



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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AMENITIES AND TOURISM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 6th January 2026

Committee Members: Cllr E Godwin (Chairman)
Cllr T Hughes (Vice Chairman)
Cllr S Barnett
Cllr J Belsey (Town Mayor)*
Cllr M Belsey
Cllr H Farren
Cllr J Mockford
Cllr A Peacock*
Cllr S Reeves (Deputy Town Mayor)*
* = absent

In attendance: Town Clerk
Cllr S Ody
Community & Tourism Manager
Cemetery and Compliance Manager
Estates Manager

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None present.

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr A Peacock offered his apologies which were noted.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Barnett, Farren, Hughes and Mockford declared their interest in item 33 as trustees of Chequer Mead Theatre.

25. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2025.

26. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair opened the meeting by wishing all a Happy New Year, and congratulated the team on their efforts in organising successful events over the Christmas period.

It was announced that the public notice advising the Council's intention to dispose of St Margaret's Loop had been advertised in a local newspaper on 1st January 2026. The notice would be published for a period of two weeks, as required under sections 123 (2A & 2B) of the Local Government Act 1972. Written responses must be submitted by 16th January 2026. All submissions received would be considered by Council prior to a final decision being made to submit the land for auction.

27. **TO CONSIDER THE ACTIONS LIST**

The actions list was reviewed and noted.

28. **TOURISM REPORT**

The Community & Tourism Team had been based at East Court during December whilst building works had been completed at the library, moving back on 5th January 2026. They had presided over a busy final quarter of 2025 with the Classic Motor Show, Remembrance Day, an extremely well attended Big Reveal and the indoor Christmas Market held at East Court. All events had been popular with positive feedback received.

Social media hits had increased hugely over the past 6 months, and tourism sales had gone well. Calendar sales had dipped in December due to not being in the library, so were now being offered for sale at a discounted rate.

Preparation of the Town Events leaflet was underway with dates being finalised. A larger temporary Pump Track had been booked for Summer 2026, and a 2 day Heritage Craft Fair had been proposed by East Grinstead Museum, to take place later in 2026. They had requested either free use or a discounted rate to hold this event at East Court during October 2026.

RESOLVED: After extensive discussions, Committee resolved to offer the Museum a discounted rate of either £500 or 50% of the hire fee for East Court, whichever was less, for one Sunday during a low demand time of year at the venue. Approval of this would be delegated to the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee. It was also recommended that the Museum liaise with Chequer Mead to discuss potential options for using the theatre as a venue, as it was their 30 year anniversary in 2026.

Permanent pump track options were being explored and would proceed further once a site had been formally agreed.

The report was noted.

29. **ESTATES AND CIVIC PRIDE**

A comprehensive report of all activities that had taken place over the previous quarter had been presented. A cost increase for the summer hanging baskets had been proposed.

RESOLVED: Committee agreed to increase the cost of traders' hanging baskets from £47 to £50 inc VAT for 2026.

RESOLVED: Committee agreed to increase the cost of hanging baskets offered to staff and councillors from £32 to £33 inc VAT for 2026.

The Christmas lights display had finished, investigations into having the lights along London Road included in the automatic turn on would continue.

The flowerbeds and baskets had been impressive this year, and the fingerpost repairs had been successful.

Management of the public toilets had been particularly difficult with repeated vandalism, including a metal door being ripped off a cubicle over the Christmas period. This was a bespoke item and a quote to repair this had been requested. Insurance cover for this repair would be investigated.

The boiler at the Old Court House had broken down and due to its age was now irreparable. A quote for a replacement would be obtained, and installation dates would be considered after discussion with both tenants.

The remainder of the report was noted.

30. **BURIAL SERVICES**

Holly Tree would be cutting back the hedge along Section 5C at Mount Noddy this week, and new fencing had been installed along section 4C where hedging had been removed.

The retirement of John Chisholm as Cemetery and Compliance Assistant was recognised, and formal thanks expressed for his many years of service to the Town Council.

The shoring shields used in grave digging had been serviced recently and one had been identified as requiring replacement after over 20 years in use.

RESOLVED: Committee resolved to approve the purchase of a replacement shield at a cost of £1,050 ex VAT.

A proposed increase to burial fees had been recommended within the report, as the last revision to these had been made in April 2016.

RESOLVED: The committee approved the proposed 5% increase to parishioner cemetery fees, and to increase non-parishioner fees to x4 parishioner rates effective 1st April 2026.

The report requesting S106 funding for the installation and purchase of Columbaria at Queens Road Cemetery was almost finalised, with one quote outstanding before submission could be made.

A Tesco delivery driver had hit the entrance wall of Queens Road Cemetery causing damage; Tesco would be covering the costs of the repairs subject to officer approval of the proposed repairs.

Goats may return to the cemetery in April, however before this an electrified fence would be installed. The area for their grazing would be expanded, and a shelter without sides may need to be provided for protection from the weather. The time for their grazing would be monitored to ensure they do not run out of food.

The rest of the report was noted with thanks.

31. **BOOKINGS & CARETAKING**

Installation of the new audio visual equipment for the Council Chamber should be completed by March 2026; electrical work was required within the room to ensure the AV equipment would work correctly before installation could proceed.

A review of hall hire booking rates had been completed with the following recommendations outlined in the report:

- Adopt amended rates at Sunnyside Barn effective April 2026 – existing regular hirers to remain at their current rates as most of them are on special rates.
- Adopt amended rates at The Old Court House from April 2026.
- Increase rates at Meridian Hall for 2027/2028.
- Delegation given to officers to offer promotional hire rates for venues with capacity.
- Delay rate review for East Court for 6 months to review whether offering promotional rates increases hire take up of facilities.

RESOLVED: Committee resolved to adopt all of the listed recommendations.

The free hire awarded for use of rooms at East Court was reviewed and all current arrangements noted.

RESOLVED: Committee accepted the recommendations to remove the free use offering for Dementia Alliance, Community People and EG Trade Fair as they had not made any bookings over the past year.

32. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE REGARDING THE WATER FOUNTAIN

SE Water had connected the fountain to an alternate water supply to establish whether this would result in improved water quality. Once the water testing results had been provided to the Town Council by SE Water, it would be possible to reconsider the decision made to switch off the fountain on the advice of our insurers, assuming adequate results were achieved.

The fountain would remain switched off until Spring irrespective of test results.

33. TO CONSIDER THE REQUIREMENT TO CREATE AN EPC FOR CHEQUER MEAD

The theatre had been occupied by the current trustee organisation under a long-standing lease dating from around 2016. Under the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations, an EPC was required only when a building was newly constructed, sold, or newly let. As there has been no re-grant or new lease, there was no retrospective requirement for an EPC. An EPC would be required if the lease were renewed, replaced, or granted to a new organisation.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.35pm, having announced the next meeting would be Tuesday 24th March 2026.

Signed

Chairman