

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Committee** held at the **Shire Hall** on **Friday 31st October 2025** at **5.30pm**

Councillors:

Present: S Bale, G Holdcroft, R Leach, S Miller, N Phipps, R Sanders and M Sutton

Apologies: P Gillard, T Rogerson and C Walsh.

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

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were approved from Councillors P Gillard, T Rogerson and C Walsh.

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 24th September 2025.

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 24th September 2025 were approved as a true record.

6. To consider the Council's Expenses Policy.

The Town Clerk was asked to raise a query with the Suffolk Association of Local Council's and the Council's internal auditors regarding the provision of a 'Members Expenses Policy' for Woodbridge Town Council.

The Committee agreed that the provision of a childcare and carers allowance, up to a maximum amount yet to be determined, be a key consideration in any such policy.

7. To consider and agree the Council's Statement of Rental charges for the period April 1st 2026 – March 31st 2027.

The Committee approved the Town Clerk's proposal for the Council's Statement of Rental charges for the period April 1st 2026 – March 31st 2027.

The Town Clerk and Estates Officer were asked to ensure that hirers of tables and chairs on Whisstock's Place be confined to a demarked (with floor studs) area of the POS, and have a defined number of tables and chaired detailed on their hire agreement.

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

The Committee undertook their second review of the Woodbridge Town Council draft budget for 2026/27, which had been updated in line with the Council decision to bring in house its grounds maintenance from April 1st, 2026.

The updates were made to the budget spreadsheet:

Income

- Shire Hall income (ad hoc hires) – Increased to £2,500 further to increased usage of the space.
- Hire of Whisstock's Place – Increased to £5,000 in the expectancy of continued hires from local businesses and numerous ad hoc events.
- Interest received – Retained at £15,000 despite interest rate reductions – Council expects more money to be held in reserve so a similar amount of interest should be received.
- CIL – Retained at £6,000 – East Suffolk Council CIL portal provides a similar amount expected to be paid to WTC in 2026/27.

Expenditure

- In-sourcing – Figure from Town Council for 'in year' spend included as a single amount – Town Clerk to divide accordingly for draft no.3.
- Shire Hall cleaning – increased to twice weekly in lieu of increases hires.
- Staff training – increased to £2,500 in the expectancy of additional requirements on Officers as part of the LGR.

- Bank charges – Increased to £600 as HSBC charges have increased due to more transactions and dual signatories.
- Insurance – increased by 30% in line with guidance from Zurich.
- Addition of £100,000 for consultancy support/ project management as part of LGR consideration. Town Clerk to update the staffing budget to include possible new Officer positions.
- Kingston Field – £50,000 allocated to trigger discussion about the proposed improvements following public engagement/ public consultation.
- Tide Mill support – increased by £10,000 due to expected expenditure as part of the maintenance of the Tide Mill pond.
- Communication budget – following successful trial in the current year, new budget for Comms to include monthly ‘Mayors’ update.

EMR movements

- £20,000 contribution to the Council’s Play Area Equipment EMR in the expectancy that existing balance will fully utilised as part of the Fen Meadow improvements, and the requirements for some reserve to replace ageing equipment.

Members to be sent revised draft budget spreadsheet by Clerk to review impact on precept and consider need for further changes toward developing the budget .

9. Closure

The meeting was closed at 7.20pm.

Councillor Sanders
Chair