

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Committee** held at the **Shire Hall** on **Wednesday 14th January 2026** at **7pm**

Councillors:

Present: S Bale, S Miller, R Sanders and M Sutton.

Apologies: G Holdcroft, R Leach, T Rogerson and N Phipps.

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

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were approved for Councillors G Holdcroft, R Leach, T Rogerson and N Phipps.

2. Declarations of Member Interests.

No members made any declarations of interests in relation to items on the agenda.

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 agree and approve the minutes of the meeting held 10th December 2025.

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 10th December 2025 were approved as a true record.

6. To consider the fifth draft of the 2026/27 Woodbridge Town Council budget.

The Committee considered the fifth draft of the 2026/27 Woodbridge Town Council budget and noted that the forecast percentage increase of the precept be 26.4%.

Staffing

The Committee were advised by the Chair of the Staffing Committee of the recommendation to be made to Council about the employment of the Assistant Gardener, and the salary to be offered based on the advert. The staffing budget was updated accordingly.

The Committee also considered the employment timelines of the Assistant Clerk and Finance and Admin. Officer, and in the expectancy that the Council will look to appoint the Assistant Clerk in June with a start date in late July/ early August, altered the budget accordingly to account for the correct number of weeks that that person will be paid (34 down from 52). The Finance and Admin. Officer is expected to join in late April/ early May, therefore the works budgeted for have been reduced to 47.

Earmarked Reserves/ Local Government Reorganisation

The Committee considered the position of the Council's Earmarked Reserves, with a view to allocating in year funds for the expected work/ utilisation of consultants as part of the Council's due diligence into the potential impacts of LGR. The Committee had previously included a sum of £35,000 in the forecast for this purpose.

The Finance Committee recommend to Full Council that a new Earmarked Reserve is created, into which £20,000 of funds are diverted, taken from the following existing Earmarked Reserves:

EMR 315 – Future Years Maintenance (current balance £34,783.57) – £5,000

EMR 335 – Elections (current balance £10,000.40) – £5,000

EMR 442 – Shire Hall project (current balance £170,000) – £10,000

In the expectancy that Council will approve this recommendation on 21.01.25, expenditure line 4930 was reduced to £15,000. Combined, the sum of the EMR and 4930 provide £35,000 of funding for LGR due diligence.

Kingston Pavilion toilet

The Finance Committee considered a request from the Amenities Committee that £5,500 be allocated for the daily cleaning of the Kingston Pavilion toilet. The Committee were agreeable to this request and thanked the Amenities Committee for their work and plans for the improvement of Kingston Field.

Estate Resilience

The Chair reported that he had been unable to meet with Cllr. Beck to discuss the requirements of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee for funding toward the Biodiversity Action Plan (recognised as Estate Resilience in the forecast).

It was noted that £5,000 has been forecast for 4135/140, and there is an expected underspend from the current years balance of £25,000 which could be earmarked for use during 2026/27.

The Town Clerk was asked to include an item on the Town Council agenda, prior to the consideration of the budget, to enable Cllr. Beck to speak to the Biodiversity Action Plan and for the Council to agree the funding to be provided in the budget.

Taking into consideration the potential for additional funds to be provided in the budget for Estate Resilience, the Finance Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that the precept to be demanded from East Suffolk Council for the Financial Year 2026/27 should be £654,757, which represents an increase of 18.9%, makes a band D equivalent of £186.54, an increase of £29.59 a year or 57p a week.

- Precept - £654,757
- Band D Equivalents - 3510.07
- Band D Council Tax - £186.54
- Net Band D Increase - £29.59
- Percentage Terms - 18.9%
- Cost per week - £3.59
- Increase per week £0.57

7. Closure

The meeting was closed at 7.14pm.

Councillor Sanders
Chair