

# SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

## FINANCE, POLICY and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Minutes

of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held at the Chamber, Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth at 7:20pm on **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

#### **Those present**

Cllr Eric Buckmaster  
Cllr Ruth Buckmaster  
Cllr Nathan Parsad-Wyatt

Cllr Reece Smith  
Cllr Steve Smith

#### **In attendance:**

Christopher Hunt - Town Clerk  
Cllr Annelise Furnace  
Lisa Nolan – Finance Officer

#### **F 24/27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Greg Rattey  
*[prop Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt sec'd Cllr R Smith]*

#### **F 24/28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

#### **F 24/29 MINUTES**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (F02).  
*[prop Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt sec'd Cllr R Buckmaster]*

Owner	Action	Update
Clerk	The Clerk to explore if the traders would open the What's App group to all councillors	Carried forward due to the absence of Cllr Rattey

#### **F 24/30 STAFF MATTERS**

To consider any matters relating to members of staff.  
The Clerks report was referred to highlighting the local government pay increases and increment levels that have been thoroughly assessed and agreed upon. These adjustments have been carefully considered and incorporated into this year's budget. This ensures that the financial planning accurately reflects the latest pay scales and increment levels, providing a fair and competitive compensation structure for all employees.

#### **F 24/31 FINANCE MATTERS**

Budget 2025/26

The draft budget and Clerk's report for the year 2025/26 were discussed, and various areas of the budget were explored to assess accuracy, with the following three points leading this scrutiny:

- Do you want to continue with the current level of services?
- Will the budget stand up to scrutiny?
- Are you happy to justify the budget to precept payers?

Following the debate, it was agreed by all members to recommend that the full council adopts the proposed budget for 2025/26 with a precept of £479,835 (2024/25: £452,775). This represents an increase of 4.95%

(£5.46 per annum) on Band D equivalent housing, equating to £2.23 per week or £0.32 per day.

*[prop Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt sec'd Cllr R Buckmaster]*

**F 24/32 JUBILEE GARDENS**

Update on the current project status, The Clerk reported that he had sought three quotes for the tree felling which varied from £14,400, £10,500 to £6,650. Members agreed the cheaper quote should be pursued if the company met insurance and qualification criteria and were reputable.

It agreed to get the trees removed as per the plan so the funding can start to be spent after the delays faced applying for the tree removal and pre planning advice.

**F24/33 COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT**

The Clerk explained that the cross border council meetings with Sheering, Hatfield Heath and High Wych have produced healthy debate and it was agreed that another meeting should be arranged for late February.

**F24/34 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

To discuss proposals for promoting economic development in the town: The Clerk explained that due to Cllr Greg Rattey being the lead on this matter a full update will need to be made on his return at the next meeting. He also updated the members on the huge success of the Christmas project 'Gifts of Love' This was echoed by Cllr Reece Smith who had received positive feedback from a resident who had been the recipient of Christmas gifts from the project.

**F24/35 POLICY MATTERS**

To consider any matters relating to policies for the future development of Town Council services to the community.

- Financial Regulations - The Clerk explained some of the areas that were legally required to be in the financial regulations and some areas where discretion on limits could be made.

**Approved**, the draft document, Financial Regulations 2025, to make a recommendation for adoption of the Regulations by Council.

*[prop Cllr S Smith sec'd Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt]*

- Risk Assessment 2025-2026, the risk assessment was explained by the Clerk being a legal requirement and had a copy of the proposed risk assessment available hard copy at the meeting for scrutiny.

**Approved**, the draft document, Risk Assessment 2025-2026.

*[prop Cllr R Smith sec'd Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt]*

**F24/36 INCOME and EXPENDITURE REPORT**

**Noted**, The Clerks variance report for month nine of the 2023/24 financial year

**F24/37 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

All opportunities for funding will be explored, the Clerk had been contacted by Essex County Council and was exploring funding to cover the Sawbobus reaching Lower Sheering and possibly linking into Essex bus services.

**F24/38      REDUCING THE COUNCILS CARBON FOOTPRINT**

To discuss the progress of the reduction of the councils carbon footprint. The Clerk explained that the budget aligned with the Action Plan and towards the council reducing its carbon footprint. Cllr Angus Parsad-Wyatt was exploring a commuter bus service to the train station reducing the number of vehicles travelling to the station. Energy suppliers were to change at the end of their current contracts to find greener suppliers.

**F24/39      ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

None raised for this meeting.  
Nothing raised

Meeting Closed at 8:08pm

**ACTIONS**

Owner	Action	Update
Cllr Rattey	The Clerk to explore if the traders would open the What's App group to all councillors via Cllr Rattey.	To be carried forward