providing a good enough service to Suffolk families.



## **Report for January 2026 to Sudbury Town Council - From Philip Faircloth-Mutton (SCC Councillor)**

### **Suffolk County Council Conservative Administration Rejects Calls for Postponed Elections to take place**

We were gravely disappointed that our efforts as an Opposition yesterday were defeated in an extraordinary Full Council meeting by 39 votes to 17, with 4 abstentions. Given the importance of the matter, it was concerning that only Conservative Cabinet members made contributions on behalf of the Administration, with Conservative backbenchers seemingly muzzled with no speeches forthcoming.

At the meeting, the Suffolk County Council Reform UK Group was unanimous in its contributions to debate and the final vote that elections should take place on 7 May 2026, as promised by the Government in 2025.

The Conservative Leader of Suffolk County Council will now write a letter to HM Government expressing concerns over capacity of the County Council to implement Local Government Reorganisation (one or three new unitary councils for the ceremonial county of Suffolk). The Secretary of State for Local Government will confirm election arrangements by the end of February. Their decision on one or three unitary councils for Suffolk is possible by mid-March.

### **New 20mph Speed Limit Application Policy**

The Administration approved a leaner policy to implement 20mph speed limits across the county on Friday. I welcome this in principle, given I have had local speed limit applications rejected outside schools due to unnecessary local by-laws not existing in other parts of England. There should be no obstacles in such areas, and I'm pleased calls I made while serving in the administration have been addressed. I do, however, have concerns on the new policy:

- **Costly referenda:** unclear language on the necessity for a public referendum by local communities in meeting documents, although this was clarified by the cabinet member as a public engagement and promised this would be confirmed in the final written policy.
- **Self-enforcement:** costly highways modifications are often a roadblock for schemes by local communities and the draft policy was unclear on this. The cabinet member assured me at the meeting sign-only schemes would be permitted, where requested.

### **Upper East Street / Bridge Terrace access/exit improvements**

Residents at the above-mentioned and I were pleased to receive sign off for improvement works, which will be funded exclusively from my local highways budget.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Faircloth-Mutton".

This was first brought to my attention by residents, who have endured visibility issues for a prolonged period, at a site visit with my local highways officer and I. I'm pleased that this is now going to be resolved. Works are scheduled to be complete in 13 weeks.

**Spire Chase Salt Bin filling**

Following Cllr Jan Osborne's query, I have relayed the above-mentioned to Suffolk Highways on the ownership of the bin and will revert back.



## **Babergh Report**

**January 2026**

By Cllr Laura Smith

### **Increase in Car Parking Charges**

On 6<sup>th</sup> January Babergh Cabinet voted by majority of 6-2 to increase car parking charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham by 20%. Cllr Ruth Hendry and Cllr Laura Smith voted against the proposal.

The recommended increases were backed up by a report from the University of Suffolk based on 2025 footfall, spending and dwell-time data which drew the conclusion that the charges have not had an impact on the town centres.

The increase is towards achieving full cost recovery and the paper warned 'if these proposals are not implemented, equivalent reductions in other services will be necessary instead'.

<b>Short Stay Tariff</b>	<b>Existing charge</b>	<b>New charge</b>
Up to 1 hour	£1.00	£1.20
Up to 2 hours	£1.50	£1.80
Up to 3 hours	£2.00	£2.40
Up to 4 hours	£2.50	£3.00

<b>Long Stay Tariff</b>	<b>Existing charge</b>	<b>New charge</b>
Up to 2 hours	£1.00	£1.20
Up to 3 hours	£1.50	£1.80
Up to 4 hours	£2.00	£2.40
All Day (Up to 24 hours)	£2.50	£3.00

<b>Season ticket</b>	<b>Current fee</b>	<b>2026/2027 fee</b>
1 month	£25.00	£30.00
3 months	£70.00	£84.00
12 months	£250.00	£300.00

The proposal to start charging on Sundays was amended, so parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays will remain free of charge.

Proposed increases at Pin Mill car park were also reduced by amendment.

The change may take several months to be implemented so enjoy the current charges while you can.

### **Severe Weather Emergency Procedure**

Babergh's SWEP is active due to the low temperatures and current weather conditions.

Anyone homeless or rough sleeping will be offered emergency accommodation  
If you spot anyone sleeping rough, go to [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) and click 'Take action now' or call Housing Solutions - 0300 1234000 option 3.

### **Launch of Community Energy Group 'Stour Power'**

On 29<sup>th</sup> January Sudbury Arts Centre hosts the launch event for Stour Power Community Energy, a new community-led initiative supporting the Stour Valley and wider Babergh area.

The event will introduce the new community energy group and its aims, share opportunities for local renewable energy and retrofit projects and explain how residents, organisations, and volunteers can get involved.

Date: Thursday 29 January

Time: 7:00pm-9:00pm

Venue: Sudbury Arts Centre

RSVP / Info: [www.stourpower.com](http://www.stourpower.com)

### **Community Development Grant – deadline**

Babergh's Community Development Grant is open for applications and the window will close on 18 January 2026.

These grants are available to community organisations seeking support towards revenue, capital and pre-project costs or activities.

Last year, more than £270,000 was awarded to a variety of projects in the district.

For more information go to <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/community-funding>

### **Household Recycling and Waste Collection Policy**

In December the Cabinet approved the new Household Recycling and Waste Collection Policy, ahead of the implementation of 'Better Recycling' in the summer.

The changes are part of a government-mandated scheme and will include a new weekly food waste collection service, allowing residents to dispose of unusable and expired food items.

Extra items such as glass and cartons (Tetra Pak) will be accepted in the recycling collection and there will be a separate collection for paper and card.

Households will be provided with **four** collection services as standard:

- a three-weekly **refuse** (general rubbish) collection
- a three-weekly **recycling** collection for glass, plastics, metal and cartons
- a three-weekly **paper and card** collection
- a weekly **food waste** collection

The changes are likely to provoke some public controversy; a Suffolk-wide advertising campaign will be starting shortly to raise awareness before changes come in in June 2026.

Final **Sudbury Town Council Budget**

CC	Cost Centre Name	Budget 2026/2027	Actual 2025-26 Mid-Year	Budget 2025-26	Difference 2025 Budget to mid year	
101	Corporate Management	(909,400.00)	(858,400.00)	(858,400.00)	(51,000.00)	6%
102	Democratic Representation and Management	8,000.00	-	8,000.00	-	0%
103	Grants - General Power of Competence	50,000.00	720.00	50,000.00	-	0%
109	Central Services and Administration	269,722.00	132,715.00	256,500.00	13,222.00	5%
201	Markets	14,790.00	(16,789.00)	(490.00)	15,280.00	No profit
205	Council Public Events	61,320.00	14,512.00	39,400.00	21,920.00	56%
206	Town Economy	40,170.00	8,605.00	41,240.00	(1,070.00)	-3%
211	Town Hall Building	133,210.00	38,475.00	103,760.00	29,450.00	28%
212	Public Clocks	2,500.00	1,861.00	2,500.00	-	0%
214	Street Cleaning	22,830.00	-	8,460.00	14,370.00	170%
215	Public Toilets	20,010.00	-	8,200.00	11,810.00	144%
221	Allotments	2,510.00	262.00	1,020.00	1,490.00	146%
239	Open Spaces and Closed Churchyards	64,080.00	14,813.00	44,022.00	20,058.00	46%
241	Cemetery	113,440.00	25,441.00	108,790.00	4,650.00	4%
242	Flint Lodge	118,230.00	25,441.00	-	118,230.00	New
243	War Memorial, Aelfhun and Gainsborough Statues	2,500.00	-	2,500.00	-	0%
250	Information Centre	49,550.00	25,349.00	47,890.00	1,660.00	3%
252	Christmas Lights	34,570.00	1,473.00	26,670.00	7,900.00	30%
261	Museum	850.00	-	850.00	-	0%
301	Street Lighting	4,500.00	-	8,500.00	(4,000.00)	-47%
302	Street Furniture	1,350.00	61.00	1,350.00	-	0%
311	Highways	(1,700.00)	(1,628.00)	(1,700.00)	-	0%
312	Footpaths	1,950.00	-	3,000.00	(1,050.00)	-35%
321	Floral Displays and Flower Beds Maintenance	29,090.00	15,789.00	27,480.00	1,610.00	6%
341	Community Wardens	65,130.00	34,150.00	93,936.00	(28,806.00)	-31%
901	Civic Activities	31,690.00	9,889.00	29,590.00	2,100.00	7%
<b>Financial results</b>		<b>230,892.00</b>	<b>(527,261.00)</b>	<b>53,068.00</b>	<b>177,824.00</b>	
	Budget support from General Reserves	(230,892.00)		(53,068.00)	66% FL	
	Other support from General Reserve	-		-	59,594.00 FL	
	Grants	-		-		
	Precept	(909,400.00)		(858,400.00)		
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(1,140,292.00)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(911,468.00)</b>		
<b>Net Budget for Full Council Approval</b>		<b>1,140,292.00</b>		<b>911,468.00</b>		
<b>Financial results including precept and grants</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>(527,261.00)</b>	<b>-</b>		
	CT base (+0.9% on last year)	4,656.67		4,615.34		
	Band D	(195.29)		(185.99)	(182.34)	
	Band D increase	5.00%		2.00%		
					<b>Band D Increase</b>	
	Precept increase of 0% £	-	(866,094.05)			
	Precept increase of 1% -£	8,660.94	(874,754.99)	(1.86)		
	Precept increase of 2% -£	17,321.88	(883,415.93)	(3.72)		
	Precept increase of 3% -£	25,982.82	(892,076.87)	(5.58)		
	Precept increase of 4% -£	34,643.76	(900,737.82)	(7.44)		
	Precept increase of 5% -£	43,304.70	(909,398.76)	(9.30)		





# Sudbury Town Council

## Press and Media Policy

### Preamble

This policy applies on those occasions when the Town Council, as a corporate body, is asked for a statement, a comment or information from the media, or as a corporate body issues a press release, or information to factually clarify/correct other comments published in the media. Media is defined as any activity "reporting" on the Town Council.

This policy does not, and is not intended to, apply when individual Councillors are contacted directly by the media for a personal comment or statement, nor when individual Councillors contact the media with a personal statement. In such cases it should be made clear that it is the individual's own opinion or comment, not that of the Town Council.

In general, the Town Clerk provides factual information on behalf of the Council. The Mayor or a delegated Committee Chair may be asked to provide details of the corporate decisions that have been made at official meetings. If a Councillor is unsure about the circumstances of a particular issue he should contact the Town Clerk before communicating with the media, including social media.

### Policy Statement

Sudbury Town Council wishes to be open and transparent in the way it considers information and takes decisions. As a Town Council we will therefore proactively seek opportunities to publish information about our activities with the intention of raising awareness about what the Town Council is doing.

### Personnel

When the Mayor is unavailable the Deputy Mayor will take on any of the Mayor's specified tasks and responsibilities.

When the Town Clerk is unavailable the Deputy Town Clerk will take on any of his specified tasks and responsibilities.

#### 1. Requests from the Media

- 1.1 All members and staff should make the Town Clerk aware of any approaches from the media for interviews, statements or information.

Adopted by resolution of Sudbury Town Council on 13 January 2026

1.2 Any request from the media will be considered by the Town Clerk and he will try to identify if the Council has already agreed a policy position on the subject. The Town Clerk will then contact the most appropriate person (usually this will be the Mayor, or the Committee Chair where the matter has been delegated), to agree a response on behalf of the Town Council.

1.3 Prior to releasing a statement or giving an interview, the Town Clerk and the Mayor or Committee Chair should agree bullet points to cover the broad content of any response. This may be supported by other, more detailed documents when appropriate.

## **2. Response to Media Articles, Published Letters, Online Comments, Tweets, Facebook items**

2.1 Every situation must be carefully assessed, and, in many cases, a corporate response will not be appropriate.

2.2 Any officer or member who sees an article or item and thinks that a corporate response may be appropriate should inform the Town Clerk.

2.3 In assessing whether or not a corporate response is appropriate the following will be considered:

- Is the article or item in question factually accurate?
- Is the article or item expressing a personal view – and if so is that clearly stated?
- Would further discussion on the subject be constructive?

2.4 Any potential corporate response will be considered by the Town Clerk and then forwarded to the most appropriate person to prepare a draft response on behalf of the Town Council.

2.5 Prior to releasing any corporate response, the Town Clerk and the Mayor or delegated Committee Chair should agree the written content. This may be supported by other, more detailed documents when appropriate.

## **3. Media Releases**

3.1 The Town Clerk, Mayor and Committee Chairs should identify issues and stories that have the potential to be of interest to the public.

3.2 The Town Clerk will draft corporate media releases in consultation with the Mayor and Committee Chairs, or any individual Councillor, as appropriate.

3.3 An information copy of the final corporate media release will be sent to the Mayor and any Councillor who is quoted in the text.

3.4 Corporate media releases will be sent to relevant media outlets as determined by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor.

3.5 A copy of the corporate media release will be posted on the Town Council's website.

3.6 A copy of the corporate media release will be sent to Councillors and staff.

#### **4. Media training**

4.1 Opportunities will be made for all Councillors and the Town Clerk to attend media-related training.

#### **5. Decision making**

5.1 This Press and Media Policy is the relevant policy referred to in the Town Council's Standing Order No 22 on relations with the press and other media.

5.2 Any decision about the content of corporate media releases or information to be supplied to the media or any response to any media item will be taken by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Mayor. (This accords with the legal position that no individual Town Councillor can make a decision on behalf of the Council).

#### **6. Social Media Policy**

6.1 Official social media accounts operated by the Town Council will be used to help keep local residents, businesses, interested parties and visitors to the town informed of important Town Council related news, events and updates.

6.2 The official accounts will be managed by the Deputy Town Clerk, on behalf of the Town Council, who will seek to ensure that any legal obligations or best practice guidelines are adhered to.

6.3 Members of the public can expect the Town Council's official social media to have updates covering some or all of the following:

- Alerts such as news, publications, events, publicity campaigns, Council/Committee meetings and new content on our other digital channels.
- Invitations to provide feedback on specific issues on which we are consulting.
- Information about or from our partners or other local groups about what they're doing
- Occasional live coverage of events

6.4 The Town Council may follow or subscribe to social media accounts from other users. This does not imply endorsement of any kind.

6.5 The official accounts will be updated and monitored during working hours only and will not be political. Political posts will be removed and the Town Council will not engage on issues of party politics at any time.

- 6.6 Inappropriate language or anything that might contravene libel, defamation, copyright or data protection laws will be removed.
- 6.7 Online social media sites may occasionally be unavailable and the Town Council accepts no responsibility for lack of service.
- 6.8 Feedback and ideas are welcomed from all sections of the community and the Town Council will endeavour to join the conversation where possible. However, it may not be possible to reply individually to all messages.
- 6.9 Emerging themes or helpful suggestions will be passed to the relevant persons.
- 6.10 Councillors may have their own personal social media accounts and it is helpful to have guidance on what is and is not acceptable usage as an elected or co-opted member. This guidance complements the general rules under the Suffolk Code of Conduct for Members. If your social media account identifies you as a member of the Council, others will presume that you are speaking as a member and you will need to adhere to the Code. It is often safer to state explicitly in the text that you are *'speaking in an entirely personal capacity'* and that your views are *'not the views of the Town Council'*.
- 6.11 Staff should avoid mentioning Town Council business in their personal social media accounts and must never comment on policies or any councillors or staff members, current or former.
- 6.12 Other than referring to published resolutions of the town council, or official town council posts, councillors should never;
- comment on any staff members, current or former.
  - 'friend' or make other type of link with a member of staff, unless they have been declared to the Town Clerk as a friend.

The following standard response should be used if responding is unavoidable.

- Please send you concerns or questions to the town council using [info@sudbury-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@sudbury-tc.gov.uk)

If members feel that a response is required by the town council, they should contact the Town Clerk, who may be able to authorise a corporate response, which members can then 'like', 're-tweet', etc as appropriate

## **7. Correspondence**

- 7.1 Councillors must not normally communicate in the name of the Council with any outside body or person. All such communications should be carried out by the appropriate member of staff as delegated by the Town Clerk. Staff may draft letters for signature by the Mayor or a Committee Chair when delivering policies agreed by the Council or a delegated Committee.

- 7.2 It may be appropriate in some circumstances for a letter to be sent in the name of a Councillor, for example in response to a letter of complaint regarding the Town Council sent direct to that Councillor, but this should be the exception rather than the norm. When this is required, the letter will be drafted by the staff and approved by the Town Clerk before being offered to the member for signature.
- 7.3 Letters which create contractual, legal or other obligations or which give instructions on behalf of the Council must never be sent out in the name of a Councillor.
- 7.4 Staff should consider when providing information to one Councillor, whether others should be informed e.g. in relation to a ward or local matter. Normally all members will be copied on a response to a councillor, unless there are good reasons for not making the information more widely available.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script.

