FREEPORT EAST | Felixstowe Gateway 14 Harwich

A GLOBAL FREEPORT FOR A GLOBAL BRITAIN

FREEPORT EAST LIMITED
SUPERVISORY BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors of FREEPORT EAST LIMITED (Company) on 20th April 2026, Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk Council, East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton, Suffolk, IP12 1RT

PRESENT:	NAME	POSITION	
	Mark Lemmon	Chair	
	Steve Beel	Chief Executive Officer	
	Dr Robert Singh	Director	
	Sir Christopher Haworth	Director	
	Cllr Richard Smith	Director	
	Cllr Andrew Mellen	Director	
	Andrew Lawrence	Director	(via MS Teams)
	Cllr David Beavan	Director	
	Cllr Ivan Henderson	Director	
	Cllr Lesley Wagland	Director	

IN ATTENDANCE:	NAME	ORGANISATION	
	Simon Papworth	Freeport East	
	Daisy Newton	Freeport East	
	Andy Burgess	Alternate Director	
	Jacinda Love	Freeport East	(via MS Teams)
	Laura Mayne	Freeport East	(via MS Teams)
	Steven Wilson	Freeport East	(via MS Teams)
	Alex Courage	Freeport East	(via MS Teams)
	Tom Nickalls	Freeport East	(via MS Teams)
	Sophia Padget	Freeport East	(via MS Teams)
	Alison Ford	MHCLG	(via MS Teams)
	Danielle Patterson	East Suffolk Council	
	Michelle Gordon	Mid Suffolk District Council	
	Paul Wood	East Suffolk Council	(via MS Teams)
	Mark Taylor	Hutchison Ports UK	(via MS Teams)
	Helen Rudd	Harwich Haven Authority	(via MS Teams)
	Sam Jones	Essex County Council	
	Lisa Roberts	Suffolk County Council	(via MS Teams)
APOLOGIES:			
	Clemence Cheng	Director	
	Marie Finbow	Freeport East	

1. Notice and quorum

The Chair declared the meeting open.

2. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the Freeport East Supervisory Board meeting.

Apologies were received from Clemence Cheng.

Apologies were received for Lorraine Rogers (S151 Officer of East Suffolk Council) with Danielle Patterson representing East Suffolk Council on her behalf until Loraine was able to join the meeting at 3pm.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed.

The Board approved the minutes from the last meeting with no inaccuracies recorded.

4. Declarations of interest

Directors present declared that they had no new interests which they were under a duty to disclose in accordance with section 182 of the Companies Act 2006 (The Act) in any existing transaction or arrangement or section 177 of the Act in any proposed transaction or arrangement with the Company or was otherwise required to be disclosed in accordance with the Articles.

No other declarations of interest were shared.

5. Risk Summary & Work Programme Delivery Update

The Board **noted** the contents of this summary report.

The Chief Executive provided the Board with an overview of the changes made within the risk register since the previous Board meeting in March.

Risk No. 20 – Inflation Costs – while this risk had gradually over recent years it had now been increased from green to red to reflect the active conflict in the Middle East and subsequent potential increases in inflationary pressures and interest rates.

Risk No. 23 – Lack of Resource – The Board were notified of the reduction in the risk rating, although continuing to remain amber. The change was made due to Board level approval of the 2026/27 operational budget and providing sufficient capacity and resources, The Chief Executive noted the budget is not yet approved by all Members.

It was noted that Risk No. 20 should be reviewed in order to reflect a broader perspective on macro-economic pressures that could impact on Freeport East objectives.

ACTION: Update Risk Register for Risk No. 20 – Inflation Costs.

The Board agreed with the current Risk Register, and no further questions were raised.

The Chief Executive noted that this was the last report against the 25/26 Work Programme and this would be updated for future meetings to reflect the new 26/27 Business Plan.

It was noted that Tax Site Updates would also be covered under the later agenda item on seed capital.

The Chief Executive mentioned Assan Panel's factory on Gateway 14 will be opening in June and the Skills and Innovation Gateway will be opening in July. Also shared with the Board was that the grant agreement in relation to support for development costs at the Anzani Avenue Felixstowe site is now in place.

The Board noted that Colchester Institute has been selected as a Clean Energy Technical Excellence College and looked forward to their role in supporting the wider Freeport East agenda.

The Board also noted the impact of the Sunspot in Clacton/Jaywick and the process involved in securing funding from SELEP. The Board agreed that continuing to identify appropriate means to support areas of acute deprivation should be a priority for Freeport East in collaboration with other organisations.

The Chief Executive shared with the Board that the majority of programmes undertaken under the umbrella of either Innovation & Skills or Clean Growth Fund are now practically complete with the remainder finalising in the coming months. There has been delays in drawing down the funds but broadly they have been delivering against their deliverables albeit slightly slower than hoped.

The Board were made aware of the evaluation paper which would be brought to the Board at a subsequent meeting.

The Board questioned whether the University of Suffolk's completion date had already been extended or whether this was the original date. Freeport East confirmed that due to the multiple strands within the programme, the completion date had been pushed back.

ACTION: Provide an overview of the MENTA ISF funded programme outcomes to Cllr Beavan.

6. Government Policy update

The Board **noted** the contents of this summary report.

The Chief Executive provided an update on ongoing Ministerial engagements, delivery of the Industrial Strategy Zone Action Plan, Assan Panel and the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway. Also highlighted was the upcoming meeting with the Office for Investment on 21st April which is focused on the Strategic Sites Accelerator £600m investment fund.

Freeport East is scheduled to meet with Minister Stockwood & MHCLG in the coming weeks and are hoping to extend an invite to the opening of the Assan Panel facility which is planned for early June.

The Chief Executive notified the Board that four expressions of interest were submitted to the Strategic Sites Accelerator, and the Connections Accelerator Service is supporting Felixstowe to accelerate the grid connections. Updates in relation to these projects will be received throughout April.

The Board were presented updated imagery of both Assan Panel & the Skills and Innovation Gateway which are both nearing completion.

The Board also received further updates in relation to Assan Panel following Freeport East's visit earlier in the day; their first export to northern Europe via the Port of Felixstowe is scheduled to leave next week.

7. Finance & Audit Committee Update

The Board is requested **to note** the contents of this paper.

Cllr Smith gave assurance to the Board that the Risk Register is examined at the Finance and Audit Committee meeting and there was nothing significant at this point to flag to the Board. He also noted that the organisation continues to work within its budget envelope, with an expansion in staff numbers, albeit slightly underspent overall.

Cllr Wagland emphasised that this will be Cllr Smith last meeting and huge thanks were provided to Richard for all his hard work and support since the very beginning of the Freeport East initiative. The Chair and Board all offered their thanks to Cllr Smith.

The Chair brought Appendix A – Replacement of Board Representative to the attention of the Board, noting the Finance & Audit Committee discussed two potential solutions, with the preference being to select a replacement prior to the next Audit Committee if possible. The Board concurred with this.

The Board also raised the importance of having a political presence within the committee (i.e. a local Councillor representative) with experience and appreciation of the Freeport's development.

The Chair then requested for the Board to delegate powers to The Chair & the Section 151 Officer (as Chair of the Audit Committee) to develop a proposal for the appointment which would then be shared with relevant directors for approval.

All Board members **approved** the proposed process for relevant Board directors to approve the appointment via email. *

**Relevant Board directors exclude candidates who have offered themselves for this role, and Richard Smith and Lesley Wagland who have resigned from the Supervisory Board.*

The Supervisory Board were asked to **approve** the Forecast Rates Statement for 2026-27 FY.

The statement sets out the forecast of retained business rate income and allocations across different costs and Pots for the FY26/27.

The Board all raised hands in vote of **approval** for the Forecast Rates Statement 2026-27.

8. Governance Review Implementation Plan - Update

The Board was asked **to note** the progress against the Governance Review Implementation Plan (Annex A).

A number of the Board noted continuing reservations amongst public sector Company Members in relation to the proposed governance efficiency measures, in particular in relation to the streamlining of Member Consent Matters.

Andrew Lawrence noted that he felt private sector Company Members were supportive of the streamlined processes for approvals but he did not object to a delay to allow further consideration.

Lorraine Rogers entered the meeting at 15:05pm.

It was proposed that the Chief Executive and Chair should engage directly with Members to seek appropriate resolution to how governance processes can be made more efficient in support of the Company Objects. It was noted, for example, that the majority of Members had still not approved the annual Business Plan and Budget which created unnecessary uncertainty and administrative burden for the Company even whilst the Directors had provided their full support.

The Board shared their willingness to take this matter back to their relevant Member organisations to support the case for greater efficiency.

9. Seed Capital update

The Board are asked to note the update on seed capital delivery and support the planned approach for use of any surplus seed capital spend from the Harwich project.

The Chief Executive provided updates around the Felixstowe Seed Capital project; it continues to progress positively, with two financial drawdowns made against the remediation and flood risk works. The works to support a new cable route and new substation are being prepared for tender, however the works to the existing substation will need to be undertaken by UKPN. Although the volume of available spare power is not at the maximum level required, these works shall allow what is possible to be utilised. The Chief Executive also informed the Board of how four different options for the cable corridor were considered. The preferred corridor route would run further east being ending at the new primary substation close to the main port entrance and at the heart of the freeport development site.

Updates were then provided to the Board around the Harwich Seed Capital project; there are two main elements to this project, one of which is focused on the transportation works which is progressing slowly due to the engagement with Network Rail and largely dealing with third parties. The other element is related to the grid connection which has been subject to detailed engagement and optioneering with UK Power Networks in order to secure sufficient capacity for Green Energy Hub. The Chief Executive shared with the Board how the estimate for grid connection had now reduced and was expected to be up to £2m to cover the works on the existing substation, a new cable route and new substation.

The Chief Executive further explained how, if the newly estimated costs end up being accurate, this would leave a surplus that was proposed to be redeployed to other development costs required for the project. This would keep it in line with previous approvals provided by MHCLG and taken through the Freeport East board. In particular this was likely to allow progress of specific site investigation works and potential capital works to support the new small boats harbour. It was noted that Freeport East team and a number of Board members were keen to prioritise efforts to deliver the small boats harbour as this would provide very tangible progress and benefit to local communities. , Freeport East will continue to explore this further over the coming weeks together with Hutchison Ports before returning to the Board.

The Board were then made aware of a meeting which recently took place with the Crown Estate and National Wealth Fund, who have subsequently highlighted how they are keen to engage to support the Bathside Bay project. This had also been supported by the updated market analysis report which Freeport East had commissioned from Opergy. A copy of the report would be circulated to the Board in due course.

Tendring DC highlighted to the Board how they have written to the Secretary of State Ed Milliband regarding the importance of Bathside Bay and how it is supportive of the Government's targets. A positive response has been received from Minister for Energy Michael Shanks, who is willing to meet to discuss further.

10. Indicative Allocation of current Freeport Pot C Funds

The Board were asked to note the latest position on Pot B funding allocations and support the proposed indicative allocation of currently available Pot C funds in order to allow further proposal and business case development, and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

The Capital Projects Plan was noted as a long-list of key projects that were capital in nature and included all the 14 transport masterplan priorities as well as a range of other investments that would support growth of Freeport East. It was noted that not all were intended for Freeport East financial support but also included those that we would advocate and seek to attract other funding for.

The Chief Executive introduced the proposed allocations of £3.35m of the available Pot C funding. This included allocations to the Bathside Bay development costs, a number of transport initiatives (including a possible capital contribution to a major transport project, support for Harwich-Felixstowe connectivity and funds for detailed studies), as well as £1m for local private sector growth support. It was noted that the proposed allocations would not use all of the available funds and would not all be spent in the current financial year and therefore would retain sufficient flexibility for future decision-making. However, by ear-marking funds at this stage it would allow the Executive to prioritise their focus and efforts on specific projects and initiatives.

The Board queried whether consideration should be given to supporting revenue focused projects aiming to deliver against both skills and innovation. The Chief Executive noted that once the Innovation & Skills Fund evaluation had been completed it would allow an assessment of these types of options.

The Board supported the proposed allocations and would await for further detailed analysis to return to the Board for subsequent approvals.

11. Comms Update

The Board were asked to note the Comms report.

Freeport East notified the Board of their attendance at UKREiiF in Leeds where we shall be sponsoring both the Suffolk County Council & Essex County Council pavilions.

Dr Robert Singh shared his willingness to support Freeport East throughout his attendance at UKREiiF.

12. Forward Plan

The Board were asked to note the Forward Plan.

13. Any Other Business

The Chair provided thanks to Cllr Richard Smith for all his help and support and contributions whilst being with Freeport East.

Cllr Richard Smith gave thanks and highlighted his enjoyment as a Director from the very start and noted we are at the top of the list of Freeports and wishes the Freeport all the best success.

The Chair shared his and other board members gratitude towards Cllr Lesley Wagland as there is a chance that she may find herself in position whereby she is no longer present at the Freeport East board if she were not to be re-elected as Councillor.

Thanks were also provided to Paul Davey ahead of his retirement from Hutchison Ports.

14. Close

Meeting closed at: 15:56pm

The next meeting is scheduled for 22nd July 14:00 pm – 16:00pm

Mark Lemmon Chair

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