

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Committee** held at the **Shire Hall** on **Wednesday 30th September 2026** at **7pm**

Councillors:

Present: Cllrs. Sue Bale, Sharon Miller, Robin Sanders, Mike Sutton and Katharine Turner.

Apologies: Cllrs. Ruth Leach, Geoff Holdcroft and Nigel Phipps.

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

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were approved from Councillors Ruth Leach, Geoff Holdcroft and Nigel Phipps.

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 29th July 2026.

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 29th July 2026 were approved as a true record.

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

The Committee noted the response from the Planning Committee that their preferred position was not to undertake a full neighbourhood plan, and that members from that Committee were soon to meet with the ESC Officer responsible for neighbourhood planning to discuss how the Council can be fully engaged in the new local plan.

The Committee further agreed that in line with this position, no funding would be required in forthcoming budget.

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

The Committee noted 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.

The Committee felt unable to make any changes to the draft budget due to current uncertainties at the Council in relation to project timescales and staffing matters.

The Amenities and CEE Committees were asked to prioritise their ongoing projects, the Town Clerk to provide a full list of all major projects, and for the Council to meet informally to consider its direction for the forthcoming term.

In relation to the request from Town Council to consider the proposed second 'Assistant Gardener' hire, concerns were raised about the impact of the hire on the budget (the standalone costs of a second hire would add 6% to the Council precept), and therefore no formal decision was taken at the meeting. Members also raised the potential of WTC withdrawing from an asset transfer process with ESC in order to allow the Head and Assistant Gardener to focus solely on the maintenance of the Council's existing estate, rather than being forced to make plans for an enlarged area of ownership.

The Staffing Committee were asked to provide detail as to the financial implications of the proposed Strategic hire and consider the staffing structure in light of the resignation of the Deputy Town Clerk.

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

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that due to the lack of a full business case and detail as to how the proposals would be to the benefit of Woodbridge residents, that the request for funding to the amount of £17,000 is not provided to the Deben Climate Centre.

The Committee was also concerned that the provision of such a significant sum of money to a single organisation in order to seed fund the start-up/ capital costs of their project was not in the best interests of the parish or its inhabitants, nor

commensurate with the amount spent, as is the guidance on grant giving provided in section 137 of the Local Government Act.

There remained in the room support and enthusiasm toward the project, and at the point when the Deben Climate Centre can demonstrate the direct benefit of the project to Woodbridge residents, that organisation will be encouraged to apply to the Woodbridge Town Council grant scheme for funding in line with amounts provided to other organisations operating in the town who support the needs of parishioners.

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

The Committee agreed that if the Council is successful in receiving grant funding for the project via the East Suffolk Council Thriving Places scheme, that the Town Council contribution to the project can be met from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) reserves.

If the Council are not successful in receiving grant funding, then the entire cost of the project, forecast to be £15,000, can be met from EMR's 315, 377 and 411, with the Town Clerk, Town Mayor and Chair of the Staffing Committee mandated (by Council) to agree the final amounts from each.

11. Closure

The meeting was closed at 8.25pm

Councillor Sanders
Chair