



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of the annual meeting of East Grinstead Town Council Thursday 14th May 2026 at 7pm

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 S Reeves
- Cllr T Scott*
- Cllr F Visser*
- Cllr R Whittaker

* = absent

In attendance:

- Town Clerk
- Deputy Town Clerk
- Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)
- 30 Members of Public

Public Participation

No questions were asked.

The Town Mayor Cllr J Belsey welcomed all to the meeting and then spoke about his year as Mayor before presenting cheques to his charities.

On reflection, his year had passed so quickly since taking on the chain last year but, as each Mayor was only ever the custodian of the chain and the role, he was now looking forward to Cllr Reeves and Cllr Pond taking over the mantle.

It had been a fantastic honour to be the Mayor in a community which really valued this role, with everyone so grateful for all that was being done to support them.

During this year one young man - at the St Georges Day parade – had been beside himself with excitement to be in the vicinity of the Mayor, and said he would never wash his hand again after shaking hands! It was heartwarming to be able to provide such cherished moments to those around us.

There were so many to thank, so many organisations which do so much, who we see all the time around town and at our public events; indeed, many were in the room today. Special thanks were expressed for the Lions and the great job they do year on year, as well as to the Rotary who also do so much; St Johns Ambulance who come along and support all the local events, particularly Tony who was ever present.

The Town Mayor had chosen Age UK and EG Scouts as his charities. He had been glad to help Age UK over the past year, only recently stepping down after a decade as a trustee. He had always been proud to support them, and the need for the dementia service, together with the newer initiatives coming forward, was ever growing. When wearing the chain people looked at you and were drawn to talking to you, which gives you pause to notice those who were quieter and more in the background, those who were alone and perhaps lonely, and would appreciate a word or two. We should all try and do this to make everyone feel special and included as part of the community.

It had also been a pleasure to work with EG Scouts, the Town Mayor thanked them for their support at our events and attending East Court Live with their games to keep the kids occupied. It had been fabulous to reintroduce the St Georges Day parade and gratitude was expressed to the organisers of the Classic Bus event who were moving their dates to accommodate this going forwards.

Although the Town Mayor would be losing the chain this evening, he would get to keep his EG District scarf and looked forward to continuing to offer support to them in the future.

Last year, one of the focuses mentioned was a desire to improve equal opportunities for men and women, boys and girls. One of the things that happened this year was hosting a girls football match between Sackville and Imberhorne schools thanks to the newly created Hermove, who had done so much during the course of the past year with ambassadors such as Kelly Holmes and Sally Gunnell. It was important that everyone grew up with access to equal opportunities, the first year had been unexpectedly special in that respect and he looked onward to seeing where this would go in the future.

More widely, we should be looking at other issues such as the infrastructure which affects us all, with the length of queues for the ladies toilets compared to gents an example – things like this were not right. All new community facilities should be designed to reduce the impact of this by having better facilities.

The Town Mayor then gave thanks to everyone who had supported him over the past year, staff and councillors, also to his mother Cllr M Belsey who had shouldered a lot to support him in his role. Thanks to the public for supporting these events and the town council staff – although he was nervous to name anyone as he didn't want to forget anyone.

Whilst not rivalling the incredible sums raised by Cllr Ody last year, he was pleased to announce he had raised £6,000 for Age UK and £6,000 for EG Scouts.

The Town Mayor had been especially looking to raise money for the young leaders group, helping them to get the training required to enable them to lead the adventurous activities for 14-18 year olds; it had been a pleasure and honour to work with them.

EG Scouts then spoke explaining it had been an honour to be chosen as one of the Mayor's charities for the past year, so to recognise this the youth unit would be named for the Town Mayor; the Belsey Unit would support members in the 14-25 age range, and it would be here that they would start learning the skills required to becoming future leaders. Currently there were 45 working their way through the young leaders scheme. The funding raised would go towards camps and events to encourage more young people to get involved. It had been an honour to work with the Town Mayor on this initiative.

The Town Mayor now stated it was a complete pleasure to pass on the chain to our new Town Mayor Cllr Stephanie Reeves. It had been a great meeting of Cllr Reeves and East Grinstead, as she was very sharp on the points that matter to us all and would keep us on our toes.

In light of the successful work of Hermove this year, let's hope there would not be such a long gap to the next female Town Mayor.

1 To elect a Town Mayor for the 2026-27 civic year

The Town Mayor (Cllr J Belsey in the Chair) opened the meeting and thanked all for attending before moving to the business of electing a new Town Mayor, proposing Cllr Reeves for the role. This was seconded by Cllr M Belsey.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Reeves be elected Town Mayor for the civic year of 2026/2027.

Cllr Reeves received the Mayoral Chain of Office.

The new Town Mayor then gave a few short words of thanks, obviously to the outgoing Town Mayor who had been dazzling, bringing joy to everyone and achieving so much for his charities, it was an honour to follow him and know he'd remain an active stalwart of all his charities.

Thanks to her councillor colleagues for the vote of confidence which was enormously flattering and honouring. Also thanks the lovely team at East Court, the bunting in the hall tonight, the beautiful gardens and facilities and everything that was done for the community including the bid entered for the Town of Culture 2028 amongst other exciting plans, such as the return of the Pump Track this summer and the Town Twinning event planned for 2027.

Hermove were a charity in the making, an organisation that looked to bridge the divide between men and women in sport, as well as in sporting wellness. The Town Mayor was thrilled to be helping them in their fundraising, alongside EG Lions who were everywhere at all events, supporting everyone.

The Town Mayor's final word was to say it wouldn't be possible without her husband Adam, who had embraced moving to East Grinstead when they were expecting their babies and who supported her in everything that she did, and a final shout out to her dad as it was his birthday today, happy birthday and thanks for being here.

The Town Mayor then presented the past Mayors jewel to Cllr J Belsey, together with a gift from his colleagues to thank him for all his hard work over the past year.

2 To appoint a Deputy Town Mayor for the 2026-2027 civic year

The Town Mayor opened the item to appoint a new Deputy Mayor, and Cllr Pond was proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED: That Cllr Pond be elected as Deputy Mayor for the civic year of 2026/2027.

3 To receive declarations of acceptance of office for the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor or, if permitted by Council, at a later date fixed by Council

The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor read out the declaration of acceptance of office and signed accordingly.

4 To receive apologies for absence

Cllrs Farren, Scott and Visser had offered their apologies which were noted.

5 To note the requirements of and resolve to adopt the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct had been updated to reflect the latest model code framework, which provided a comprehensive and robust set of standards and behavioural expectations for councillors.

The revised Code strengthened clarity around conduct, interests, respect, accountability and Member responsibilities, and aligned the Council with current best practice across local government

RESOLVED: Council adopted and approved the revised Code of Conduct policy.

6 To receive notification of any updated Councillor's Register of Interests

A reminder was given to all councillors to review their Register of Interest every 12 months, with updates provided to the Town Clerk.

7 To receive declarations of interest from members in respect of any matter on the agenda. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest. If you become aware, during the meeting, of an interest that has not been disclosed under this item you must immediately disclose it

None.

8 To confirm the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 7th April 2026

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2026 were approved and signed.

9 To resolve to appoint the Leader of the Council for 2026-2027

RESOLVED: Council appointed Cllr Farren to continue as Leader of the Council for 2026-2027.

The Town Mayor congratulated Cllr Farren on remaining Leader of the Council and thanked her for all her hard work over the past year.

10 To note the Leader of the Opposition will change from Cllr Mockford to Cllr Barnett

Council noted that Cllr Barnett would fill this role for the coming year. Thanks were expressed to Cllr Mockford for all her hard work, and the Town Mayor looked forward to working with Cllr Barnett over the coming year.

11 To note the Council's action list

The open action was noted, to continue working on proposals for the use of King George's Field for consideration by MSDC; this had slowed a little due to focus on the Town of Culture bid but efforts would resume.

12 To confirm eligibility and approve the continued use of the General Power of Competence (GPC). The Criteria for the GPC as defined in S8 of the Localism Act 2011 (having an appropriately qualified Clerk and at least two thirds of the Council being elected) was met by the Council

Council noted the continued use of the General Power of Competence as the eligibility criteria continued to be met.

13 To receive a report of Councillor's attendance at meetings of Council and Standing Committees during 2025-2026 civic year

Council had received a schedule of Councillors' attendance at meetings of Council and Committees during the 2025-2026 civic year, and noted this was a true record of attendance.

14 To review and (re)adopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The Standing Orders had been updated as follows:

Added 4.e.v: to allow appointment of substitutes to attend committee meetings in the event that an ordinary member of the committee was unable to attend;

Added 18.f: annual review of the scheme of delegation including detailed information relating to the approval authority of Officers and Committees.

The Financial Regulations had been amended as follows:

5.6 and 5.7: amended the contract approval limits to be in line with the Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED: Council adopted the updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations effective today, incorporating the changes above.

15 To consider and approve the updated Scheme of Delegation

The Scheme of Delegation had been updated as follows:

Section 4: to include management of salaries in accordance with contracts of employment, including payment of expenses and allowances and implementation of pay awards and conditions of service in line with National Joint Council Scheme of Conditions of Service (the 'Green Book') as amended by local agreement;

Section 4: added Head of Estates, Head of Community & Tourism, Cemetery Manager and Officer roles including updated financial approval limits.

RESOLVED: Council adopted the updated Scheme of Delegation.

16 To review the Standing Committees for 2026-2027, review and adopt the terms of reference (appendix F), appoint members to serve on each committee, as well as considering the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair for each committee as follows

These Terms of Reference outline the roles and responsibilities of each standing committee.

RESOLVED: Council approved and adopted the Standing Committees Terms of Reference which included details of the revised committee structure.

RESOLVED: Council resolved to appoint the following members to serve on each committee detailed below, along with the Chair and Vice Chair for 2026/2027.

a) **Estates & Environment Committee (7 members)**

The following 7 members were resolved to serve this committee:

Cllrs Barnett, Gibson, Ody, Pond, Scott, Visser and Whittaker

Chair: Cllr Ody

Vice Chair: Cllr Whittaker

All were reminded that the next meeting was Thursday 4th June 2026.

b) **Planning Committee (7 members consisting, if possible, of at least one member representing each Ward)**

The following members were resolved to serve this committee:

Cllrs Gibbs, Godwin, Mockford, Ody, Peacock, Scott & Whittaker

Chair: Cllr Gibbs

Vice Chair: Cllr Godwin

All were reminded that the next meeting was Thursday 21st May 2026.

All were also reminded that as per Standing Orders all Councillors were required to attend Planning training if they were new to the committee and had not attended this previously.

c) **Community & Tourism Committee (7 members)**

The following 7 members were resolved to serve this committee:

Cllrs J Belsey, M Belsey, Farren, Godwin, Hughes, Mockford and Peacock

Chair: Cllr Godwin

Vice Chair: Cllr Hughes

All were reminded that the next meeting was Thursday 18th June 2026.

- d) **Finance & General Purposes Committee** (composed of the Chair of the other Standing Committees, plus 3 other members)
The following 8 members were resolved to serve this committee:
Cllrs Barnett, M Belsey, Farren, Gibbs, Gibson, Godwin, Mockford & Ody
Chair: Cllr Farren
Vice Chair: Cllr M Belsey

All were reminded that the next meeting was Thursday 25th June 2026, to receive the annual accounts followed by special Full Council to sign off the accounts.

- e) **Human Resources Committee** (4 members)
The following 4 members were resolved to serve this committee:
Cllrs Farren, M Belsey, Mockford and Town Mayor Cllr Reeves
Chair: Cllr Farren
Vice Chair: Cllr M Belsey

This committee would meet on an ad hoc basis so no meetings were scheduled at this time.

The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor were ex officio members of Standing Committees, the composition of which was in accordance with the Standing Committees Terms of Reference.

17 To consider the Working Groups required for 2026-2027 and confirm membership

RESOLVED: Council resolved to appoint the following members to serve on each working group below for 2026/2027.

- a) **Consultation**
Cllrs M Belsey, Farren, Mockford, Town Mayor and the Chair of the committee relevant to the item under consideration
- b) **Planning & Economic Development**
Cllrs M Belsey, Farren, Gibson and the Chair of Planning
- c) **Budget**
Cllrs Barnett, M Belsey, Farren, and the Deputy Town Mayor
- d) **Business Development**
Cllrs J Belsey, Gibbs, Gibson, Godwin, Hughes, Ody, Pond & Scott
- e) **Devolution**
Cllrs Barnett, M Belsey, Farren, Mockford, Peacock, Reeves, Visser & Whittaker

18 To nominate 5 members plus the Town Mayor, to be approved bank account and cheque signatories on behalf of the Town Council

The bank account and cheque signatories for 2026/2027 were proposed as the Town Mayor Cllr Reeves plus Councillors M Belsey, Farren, Hughes, Mockford and Peacock.

RESOLVED: Council approved the bank account and cheque signatories above.

19 To appoint representatives to serve on the under mentioned bodies for the 2026/2027 civic year

RESOLVED: The following councillor representatives were approved for the outside bodies detailed below.

1. East Grinstead Town Twinning Association
Cllr Visser
2. Mid Sussex Association of Local Councils
Cllrs Mockford and Whittaker
3. Age UK East Grinstead and District
Cllr Hughes
4. Friends of East Grinstead Museum
Cllr Mockford
5. East Grinstead Music and Arts Festival
Cllr Gibbs
6. Disability Access Group (East Grinstead and area)
Cllr Barnett
7. East Grinstead Business Association
Cllr Whittaker
8. East Grinstead Fairtrade Town Steering Group
Cllr Scott
9. Mid Sussex Association of Town Councils:
Town Mayor Cllr Reeves, Leader of the Majority Group Cllr H Farren,
Leader of the Minority Group Cllr Barnett and one other Cllr Whittaker
10. Grenestede Talking News for the Blind
Cllr Peacock
11. Felbridge Beef and Faggot Trust
Cllr M Belsey
12. SANG Steering Group (MSDC)
Officers
13. East Grinstead Sport Council
Cllrs Ody & Whittaker
14. East Grinstead Food Bank
Cllr Peacock
15. Community Rail Partnership
Cllr Pond

To note:

16. Chequer Mead Theatre:
Up to 4 trustees were appointed by the Town Council.
Those currently in place were Cllrs Barnett, Farren, Hughes & Mockford,
they were appointed for a 4 year term, subject to an overall continuous 12
years of service.

17. East Grinstead Museum

A trustee was appointed by the Council who remained as such until they stepped down or ceased to be a councillor.

Cllr Ody was the current incumbent.

18. Queen Victoria Hospital (Stakeholder Governor)

Cllr Mockford, as appointed in 2024.

This brought us to the end of the meeting. The Town Mayor invited all to please stay and enjoy the refreshments.

Meeting closed at 7.57pm.

The date of the next meeting of the Town Council was **Thursday 30th July 2026**, although there would be a short special meeting on 25th June 2026 to approve the AGAR accounts.

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