



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of East Grinstead Town Council on Monday 26th January 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:

Cllr J Belsey (Town Mayor)
Cllr S Reeves (Deputy Town Mayor)*
Cllr S Barnett
Cllr M Belsey
Cllr H Farren
Cllr L Gibbs*
Cllr I Gibson
Cllr E Godwin
Cllr T Hughes
Cllr J Mockford
Cllr S Ody
Cllr A Peacock*
Cllr C Pond
Cllr T Scott*
Cllr F Visser
Cllr R Whittaker*

* = absent

In attendance:

Town Clerk
Deputy Town Clerk
Head of Finance

Public Participation

4 members of the public were in attendance.

2 members of the public spoke to item 62 regarding the future ownership of St Margaret's Loop, and the intention to the Council to consider the sale of the site at auction.

54. Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Gibbs, Peacock, Reeves, Scott & Whittaker offered their apologies, which were noted.

55. To confirm the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 16th October 2025 and the EGM held on 16th December 2025

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 16th October and 16th December 2025.

56. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs Barnett, Farren, Hughes and Mockford were trustees of Chequer Mead.

57. **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The diary of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's events was noted. The Town Mayor commented how busy the run up to Christmas had been and that it had been an honour to attend the successful events which had taken place.

58. **To receive such communications as the Leader of the Council may desire to lay before the Council**

The Town Council had now been accepted as a member of Sussex Resilience Forum, meaning we should receive communication from the outset regarding any local crisis situations should they occur, such as the recent water outage.

59. **To dispose of any business outstanding from the last meeting**

None.

60. **To receive and consider the minutes of Committees:**

	Date	Minute No	Page No
(a) Council	16/10/2025	35-50	13-17
(b) Planning	04/11/2025	61-71	18-20
(c) Environmental & Sustainable Travel	25/11/2025	23-32	7-9
(d) Public Services	09/12/2025	22-32	9-14
(e) Planning	16/12/2025	72-78	21-22
(f) Amenities & Tourism	06/01/2026	22-33	9-12
(g) Finance & General Purposes	20/01/2026	30-45	8-12

Cllr J Belsey proposed the Full Council minutes.

Cllr Godwin proposed the Planning Committee minutes.

Cllr Ody proposed the Environmental & Sustainable Travel Committee minutes.

Cllr Mockford proposed the Public Services Committee minutes.

Cllr Godwin proposed the Amenities & Tourism Committee minutes.

Cllr Farren proposed the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

RESOLVED: The minutes and decisions of the meetings detailed above were accepted.

61. **To consider the draft Terms of Reference for the new Committee structure**

The updated draft Terms of Reference to support the new Committee structure approved in the 16th October 2025 Council meeting was considered.

RESOLVED: Council approved the terms of reference, which would be adopted at Mayor Making in May upon the launch of the new committee structure.

To consider the Ongoing Ownership of St Margaret's Loop

As a result of the recent Council decision to consider the sale of St Margaret's Loop at auction, a public notice was displayed from 2nd January – 16th January 2026 asking for any comments to be submitted to the Council for consideration in relation to the proposed sale.

Council members reflected on the many years this site had been under consideration for development into a walk and cycle way, and the lengthy process and difficult decision reached to sell the site after so long trying to proceed to a viable solution. As demonstrated by the feasibility study completed in 2025, the long-proposed development had become financially insurmountable with the introduction of the Biodiversity Net Gain legislation requirements. Preservation of the site would be difficult without access, and purchasing the additional section would significantly increase the Council's financial liability from a maintenance perspective with so many large trees in the organically-grown site.

The Town Council regretted the necessity of this decision, however this had been the first time a full understanding of the potential costs and competing priorities of the potential development had been established in detail.

This decision as to the future of the site had been hastened somewhat by the deadline imposed on the Council by one of the third party owners of the cutting, after so many years of protracted negotiations.

It would be important for any future owner to understand and respect the liabilities and limitations of the site. Fair value should be considered for any potential sale of the site, however this needed to be offset against the ongoing costs of keeping the site safe in future, as determined by the state of the vegetation and the limitations of gaining access.

It was stated at the meeting that WSCC would not be able to take ownership of the site due to their own budgetary constraints, and current policy of not taking on any new liabilities at this time.

Planning constraints regarding future potential development of the site would be a challenge for any future owner. The likelihood of offsetting potential development costs against income from an infill option would be minimal due to the difficulties of obtaining planning permission.

RESOLVED: Council voted unanimously to proceed to list the site at auction. The Clerk was instructed to instruct the legal pack and clarify the importance of receiving fair value in any sale achieved.

62. **To approve the Council Meeting Dates for 2026-2027**

Council considered the proposed meeting dates for 2026-2027.

RESOLVED: The following meeting dates were approved:

14th May (Mayor Making)
25th June (AGAR Approval)
30th July
8th October
21st January 2027 (Precept Approval)
8th April

63. To receive the Chequer Mead Annual Report

The Council expressed their pride in the facility and how much of an asset it was to the community. The new management and leadership were to be welcomed and there was optimism that the near future was looking positive for the theatre, albeit the next 3 years were still looking challenging. Investment in the building was required to make broad improvements. The new structure put into place by the trustees was paying off.

The report was noted.

64. To consider the updated Financial Risk Register

The Council's approval of the Financial Risk Register was an annual audit requirement. It was noted that there had been no changes to the gradings of any risks, however approval was sought for the updates made to the mitigating actions for the following risks:

Existing Mitigating Actions in Risk No.1 have been updated
Further Mitigation Actions in Risk No. 18 have been added
Further Mitigation Actions in Risk No. 22 have been added

A cyber risk quote was due to be reviewed with the Town Council's insurers. It was clarified that the amber risks were likely to remain amber due to the nature of the potential impacts of the risks being unchangeable.

RESOLVED: Council approved the updated risk register.

65. On the recommendation of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, to formally resolve the following for the 2026-2027 financial year:

- a. The Town Council's estimated expenditure of £1,760,828 and estimated income of £370,830 in the 2026-2027 financial year be approved, resulting in a net cost of £1,389,998.
- b. That Council, on 26th January 2026, be requested to approve an actual precept for the 2026-2027 financial year of £1,389,998. This would represent an annual Band D council tax of cost of £114.59 based on the known tax base of 12,130.3.

RESOLVED: Council approved the budget and precept demand for 2026-2027 as set out above, and the Clerk was instructed to make this precept demand on Mid Sussex District Council.

Thanks were expressed to Officers and Councillors who worked hard to prepare the budget options for consideration. It was noted that although fixed costs had to be absorbed within the budget, the expenditure was also being targeted at initiatives for the benefit of the community such as the youth club.

66. To review the updated status of the Business Plan

The business plan was considered together with the updated status of the items completed.

The Town Improvement Consultation report would be reviewed in future meeting.

The current status of the business plan was noted.

67. **To note the action list**

Noted.

Meeting closed at 7.59pm.

The date of the next meeting of the Town Council was **Tuesday 7th April 2026.**

DRAFT