Woodbridge TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **meeting of the Town Council** held at the Shire Hall on **Wednesday 21st October 2026 at 6pm**

Councillors:

Present:	Cllrs. David Adelson, Sue Bale, Ruth Leach, Eamonn O'Nolan, Doreen Pegg, Nigel Phipps, Simon Sadler, Robin Sanders, Michael Sutton, Katharine Turner and Martin Wilks.
Apologies:	Cllrs. Ellie Beck, Geoff Holdcroft, Sharon Miller and Catherine Walsh.
In Attendance:	Town Clerk (Mr G E Diaper), and five members of the public.

1. Apologies

The Council agreed to approve the absence of Cllrs. Ellie Beck, Geoff Holdcroft, Sharon Miller and Catherine Walsh.

2. Declarations of Member Interests.

Cllr. O'Nolan declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 21 as the Chair of the Deben Climate Centre.

3. Requests for dispensations.

The Council agreed that Cllr. O'Nolan could participate in the discussion at item 21 but not vote on any resolution in regard to the Deben Climate Centre.

4. Public question time.

Mr Ugur Vata spoke to the Council about the success of the local produce festivals held on the Market Hill. Mr Vata also requested that the commitment to provide public toilet facilities at the (currently closed) Theatre Street toilet site remains in place.

Mr Henry Palmer, who along with his wife, are the owners of Buttrum's Mill spoke to the Council about their plans for the development of the Mill into an asset for the town and its visitors. The Council expressed support for the provision of a letter of support for their application to the East Suffolk Council Thriving Places fund.

5. To agree and approve the minutes of the meeting held 23rd September 2026

The Council approved the minutes of the meeting held 23rd September 2026 as a true record.

6. <u>To present to Mr Moray MacPhail the award of Honorary Freeman of Woodbridge</u>.

The Town Mayor presented to Mr Moray MacPhail the award of Honorary Freeman of Woodbridge further to his service to the town as the Membership Secretary of the River Deben Association and as the founder of the Suffolk Repair Shed.

7. <u>To receive a presentation from Shayne Plant, East Suffolk Service Limited, followed by a Q & A.</u>

The Council received a presentation from Shayne Plant, the Facilities Manager from East Suffolk Services Limited.

Mr Plant firstly provided a general overview of his organisations work in Woodbridge – 824 'jobs' since July 2024 of which 85% were related to public toilets issues and repair. He advised that anti-social behaviour in Woodbridge is currently low.

Mr Plant provided specific feedback about the Model Boat Pond and Castle Street amenity area, including the two small parcels of land accessible from Chapel Street and Valley Close, which represent two of the four priority sites which the Council are considering for potential asset transfer from East Suffolk Council. The Town Clerk was asked to present to the Property and Green Spaces Due Diligence Working Parties a report of Mr Plant's presentation.

The Town Clerk was also asked to contact Mr Plant to advise of the trees adjacent to the railway line at the Model Boat Pond which the Council consider require attention.

Mr Plant was asked if he could share any tree survey data with WTC. The Council also indicated an interest in accompanying Mr Plant on a future review of ESC assets in Woodbridge. The Council thanked Mr Plant for his contribution.

8. <u>To receive a presentation from Claire Stadden, Woodbridge Art Haven.</u>

The Council received a presentation from Claire Staddon from the Woodbridge Art Haven, who presented to Council a summary of the numerous and successful creative and community focussed events which that organisation had hosted in the building sold to them by the Council earlier this year.

Claire or Mary-Anne were asked to return in six months for another update.

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

a. Planning – 30.09.26
b. Finance – 30.09.26
c. Staffing – 07.10.26
d. Climate and Ecological Emergency – 07.10.26
e. Amenities – 07.10.26

10. To consider and approve Town Council payments list for October 2026.

The Council approved the Accounts and Payments List for October 2026 – **£13,070.62.**

The Council noted that the accounts were checked by Cllrs. Pegg and Sanders.

11. To note the following Town Council Accounts:

a. Payments made since the September Town Council Meeting - **£14,567.35**
b. Direct Debit payments for September 2026 - **£703.29**
c. HSBC Corporate Card payments for September 2026 - **£1,549.62**
d. Bank Reconciliation and Supporting Statements to 30th September 2026 - **£1,089,651.94**
e. Debtors report to 30th September 2026 (Confidential)

12. To note the Council's financial position as at 30th September 2026.

a. Income **£712,181.00** and Expenditure **£276,186.00** Report to 30.09.2026
b. Balance sheet as of 30.09.2026 - **£1,074,609.00**

13. To note the receipt of the second half of the 2026/27 precept payment.

The Council noted the receipt of the second half of the 2026/27 precept payment.

14. Openness and accountability of Woodbridge Town Council:

a. To receive a report from the Town Mayor – The Town Mayor spoke to his list of engagements since the September meeting of the Council.

b. To receive an update from the Town Clerk – The Town Clerk advised that shortly before the meeting he had received confirmation from East Suffolk Council that planning permission would not be required for the installation of the Changing Places toilet at Hamblin Road.

   The Town Clerk was reminded that he must print sixteen copies of the Emergency Plan for collection by Councillors.

c. To note the feedback from the Beccles Town Council Peer Review – The Town Mayor reported on his involvement in the Beccles Town Council peer review, which was agreed by all parties to have been a worthwhile exercise. The findings of the report highlighted the necessity for local Town and Council Parish Council's to seek to work together to tackle the challenges facing East Suffolk market towns.

d. To receive a report from Cllr. Sanders regarding matters arising from the Sizewell/ NSIP meetings – Cllr. Sanders reported that there has been less activity in the last month than usual in relation to the Lionlink and Sealink applications, whilst Sizewell C continues to press the Environment Agency for additional water abstraction licenses.

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

   i. The A12 upgrade – Cllrs. Leach and Sanders attended the SCC Planning meeting where the application for the A12 improvements was considered and approved. Cllr. Sanders advises that SCC will meet the requirements of the NPPF in producing a construction phase logistics and traffic management plan. The Mayor has issued a press release re-iterating WTC's concerns.

   ii. East Suffolk Rail Line services – The Town Mayor reported that the MP for Suffolk Coastal has yet to publish her report on the proposals, and that a meeting previously planned for Westminster has been deferred and moved to Saxmundham.

15. **<u>To consider the significant projects of the Council.</u>**

a. The Shire Hall

i. Receive an update and recommendations from the Shire Hall Working Party. He reported on an extensive programme of meetings with third parties. He indicated that there was growing support for the shire Hall as a cultural hub and the group remain open to all ideas. But it remains early days. His report was well received by Councillors. Cllr. Sadler advised that he had received an additional quotation for the feasibility works for which the Council has already mandated the Shire Hall Working Party to appoint its preferred contractor up to a maximum value of £10,000. The Council agreed to increase that amount to £12,000.

b. Local Government Reform

i. To receive an update from the green spaces due diligence working group – The Town Clerk reported that he has requested maintenance figures from East Suffolk Council for the four priority sites and has registered with suppliers of online utility mapping which are easily accessible for all sites owned by ESC. The Working Party is trying to schedule a meeting to consider the documents available.

ii. To receive an update on the built spaces project – The Town Mayor advised that East Suffolk Council are willing to provided seed funding to the amount of £7,500 for the first stage of the Deben Campus feasibility study. The Council agreed to match that amount, payable from expenditure code 4930 (LGR).

c. Greater Whisstock's area matters (Floodgate, Foreshore, POS etc) - The Town Clerk and Estates Manager were asked to seek professional advice in relation to the condition of the River Wall/ Whisstocks Quay – the proposal to install wooden boarding in line with that in situ on the opposite quay was considered insufficient.

d. Kingston Field improvements – The Council noted the plans of the Amenities Committee to undertake internal modifications to the Kingston Pavilion to support its tenants, Longfields. The Town Clerk advised that Longfields were willing to sign a new lease as offered to them in May which a yearly rent set at £3,000 – the Council were agreeable to this proposal and asked the Town Clerk to prepare legal documents accordingly.

The Council noted the report that the 'Bears Wood' multiplay in Kingston Field (installed in 2003) has been identified for replacement in the next 2-3 years. The Finance Committee were asked to consider the allocation of funds to the Council's Play Area earmarked reserve in forthcoming budgets.

16. 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.

17. 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.

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

County Councillor Leach advised the Council of the progress of her recent application for further Traffic Regulation Orders for Woodbridge to protect junctions; she confirmed that the financial support from the Woodbridge Town Council Highways and Transport Committee was extremely welcome.

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

Cllr. Leach advised that the best thing that Members can do is to report rough sleepers via https://thestreetlink.org.uk/

The Town Clerk was asked to create a news item on the Council's website advising the public of how to use Streetlink.

The Property Working Party were asked to consider at their next meeting the idea of the Town Council providing support for homeless people in Woodbridge, potentially through the provision of a building for temporary accommodation.

20. To consider and vote on the nominations received for the Potter Community Cup.

The Council agreed to award the Potter Cup Community to the Riverside Musical Theatre Company.

21. <u>To consider a recommendation from the Finance Committee in relation to the request for grant funding submitted by the Deben Climate Centre.</u>

The Council agreed to defer the consideration of the recommendation from the Finance Committee pending the receipt of a business case from the Deben Climate Centre and a visit to Grange Farm to view the proposed site of the Community Farm.

22. <u>To consider the project plan for the Fen Meadow play area improvements and agree the next steps.</u>

The Council agreed to provide to the Amenities Committee delegated authority to complete the Fen Meadow play area project, up to a maximum project value of £85,000. If expenditure on the project is forecast to exceed that amount, Council must be informed at the earliest opportunity.

Upon completion, the Amenities Committee are to provide a project closure report.

23. <u>To consider a recommendation from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee in relation to the signing of an agreement with the Bee Café CIC.</u>

The Council approved a recommendation from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee that the Council enter into an agreement with the Bee Café CIC to regularise the future management of the Bee Cafes in Woodbridge.

24. <u>To receive the minutes from the October meeting of the Property Working Party and consider the recommendations therein:</u>

a. Shire Hall toilet renovation – The Council approved the recommendation that the Shire Hall main toilet requires refurbishment, and that the Town Clerk and Admin. Officer be mandated to appoint their preferred supplier and to allocate payment accordingly from one of the Council's 'Shire Hall' earmarked reserves. Officers were asked to ensure that full re-decoration of the toilet be included in the work, and that the toilet be made as accessible as possible through the installation of grab rails or similar infrastructure.

b. Submission to HM Land Registry for the freehold ownership of Elmhurst Park and Kingston Field – The Council approved the recommendation

to rescind the application to HM Land Registry seeking to register the freehold ownership of Elmhurst Park and Kingston Field in the name of the Council. The Town Clerk was asked to investigate and take legal advice where required, as to the creation of a new charity to manage all of the Council's green and open spaces.

c. Insurance cover for volunteers working in the Elmhurst Park kitchen garden – The Council approved the quotation from Zurich Charity Insurance to provide insurance cover for any volunteers working in the Elmhurst Park Kitchen Garden, payable from expenditure code 4905. Cllrs. Adelson and Phipps alongside the Town Clerk and Estates Manager were mandated to agree the particulars and documentation required to ensure the satisfactory enrolment and utilisation of the volunteers wishing to work on the Town Council estate.

   The Council agreed that part of the Elmhurst Park kitchen garden would be retained for community gardening activities.

25. <u>To note the receipt of interim internal audit and consider the comments provided by the auditor</u>.

The Council noted the receipt of the interim internal audit completed by Colin Poole of SALC/ Haverhill Town Council.

The Council agree the following actions in relation to comments provided in the audit:

1 – Pension re-declaration - The Council noted that the Town Clerk had submitted to the Pensions Regulation the Council's 'Pensions Re-declaration' on July 1st, 2026.

2 – Fidelity Guarantee – The Council noted the short-term risk of insufficient fidelity cover but agreed that as total funds will quickly be reduced to below £1,000,000, no immediate action is required. The Town Clerk to raise the matter with the Council's insurers when informing them of the Council's acceptance of a new policy.

3 – Asset register -The Council noted that a dynamic asset register will be maintained by the Finance and Admin. Support Officer.

4 – IT policy – The Town Clerk was asked to modify the Haverhill Town Council IT policy to reflect the needs of Woodridge Town Council, with a view to that policy being adopted by the Council. Cllrs. Adelson, O'Nolan and Sanders, alongside the

Town Clerk, were to meet with React IT to discuss any additional safe working practice and cyber security measures for councillors.

5 – The Council noted the template the Town Clerk will use to confirm the appointment of the internal auditor for forthcoming year.

26. To consider the quotations received for the renewal of the Council's Insurance cover.

The Council agreed to enter into a three-year agreement with Zurich Municipal to be the Council's insurer. The invoice would be payable from expenditure code 4905.

27. To consider the feedback received from the Whisstock's Place public engagement and agree future outreach.

The Council noted that there had been a very positive response about the town from residents and visitors. The main concern raised during the public engagement at Whisstock's Place was the lack of phone signal in the town. Parking issues were a close second. A report on the engagement was made available to Councillors. There was support for more such engagement events.

Cllr. Pegg was asked to provide a paper for consideration by the Amenities Committee in relation to the misuse of noticeboards in Woodbridge.

28. To consider if the Council wishes to comment on the proposal to record a public footpath along the route known as Doric Place.

The Council agreed that the Town Clerk should communicate to the Suffolk County Council Definite Map Officer it's unanimous support for the recommendation to record a public footpath along the route known as Doric Place.

29. To consider the 'Quarterly Business Review' provided for the Council by React IT.

The Town Clerk was asked to include the consideration of the Quarterly Business Review as part of the agenda for the November meeting of the Council.

30. 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.

31. <u>To consider a recommendation from the Grants Working Party in relation to Round 2 of the 2026/27 grant scheme.</u>

The Council approved the recommendation from the Grants Working Party to award the following grants as part of Round 2 of the 2026/27 Woodbridge Town Council grant scheme:

- Citizen's Advice Service £1000
- Just 42 £1000
- St Marys Church £500
- Tea House £800
- The Galley £500
- Suffolk Tractor Light Parade £1500
- Woodbridge Festival of Art & Music £1500
- 432 Woodbridge Squadron Royal Air Force Air cadets £1650

The Council noted that this decision leaves a balance of £6,240 for Round 3 (February).

32. <u>To consider recommendations from the Staffing Committee in relation to the Council's:</u>

a. Administrative Officer - The Council approved the recommendation from the Staffing Council that the Council's Administrative Officer be contracted to work an extra three hours per week, from April 1st, 2027. The Finance Committee were asked to accommodate this uprate in the 2027/28 staffing budget.

b. Strategic Change Management Specialist – The Council approved the recommendation from the Staffing Committee as to the person to be appointed to the position of Strategic Change Management Specialist for Woodbridge Town Council. The Finance Committee were asked to include six months allocation of that persons time in the 2027/28

staffing budget. The Town Clerk and Finance Officer were asked to ensure that the payments made to that person are accounted for separately from the payments made to the contracted Officers of the Council as this was not a salaried position

c. Deputy Town Clerk (Temporary cover) – The Council agreed to delegate the appointment of temporary/ locum staff as cover for the departing Deputy Town Clerk to a Working Party of the Staffing Committee (Cllrs. Bale, O'Nolan and Phipps, and the Town Clerk). It was noted that at this time, no immediate action would be taken in relation to temporary cover.

33. <u>Closure</u>

The meeting was closed at 8.40pm.

Councillor Nigel Phipps
Chair