

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Committee** held at the **Shire Hall** on **Wednesday 24th September 2025** at **5.30pm**

Councillors:

Present: S Bale, P Gillard, N Phipps and R Sanders

Apologies: G Holdcroft, R Leach, S Miller, T Rogerson and M Sutton.

In Attendance: Town Clerk (Mr G E Diaper) and no members of the public.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were approved from Councillors G Holdcroft, R Leach, S Miller, T Rogerson and M Sutton.

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

There were no members of the public present.

5. To agree and approve the Minutes of the meeting held 25th June 2025.

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 25th June 2025 were approved as a true record.

6. To consider updates to the Council's Financial Regulations.

a – Checking of supplier payments.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that section 7.5 of the Council's Financial Regulations be updated to read (new wording underlined):

Two councillors shall check the payment details against the invoices, and these Councillors should also raise queries where they deem it appropriate on individual invoices and payments before confirming via return that the payment can be authorised using the online banking system.

b – Payments to Councillors.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that section 11 of the Council's Financial Regulations (Payment of salaries and allowances), be updated to include a new sub section at 11.9 to read:

All expenses submitted by Councillors in regard of travelling and subsistence claims in connection with discharging the duties of the authority or its committees or sub-committees, as well as payments to a Councillors private business, must be authorised at a meeting of the Town Council.

The Town Clerk was asked to add to the agenda for the October meeting of the Committee the consideration of Councillor expenses in regard of childcare and caring responsibilities.

7. To review the Council's Risk Management Schemes

The Committee agreed that for ease of understanding, the Council's Red Risks relating to individual properties be transposed directly in the main risk register. The summary risk for all Council assets to be removed.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that the red risk identified for Highways be downgraded to Amber. This decision is predicated on the work already undertaken on the Thoroughfare to improve the condition of the footway, and the improvement works proposed as part of the Active Travel Woodbridge proposals.

The Town Clerk was asked to add to the agenda for the February meeting of the Committee the consideration of the Council's amber and green risks.

8. To consider the first draft of the 2026/27 Woodbridge Town Council budget.

The Committee undertook an initial review of the Woodbridge Town Council draft budget for 2026/27, focussing primarily on the Council's forecast income and expenditure.

The Committee noted the significant impact of the proposed insourcing of the Council's gardening and await the Town Clerks fully costed report being presented to Town Council in October.

The Committee made the following changes

Income

- Pavilion property income increased to £4,500 in line with lease to Longfields.
- Whisstocks Quay income to be reinstated should an agreement be signed for the management of the houseboats at Whisstocks Quay.
- Wedding income reduced to £15,000 due to the Council's decision to permit a two month 'wedding window' in 2026 to allow for window repair work. The Committee agreed that Officers can take wedding bookings for the entirety of the 2027.
- The Committee noted the reduction in interest to received from the Council's accounts with Unity Trust and Suffolk Building Society.
- Capital Receipts removed as the sale of two Council properties expected to be completed in the current financial year.

Expenditure

- Grounds Maintenance contract expenditure removed in the expectancy of Council agreeing to insourcing.
- Salaries, Pensions etc increased in the line with the expected insourcing.
- The Committee noted the advice from the Council's insurers to expect a 30% increase once the three-year deal expires in October 2026.
- Town Council events reduced to £10,000 – Council should agree soonest whether any event directly organised by the Council, aside from Remembrance and Christmas, are required for 2026/27.
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust events removed – the Committee noted the success of these events over the four years the Council has funded them and thanked the Suffolk Wildlife Trust for their significant efforts.
- Grants budget increased to £25,000.
- All project funding removed – any new one-year projects to be considered must be fully costed before being presented to the Committee.
- Additional funding for International/ Twinning in the expectancy of a more formal twinning event.
- Shire Hall ring fence reestablished to £100,000.

9. Closure

The meeting was closed at 6.53pm.

Councillor Sanders
Chair