

Minutes of the **meeting of the Town Council** held at the Shire Hall on **Wednesday 23 September 2026 at 6pm**

Councillors:

Present: Cllrs. David Adelson, Sue Bale, Ellie Beck, Sharon Miller, Nigel Phipps, Simon Sadler, Robin Sanders, Michael Sutton, Katharine Turner and Catherine Walsh.

Apologies: Cllrs. Geoff Holdcroft, Ruth Leach, Eamonn O’Nolan, Doreen Pegg, and Martin Wilks.

In Attendance: Town Clerk (Mr G E Diaper), Head Gardener (Mrs J L Dighton) and five members of the public.

1. Apologies

The Council agreed to approve the absence of Cllrs. Geoff Holdcroft, Ruth Leach, Eamonn O’Nolan, Doreen Pegg, and Martin Wilks.

2. Declarations of Member Interests.

Cllr. Walsh declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 20 as a paid volunteer at the Deben Climate Centre.

3. Requests for dispensations.

The Council agreed that Cllr. Walsh could participate in the discussion at item 20 but not vote on any resolution in regard of the Deben Climate Centre.

4. Public question time.

A director of the Deben Climate Centre spoke to her organisation’s application for grant funding from the Council to help facilitate their ‘Community Supported Agriculture Project’ at Grange Farm, to which they hope to attract people and families from Woodbridge. She answered a number of questions. Agreed to setting up a site visit.

The organiser of the Suffolk Tractor Light parade introduced herself and her husband to the Council in advance of their fifth event scheduled for 13 December this year.

She also spoke to the grant application she has submitted to the Council to cover the costs of the traffic management for the event.

The Chair of the Woodbridge Riverside Trust addressed the Council about the acoustics of the Council Chamber.

5. To agree and approve the minutes of the meeting held 22 July 2026

The Council approved the minutes of the meeting held 22 June 2026 as a true record.

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

- a. Planning – 29.07.26
- b. Finance – 29.07.26
- c. Planning – 26.08.26
- d. Climate and Ecological Emergency – 02.09.26
- e. Amenities – 02.09.26
- f. Highways and Transport – 16.09.26
- g. Staffing – 16.09.26

7. To consider and approve Town Council payments list for September 2026.

The Council approved the Accounts and Payments List for September 2026 – **£18,038.60**

The Council noted that the accounts were checked by Cllrs. Bale and Beck.

8. To note the following Town Council Accounts:

- a. Payments made since the July Town Council Meeting – **£20,467.79**
- b. Direct Debit payments for July & August 2026 – **£336.67**
- c. HSBC Corporate Card payments for July – **£362.87** & August 2026 – **£1,295.86**
- d. Bank Reconciliation and Supporting Statements to 31st July – **£848,083.38** & 31st August 2026 – **£809,645.70**
- e. Debtors report to 31st August 2026 (Confidential)

9. To note the Council's financial position as at 30 August 2026.

- a. Income **£366,216.00** and Expenditure **£227,021.00** Report to 31.08.2026
- b. Balance sheet as of 31.08.2026 – **£780,559.00**

10. Openness and accountability of Woodbridge Town Council:

- a. To receive a report from the Town Mayor** – The Mayor spoke to his list of meetings attended since the July meeting of the Council, highlighting enjoyable recent visits to Lowestoft for an ESC conference, and Beccles Town Council as part of a peer review of that organisation. He asked if a councillor would volunteer to work with him on the discussions with Choose Woodbridge and East Suffolk Council on economic development of Woodbridge. He hoped that one or more members of the public would step forward to assist the Council.
- b. To receive an update from the Town Clerk** – The Council noted updates from the Town Clerk in relation to the Community Hall and Changing Places toilet project. The Council agreed that the invoice from Harrison Clarke Associates for the Health and Safety survey of the Community Hall, £3,300, be settled via EMR 350 (Community Hall). The Council asked that the Property Working Party consider the Heads of Terms for the Changing Places toilet at their next meeting.
- c. To receive a request from Cllr. Sadler in relation Town Council Comms** – Cllr. Sadler asked that any Councillors wishing to be involved in the 'Mayors Monthly' can contact him directly. Similarly, any proposals for future topics can be provided via email.
- d. To receive a report from Cllr. Sanders regarding matters arising from the Sizewell/ NSIP meetings** – Cllr. Sanders spoke to his report and was asked about support from Sizewell C for those properties to be affected by the nighttime goods trains. Cllr. Bale agreed to draft a letter to that organisation seeking compensation for those Woodbridge businesses to be affected.

Cllr. Sanders also advised of a planned closure of the East Suffolk line from 24 October to 15 November.

In addition, the Council will be updated on in the event of new information:

- i. The A12 upgrade** – Cllr. Turner advised that the Highways Committee will be submitting a response to the revised planning application that had failed to take into account the Council's concerns regarding the Grundisburgh Roundabout.

- ii. **East Suffolk Rail Line services** –The Mayor spoke to the ongoing efforts of the MP to secure improved services on the East Suffolk line.

- e. **To receive an update from Cllr. Adelson on the Town's Emergency Action Plan** – Cllr. Adelson advised the Council of the latest updates to the plan, including the positive news that the opening of a rest centre will be covered by the Council's insurance policy.

Cllr. Adelson spoke to concerns about the lack of ability to contact the Officers of the Council in an emergency – The Council asked that the Staffing Committee consider this matter at their next meeting – that being the consideration of a formal arrangement for overtime/ emergency cover.

Further to concerns raised in relation to fire risk at events organised on the Town Council estate, Cllr. Adelson and the Town Clerk were asked to update the Council's Terms and Conditions of Hire and present this for approval at a future meeting of the Council.

The Town Clerk was asked to print a copy of the Emergency Plan for each Councillor to keep at hand at their home address.

11. **To consider the significant projects of the Council.**

a. **The Shire Hall**

- i. **Receive an update and recommendations from the Shire Hall Working Party** – Cllr. Sadler spoke to the notes from the recent meetings of the Shire Hall Working Party, from which the Council agreed the following expenditure, payable from EMR 342 (Shire Hall project):

- Repairs to the foul water drains on the Market Hill (Drain Doctor) – £2,101.50 ex VAT.
- Up to a maximum of £10,000 for a feasibility study into the future use of the Shire Hall. Having agreed the content of the tender document, the Council delegated the appointment of the contractor/ organisation to undertake the study to the Shire Hall Working Party.

b. **Local Government Reform**

i. **What impact does the cancellation of LGR mean for WTC** – The Town Clerk advised of his recent involvement in a meeting including the CEO of East Suffolk Council, where it was stated that ESC remain interested in considering asset transfer of green spaces to Town and Parish Councils.

ii. **To receive an update from the green spaces due diligence working group** – The Town Clerk spoke to his paper which followed communication with the ESC Property Management Lead. Whilst ESC is not able to provide the due diligence information requested at this point in time, they can provide maintenance costs for the assets of interest to the Council. The Town Clerk was asked to consider the timescales for Officers undertaking the due diligence research from publicly available sources.

The Council noted the position of ESC that should they agree to the transfer of the 'prized assets' in town, they will expect WTC to also accept the smaller and less valuable assets as part of a deal.

The Mayor informed Council that the head of East Suffolk Services, Shayne Plant, has accepted an invitation to meet with Council at their next meeting.

iii. **To receive an update on the built spaces project** – The Town Mayor advised the Council that a proof-of-concept funding bid for the Deben Campus has now been submitted to East Suffolk Council.

The Council noted that ESC has a policy not to divest of income generating assets such as paid car parks, following an initial enquiry made the Town Clerk at the instruction of the Highways Committee.

c. **Greater Whisstock's area matters (Floodgate, Foreshore, POS etc)** – The Town Mayor and Town Clerk updated the Committee on a meeting held earlier in the day with Flood Duty Officers from the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency will be providing details of the number of gate closures at different tide levels and what the level should be set at if only 4 gate closures were to occur per year – which was the design specification for the gate.

The Town Clerk and Estates Manager were asked to consider maintenance requirements of the Whisstocks Quay, including the non-return flap valve and a survey of the structure under the path.

- d. **Kingston Field improvements** – Cllr. Miller advised that she was soon to meet with the Chair of the Woodbridge Tennis Club to discuss potential plans for the renovation of the Kingston Pavilion, and that the Amenities Committee await further reports from the Deputy Town Clerk in relation to play infrastructure on the field.

12. 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.

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

The Council noted the receipt of a written report from District Councillor Leach; nothing had been received from District Councillor Molyneux.

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

In the absence of the County and District Councillors, Members were asked to email any comments and questions to them.

15. To note the resignation of Cllr. Thomas Rogerson and to agree the Council's position in regard to co-option less than six months prior to local elections.

The Council noted the resignation of Thomas Rogerson, and a vote of thanks was agreed for his contributions to the Council over the past three years.

The Council agreed that if an election is not called, Officers should publish the vacant seat with a view to co-opting a new Member at the November meeting of the Council. The Town Clerk was reminded to update the application form to include a section asking interested persons to state any membership to a political party and other declarations needed under the Nolan principles.

16. To receive an update from the Town Mayor in regarding his ongoing discussions with the Woodbridge Riverside Trust, Sutton Hoo Ships Company and East Suffolk Council in relation to the Longshed.

The Mayor spoke to his update regarding his ongoing discussions with the Woodbridge Riverside Trust, Sutton Hoo Ships Company and East Suffolk Council in relation to the Longshed. He expressed his frustration at the SHSC's continued refusal to publish a launch date, thereby undermining the town's ability to plan events around the time of the launch, and to engage with a plan on the future of the Ship post-launch.

17. To note the receipt of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31 March 2026 and consider any actions required.

The Council noted the receipt of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31 March 2026, including the additional comment that the Council has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertion in Section 1, Box 10.

Further to the Council's efforts to comply with Assertion 10, the Council authorised the Town Clerk to purchase from *ReciteMe* their 'Accessibility Checker' tool at a cost of £2,850.00 ex VAT; the Town Clerk, Town Mayor and Chair of the Finance Committee were mandated to agree the nominal coding for the expenditure.

The Town Clerk was asked to continue his work on researching and recommending a workable Information Technology (IT) and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy for the Council. Cllrs O'Nolan and Phipps would, as previously agreed, continue to be available to assist in this work.

18. To consider the recommendations from the Policy Review Working Parties in regard of the Council's Priority Policies.

With the amendments proposed by the Council's three Policy Review Working Parties, the following policies were adopted for use by the Council:

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Terms of Reference (Including an update that Working Parties may execute the decisions of the Council).
- Press, Media and Social Media
- Freedom of Information
- Data Protection

19. To consider recommendations from the Council's Committees and Working Parties:

- a. **Property Working Party** – The Council agreed to the installation of a steel perimeter fence along the full length of boundary of Kingston Field adjacent to Kingston Farm Road. The Council noted that East Suffolk Council have reacted positively to an Expression of Interest submitted to their Thriving Places fund, which could see up to 70% of the project costs met by the fund, subject to a successful grant funding application. The Council agreed that funding for either the full cost, or a match funding amount, be delegated to the Town Clerk, Town Mayor and Chair of the Finance Committee, and to be reported back to Council once the project is complete. The project is expected to cost £15,000.
- b. **Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee** – The Council approved the recommendation from the CEE Committee to ban the use of fireworks on the Town Council estate. The Town Clerk was asked to update the Terms and Conditions of Hire accordingly.
- c. **Highways and Transport Committee (include request for volunteer to lead on reestablishing Neighbourhood Watch in Woodbridge)** – No Member of the Council volunteered to lead on the reestablishing Neighbourhood Watch in Woodbridge. However, Councillors were encouraged to come forward after the meeting if they felt able to help in the relaunch.

20. To consider requests for grant funding from the following organisations:

- a. **Salvation Army, Woodbridge Branch** – The Council agreed to provide a grant of £2375.00 to the Salvation Army, Woodbridge Branch, which covers the running costs for a single month supporting the people of Woodbridge. The Town Clerk, Town Mayor and Chair of the Finance Committee were mandated to agree the nominal coding for the expenditure.
- b. **Deben Climate Centre** – The Council agreed an in-principle position of support for the provision of funding to the Deben Climate Centre and remitted the first consideration of the matter to the Finance Committee. Members suggested options including grants, loans and support from the County and District Councillors as a shared means to raise the funds required.

21. To consider a proposal and associated costs from the Council's Estates team in regard of the Elmhurst Park Blossom Garden.

The Council agreed that £3,500 from EMR 325 (Amenity Projects) be provided to fund the creation of a Blossom Garden in Elmhurst Park.

22. To note the attendance by the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Mark Pendlington, at the Remembrance Children's Service, and consider plans for visits in the town thereafter.

The Council noted the attendance by the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Mark Pendlington, at the Remembrance Children's Service on 6 November. The Town Mayor asked that ideas for visits to local charities and organisations be provided to him via email.

23. To consider planning applications DC/25/4863/FUL, DC/26/2249/FUL & DC/26/2550/LBC.

The Council agreed that it has 'No objection' to the following planning applications:

DC/26/2249/FUL - Old Customs Cottage 5A Quay Street Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 1BX

DC/26/2250/LBC - Old Customs Cottage 5A Quay Street Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 1BX

DC/25/4863/FUL - Grove House Hotel 39 Grove Road Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 4LG

24. To consider the insurance for volunteers working under the control of the Estates team.

The Council asked the Town Clerk to continue, as a matter of urgency, his investigations into an insurance policy for volunteers working in Elmhurst Park, possibly through the Elmhurst Park charity of which the Council is the sole managing trustee.

The Property Working Party were asked to consider any update from the Town Clerk at their next meeting.

25. To consider what support the Town Council can provide for rough sleepers.

This item was deferred.

26. To consider updates to the Honorary Freeman and Freewoman of Woodbridge awarding protocol.

The Council agreed a number of changes to the Honorary Freeman and Freewoman of Woodbridge awarding protocol, with the aim of making the giving of the award more open and accessible to people now living outside of the town and it's neighbouring parishes, and to ex-Members of the organisation who had not served the Mayor/ Deputy Mayor/ Chair capacity.

27. 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.

The Council agreed 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.

28. To consider reports and recommendations from the Staffing Committee.

The Council noted the resignation of Mr Frankie Freeland from the position of Assistant Gardener to Woodbridge Town Council.

The Council agreed the advertising particulars for a replacement hire, agreeing that weekend working would not be part of the job role, the main focus of which would be plant care. The Council agreed with the position of the Head Gardener not to include the option of Saturday working. Weekends were simply not a suitable time for gardening on most of the estate. Weekend cover and emergency cover needs to be further discussed by the staffing Committee and should not be part of the Gardening staff responsibilities.

The Council further agreed that in principle it supports the employment of a second Assistant Gardener sometime in March/ April 2027 (with a job focus on lawn/ grass care). The Finance Committee were asked to give first consideration of the impact on the staffing budget for 2027/28 of the proposed second hire.

The gardening team were asked to present at their next quarterly meeting, which if possible should be held on a Thursday or Friday, a complete picture of 2026 and

2027 activity and likely funding needs. This would provide more context to the individual requests being received by Council and its committees.

29. To receive an update on the sale of the Theatre Street toilet site.

The Council noted that the proposed sale of the Theatre Street toilet site had collapsed.

The Property Working Party were asked to give first consideration of potential future uses for the area.

30. To receive a verbal update from the Town Clerk and Town Mayor following a meeting with the Woodbridge Community Hall Management Committee (meeting at 2pm on 23.09.26).

The Town Clerk and Town Mayor updated the Council on their meeting with the Chair and Treasurer of the Woodbridge Community Hall Management Committee earlier in the day.

At that meeting it was agreed WCHMC would supply updated drafting in relation to the shared repair and maintenance requirements for consideration as part of lease negotiations. The Property Working Party were asked to give first consideration of these proposals.

31. To receive an update from the Mayors and Deputy Mayors group regarding matters relating to the town's festivals.

The Town Mayor provided an update from the Mayors and Deputy Mayors group regarding matters relating to the town's festivals.

32. Closure

The meeting was closed at 8.48pm.

Councillor Nigel Phipps

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