



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of East Grinstead Town Council Thursday 8th October 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Cllr S Reeves* (Town Mayor)
Cllr C Pond (Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr S Barnett
Cllr J Belsey
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 T Scott*
Cllr F Visser
Cllr R Whittaker

* = absent

In attendance:

Deputy Town Clerk
20 Members of Public

Public Participation

20 members of the public were in attendance.

One member of the public raised a question on agenda item 48 in relation to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's attendance at events.

One member of the public raised questions on agenda item 62 relating to the closure of Glen Vue and the potential impact on Age UK services in the town.

45 To receive apologies for absence

Cllrs S Reeves, Godwin and Gibson offered their apologies which were noted. In the absence of the Town Mayor, the Deputy Mayor chaired the meeting.

46 To confirm the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 30th July 2026

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30th July 2026.

47 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.

Cllr Mockford declared an interest in agenda item 58 Moat Pond as Chair of East Grinstead in Bloom.

48 To review the list of Town Mayor engagements

The Deputy Mayor extended congratulations to the Mayor and her family on the arrival of their daughter Emmeline in September.

The list of engagements was circulated. The Deputy Mayor noted his attendance at the International College of Oriental Medicine which he had found very informative and his visit to the East Grinstead Museum where relatives of Sir Archibald McIndoe had donated medals, which were now on display.

49 To receive such communications as the Leader of the Council may desire to lay before the Council

Cllr Farren reported no updates for the recent quarter.

At this point in the meeting agenda item 62 was discussed due to the members of the public in attendance that expressed an interest in this matter.

50 To note the actions list

All action items allocated against Council were noted.

51 To receive and consider the minutes of Committees:

	Date	Minute No	Page No
(a) Planning	02/07/2026	18-24	6-7
(b) Planning	13/08/2026	25-34	8-10
(c) Estates & Environment	10/09/2026	10-22	4-8
(d) Community & Tourism	17/09/2026	8-17	4-6
(e) Planning	24/09/2026	35-44	11-13
(f) Finance & General Purposes	01/10/2026	15-29	4-7

Cllr Gibbs proposed the Planning Committee minutes.

Cllr Ody proposed the Estates & Environment Committee minutes.

Cllr Hughes proposed the Community & Tourism Committee minutes.

Cllr Farren proposed the Finance & General Purposes Committee minutes.

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

52 To receive an update from Inspector Fahey – Sussex Police

Inspector Fahey had circulated the statistics for the period of 1 July to 1 October 2026 to Council prior to the meeting. It was noted that response times for a Cat A were 41 seconds over the target time of 20 minutes. Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill response times were in the region of 15 minutes. Measures were being looked at currently to bring these times down for the town.

Car meets were noted as the priority issue being addressed, with Operation Hub Cap in force which responded to car cruises. One recent meeting attracted over 100 cars, which were moved on from Birches Industrial Estate. Car blocking tactics were used to block police vehicles from moving. Measures being considered included CCTV and officers being deployed at specific times together with monitoring of social media.

Three e-scooters were seized recently in the town and Operation Scramble (Sussex) continued to tackle this ongoing issue.

The Stag House area was having additional patrols following recent reports; however, no issues had come to light.

The report of nitroxide cannisters in the Mount Noddy area was discussed and some evidence had been found that suggests this behaviour is going on; no sightings of the rough sleeper had been found but monitoring would continue.

Bird shooting incidents were being dealt with by the rural crime team; the group suspected of this were aware that their activities were being investigated.

A partial closure order for three months at a property which restricts visitors to an address in the Sunnyside area had been put in place and had reduced anti-social behaviour.

The seizure of several thousand pounds of Class A drugs and knife was confirmed in East Grinstead, this would go to court in due course.

Thanks were given to Inspector Fahey for attending the meeting and it was requested that the Council be supplied with the ongoing statistics in respect of Cat A response times.

53 To receive an update from East Grinstead Food Bank

Mike Barlow representing East Grinstead Food Bank attended the meeting.

All Councillors were welcome to visit the food bank facilities and have a guided tour if they had not already attended.

It was highlighted that the facility does not just provide food, there was increasing demand on the financial inclusion service which supported people with advice on financial matters. This helped identify why people needed the food bank and often led to ending support once their financial issues were resolved. They were currently working with WSCC to review funding support.

Working alongside the Trussell Trust network enabled more people to access the food bank. Other support available included energy top ups, launderette and butchers vouchers. Cash was never handed out, and Aldi gift cards would challenge the purchase

of tobacco and alcohol. The figures of the ward areas on food bank usage would be sent to the Town Clerk. It was noted that food donations had dropped.

The Council thanked the Food Bank for attending and extended their support for the facility and the work that the volunteers did to support residents. It was suggested that a visit be arranged by the Town Clerk for Councillors to attend and to see if the Council could collaborate using other connections, for example with the District Council, to assist with signposting as people were turning to the food bank for other reasons as well, e.g. debt.

54 To receive an update from Fairtrade

Susan Joy representing Fairtrade attended the meeting. She paid tribute to the work that Mike had done for the Food Bank as he was retiring as Warehouse Manager.

East Grinstead had been a Fairtrade town since 2005 and their aim was to raise local awareness of Fairtrade labelled products and encourage local shops, schools and businesses to stock these and support community events. All products have the Fairtrade logo on which symbolised the sky, land and farmers raising their hands to show the determination to grow crops. A whole range of products were sold including tea and coffee.

To be a Fairtrade town, support was needed from the Town Council, and this was recognised. A reapplication would be forthcoming, and they would be in contact with the Town Clerk regarding this.

The Council thanked Susan for coming and highlighting the great products and work that was being done to raise awareness of the organisation. The possibility of having Fairtrade Trade signs around the town was mentioned, although this would involve WSCC Highways it was suggested that the Town Clerk be approached to explore this further.

55 To receive an update from County Councillors

Cllrs Dowsett and Russell were present at the meeting and gave the following reports.

Cllr Dowsett introduced himself and thanked the Council for inviting him to the meeting, noting the importance of understanding what the Town Council was doing. He reported that he was involved with the A22/A264 feasibility study which was a joint agreement with West Sussex and Surrey County Councils to undertake a study to improve the traffic flow, looking at more sustainable travel options and bus routes and noting that the improvements needed to address traffic flow and congestion issues. The public consultation would be held in February 2027.

Cllr Russell introduced herself and noted WSCC were awaiting the children's services Ofsted report which was due in November. The deficit in respect of SEN education funding was noted and WSCC were looking to receive 90% of the funding back if a SEN reform plan was submitted to the Government. £182m would be coming forward, however this would still leave a large deficit which was a national problem. The Old Caretakers Cottage at Sackville School was being turned into a centre for alternative provision.

There was no update on the Local Government Reorganisation. The feasibility study on the A22/A264 was delayed as it did not include the Ashurst Wood (south) area. A Safer Routes to School scheme was being prepared for public consultation making

improvements for Sackville and Estcots Primary school.

Cllr Russell noted the understandable concerns from residents relating to Age UK West Sussex, Brighton and Hove and Glen Vue around how they intended to deliver services to residents and what would happen to the building. Cllr Russell had attended a meeting with Age UK CEO Helen Rice and MP Mims Davies, and it was clarified that Age UK had to act promptly with the closure due to significant losses of £20,000 a month. Their new service model focused on outreach services which were felt to be the most effective way of helping elderly people.

Funds donated to Age UK East Grinstead specifically would be invested in East Grinstead, however Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove should be held to account on this issue. The Memory Café and Dementia Respite services would continue in East Grinstead in other locations. WSCC – who owned Glen Vue – were currently looking at the building under an options process, and it was mentioned a community asset transfer could be considered. Cllr Russell was meeting with the Town Clerk next week to review the situation and see how the Town Council could support and possibly develop the building.

WSCC Councillors were thanked for their updates, and the concerns were noted in relation to Age UK services and the Glen Vue building. It was noted that Age UK West Sussex, Brighton and Hove had made the decision to close Glen Vue and the Council could not change this but could provide a supportive role, listening to the voices of residents and working together with County Councillors to identify potential options moving forwards.

56 External Audit – to note the result of the external audit for 2025/2026

It was confirmed that the external audit was completed with no matters raised. This had been circulated to Councillors, thanks were given to the Responsible Finance Officer and the report was noted.

57 To consider the recommendation of the Estates & Environment Committee regarding the proposal to introduce parking controls at East Court car park

The Council reviewed the Estate & Environment Committee recommendation to make no changes at this stage to the parking management at East Court; but to monitor and obtain data once the first phase of the residential development was completed to see what the impact was on parking, review the situation and consider implementation of a management plan if required at that stage.

This recommendation was discussed and a counterproposal was put forward that officers should continue to investigate alternative strategies to present to Council, ensuring that a management plan would be ready to progress rather than waiting until the development was fully occupied and issues arise. The officers report noted several options, which would need to be more clearly defined.

It was noted that the car park was already busy and with the addition of the development of the old police station issues were very likely to arise, with residents of the properties using East Court to park due to the limited number of spaces within the development.

This would potentially cause a negative impact for residents using the community facilities and hirers of the buildings at East Court.

RESOLVED: That officers investigate alternative strategies to bring before Council in January 2027, so an appropriate scheme was ready to be implemented as and when required, potentially prior to the residential development being completed.

58 To consider the estimated annual costs for annual maintenance of Moat Pond and continue negotiations with MSDC regarding handover of this asset

Council reviewed the budget costings provided in the report and acknowledged Moat Pond was a community asset, however it was important that if it was taken on by the Council it needed to be deliverable which would require additional resources and funding. It was noted that the figures from MSDC were not clear and the possible future maintenance costs could be significant, which could include extensive tree maintenance and aeration equipment, footpath and bank reconstruction and other works so would need to be budgeted accordingly.

RESOLVED: Council supported the recommendation to continue the negotiations with MSDC in respect of handing over Moat Pond, noting that this would come with additional liabilities and would require an appropriate budget to be available.

It was noted at 2100hrs that Standing Orders were suspended to continue the meeting for a further 15 minutes for the Council to complete the business on the agenda.

59 To receive an update regarding the auction of St Margarets Loop

It was noted that the land had sold for the sum of £5,000 at auction on the 24th September 2026. The deposit had been paid by the purchaser to the Council's solicitor and completion was expected on 22 October 2026. The section of land owned by Railway Paths had also sold at auction.

60 To consider the adoption of the following policies

The following policies were circulated:

Business Continuation Plan
Complaints Policy

RESOLVED: The Business Continuation Plan and Complaints Policy were approved and adopted.

61 To note the updated prioritised Business Plan which will be used to inform budget planning for 2026-27 and beyond

The Business Plan update was noted.

62 To note the closure of Glen Vue Centre as occupied by Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove

The Council were informed last week about the closure of the Glen Vue centre as from the 30th October 2026, although this information did not come directly from Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove but from a hirer of the Glen Vue building. Councillors were all very disappointed and shocked to hear the news and questioned the short period of notice and the timing with the winter months upon us, noting that the rent on the building has been paid 12 months in advance and looking at the Age UK East Grinstead charity accounts, several thousands were available in reserves. It was disappointing that no

consultation or communications had been received in advance from Age UK in relation to their position.

Councillors expressed their concerns on the impact this closure would have on residents, families, staff, volunteers and hirers of the building and understood the passion from residents in the room who attended the meeting.

The Town Clerk had been in communication with the Deputy CEO of Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and it was noted that it was disappointing no representatives were able to attend the meeting this evening; it was hoped they would attend a future meeting. A document had been sent to the Council subsequently which noted that keeping the building open, although the rent has been paid in advance, was not financially viable. However, no figures had been provided to demonstrate future savings or how services would be funded in future. It was understood an amount of money had been gifted to Age UK East Grinstead and concerns were noted that this money needed safeguarding for the future to serve the town, as this had been given in relation to the 25-year lease of the building. The Town Clerk would continue to liaise with Helen Rice (CEO) on the situation and to ensure the Council were kept up to date and informed.

It has been confirmed that the Dementia Respite Service would continue 2 days a week, relocated to the Cranston Suite at East Court, however it was questioned if these facilities were suitable for this purpose. The Memory Café would be held at the Trinity Methodist Church.

It was reported that the F&GP Committee decided to pause the annual grant given to Age UK at their meeting on 1st October 2026 until further clarification had been received as to what happens next.

Cllrs John Belsey and Margaret Belsey confirmed they had previously been trustees for Age UK East Grinstead for many years, and fellow Councillors thanked them for their work and support provided to the charity.

Councillors noted generally that they would be looking to support the continuation of services and be the voice for residents in respect of the current situation, continuing to communicate with Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and ensure they were held to account.

It was noted that Cllr Russell had attended a meeting today with Helen Rice (Age UK) with MP Mims Davies also present.

The meeting closed at 2109hrs. The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 21st January 2027 at 7pm.**