

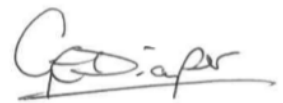
To Members of the Finance Committee

Cllr. Sue Bale
Cllr. Geoff Holdcroft
Cllr. Ruth Leach

Cllr. Sharon Miller
Cllr. Nigel Phipps

Cllr. Robin Sanders
Cllr. Michael Sutton
Cllr. Katharine Turner

You are hereby summoned to **attend the meeting of the Finance Committee** to be held at the **Shire Hall** on **Wednesday 30th September 2026 at 7pm.**



Greg Diaper

Town Clerk

25th September 2026

Public Attendance

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend. The public will be invited to give their views/question the Town Council on issues on the agenda, or raise issues for consideration of inclusion at future meetings. This item will be limited to fifteen minutes duration.

The Town Council, members of the public and press may record/ film or broadcast this meeting when the press and public are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends this meeting is advised that the Town Council cannot control 3rd party recording.

Woodbridge Town Council vision statement

The Council will strive to ensure Woodbridge is a safe, harmonious, and thriving town where all residents and the wider community feel welcome.

We will work to make Woodbridge a place where all generations can participate in a vibrant, inclusive society that is environmentally resilient.

Agenda

1. **Apologies.**

2. **Declarations of Member Interests.**

To receive any declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

3. **Requests for dispensations.**

To consider requests for dispensations from Members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest.

4. Public question time.

For the public to ask questions of the Council or raise issues for consideration at a future meeting of the Council. Fifteen minutes maximum – three minutes per person.

5. To agree and approve the [minutes](#) of the meeting held 29th July 2026.

6. To consider a response from the Planning Committee in relation to the requirements for a neighbourhood plan for Woodbridge.

7. To consider the current and forecast position of the Council's Staffing budget for 2026/27.

8. To consider the 1st draft of the Council's budget and precept request for the financial year 2027/28.

9. To consider a request for grant funding from the Deben Climate Centre.

10. To consider the funding for the Kingston Field barrier.

11. Closure.

Item 6

To consider a response from the Planning Committee in relation to the requirements for a neighbourhood plan for Woodbridge.

As part of the consideration of the Council's Risk Register, the following was recorded in the minutes in relation to planning/ economic concerns:

Planning/Economic – Planning Committee asked to take a position on the requirement for a local plan for Woodbridge. The Finance Committee would urge a pragmatic approach to the consideration – whilst it is recognised that securing a plan would provide some local benefit, the time requirements upon Councillors, Officers and residents, and the lack of ability of a plan to adopt quickly to changes in planning legislation, may outweigh the benefits. Working closely with the planning authority for a strong Woodbridge position in the new ESC Local Plan, may also be more achievable.

The Planning Committee considered this requested at their August meeting, with the followed provided in the minutes from that meeting:

10. To consider a request from the Finance Committee to take a position on the requirement for a local (neighbourhood) plan.

The Committee agreed that its preferred position is that Woodbridge has a strong representation in new East Suffolk Local Plan, rather than work to complete a neighbourhood plan. To this point, the Committee and Town Council will need to actively engage with East Suffolk Council during the preparation of the new Local Plan.

Subsequently, the Chair and Town Mayor have attended ESC meetings where neighbourhood planning has been discussed, and a verbal report on those discussions will be provided during this item.

Members are asked to consider a response from the Planning Committee in relation to the requirements for a neighbourhood plan for Woodbridge, and agree any next steps.

Item 7

To consider the current and forecast position of the Council's Staffing budget for 2026/27.

The Chair has requested that as the staffing budget represents the single largest item of expenditure in the budget; the current and forecast position is provided for consideration ahead of any discussion about next year's budget.

The total 'Staffing budget' for 2026/27 is £394,027, which is represented as follows in the operational budget:

4600	Salaries	£	232,312
4601	Salaries PAYE Tax/NI	£	83,587
4602	Salaries Pension Contribs	£	78,127

Six months into the year and with all back pay now paid to Officers, this is the current position:

	Actual Year to Date	Current Annual Bud	Budget Variance	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
<u>Overhead Expenditure</u>						
4600 Salaries	99,767	232,312	132,545		132,545	42.9%
4601 Salaries PAYE Tax/NI	38,443	83,587	45,144		45,144	46.0%
4602 Salaries Pension Contribs	30,105	78,127	48,022		48,022	38.5%
Total Overhead	168,315	394,026	225,711	0	225,711	42.7%

This item will focus on 4600 (Salaries), as the main contributor to the total amount. The % spent of 4602 (Pension Contributions) is lower than 4600 and 4601 as the Council budgetted for employer contributions of 20%, but this was reduced (post the agreement of our budget) to 17% by SCC following their actuarial valuation, meaning a forecast saving of around '£8000' on that expenditure code come year end.

4600 – Salaries:

The nominal ledger report for budget code 4600 is provided below – the amounts are quite stable from April – August, then a larger month in September to accommodate for back pay.

A/c Code	4600	Salaries				Annual Budget	232,312
Centre	160	Organisation				Committed	0
Month	Date	Reference	Source	Transaction Detail		Debit	Credit
					Opening Balance	0.00	
1	24/04/2026	BACS	Cashbook	Salaries April 2026		15,783.16	
2	22/05/2026	BACS	Cashbook	Salaries May 2026		15,452.87	
3	25/06/2026	BACS	Cashbook	Salaries June 2026		15,723.69	
4	24/07/2026	BACS	Cashbook	Salaries July 2026		16,635.74	
5	25/08/2026	BACS	Cashbook	Salaries August 2026		16,264.67	
6	25/09/2026	BACS	Cashbook	Salaries September 2026		19,906.51	
		Account Salaries			Account Totals	99,766.64	0.00
		Centre Organisation			Net Balance Month 7	99,766.64	

Without any consideration of overtime, the forecast salary payments for the remaining six months of the year are as follows – what this figure does however exclude are any potential payment to the proposed Strategic Change Management person, the employment of which the Staffing Committee are still progressing:

October – £15,447

November – £13,275

December – £15,135

January – £17,247

February – £17,247

March – £17,247

TOTAL – £95,598

YEAR END TOTAL – £195,364 (84.1%)

Forecast/ potential underspend (excluding Strategic Change wages) – £36,948.

Members are asked to consider the current and forecast position of the Council's Staffing budget for 2026/27.

Item 8

To consider the 1st draft of the Council's budget and precept request for the financial year 2027/28.

The process for setting the Council's budget was explained in the agenda for the July meeting of the Committee – the primary focus for the Committee from now until early January is to agree a budget and precept request to recommend to Full Council in mid/late January 2027.

The following was requested of the Town Clerk at the July meeting, and these sums and previous years figures have been included in the budget spreadsheet provided via SharePoint.

7. To discuss the Council's budget and precept request for the financial year 2027/28.

The Committee agreed that a new budget spreadsheet showing the actual spends from the previous and current financial years, and a budget for all four years of the forthcoming Council, be prepared for consideration at the September meeting of the Committee.

There was no consideration of the income and operational budgets; the Committee did agree the following in relation to the Town Support budget:

- Inclusion of a sum of £12,000 for WTC organised public events in 2027/28.
- Addition of £1,000 to the Christmas Lights funds (to £10,000)
- Inclusion of £10,000 in the expectancy of remedial work to the Tide Mill pond.

Income

The first draft of the income budget provides an amount of £86,946, around £6000 more than the current year.

As always, the income received via the service charges (1216, 1217 and 1218) will be updated in early January once the exact figures are calculated following the closure of the service charge year (calendar).

One unknown at the time of writing is the lease for the Kingston Pavilion Café – the current lease with Longfields expires on February 1st. The tenants were approached in May and again recently with the Council's offer of a two-year extension – no response has been received.

An increase in the forecast wedding income by £9000 is the main driver for the overall increase – with weddings possible throughout the year, the Council's Wedding Officer is

confident of securing a large number of bookings – interest has been very high in the last few weeks. During this shortened year we have taken over £26,000 of bookings. £18,000 is already secured for 2027/28.

Expenditure (Operating Costs)

The largest items in the Staffing budget are Staffing cost – there is a separate report on that forecast below.

Other items for consideration of highlighted in orange:

4030, 4040, 4050 – In house maintenance – Are these sums sufficient for the requirements of the gardening team, especially in light of potential expansion. An immediate requirement may also be the purchase of another vehicle should staff number increases. Much more work to do on this subject.

4125 – Toilet cleaning – Kingston Pavilion and Changing Places. In the current year it has not yet been possible open the Pavilion external toilet to the public, nor has the Changing Places project moved close to the opening of a facility.

4645 – The Town Clerk needs to investigate more the ever-increasing costs of virus protection and IT support.

4881 – Potential for reduction here – Claire (Finance Support) is working toward understanding the service charge accounting process, and if that process is fully understood, the fee for the external accountant can be removed.

4905 – Insurance – The Council's current insurance policy expires in October – tender documents have been sent to known insurers of local Council's, and Council will appoint insurers at the October meeting. Potential for a 20% increase has previously been advised.

At this early stage there is a £9000 increase – this figure is likely to increase after more detailed consideration of the budget by Members and Officers.

Expenditure (Town support)

Further to the addition of the funds agreed at the last meeting of the Committee, there is little change to the expenditure budget at the current time.

Highlighted in orange for consideration:

4135 – Estate Reliance – This amount was reduced in the current in year budget, but offset with money provided in reserves. Essentially a pot of money spent via recommendations

from the CEE Committee and their Biodiversity Action Plan, consideration as to how to fund their activities next year is required.

4131 – In light of the departure of the Deputy Town Clerk, does the Council wish to continue with organising a public event/ events in 2027/28 (aside from Christmas).

Staffing budget

The Council's Town Clerk, Finance Officer, Admin. Officer and Finance and Admin Support Officer will remain on the same SCP as the current year in line with previous agreements of the Council.

The Council's Estates Officer, Maintenance Officer, and Head Gardener will receive (on the assumption of successful year end appraisal), a contractual update of one salary point.

The Council employees two Wedding Officers on irregular hours contracts – the £960 provided in the budget is ample for their combined wages during the year.

These lines on the Staffing budget are show highlighted in blue and are settled positions.

At the time of writing there is uncertainty about the Deputy Town Clerk, Strategic Change and Assistant Gardener(s) (more on this later) – the Staffing budget is therefore far from finalised.

Column P – The Staffing budget forecasts for a 3% increase on gross salary as part of the yearly uprate in Local Government pay scales. For the current year, that increase was 3.3%.
Is 3% sufficient?

Column Q – Employer pension contributions reduced to 17%.

Future staffing requirements:

Members will recall the discussion at last week's Town Council in relation to requests from the Estates Manager and Head Gardener for additional gardening support moving into 2027 – the minutes from that meeting state:

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.

The advertisement for the existing position will soon be published – this Committee was asked by Town Council to consider the impact of a second assistant gardener on the budget (the report from the Estates Manager is provided on SharePoint).

Assuming both assistant gardeners are paid at the same rate, this would add an extra £30,000 to the staffing budget, increasing the overall precept request (as provided overleaf) by 6%.

Routine and Future Maintenance

This tab still requires work, but some additions have been made in account for increased costs in relation to defibrillator replacement and maintenance, replacement sand for the Kingston Field play area, maintenance of the Queen Victoria statue, twice yearly cleaning of the Shire Hall carpet – all of which were raised as requirements this year.

EMR contributions

As per last year in terms of small contributions to Shire Hall maintenance, Tide Mill and Greater Whisstocks EMR's – also include £50,000 Shire Hall ringfence (not included last year).

This early draft provides a 10% increase:

WTC requirement	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Total income (ex Precept)	£60,990	£229,476	£79,233	£86,946
Contribution to reserves	£87,004	£186,350	£13,438	£13,438
Shire Hall contribution/ ringfence	£50,000	£50,000	£0	£50,000
Expenditure (Operating costs)	£357,008	£379,343	£568,127	£577,775
Expenditure (Town support)	£73,500	£169,425	£152,425	£165,725
Budget	£430,508	£548,768	£720,552	£743,500
PRECEPT	£494,522	£555,642	£654,757	£719,991
Highlights	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Band D Equivalents	3378.86	3540.24	3510.07	3510.07
Band D Council Tax	£ 146.36	£ 156.95	£ 186.54	£ 205.12
Net Band D Increase	£ 20.96	£ 10.59	£ 29.59	£ 18.58
Percentage Terms	16.7%	7.2%	18.9%	10.0%
Cost per week	£ 2.81	£ 3.02	£ 3.59	£ 3.94
Increase per week	£ 0.40	£ 0.20	£ 0.57	£ 0.36

Members are asked to consider the 1st draft of the Council's budget and precept request for the financial year 2027/28.

Item 9

To consider a request for grant funding from the Deben Climate Centre.

Council considered the following (redacted – Salvation Army info removed) item at its meeting on September 23rd:

Item 20

To consider requests for grant funding from the following organisations:

- a. Salvation Army, Woodbridge Branch.**
- b. Deben Climate Centre.**

Uploaded to SharePoint are grant funding requests (outside of our normal grant scheme) from the Salvation Army, Woodbridge Branch, and the Deben Climate Centre.

Deben Climate Centre

The following was received by the Town Clerk and Town Mayor on 15 September:

Dear Councillor Phipps and Town Clerk,

Please find attached an application from the Deben Climate Centre for funding support for their Community Garden at Grange Farm. We would appreciate the funding application being considered at the upcoming Council meeting on the 23rd of September, 2026, since the autumnal weather is now perfect for preparing the ground for planting.

I have included both pdf and doc.x versions of the application. Please let me know if you have any questions about the application.

Yours sincerely,

*Wendy Herniman
Director
Deben Climate Centre*

Members are asked to consider requests for grant funding from the following organisations.

The (redacted) minutes from that meeting state:

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

- a. 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.

Uploaded to SharePoint is the application from the Deben Climate Centre.

Members will recall that the Council used to maintain an EMR for 'Community Projects' – it was decided at the October meeting of the Council in 2025 that the entire funds provided in this EMR be reallocated to fund the start up costs required for the in-house gardening of the Council's estate:

EMR 360 – Community Project

Earmarked reserves are funds set aside for specific projects, initiatives, or expenditures – of all of the Council's EMR's, the Community Project EMR, is the most poorly defined and at risk of being questioned by the public and auditors as to why the Council are holding public funds without clear reason.

These funds were nominally set aside for a potential project in the Melon Pit (which was scuppered by the threat of legal action by the neighbour – that space would be used to keep the Council's vehicles), and to support the potential develop of a Community Garden at Grove Court, which the Council understands has not been successful.

The balance of EMR is £35, 274.

At the request of Full Council, the **Finance Committee are asked to consider the potential of financially supporting the Deben Climate Centre in their attempts to create a Community Supported Agriculture Project' at Grange Farm, Hasketon.**

Item 10

To consider the funding for the Kingston Field barrier.

Full Council, further to a proposal from the Property Working Party, have agreed that the Council will install steel perimeter fencing on Kingston Field:

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.

The Chair has asked that this item be provided to the Committee for consideration as to how the funds, either the full or match funded amount, can be found within the Council's in year and Earmarked Reserve budget. The Town Clerk will provide some guidance as to the options available.

Members may be interested to note that Felixstowe Town Council has recently taken similar steps to protect its estate:

<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/26577585.new-railings-felixstowe-park-traveller-encampment/>

Members are asked to consider the funding for the Kingston Field barrier.