



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of East Grinstead Town Council Thursday 30th July 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:

Town Clerk
4 Members of Public

Public Participation

One question was raised regarding agenda item 41 relating to the potential future ownership and management of Moat Pond.

29 To receive apologies for absence

Cllrs J Belsey, Gibbs, Gibson, Pond and Scott had offered their apologies which were noted.

30 To confirm the minutes of the following Council meetings:

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 14th May 2026 and 25th June 2026.

To confirm the minutes of the final meetings held by the following committees, required for approval by Full Council:

Environmental & Sustainable Travel on 24th February 2026

Public Services on 10th March 2026
Amenities & Tourism on 24th March 2026.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the above committee meetings were considered and approved.

31 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 41 Moat Pond as Chair of East Grinstead in Bloom.

32 To review the list of Town Mayor engagements

The Mayor noted her engagements had been circulated, and expressed thanks to the Deputy Mayor for stepping in to cover events at times, especially during the recent heatwave.

33 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.

34 To note the actions list

All action items allocated against Council had been completed and closed.

35 To receive and consider the minutes of Committees:

	Date	Minute No	Page No
(a) Planning	21/05/2026	1-9	1-3
(b) Estates & Environment	04/06/2026	1-9	1-3
(c) Planning	11/06/2026	10-17	4-5
(d) Community & Tourism	18/06/2026	1-7	1-3
(e) F&GP	25/06/2026	1-14	1-3

Cllr Godwin proposed the Planning Committee minutes.

Cllr Ody proposed the Estates & Environment Committee minutes.

Cllr Godwin 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.

36 To receive an update from Abigail Jago, CEO, regarding Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH)

Abigail Jago, CEO of QVH opened by explaining QVH's ongoing drive for continuing improvements and shared details of the feedback received from patients in recent times

as well as how proud they were to be rated best in the country in the 2024 CQC Adult Inpatient Survey, as well as being the highest-scoring trust in the 2024 Children and Young People Survey.

Their electronic patient records programme and digital breathlessness pathways had also won recent awards, and their Speech & Language Therapy programme had been recognised nationally on BBC Radio 5 Live.

A recent staff survey showed positive feedback with 93% recommending the care provided to family and friends, and 73% recommending QVH as a place to work.

Whilst financials remained challenging, waiting times had been reduced although there had been a significant increase in potential skin cancer referrals. Targets for first outpatient appointments taking place within 18 weeks were now being achieved.

A strategy had been developed in 2024 to set out their future vision of building a centre of excellence to ensure continued ability to service patients and receive good feedback through provision of electronic patient records and a diagnostics centre. QVH was a challenging site; efforts continued to try and make improvements where possible. A research and innovation hub was to be developed at the hospital, and it was satisfying that it was always possible to attract skilled professionals to work at the hospital.

QVH was very proud of its heritage relating to staff, patients and the community. It was recognised that national funding challenges required careful management to ensure sustainability for the future, working to identify the best strategic partner as a result.

To that end a Memorandum of Understanding had been agreed with the Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust (RSFT/ASPH) group. This would strengthen the specialist services on offer as well as enhancing long-term sustainability. This was an interesting organisation with an eclectic group of specialist services that had synergies with QVH offerings. Many teams worked together already, leading this to be considered the best strategic fit.

A joint Chief Executive would be in place for the first 6 months of the partnership with no changes to services or locations, with the ambition being to strengthen QVH and its sustainability and security into the future.

In comparison with the previously proposed Brighton partnership, there were several important distinctions. The process had been materially different, with deliberate and focused engagement with clinical partners. Many stakeholders had not considered Brighton to be the right fit and, together with the objective consideration given to feedback from stakeholder groups, the approach taken had created greater confidence in the new partnership.

Consequently, the partnership had been received more positively. It felt different, bringing together staff with colleagues who shared a similar culture, providing opportunities to build upon the exceptional reconstructive services already offered and enabling greater integration of clinical pathways.

Cybersecurity was identified as a key area in which expertise could be shared, alongside opportunities to strengthen clinical services such as cardiology.

Clinical staff already travelled between sites when required, and no significant changes to staff working locations were anticipated. A dedicated Managing Director would be based at QVH, while the Chief Executive would work across both sites.

No changes to the location or provision of services were currently anticipated. Any future proposals for change would be subject to consultation. It was hoped that capacity across the partner sites could be used to help reduce waiting lists.

Thanks were extended to Abigail for attending the meeting and providing an update on this important strategic development, which was now progressing. Details of the new Chief Executive would be shared once known, and Abigail was wished every success in her future role.

37 To receive an update from County Councillors

Reports had been received from Cllr Russell and Cllr Carvalho, which were gratefully noted.

38 To consider the report outlining the proposals for a Pump Track to be installed at King George's Field

Council welcomed the report outlining the high level options for installing a pump track at King George's Field, and reflected on the success of the temporary pump track which was part way through a week-long installation to provide a summer activity for local young residents. It was felt the popularity of this track boded well for a future permanent fixture, especially alongside the other items recommended for consideration such as improvements to the skate park and installation of a splash pad.

Councillors were minded to think big regarding the design of the pump track by seeking and pursuing opportunities from external bodies for grants to support and match funding of this initiative. It was felt this would provide a fantastic opportunity for the local community to be involved in the design and fundraising for this future asset.

Consultation with our young community on the preferred design for the purpose-built track would be encouraged to create a design which would appeal to all and hopefully maximise usage going forwards. Opportunities for S106 funding transfers with MSDC would be explored.

It was believed that a pump track would appeal to a wider range of people so would be prioritised, with a splash pad being considered as a future phase to improve the facilities, followed by skate park enhancements. Phased planning was essential to ensure funding could be identified to deliver these improvements.

RESOLVED: Council supported the recommendations outlined in the report and authorised further development of design proposals focusing on an integrated asphalt track up to an initial budget of £250k, subject to sourcing of grant funding. Planning advice would be clarified, and initial designs would be returned to the Community & Tourism Committee.

39 To consider the proposal and costs in relation to the Active Travel to School Scheme – Raingarden Partnership Opportunity

To make road safety improvements between Sackville and Estcots Primary School to widen the pavements and prevent parking, WSCC was looking to create a raingarden in support of an active travel to school scheme. Approx 2,200 children were dropped off and picked up from this area daily during term time, this would make the area safer for all pedestrians.

Once installed regular maintenance will be required. WSCC required a commitment from the Town Council to take on this maintenance, after the first year of installation had passed. After reviewing the maintenance programme it had been confirmed that the existing Outdoor Services team would have the capacity to absorb the maintenance required. The planting scheme would consist of low maintenance perennial plants.

Councillors raised some concerns that the scheme, whilst a positive step to try and restrict traffic and parking in this area, would move the problem of traffic and safety further away. It was advised that drop off arrangements had been explored in the past but no viable scheme had been identified. Coaches for school trips would be a particular challenge in future, but overall this scheme would make a positive difference to the schools and how they manage traffic.

RESOLVED: Council supported the recommendation to take on the maintenance of the raingarden from 2028 when it was scheduled to be handed over, WSCC to be informed.

40 To consider the following matters in relation to East Grinstead Town Council's annual insurance policy:

- To note the annual insurance policy renewal cost of £39,201 effective 1st September 2026 – 31st August 2027 (the final year of a 3 year contract), an increase of £3,527 or 9.9%.
- To consider whether to extend the existing 3 year contract to 5 years (ending 31st August 2029) creating a lower renewal premium for 1st September 2026 – 31st August 2027 of £37,370, an increase of £1,696 or 4.8%.

RESOLVED: To renew the insurance premium at a premium of £37,370, an increase of £1,696 or 4.8%, for an extended period of 2 years to a 5 year contract.

41 To consider the proposal to take ownership and responsibility for Moat Pond from MSDC

Moat Pond was felt to be an important ecological site within the town and so should be preserved. Supporting local wildlife and ecology, it would require significant investment to bring the area back to its best. The current condition of the site needed improvements and some of the works required would not be small. There were some obvious areas of remedial works required which would need to be addressed prior to any transfer of ownership.

Officers would continue to explore the commitment and liability of the site including obtaining a greater understanding of the future costs required for maintenance before agreeing to a transfer. Insurance requirements would also need consideration.

In principle, Councillors supported the idea of pond ownership however a full and comprehensive understanding of running costs would be required before agreement, as well as identification of one-off costs required to bring the condition of the entire site up to required standards.

RESOLVED: Officers would continue discussions with MSDC to negotiate ownership of the pond, including detailed understanding of full one-off and standard annual maintenance costs together with any potential commuted sums. It would be emphasised that existing pond maintenance must continue in the interim.

42 To consider the draft business plan and prioritisation of projects for 2026-27

RESOLVED: The business plan items would be considered individually by each identified committee to create a prioritised schedule for progressing.

43 To receive an update relating to the S106 funds

Council noted that Officers would continue to pursue quick win projects based on initiatives identified on the business plan and present options to committees for consideration prior to submitting S106 funding requests.

44 To consider the following matters regarding West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC):

- 44.1 To receive an update regarding WSALC's financial position and to note the recommendation of Mid Sussex Association of Three Towns to write requesting clarification of WSALC's financial strategy and plans

RESOLVED: Council noted the approx. £200,000 held in reserves by WSALC and approved the proposal for MSATC to write to the CEO and Board members to request clarification of their reserves strategy and details of the earmarked projects these funds would be allocated towards.

- 44.2 To resolve the WSALC representatives for 2026-2027, noting that the MSALC (Mid Sussex Association Local Councils) representatives were Cllrs Godwin & Whittaker. These representatives will be required to attend the WSALC AGM on 4th November 2026 in Brighton in order to raise questions regarding their current financial position.

RESOLVED: Cllrs Peacock and Whittaker were nominated to attend the AGM on 4th November 2026 to ask about the reserves strategy should answers not be forthcoming in the interim. The Clerk was instructed to clarify whether a formal motion would be required before these matters could be discussed at the AGM.

RESOLVED: Subject to the response received from WSALC regarding these matters, the Clerk was instructed to include a future agenda item to consider East Grinstead Town Council's future membership of WSALC.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

The date of the next meeting was **Thursday 8th October 2026**.