

SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 11TH MARCH 2025 AT 7.00PM

Present: Miss A Owen – Mayor of Sudbury, in the CHAIR
Mrs M Barrett Mr A Osborne
Mr P Beer Mrs J Osborne
Mr N Bennett Mr T Regester
Mr S Hall Mr A Stohr (arrived at 7:30pm)
Mr J Jeagar Mr A Welsh
Ms E Murphy Mr N Younger

In attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk
Mrs 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 K Graham.

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.

Councillor Mr P Beer declared that he was also a Suffolk County 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 11th February 2025 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

6. REPORTS

a) County Councillor's Reports – Councillor J Carter had sent in her report, which had been circulated with the agenda, and is included at pages 201 to 202. Members were asked to email any questions to the county councillor concerned. Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton attended and gave his verbal report, which is at pages 203 to 204.

- Libraries proposed to return to in-house management by SCC, this will allow all 45 library sites to remain open, with the same hours and an investment in mobile libraries. This came from a public consultation that took place last year.
- Local arts organisations will receive a boost through the new £500,000 Suffolk County Council Culture Fund, local recipients will include Gainsborough's House, Quay Theatre and Sudbury Heritage Centre.
- Discussions on Sudbury in Bloom's sponsorship signs on roundabouts were moving forward, but there were still some legal technicalities to be resolved.

Members asked questions on the following areas;

- SCC charge £800 per metre for cycle paths, this seems excessive. Please provide this question in writing so that an answer can be provided.
- The buckled railings have been reported on the SCC Highways Reporting Tool and were now fixed. Could SCC access CCTV to identify the driver who caused the damage? Please provide the details by email with a reference number so that an answer can be provided.
- Suffolk Libraries management costs were too great, so does this mean that SCC can do the management cheaper? Will this be shared management by managers with other roles? Management costs were not the only reason. Libraries can help deliver other services. The SCC Libraries Team will sit under the Public Health Directorate as at present.
- Concerned about moving the library service back in house. Friends are volunteers who help the libraries. Many are shocked not to have been consulted, were they asked about cancelling the contract? SCC wish to work closely with Friends groups to ensure their good work continues. The public consultation was to ask what the service should look like, this is a government procurement requirement. There are other good examples of volunteer groups working for SCC, e.g. the archives service. SCC HR are ready to welcome the volunteers.
- County Council elections have been delayed by a year and SCC recommended that people did not support the petition. Are these actions undemocratic? The delays to elections have happened in other areas in the past, this is normal procedure. SCC made a polite request not to sign the petition as SCC believed that their proposal was the best option. The public still had a choice to take part and the petition has been received by the Monitoring Officer.
- What is the cost of bringing the library service back in house? First year £1.2 to 1.8m, cost neutral from year 2. Extra funding could come from s106 agreements.

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 J Carter had sent in her report, which had been circulated with the agenda, and is included at pages 205 to 206. The following points were raised;

- Dog fouling meeting with BDC. STC should continue with putting up warning stickers. How can we take joint enforcement action with BDC?
- Welcome the reopening of the swimming pool, but will the wave machine ever re-open? The wave machine is broken and will remain so whilst current financial constraints apply.



- How long will it take to repair the Belle Vue Park brick wall on Cornard Road? Probably 6 weeks with a single lane closure. Suffolk Highways have not confirmed the details.

RESOLVED

That District Councillor J Carter be thanked for her report.

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

- A male had exposed himself near the cricket ground and been seen on CCTV.
- There was a similar incident in the bus station area, same man with the same clothing. Targeted police patrols and knocking on doors had identified the suspect wearing the same clothing. He had been arrested and was being processed.
- Concerns about cannabis at Cedar Apartments. A male had been stopped in car with a significant quantity of nitrous oxide (NOX). He had been arrested, his flat searched and a lot of cannabis found.
- A cannabis farm had been found in Melford with about 40 plants.
- Officers had targeted antisocial behaviour (ASB) by vehicle drivers in the Sudbury area and had reported the drivers.
- Sudbury police always welcomed community intelligence from concerned local residents.

RESOLVED

That PC J Moore be thanked for his report.

d) Mayor's Announcements

- The Mayor had attended HRH the Duke of Gloucester's visit to Gainsborough's House.
- The Mayor was planning to host a stall on the Easter market.
- The Mayor was holding a charity dinner on 23rd April at Lydia costing £30 a ticket.

e) Public Forum – 5 members of the public were present.

- The chair of the Sudbury Library Volunteers Group asked would members ask for an independent audit of SCC's decision to take Suffolk Libraries back in house? How would it be funded? Banks pay a rent to use facilities, Post Office, etc. Why was a 30% reduction in opening proposed by Suffolk Libraries? SCC had requested all information from the procurement process but Suffolk Libraries had refused to agree to release in the data.
- A member of the public thanked the council for the response to his emails about data handling but said that they raised more issues. He didn't think the council had good policies. He thought that more training for councillors on data processing was required.
- Another member of the public asked,
 - What threshold test do Sudbury Town Council use to determine if a data breach needs to be reported to the ICO?
 - What relationship do Sudbury Town council hold with these 2 companies?
 - Pubucationscheme.com
 - To information.co
- Would the new Belle Vue Park toilet block be delayed by ground issues? The work to repair the retaining wall on Cornard Road must be done first.

7. TO APPROVE THE REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Town Clerk explained that there had been a recent issue when trying to make a payment for waste disposal at the SCC recycling centre using petty cash, as now only card payments were accepted. In order to reduce future risks and comply with financial regulations an amendment was proposed which would allow for a pre-paid debit card with an appropriate limit to be used by staff when required. NALC model financial regulations already included this provision as paragraph 9.2, but Sudbury Town Council had not needed to adopt it before.

The Finance Committee had discussed this during their meeting on 4th March and recommended that the full council adopt a revised version of the financial regulations to include paragraph 9.2.

RESOLVED

To approve the revised version of the financial regulations at pages 207 to 221 which have been amended to include paragraph 9.2 below.

9.2 A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the Town Clerk. All transactions and purchases made must be reported to the RFO in writing on the day they occur and authority for topping-up the card shall be at the discretion of the Town Clerk.

8. TO AUTHORISE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £9,100 ON THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL GENERAL INSURANCE POLICY WHICH IS DUE FOR RENEWAL ON 1 APRIL 2025.

The Town Clerk explained that the council's annual general insurance policy was due for renewal on 1st April 2025. The Administration Manager had asked for a renewal quote, but the insurers had not yet confirmed the price. Therefore, the Town Clerk recommended that members authorise up to £9,100, which was 10% more than the current year's policy.

RESOLVED

That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s111, members agreed to approve expenditure of up to £9,100 for the annual general insurance policy, to run from 1 April 2025.

9. TO AUTHORISE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £2,334 ON THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL VAN INSURANCE POLICY WHICH IS DUE FOR RENEWAL ON 1 APRIL 2025.

The Town Clerk explained that the council's annual van insurance policy was due for renewal on 1st April 2025. The Administration Manager received the renewal quote, which was only slightly higher than the current year.

RESOLVED

That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.111, members agreed to approve expenditure of up to £2,334 for the annual van insurance policy, to run from 1 April 2025.



10. TO NOTE THE CHANGES TO THE FIXED ASSET REGISTER, INCLUDING THE ADDITION OF THE NEW STREETLIGHTS, ALTHOUGH THE OLD STREETLIGHTS HAD NOT BEEN INCLUDED IN THE ASSET REGISTER.

The Town Clerk explained that all the streetlights owned by the council had now been converted to low energy IED bulbs. The saving in energy cost was significant, with the current year's invoice under £2,000 compared to the budget provision of over £10,000. For unknown reasons, the old streetlights had not been including in the fixed assets register, and so could not be written off. However, the new streetlights would be added to the fixed assets register with their installation cost of about £47,000.

RESOLVED

To note that the new streetlights would be added to the fixed asset register, although the old streetlights had not been included in the asset register.

11. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

Planning, Development & Highways Committees on 24th February and 11th March 2025 – The Chairman recommended noting the minutes.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes.

Finance Committees on 4th March 2025– The Chairman recommended noting the minutes.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes.

Leisure and Environment Committees on 25th February 2025 – The Chairman recommended noting the minutes.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes.

12. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE TOWN CLERK ON PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS.

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

See **CONFIDENTIAL** Annex pages 222 to 223.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8:56pm.

Chairman 

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

Date: 07/03/2025

Email: jessie.carter@suffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 07955 434411



Ballington Street Speeding

Suffolk Police have confirmed that they do currently have an enforcement site on Ballington Street, and they are actively carrying out enforcement here about once a month. Last there on 29 January 2025.

I hope the confirmation of ongoing police presence here will provide some reassurance that the traffic speed limit of 30 mph is being monitored and enforced by the Police. They did do an assessment in 2023 on Ballington Hill, opposite Ballington Gardens but this was not assessed as requiring further action. Where the average speeds are all under 30 mph – channel 1 is going up the hill towards the NSL 60mph limit so we would expect this to be a little higher as cars accelerate.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganization Update

The government has now confirmed that Suffolk and Norfolk are included in the Devolution Priority Programme and have agreed to the request from the Suffolk County Council administration to cancel this year's local elections in May. This means that councils in Suffolk now need to work on proposals for reorganisation to submit to the government by the autumn, with a view to one or more unitary councils serving the county instead of the current two-tier system – a county council and several districts/borough councils performing different functions.

Suffolk County Council has announced that it will be proposing one single unitary council for Suffolk, although district and borough councils have been clear that they would prefer two or three. All the councils need to submit their proposals to the government by 21 March 2025.

The plan is for a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk to be elected in May 2026, along with councillors for new authorities, so the timeline for these changes is very tight. The government has launched a public consultation on proposals to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk, and you can give your views on the proposals by on the following site: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Inspection Report

On Monday 10 February, The Home Office published a report of its recent inspection of Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service. Although the inspection found that the service was good at preventing fires, protecting the public and that it met requirements for responding to major incidents, the report was also concerning as it several areas where the service needed to improve, including improving culture and morale, senior leaders to act as role models and show they are committed to the values of the service through their behaviour, improving communication between staff and senior leaders and making sure employees are confident raising concerns. You may have read in the press recently that the Fire Brigades Union is alleging that Suffolk County Council has made mistakes processing firefighter pay and pensions for years and has not addressed them or listened to employee concerns about the errors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by several loops.

Suffolk County Council has subsequently announced additional investment of an extra £1.6 million over two years to improve the service, and this proposal will be decided at Cabinet in March. You can read the inspection report in full online: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/uploads/frs-assessment-2023-25-suffolk.pdf>

Active Travel Fund Award

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £3.7 million from the government to encourage cycling, walking and active travel across the county, and to make journeys more accessible. This comprises £0.9 million from the Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund. The money can be spent on the following schemes: footpaths and crossing points, maintaining existing walking and cycling infrastructure, improving cycle routes and Public Rights of Way, traffic calming, and rail station access improvements. The council is currently considering suitable local projects, which will be announced in the coming months.

Changes to Suffolk's Library Service are Moving Back In-House

Suffolk County Council has announced that from 1 June 2025, its libraries service will be moved back in-house. Currently the libraries are run by a local charity, Suffolk Libraries, but negotiations on the new contract have now broken down. The council made the decision to divest its libraries in 2012 and they have been run by Suffolk Libraries ever since then. The council is reassuring residents and library employees and volunteers that no front-line jobs will be cut, that libraries will remain open and there will be no reduction to opening hours. Running the library service had been financially challenging in recent years, with the council agreeing to provide an extra £720k in May 2023 for that financial year. The council is also keen to reassure Friends groups that money raised for local libraries will still be used for those libraries.

Local Transport Plan and Area Transport Plans

At Cabinet on Tuesday 25 February, a Local Transport Plan for the county from 2025-2040. The plan is needed by law to access funding from the government for active travel and major transport schemes, and details how the council plans to prioritise walking, cycling and wheeling in town centres to reduce congestion and air pollution. It also describes the projects that will be needed to improve transport links for Suffolk, such as works at Ely and Haughley railway junctions, better public transport, and how to manage the transition from fossil fuels. Also agreed were 15 Area Transport Plans detailing the council's transport ambitions for towns around Suffolk.

You can read the Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 and the fifteen Area Transport Plans online: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan>.

Report for March 2025 to Sudbury Town Council From SCC Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton

1. Libraries proposed to return in-house

After long procurement process, as the Cabinet Member for libraries, I will be proposing the return of the day-to-day running of our library service to Suffolk County Council when the current contract ends with Suffolk Libraries (SLS) on 31 May 2025. This is the only available option to us to ensure the service is protected in a sustainable manner.

On a practical basis, this will:

- Secure and sustainable future for all 45 libraries across the county.
- Opening hours remain the same.
- Job security for all frontline staff and volunteers.
- Greater opportunities to access other council services under one roof.
- Substantial investment in mobile libraries, books and computers.

2. Local Organisations Receive 52% Boost in new Suffolk County Council Culture Fund

The Town Council will be familiar with the County Council's decision in 2024 to change its funding formula for arts and cultural organisations from core to grant funding. Under the old system, the only Babergh based recipient of funding was Gainsborough's House in Sudbury.

Under the new £500,000 fund, in the year 2025/26, I'm pleased to report that our local area will see a fairer share of funding from the County Council. Previously, our area received £28,500 in funding. This will now increase to £43,390.

The recipient organisations in our local area will be as follows:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--------------|---------|
| Gainsborough's House | Inspiring Suffolk's Young Creatives (ISYC) | The project aims to reach more young people through participative artistic activities and volunteering opportunities in Sudbury. It includes recruiting young volunteers and piloting a free Art & Design Club for young people aged 13-16. | Sudbury | £22,750 |
| Long Melford Heritage Trust | Roman Long Melford Revealed | The project involves a geophysical archaeological survey using ground-penetrating radar in Long Melford. Supported by volunteers, the survey aims to reveal unknown features of the Iron Age and Roman Town, providing data for future archaeological investigations and aiding planners in assessing house building applications | Long Melford | £4,000 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------|--------|
| Quay Theatre | Quay Theatre Children & Young People | A programme of performing arts activity for children and young people in and around Sudbury at the Quay Theatre | Sudbury | £9,640 |
| Sudbury Heritage Centre | Sudbury Sports Clubs History | The project aims to create a central hub to bring together the histories of Sudbury sports clubs. It will feature an interactive touch screen display with lively graphics, talking heads, scrolling text, photos, and short videos, showcasing the history of each club and their interaction with the Sudbury community | Sudbury | £7,000 |

3. Sudbury in Bloom (SiB) Roundabout Discussions Continue

Discussions with regard to SiB's great work on our roundabouts across the town through their floral displays and sponsorship signage are still being worked through, but I'm pleased to report there has been a lot of progress made at the point of writing. I checked in with the Highways Team last week on a few final technical clarifications to ensure there is a high level of certainty going forward. I have relayed this information to SiB and they have been kept fully abreast of matters.

Babergh Council Report – March 2025 – by Cllr J Carter

Public consultation on Suffolk and Norfolk devolution:

The UK Government has initiated an eight-week public consultation, running from 17 February to 13 April 2025, on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) encompassing Norfolk and Suffolk. This initiative follows the region's inclusion in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, aiming to decentralize powers from Westminster to local communities.

The consultation seeks public input on various aspects of the proposed MCCA, including its geographical scope and decision-making processes. Residents, businesses, and stakeholders in Norfolk and Suffolk are encouraged to participate and share their views. It's important to note that this consultation does not address potential local government reorganization; such matters will be subject to a separate process.

The proposed MCCA would assume responsibilities currently managed by local authorities, such as public transport services, including buses. This change could lead to improvements in local bus services through Enhanced Partnerships or franchised systems, similar to models in Greater Manchester and London. Additionally, the MCCA would play a pivotal role in decarbonizing transport and enhancing active travel infrastructure, such as walking and cycling routes.

To participate in the consultation and access detailed information, visit the official government consultation page.

This consultation represents a significant opportunity for residents and stakeholders in Norfolk and Suffolk to influence the future governance of their region. Engaging in this process ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in shaping the proposed devolution.

Grants For Babergh:

A new football club stand and upgrades to play areas are among 21 projects receiving grants to support community groups and organisations in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. During the application period, which closed in January, organisations could request up to £10,000 to enhance sports and play facilities, acquire new equipment, or improve village halls. With all funds now allocated, 21 organisations have been awarded grants. The funded projects include village hall renovations and accessibility upgrades in Babergh, as well as roof repairs and sports club refurbishments in Mid Suffolk, ensuring various community spaces benefit from these improvements.

In total, £148,916.63 has been distributed across the districts, with £62,772.34 granted to eight organisations in Babergh.

Kingfisher Swimming Pool:

Kingfisher Leisure Centre's swimming pool is now open to swimmers, There will continue to be some maintenance undertaken to the exterior of the leisure centre in the coming weeks, but this hasn't impacted on its opening schedule.

The wave machine will no longer be in operation.



Stop Smoking Pop Up:

There will be a 'stop smoking' pop up at the Kingfisher (Date TBC) lead by Feel Good Suffolk

Babergh Full Council, February 2025:

At the recent Babergh Council meeting, several key decisions were made. The 2025/26 General Fund Budget was approved, including a Council Tax increase of £5.63 per year for Band D properties (2.99%). The budget also introduced new income bands and contribution rates for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The vote passed with 23 in favour and 2 against. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget was also approved unanimously, allowing for a 2.7% rent increase for social and affordable housing, adjustments to sheltered housing charges, and the retention of Right to Buy receipts to fund new housing development.

The Council also adopted the Joint Capital, Investment, and Treasury Management Strategies for 2025/26, which included an amendment to lower the capitalisation threshold from £10,000 to £1,000, along with investment policy adjustments. In addition, the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Development Scheme 2025-2029 was approved, setting the framework for future planning policies. A public consultation on changes to the Statement of Community Involvement was also agreed upon.

Other decisions included the appointment of Councillor Laura Smith to the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board. No public petitions, councillor questions, or motions on notice were received during the meeting.

Cabinet Decisions, February 2025:

During the Babergh Cabinet Meeting on the 11th of February, Babergh Cabinet has approved several key initiatives that will impact local communities.

The **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** has been endorsed for public consultation, reinforcing the council's commitment to biodiversity and environmental sustainability. The strategy will identify priority areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain, with opportunities for public and stakeholder input during the consultation phases.

In preparation for the upcoming statutory **food waste collection service** set to launch in March 2026, the Cabinet has awarded a contract for 9.5 diesel/HVO food waste collection vehicles and approved the supply of food waste caddies to households. This decision ensures cost-effective implementation while maintaining operational efficiency.

Additionally, the **2025/26 General Fund Budget and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget** have been endorsed for recommendation to Council. This includes a 2.99% increase in Council Tax (£5.63 annually for Band D properties) and adjustments to social housing rents and service charges. The Cabinet has also adopted a **new Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy** to create a more unified approach across council departments, improving responsiveness and support for affected residents.





Sudbury Town Council FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 2025

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on 11 March 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AS' or similar, located in the bottom right corner of the page.

1. General

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4. In these Financial Regulations:
 - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
 - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
 - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
 - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
 - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England.
 - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
 - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.
- 1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The RFO;
 - acts under the policy direction of the council;
 - administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
 - determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
 - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
 - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
 - seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
 - produces financial management information as required by the council.
- 1.6. **The council must not delegate any decision regarding:**
 - **setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
 - **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**

- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of £5,000;

2. Risk management and internal control

- 2.1. **The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.**
- 2.2. The Clerk, with the RFO, shall prepare, for approval by the finance committee, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk, with the RFO, shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council. Once approved, it shall be included in the risk management plan.
- 2.4. **At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 2.5. **The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:**
- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
 - **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
 - **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
 - **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
 - **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
 - **ensure division of responsibilities.**
- 2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the Finance Committee.
- 2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

3. Accounts and audit

- 3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonably accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
 - **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
 - **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**
- 3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- 3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.5. **The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6. **Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit** and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.
- 3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by the finance committee and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.
- 3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:
 - is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
 - reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
 - can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
 - has no involvement in the management or control of the council
- 3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
 - perform any operational duties for the council;



- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
 - provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
 - direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.
- 3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in The Practitioners Guide.
- 3.11. The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts, including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.12. The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

4. Budget and precept

- 4.1. **Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its council tax requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.**
- 4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the finance committee at least annually in October for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the finance committee.
- 4.3. No later than October each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.
- 4.4. Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward (by placing them in an earmarked reserve) with the approval of the finance committee.
- 4.5. Each committee (if any) shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the finance committee not later than the end of September each year.
- 4.6. The draft budget forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the finance committee and a recommendation made to the council.
- 4.7. Having considered the proposed budget and forecast, the council shall determine its council tax requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.

- 4.8. **Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.**
- 4.9. The RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- 4.10. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.
- 4.11. Any addition to, or restructuring between, any earmarked reserves shall be agreed by the finance committee.

5. Procurement

- 5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2. The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.
- 5.3. Every contract shall comply with these the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.4. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.6. For contracts estimated to exceed £10,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by the council or advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation.-Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.
- 5.7. **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation¹ regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.**
- 5.8. For contracts greater than £3,000 excluding VAT the RFO shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes;

¹ The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.



- 5.9. where the value is between £500 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the RFO shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.
- 5.10. For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.11. **Contracts must not be split into smaller lots to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.12. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
 - ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
 - iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;
 - iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.
- 5.13. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the finance committee. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.
- 5.14. The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- 5.15. Individual purchases within an agreed budget heading may be authorised by:
- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items up to £500 excluding VAT.
 - the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council or Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items up to £2,000 excluding VAT.
 - a duly delegated committee of the council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items up to £5,000 excluding VAT.
 - in respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.
 - the council for all items over £5,000;
- Another manager may only authorise expenditure on behalf of the Clerk when he is absent on leave and has specifically delegated this authority in writing.
- Such authorisation must be supported by a minute, an email or other auditable evidence trail, duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary, also by the appropriate Chair.
- 5.16. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council.
- 5.17. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget heading other than by resolution of the council or a duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency. This limitation does not apply to those budget



headings that have a business income, as in these cases extra expenditure should be balanced against extra income.

- 5.18. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £3,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 5.19. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the person, committee or full council authorising it is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.
- 5.20. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £500 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.
- 5.21. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO.

6. Banking and payments

- 6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The council has resolved to bank with Lloyds Bank with additional deposits held by other banks to spread the risk and earn the maximum interest. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency.
- 6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.
- 6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by the RFO.
- 6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking, in accordance with a resolution of the council, a duly delegated committee or a delegated decision by the Clerk, unless the council resolves to use a different payment method.
- 6.6. For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National



Insurance, pension contributions, rent, rates, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the finance committee may authorise in advance for the year.

6.7. Not used.

6.8. A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the Finance Committee for information only.

6.9. The Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments in the following circumstances:

- i. an expenditure item authorised under 5.15 above (authority to spend), provided that the final cost is not more than 10% greater than the original value approved up to a maximum of £5,000. A list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the council or finance committee.
- ii. any other payments of up to £3,000 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.
- iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 or to comply with contractual terms, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of the finance committee, where the Clerk and RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the council or finance committee.
- iv. Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £200,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the council or finance committee.

6.10. Not used.

7. Electronic payments

7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify a number of officers who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process.

7.2. All full access users shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.

7.3. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.

7.4. The Service Administrator or an authorised finance officer shall set up all items due for payment online. Before setting up any online payment, the officer involved must examine the authorisation for expenditure (under paragraph 5.15), the confirmation of the delivery of the item or service, the relevant invoices and the authorisation to make the payment (under paragraphs 6.3 to 6.10). If the officer is not clear that all these are correct, they are to clarify the details with the RFO before setting up the payment. The documents showing these shall be passed to the second authorised signatory to be examined and signed before they approve the bank payment.

- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the RFO another finance officer shall be assigned the checking duties necessary until the return of the RFO. There should never be a need to relax the full range of checks due to staff absence.
- 7.6. Not used.
- 7.7. Evidence shall be retained showing which officers approved the payment online and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purposes.
- 7.8. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next finance committee meeting and appended to the minutes.
- 7.9. With the approval of the finance committee in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are approved online by two authorised officers. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by the finance committee at least every two years.
- 7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the finance committee provided that each payment is approved online by two authorised officers, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the finance committee at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 7.11. If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are approved online by two authorised officers, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the finance committee at least every two years.
- 7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the Clerk and the RFO. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.
- 7.13. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.
- 7.14. Remembered password facilities other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

8. Cheque payments

- 8.1. Cheques are not used by Sudbury Town Council, other than for cash withdrawals.
- 8.2. Not used.
- 8.3. Not used.



9. Payment cards

- 9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and the RFO and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £2,000 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.
- 9.2. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the Town Clerk. All transactions and purchases made must be reported to the RFO in writing on the day they occur and authority for topping-up the card shall be at the discretion of the Town Clerk.
- 9.3. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk, RFO, Business Manager and Operations Manager and any balance shall be paid in full each month.
- 9.4. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used under any circumstances.

10. Petty Cash

- 10.1. The RFO shall maintain a petty cash account of £250 and may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses.
 - a) Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept, along with receipts to substantiate every payment.
 - b) Cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.
 - c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on any schedule of payments presented for approval.

11. Payment of salaries and allowances

- 11.1. **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 11.2. **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**
- 11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or a duly delegated committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council or HR committee.
- 11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed by the finance committee to ensure that the correct payments have been made.



11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.

11.8. Before employing interim staff, the HR committee must consider a full business case.

12. Loans and investments

12.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.

12.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.

12.3. The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

12.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.

12.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

12.6. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

13. Income

13.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.

13.2. The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.

13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.

13.4. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.

13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.

13.6. The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.

13.7. Not used

13.8. Not used

14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works

14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.

14.2. Any variation of, addition to, or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

15. Stores and equipment

15.1. The officer in charge of each section shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment in that section.

15.2. Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

15.3. Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.

15.4. The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

15.5. The authority to write off stores and equipment shall be delegated to the same level as the authority for procurement in section 5.15.

16. Assets, properties and estates

16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.

16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

16.3. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters



such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).

No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, or a duly delegated committee or officer as per levels of authority in paragraph 5.15, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £1,000. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

17. Insurance

- 17.1. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.
- 17.2. The Clerk shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 17.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the finance committee at the next available meeting. The RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers in consultation with the Clerk.
- 17.4. All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined annually by the finance committee.

18. Charities - Reserved

- 18.1. Not used.

19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

- 19.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.
- 19.2. The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.
- 19.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.



Appendix 1 - Tender process

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
- 2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.
- 3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.
- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order 18 and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

