

Minutes of the **meeting of the Town Council** held at the Shire Hall on **Wednesday 18th March 2026 at 7pm**

Councillors:

Present: D Adelson, S Bale, E Beck, R Leach, S Miller, D Pegg, N Phipps, T Rogerson, S Sadler, R Sanders, M Sutton, K Turner, and M Wilks.

Apologies: G Holdcroft, E O’Nolan and C Walsh.

In Attendance: Town Clerk (Mr G E Diaper) and one member of the public.

1. Apologies

The Council agreed to approve the absence of Cllrs. G Holdcroft, E O’Nolan and C Walsh.

2. Declarations of Member Interests.

Cllr. Adelson declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 32 as a member of the Woodbridge Growers and stated he would leave the meeting prior to that item.

3. Requests for dispensations.

There were no requests for a dispensation in relation to items on the agenda.

4. Public Question Time

The member of the public present did not wish to address the Council.

5. To receive a short presentation followed by a question-and-answer session from Dillon Oliver, React IT Account Manager.

The Council noted that React IT were unable to attend the meeting. The Town Clerk was asked to organise for the presentation to be received during the working day.

6. To agree and approve the minutes of the meeting held 18th February 2026

The Council approved the minutes of the meeting held 18th February 2026 as a true record.

7. To note the receipt of the minutes from this Council's Committees:

- a. Planning – 18.02.26
- b. Finance – 25.02.26
- c. Climate and Ecological Emergency – 25.02.26
- d. Planning – 04.03.26
- e. Amenities – 04.03.26
- f. Highways and Transport – 11.03.26
- g. Finance – 11.03.26

With the agreement of those Members present, the agenda was re-ordered to allow for the Cllr. Leach to attend a meeting at Melton Parish Council

13. To note the receipt of a written report from County Councillor Leach.

The Council noted the receipt of a written report from County Councillor Leach.

14. To note the receipt of a written report from District Councillors Leach and Molyneux.

No report had been received from DCllr Molyneux.

15. To question the County and District Councillors on matters contained in their written reports.

CCllr. Leach answered questions from Councillors on a range of subjects including SCC developer requirement at Sizewell C, fuel payment support announced by central government, progress with repairs the Woodbridge station footbridge, Kingston Field badger set, East Suffolk Council car park ticket machines and cultural grants to Woodbridge based organisations.

16. Exchange of views on community resilience/ community cohesion. Is it necessary to try to re-establish a good neighbour scheme in Woodbridge as was established during the Covid lockdown.

The Council considered if it is necessary to try to re-establish a good neighbour scheme in Woodbridge as was established during the Covid lockdown – the Council's Emergency Response Group was a hugely successful initiative at a difficult time, however community cohesion has suffered since and the absence of such a scheme has been questioned by some residents. It was noted that (1) many organisations provide significant levels of support to residents in the town and any

initiative should take this into account; (2) the success of any such project needed to be resident led and not council led.

The Council agreed that the Mayor should make some initial enquiries into similar schemes in the area to understand the potential requirements of the Council and how volunteers are engaged. The Melton Good Neighbour Scheme was identified as a likely port of first call. A meeting would then be called open to all councillors.

17. To consider requests from County Councillor Leach for Council support for the following projects:

a. Deben Rotary Santa Sleigh

The Council agreed that in principal it supports the proposal that a third party be sourced to the keep the Santa Sleigh in Woodbridge with support from WTC. In particular, the issue of insurance would need to be settled Cllr. Sutton to approach the Woodbridge Town Football Club to seek their interest in the project. Councillors were asked to identify other potential third parties.

b. Sutton Hoo hopper bus

The Council unanimously endorsed the position of the Highways and Transport Committee that it fully supports the Sutton Hoo hopper bus proposal.

Cllr. Leach left the meeting.

8. To consider and approve Town Council payments list for March 2026.

The Council approved the Accounts and Payments List for March 2026 - **£57,371.55**

Cllr. Sutton abstained from the vote as he had submitted an expenses claim during March 2026.

The Council requested that should the sale of the Theatre Street toilet be completed, the overage payment returned to East Suffolk will account for a 50% share of costs incurred by the Council over the years to make the site safe and to market and complete the transaction.

9. To note the following Town Council Accounts:

The Council noted the following Town Council Accounts:

- a. Payments made since January Town Council Meeting – **£35,006.08**
- b. Direct Debit payments for January 2026 – **£3,203.30**
- c. HSBC Corporate Card payments for January 2026 – **£1,430.74**
- d. Bank Reconciliation and Supporting Statements to 31st January 2026 – **£862,225.40**
- e. Debtors report to 31st January 2026 (Confidential)

10. To note the Council's financial position as at 28th February 2026.

The Council noted its financial position as at 28th February 2026:

- a. Income and Expenditure Report to 31.01.2026 – Income **£728,333.00** and Expenditure – **£467,453.00**
- b. Balance sheet as of 31.01.2026 – **£830,814.00**

11. Openness and accountability of Woodbridge Town Council:

The Council noted the following reports:

- a. To receive a report from the Town Mayor** – The Town Mayor spoke to his report and reported on an enjoyable visit to the opening of the Art Haven at 15 Tide Mill. The Town Clerk was asked to agenda an item for six months hence to receive an update report from the Art Haven CIC.
- b. To receive report from the Chair of the Council's Amenities Committee** – Cllr. Miller updated the Council on the work of the Amenities Committee, which will be focused in the new financial year on the installation of a seating area in Elmhurst Park, delivering the priority projects from the Kingston Field consultation, and updating the Fen Meadow play equipment.
- c. To receive an update from the Town Clerk on Council projects** – The Town Clerk spoke to his report, addressing the ongoing insurance claim following the damage to the Woodbridge Community Hall and on budget costs for the setup of the in-house gardening of the Council's estate.

The Council agreed the following actions further to the report:

- The invoice payable to Chapel Properties for the emergency works at the Community Hall be paid from an in year nominal expenditure code at the choosing of the Town Clerk and Finance Officer, in order that the Council can clearly check the costs of this significant claim.

- Brawdria, the surveyors appointed by the Council's insurance to assess the damage to the Community Hall, be appointed to manage the procurement process to enable the re-building of the Hutchinson Room. The Town Clerk was asked to encourage Brawdria to appoint a local building company to undertake the work.
- The Town Clerk was asked to contact Tru7 group about the installation of alternative methods of opening and closing the Whisstocks Floodgate. Floodgate International be asked as to whether extra wheels should be fitted to the floodgate.

d. To receive a report from Cllr. Sanders regarding matters arising from the Sizewell/ NSIP meetings – Cllr. Sanders spoke to his report, highlighting the work of the ESCEP quarterly meetings for which he is the Chair, and the presentations that they receive from a variety of interested and impacted parties.

12. To consider the significant projects of the Council.

a. The Shire Hall – The Town Clerk provided an update on the Shire Hall window repairs, including the requirement from East Suffolk Council of a payment of £1,805.00 to suspend the parking bays on the Market Hill for the duration of the works. The Council agreed that the cost of this license be met from the Shire Hall Project EMR (340). A working group has been established with Councillor Sadler appointed as chair. Members of the working group were confirmed as Councillors Sadler, Miller, Turner and Sanders. The Deputy Clerk would be a member. The Mayor would be an ex-officio member. The working group would report monthly to the Town Council on progress with the shire Hall project.

b. In house gardening/ maintenance – The Council requested that Cllrs. Beck and Miller meet with the Town Clerk and Estates Officer to consider the governance of the in-house gardening, specifically focussed on the execution of the gardening plan and funding requirements of the Estates Team.

c. Local Government Reform – The Council noted that Cllr. Miller would Chair the new LGR Working Party which will focus on the due diligence of ESC assets under consideration for transfer to the Council. Members of the working group were confirmed as Councillors Miller, O'Nolan, Leach, Sutton, Sanders, Adelson, Sadler and Bale. The Town Clerk would be a member for now. The Mayor would be an ex-officio member. The working Group is tasked with undertaking in the first instance the due diligence of the green spaces owned by ESC. It will work with the Informed Citizen Panel led by Des Waters and seek the necessary information and support from staff at ESC. The priority assets were identified as Houchells Meadow, Newnham Avenue, Castle Street and the Boating pond.

18. To consider the financial forecast for the year end position and agree EMR movements where appropriate.

The Council approved the recommendation from the Finance Committee in regard of the Council's General Reserve position:

- The Council's Reserves Policy be updated to state that the General Reserve figure be targeted at £100,000 on April 1st, 2026.

The Council approved the recommendation from the Finance Committee in regard of the following year end movements from the General Reserve (310):

- £8,000 to EMR 325 (Amenity Projects)
- £3,000 to EMR 411 (Estate Resilience)

The Council approved the recommendation from the Finance Committee in regard of the following movement within the Council's Earmarked Reserves:

- £75,642.00 be transferred from EMR 353 (Capital Receipts) to EMR 343 (Shire Hall project).

19. To consider the asset register report for 2025/26.

The Council noted the asset register report for 2025/26 and agreed an asset register value of £980,319.45 be submitted as part of the annual return.

20. To confirm the time, date (Wednesday 13 May) and location of the Annual Town Meeting and have an exchange of views on the possible agenda items.

The Council confirmed that the Annual Town Meeting be scheduled for Wednesday 13th May at 7pm, and the Town Clerk asked to contact the Woodbridge Town Football Club for their availability.

The exchange of views proposed a number of potential topics for discussion, but the Council noted that the meeting is specifically for parishioners to raise matters of interest to the Council, rather than the Council dictate the agenda items to be considered. The Mayor was asked to make sure all speeches were tightly controlled. There was a view that 10 minutes was too long.

The Town Clerk was asked to prepare a draft agenda for consideration at the April meeting of the Council.

21. To consider and agree the 2025/26 CIL report.

The 2025/26 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) report, to be published on the Council's website and submitted to the District Council, was agreed.

22. To consider the meeting schedule for 2026/27.

The Town Clerk was asked to prepare a draft meeting schedule for consideration at the April meeting of the Council, including the following suggestions:

- Town Council meetings to start at 6pm, with no other meeting beforehand.
- Two meetings of the Planning Committee per month.

23. To consider a recommendation from the Amenities Committee regarding the land for sale at Brock Lane.

The Council approved the recommendation from the Amenities Committee that the Council does not seek to bid on the land for sale at Brock Lane.

Officers will monitor the sale and report on the outcome of the auction – should the land not sell the Amenities Committee will be notified and further consideration given.

24. To consider recommendations from the Finance Committee in regard of:

a. Investment Policy

The Council approved the recommendation from the Finance Committee and agreed to adopt the Investment Policy for Woodbridge Town Council as presented.

b. Risk register

The Council rejected the recommendation from the Finance Committee that the red risk in regard of the Theatre Street toilet be reduced to amber – the Council agreed to maintain the original red risk until the sale is completed.

The Council approved the recommendation from the Finance Committee for the addition of two new red risks, Local Government Reorganisation and the Sutton Hoo Ships Company boat launch.

The new register would be published further to submission of comments by Cllr. Adelson.

25. To consider and approve the Council's priority policies for:

- a. Health and Safety

This item was deferred.

26. To consider an IT policy for the Council in order to adhere to new digital compliance requirements as introduced as part 2025 edition of the Practitioners' Guide.

This item was deferred.

27. To note the letter authorised by the Highways and Transport Committee further to resident concerns raised in regard of the Active Travel Woodbridge project.

The Council noted the submission of a letter to the Active Travel Woodbridge project management team.

28. To exclude the Public and Press from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 because of the confidential information being discussed.

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29. To note the completion of Officer appraisals and consider any recommendations from the Staffing Committee.

The Council noted the completion of Officer appraisals and approved the recommendation from the Staffing Committee that the Deputy Town Clerk, Estates Manager and Maintenance Officer receive their contractual increase in SCP from April 1st, 2026. The Council also agreed the recommendation in relation to the finance admin officer and the further work to strengthen the clerking team in light of the workloads going forward.

30. To consider recommendations from the Property Working Party in regard of:

- a. Relocation options for the administrative function of the Council

The Council noted the latest options available for the potential relocation of the administrative function of the Council. In particular the Council agreed a target date for the move of April 2027 at the latest.

- b. Theatre Street toilet site sale

The Council noted the latest on the negotiations regarding the proposed sale of the Theatre Street toilet site and agreed that no further concessions should be made to complete the sale as set out in the Town Clerk's letter of 5 March.

31. To note upcoming meetings for the Town Mayor – any views on issues to be discussed:

The Council noted the upcoming meetings of the Town Mayor with Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP, the Seckford Foundation and Inspector Nicola Turner.

Cllr. Adelson left the meeting.

32. To receive an update on the Elmhurst Park kitchen garden – receipt of a further legal challenge.

The Town Clerk tabled the letter received from the solicitors acting on behalf of the Woodbridge Growers and spoke to the advice he had received from the Council's solicitors.

The Council discussed how it would reply to the points raised in the letter and mandated to the Town Clerk and Town Mayor to instruct the Council's solicitors accordingly.

33. Closure

The meeting was closed at 9.41pm.

Councillor Phipps, Chair