

**SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
**HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024 AT 6.30PM**

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Committee members present: Mr S Hall – Chair  
Mr N Bennett  
Mr J Jeagar  
Ms E Murphy

Officers in attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk

1. SUBSTITUTES AND APOLOGIES

**Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs P Berry-Kilby, Mrs J Osborne and Mr A Welsh. Councillor Mr N Bennet was the substitute for Mr A Welsh.**

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

**There were no declarations of interest.**

3. DECLARATION OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

**There were no declarations of gifts or hospitality.**

4. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

**No requests for dispensations had been received.**

5. MINUTES

**RESOLVED**

**That the minutes of the Leisure and Environment Committee meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.**

6. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Town Clerk advised members that the restoration of the US war memorial had been successful, and he had asked for quotes to clean and, if necessary, restore the plinth under the Gainsborough statue. The bamboo on the Croft and the digital noticeboard will be discussed later under items 13 and 14.

**RESOLVED**

**To note the Town Clerk's report.**

## 7. TO REVIEW THE NUMBER OF COMMUNITY WARDENS REQUIRED IN FY2025-2026

The Town Clerk explained the calculations of available working hours from the operations team and how these hours might be allocated to various Tow Council areas of work. With the current workforce of two community wardens and one apprentice, this came to 5,090 working hours over the year. In addition to this, the Town Council employed a market and cemetery operator and a street warden, adding another 3,046 working hours. This gave a grand total of 8,136 working hours in the year, as shown in the table below.

	Budget Code	Operations Team Members							Calculated	Required	Percentage	
		Warden 1	Warden 2	Apprentice 1	Apprentice 2	Street Warden	Operator Market and Cemetery					
Hours per Week			37	37	37	0	30	37	178	178		
Annual Working Hours (FY2025-26)		1,672	5,090	1,672	1,709	1,709	-	1,337	1,709	8,136	8,136	
Market Duties	201	6%	4%	99	99				790	988	988	10%
Town Hall Tasks	211	3%	3%	52	52	52			53	209	209	2%
Street Cleaning and Weeding	214	8%	8%	140	140	136		802		1,218	1,218	15%
Cleaning Public Toilets	215	2%	2%	30	30	29		535	156	780	780	8%
Allotments	221	1%	1%	15	15	10				40	40	0%
Watering	321	3%	2%	45	45					90	90	1%
Other Grounds Maint	239	7%	7%	125	125	90				340	340	4%
Cemetery Grounds Maint	241	28%	29%	474	511	475			630	2,090	2,090	26%
Burial Duties	241	4%	2%	60	60				80	200	200	2%
Civic Tasks	901	1%	1%	15	15	15				45	45	0%
Parish SLAs	341	12%	11%	200	200	141				541	541	7%
Community Tasks	341	19%	20%	320	320	357				997	997	12%
CSAS Tasks	341	1%	1%	25	25	25				75	75	1%
Training / Administration/Sick	341	4%	4%	72	72	37				181	181	2%
Apprentice Education Time	341	0%	7%	0	0	342				342	342	4%
		100%	100%	0	0	0		0	0	-	-	0%
				1,672	1,709	1,709	-	1,337	1,709	8,136	8,136	

It would be possible to take on a second apprentice, once the operations manager role had been filled. It was not anticipated that this would be practical until April 2025 at the earliest, but members were keen to keep funding for a second apprentice in the draft budget for FY2025-2026 if affordable.

Members discussed the impossibility of taking on time critical commitments for other local authorities, or outside bodies, as any sickness would prevent the Town Council delivering the service. Members were clear that services for Sudbury would always take priority over services delivered for others, but that where the delivery could be flexed forward or back a week, it should be possible to cover both. The Town Clerk undertook to ensure that any future service level agreements (SLAs) would clearly state that no services could be guaranteed to be delivered on a fixed date or time and that, if planned staff were not available, Sudbury's requirements would come first.

### RESOLVED

**That the funding for a second apprentice would be retained in the draft budget v2.0 for FY2025-2026 to be considered by the Finance Committee in November.**

**That services for Sudbury would always take priority over services delivered for others and that any future service level agreements (SLAs) would clearly state that no services could be guaranteed to be delivered on a fixed date or time and that, if planned staff were not available, Sudbury's requirements would come first.**

## 8. TO REVIEW THE CEMETERY, CROFT AND MILL ACRE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE WORK

The Town Clerk had circulated the notes from the members' visit to the cemetery on 16<sup>th</sup> September, which are summarised below;

- There must be set standards for what is allowed to grow on a grave. These should be a modest size (under 2'6") and regularly maintained by the family of the deceased.
- If there is no active family maintenance, the grave should be cut flat.
- There should be a policy for non-growing flowers or offerings placed on graves. This should allow for their removal as soon as they become wilted or dirty.
- There should be a check of the rules for other large cemeteries, including Church of England rules, and the best ones should be incorporated into Sudbury's regulations.
- Grass cutting must start on the first dry day in February.
  - Second grass cut on the first dry day in March.
  - Plan to cut the grass every 10 days from the start of April through to the dry summer weather.
- If any planned cut is missed due to poor weather, it must be done on the next dry day. This will take priority over other planned grounds maintenance tasks.
- Grass clippings must not be left on grave headstones. This will be less of an issue if the grass is kept short.
- Some sections of the new hedge appear to be dying of neglect. These need to be weeded and watered if necessary.
- The cemetery hedge should be regularly trimmed all through the spring and summer and never allowed to grow out over headstones. This should not adversely affect birds nesting in the hedge.
- If the cemetery paths are to be kept clear of encroaching grass, they would need to be treated with weedkiller such as glyphosate. To do this, at least two staff would need to be trained to use glyphosate weedkiller. Alternative options of using a mechanical path clearer would be investigated.
- The programme of winter cutting back of the bushes and small trees is to continue to open the paths and uncover lost graves.
- The bushes around the chapel need to be cut back and dangerous plants treated with weedkiller (ivy and buddleia). They are not to be pulled out of the walls.
- All new memorials are to be inspected as soon as possible after installation to ensure that they conform to the Council's policy and quality standards.
- The edge of the cemetery from Flint Lodge to the compost compound needs to be cut back and maintained in a neat condition. Old headstones should be sensitively handled, recorded, and kept in the best condition possible.

The Town Clerk explained the proposed grounds maintenance schedule for the Newton Road Cemetery for 2025, which is summarised below;

### January (90 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (30 hours)
- Winter cutting of hedges, bushes and trees. (60 hours)

### February (190 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (30 hours)
- Winter cutting of hedges, bushes and trees. (60 hours)
- First grass cut 100 hours

## March (170 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (30 hours)
- Winter cutting of hedges, bushes and trees. (60 hours)
- Second grass cut (80 hours)

## April (265 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (20 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Third grass cut (80 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours) x 3

## May (235 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (20 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours) x 4

## June (235 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (20 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours) x 4

## July (235 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (20 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours) x 4

## August (185 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (20 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours) x 3

## September (175 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (60 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours) x 2

## October (125 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (60 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)
- Standard grass cut (50 hours)

## November (95 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance, or a grass cut if required. (60 hours)
- Trimming hedges, bushes and trees. (15 hours)

## December (90 hours)

- General tidying work and path clearance. (30 hours)
- Winter cutting hedges, bushes and trees. (60 hours)

**Annual total 2,090 working hours for the Newton Road cemetery**

The Town Clerk explained the proposed grounds maintenance schedules for the Croft, Mill Acre and the closed cemeteries for 2025, which are summarised below;

January

- Winter checks and tidying (12 hours)

February (40 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre - First grass cut 12 hours
- St Gregory's - First grass cut 16 hours
- All Saints - First grass cut 12 hours

March (40 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Second grass cut 12 hours
- St Gregory's – Second grass cut 16 hours
- All Saints – Second grass cut 12 hours

April (40 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 3)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 2)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 2)

May (40 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 3)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x2)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x2)

June (40 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 3)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 2)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 2)

July (40 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 3)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 2)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 2)

August (24 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 2)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 1)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 1)

September (24 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 2)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 1)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 1)

October (16 hours)

- Croft and Mill Acre – Standard grass cut 8 hours (x 1)
- St Gregory's – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 1)
- All Saints – Standard grass cut 4 hours (x 1)

November (12 hours)

- Winter checks and tidying (12 hours)

December (12 hours)

- Winter checks and tidying (12 hours)

**Annual total 340 working hours for these other open areas**

**RESOLVED**

To note the plans and the estimated working hours required for the grounds maintenance of the cemetery, the Croft, Mill Acre and closed cemeteries.

That the Town Clerk arrange another visit for members to see the realities of cemetery grounds maintenance and the options for maintaining the paths.

That the Town Clerk come back to the committee with further details on the cost and effectiveness of using mechanical or chemical methods of keeping the cemetery paths clear of grass and weeds.

9. REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR COUNCIL SERVICES FOR FY2025-2026

Members reviewed the fees to be charged for the other services listed below in the Financial Year 2025-2026.

Market Fees

Flint Lodge Rent

Room Hire Fees

Francis Road Permits

Cemetery Fees

Allotment Fees

Shop Mark-Up

Community Warden Services

**RESOLVED**

**Market Fees – That the market fees remain unchanged as an incentive to promote trade in the town centre.**

**Cemetery – That the cemetery fees be increase by the ONS CPI(H) rate for September 2024, which is 2.6%, rounded to the nearest whole five pounds.**

**Flint Lodge – That Flint Lodge fees would be discussed under Private and Confidential matters at the end of the meeting.**

**Allotment Fees – That there should be no change in the allotment fees this year, however in future the fees would be raised to the next highest whole five pounds when necessary to maintain their value with inflation, in order to enable the allotments to run at a neutral cost. This would be notified to the allotment holders at their next meeting so that it would not come as a surprise.**

**Room Hire fees – That the room hire fees be increase by the ONS CPI(H) rate for September 2024, which is 2.6%, rounded to the most appropriate whole pound.**

**Shop Mark-Up – That the shop mark-up remain the same.**

**Parking Permits – That the cost of parking permits for Francis Road remain at £75 each, however in future the fees would be raised to the next highest whole five pounds when necessary to maintain their value with inflation.**

**Community Wardens – That Community Wardens’ services be charged out at £32.50 per hour with use of the vans charged at 65p per mile, which is in line with the true cost of the council. No agreements will include any commitment to a time critical service as Sudbury tasks will always be the highest priority.**

**Any other fees will remain the same for the Financial Year 2025-2026.**

**10. TO REVIEW THE NUMBER OF LITTER AND DOG WASTE BINS EMPTIED BY BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL IN FY2025-2026**

Members discussed the locations of the 62 dog waste bins and 49 litter bins provided by the Town Council. A member of the public was present and raised concerns about the pair of bins in Acton Lane, near the pathway through to Fields View. She reported that these were regularly full and overflowing. She asked if there was a number that she could call to get the bins emptied once they were full.

Members discussed the possibility of having only one general bin in locations that currently had both a dog waste bin and a litter bin, as all the waste from both was collected and treated as one by Babergh District Council staff.

Members noted that the cost for Babergh District Council staff to empty the bins was expected to increase from £69 to £83 per bin per year for the FY2025-2026, bringing the annual cost for the 111 bins to £9,213. This was a 20% increase on the current year.

**RESOLVED**

**That officers are to confirm the details of all current bins and the schedule for Babergh District Council to empty them and bring this back to the committee.**

**11. TO REVIEW THE PLANNED EXPENDITURE FOR FY2025-2026 IN ACCORDANCE WITH FINANCIAL REGULATION 4.5**

Members noted the financial pressure on all budget areas. A member of the public had written questioning why Town Council charges had to rise and clearly it was difficult to explain the need to balance the budget. Members were content that they had reviewed all the planned expenditure under their remit and recognised that the Finance Committee would have to look at the overall affordability of the budget.

**RESOLVED**

**That the planned expenditure under the remit of the Leisure and Environment Committee had been reviewed as required by the financial regulations.**

**That the meeting be extended by 30 minutes to allow it to continue until 9:00pm.**

12. TO REVIEW THE WEED CONTROL ON THE HIGHWAYS

Members remained concerned that the treatment of weeds on the highways by Suffolk County Council had not been effective this year. Emails had been exchanged between Babergh District Council and Suffolk County Council discussing the finer points of which level of local authority should be responsible to which elements of weed control. Cllr J Carter, who sat on all three levels of local council, was trying to get clarity on what action would be taken.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Town Council should continue to lobby both Babergh District Council and Suffolk County Council to encourage them to work in a coordinated manner to control and remove weeds in Sudbury throughout the year.**

13. TO REVIEW THE BAMBOO GROWING ON THE CROFT.

The Town Clerk advised members that he visited the garden adjacent to the bamboo growing on the Croft and confirmed that it did appear to originate from that garden. The bamboo appeared to be running bamboo and would need to be completely dug up to stop it spreading further. The Town Clerk intended to buy cutting blades for the strimmers so that the community wardens could cut down the bamboo, prior to investigating options for digging out the roots.

**RESOLVED**

**To note the action being taken to remove the bamboo.**

14. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE DIGITAL NOTICEBOARD

The Town Clerk explained that a planning application for a digital noticeboard on the Old Market Place to the front left of the Town Hall had been submitted to Babergh District Council. This would allow the widest possible engagement with residents who were in favour or opposed to the proposal. Once planning permission had been obtained, detailed funding options could be explored.

**RESOLVED**

**To note the progress on the digital noticeboard.**

15. TO AUTHORISE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £1,500 EXCLUDING VAT ON THE REPAIR OF THE POTHoles BEHIND THE TOWN HALL, NOTING THAT A LONG-TERM PERMANENT SURFACE CANNOT BE INSTALLED UNTIL LEGAL ASPECTS HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.

The Town Clerk explained that, with the onset of autumn weather, the condition of the car park behind the Town Hall had deteriorated rapidly. There were 12 large potholes that were becoming a danger to vehicles. The other properties backing on to the car park had the right to cross the Town Council's land and these potholes would need to be repaired.



The full resurfacing of the car park had been approved by the Leisure and Environment Committee in April 2024 at an estimated cost of £18,000, but this could not go ahead until the legal aspects of ownership, parking and transit rights of the other properties were confirmed. This was not an easy task, as the Town Council had spent time and money getting solicitors to go through the deeds in 2020 without a clear result, as some key documents could not be found.

The Town Clerk recommended that a contractor was engaged to repair the current surface at a cost of £1,476 excluding VAT which could be done in the next few weeks. Once the materials had been ordered, the other businesses would need to be warned that the car park would be closed for a few of days whilst the work took place.

**RESOLVED**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.133, expenditure of up to £1,500 excluding VAT is authorised for the repair of the potholes behind the Town Hall.**

**16. TO NOTE THE EXPENDITURE OF £1,100 EXCLUDING VAT ON A HEAT LOSS SURVEY AND TO AUTHORISE A FURTHER EXPENDITURE OF £5,000 ON ANY ADDITIONAL WORK REQUIRED TO PREPARE TO ISSUE THE TENDER OF THE HEATING SYSTEM REPLACEMENT**

The Town Clerk explained that a heating design engineer had been engaged to visit the Town Hall and make a technical assessment for a heat loss survey that would confirm the size of heating system required. This had cost £1,100 but had the potential to save tens of thousands of pounds if a smaller, simpler heating system could suffice. Once the technical report had been received, further funds may be required to produce a suitable tender. To avoid further delays, the Town Clerk asked for authorisation to spend up to a further £5,000 on any necessary preparatory work.

**RESOLVED**

**To note that the heat loss survey had been conducted at a cost of £1,100 excluding VAT.**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.133, expenditure of up to £5,000 excluding VAT is authorised for additional work required to prepare to issue the tender for the replacement of the Town Hall heating system.**

**17. TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL RISE FOR INFLATION FOR THE FLORAL CONTRACT, CALCULATED USING THE SEPTEMBER 2024 OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS CPIH FIGURE OF 2.6%. THIS IS THE SECOND YEAR OF THE 3-YEAR CONTRACT AND WILL BRING THE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £21,033 EXCLUDING VAT.**

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council were at the end of the first year of a three-year contract for the floral displays in the town centre. The contract allowed for an annual increase for inflation based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) CPIH inflation rate as published each September. The rate for September 2024 was 2.6%, so the initial year's cost of £20,500 would rise to £21,033 for the second year of the contract. Authorisation for all three years of the contract had been given by the full council in October 2023, but the Town Clerk felt that it was appropriate for the committee to note and authorise the annual increase.

**RESOLVED**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.144, the additional expenditure of up to £533 excluding VAT is authorised for the second year of the floral contract.**

**That the meeting be extended by 30 minutes to allow it to continue until 9:30pm.**

**18. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND FAIR**

The Town Clerk explained that the new management team had examined the requirements for the Christmas lights and the Christmas Fair and had allocated sufficient trained staff for these activities. There had been some variation in costs and this would be addressed in the next item.

**RESOLVED**

**To note the plans for the Christmas lights and Christmas Fair.**

**19. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR CHRISTMAS FAIR AND LIGHTS SWITCH ON FOR £1,330 FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND UP TO £700 EXCLUDING VAT FOR FIRST AID COVER**

The Town Clerk explained that whilst the Christmas Fair had many stalls, rides and food options, there had always been interactive entertainment for some or all the night suitable for all ages. In previous years there had been stilt walkers and character performers. This year, the working group had decided to not have the character performers and to focus on stilt walkers for the evening. In addition, Sudbury Dramatic Society had offered to help this year at the Christmas Fair with panto cast members in hired costumes. Their estimate was that this would cost £200 to £250 per character, so a maximum of £750 for 3 characters.

**RESOLVED**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.144, the expenditure of up to £1,330 excluding VAT is authorised for two LED stilt walkers and two circus elves for 3 hours of roaming entertainment during the Christmas Fair.**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.144, the additional expenditure of up to £750 excluding VAT is authorised for the hire of costumes for use by members of Sudbury Dramatic Society to wear as additional roaming entertainment during the Christmas Fair, subject to sufficient funds being available within the authorised overall budget for the Christmas Fair.**

**That, under the power of the Local Government Act 1972, s.144, the expenditure of up to £700 excluding VAT is authorised for first aid medical cover during the Christmas Fair.**

**RESOLVED****EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

**That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified in item 20 as the publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.**

20. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON FLINT LODGE REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS AND TO AUTHORISE UP TO £5,000 FOR WORKS.

**RESOLVED**

See PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL Annex A pages 689 to 690.

The meeting concluded at 9:29 pm.

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Chairman

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