



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 10th March 2026

Committee Members: Cllr Reeves (Chairman)
Cllr Whittaker (Vice Chairman)
Cllr J Belsey (Town Mayor)*
Cllr Barnett
Cllr M Belsey
Cllr Gibson
Cllr C Pond*
Cllr Visser*
* = absent

In attendance: Town Clerk
Community & Tourism Manager
Cllr S Ody

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Eight members of public were in attendance. Questions were raised during item 38 South East Water.

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs J Belsey and Pond offered their apologies which were accepted.
Cllr Visser was absent.

34. MINUTES

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

35. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The town council's application for the UK wide Town of Culture 2028 competition was announced, together with the planned public consultation session planned for Monday 16th March at East Court. All present were encouraged to attend.

Insp Ben Fahy would be replacing Insp David Derrick effective 1st April, the committee looked forward to meeting him.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Whittaker advised he was Vice President of East Grinstead Rugby Club.

37. **LOCAL POLICING UPDATE**

Inspector Derrick had been unavailable to attend and so had provided a written report for consideration, the details of which are included below:

East Grinstead – Last 3 months (1.12.25 – 28.2.26)

- 1,780 incidents reported – 310 Cat A, 104 Cat B, 149 Cat C – 109 fewer incidents than the previous 3 month period.
- 128 with Domestic Abuse tag
- 690 incidents attended by Police in person
- Of the 690 incidents attended – these include 79 violent crimes, 100 medical incident/concern, 64 suspicious activities, 37 road related incidents, 23 RTCs, 42 ASB and 17 burglaries

Recorded crime in East Grinstead

- -11.5% Rolling Year (RY) reduction in Total Crime
- -7.6% RY reduction in Burglary
- +50% increase in Robbery due to a change in classification for shoplifting assaults, all areas have seen a similar increase in data
- +24.1% RY reduction in Possession of Weapons offences (this will be small numbers)
- -6% RY reduction in recorded DA crime
- -20.7% RY reduction in Public Place crime

Once again Committee expressed grateful thanks for all the efforts and work undertaken by the police within the town to support residents, and to Insp Derrick for his support over the past 3 years, wishing him luck in his future endeavours. The Committee looked forward to meeting the town's new NPT Inspector, Ben Fahy, after he started in his new role on 1st April 2026.

The Clerk advised there had been no feedback received regarding usage of the Police Station at Chequer Mead since the relaunch in September 2025. The Clerk would follow up regarding this.

38. **SOUTH EAST WATER**

The following representatives of SEW were in attendance: Jo Shippey (Senior Community Engagement Manager), Parris Durrant, Douglas Whitfield (Water Supply Director) and Rob Hall (Head of Water Supply Sussex). A presentation was made to explain the recent water outage experienced in January 2026 with an opportunity for questions provided.

Firstly, apologies were offered for the outage experienced, which had been one of the most widespread incidents experienced in the past 25 years.

An explanation for the cause of the outage was offered; the weather which caused a mild freeze thaw situation followed by Storm Goretti created a leak increase, which then led to power outages which took 3-4 hours to reset and get water back into supply. The following intense rain caused a severe deterioration in the water quality in the River Ouse, meaning Barcombe output was reduced for 48 hours. This combined with increased demand led to the lack of supply.

The widespread impact across Kent and Sussex led to 25,000 houses being without water.

It was acknowledged there had been huge challenges in communications due to the wide area impacted, leading to the creation of bespoke information relevant to individual areas.

The team were looking at how they could improve this to ensure impacted areas receive better communications in future.

A total of 984,000 litres of water had been distributed during the outage, with 250,000 litres being delivered to vulnerable customers. A reminder was issued that all customers who were vulnerable or unable to collect water should sign up to the Priority Service Register, so they would have water delivered to them in the event of a future water outage. The current website address to register for this was:

[Register for priority services | South East Water](#)

Compensation payments of £600 had been paid already to households, with £1,200 due to non-households via the business provider, Castle Water.

Additional water stations across the region were being identified, and SEW would be working proactively with local councils and Sussex Resilience Forum to ensure these were in the best places.

Whilst constantly trying to reduce future risk of an event like this reoccurring, SEW were planning to develop hyper local plans especially for more rural communities. Meanwhile, an additional 27 network technicians had been recruited to work across the network.

Plans were in place to improve the connectivity of the network across Sussex to enable water to be moved around better, including the Weir Wood reservoir to Ardingly reservoir. A project to install a connection pipe of 13.8km was being progressed as a non-emergency scheme with underground rather than overground pipes. It was also being explored whether it would be possible to connect Weir Wood to Forest Row.

A 5km pipeline to support new development in the town was planned for Imberhorne Lane, commencing January 2027, at a cost of £5.7m. There were also pipeline upgrades around the town planned for 2026-2027.

EGBA asked about non-household compensation, raising the inadequacy of the award, especially for those who were unable to work during the outage period but who did not have fixed premises e.g. micro businesses or premises with multiple usage. A petition would be presented at Westminster via local MP Mims Davies.

The retail separation which had occurred several years ago in the water industry was explained, and how there was a separate retailer providing water to businesses. Compensation had been paid by SEW to Castle Water who would forward to their customers. SEW was not designed or set up to pay business losses to businesses, and they were advised to contact their insurance provider.

Regarding SEW communications, 64% of customers had been sent text message alerts. It was possible to sign up to receive these via the SEW website. Improvements were being explored to ensure the quality and volume of communication being made reached those it was intended for. A new Comms Officer had recently joined them who was exploring how comms with business groups could be improved. A mechanism for contacting key stakeholders would be welcomed.

EG Sports Club – echoed the comments made by EGBA, especially regarding communications both during and following the outage. The damage caused by the lorries during the use of the Sports Club as a water distribution site was being explored via

insurers, however the daily payment offered for using their car park had not been made; indeed it had been impossible to trace the person who had made and agreed this offer on behalf of SEW. No further communication had been received after the initial call, so there had been no awareness of the scale of the water station, the number of vehicles, no risk assessment had been created and no contact details provided. Staff onsite manning the station were unable to provide any contact details.

SEW apologised for this experience, and would look to reach out as matters continued to calm to address this so it did not happen again in future. A 3rd party company would be used in future to avoid this scenario happening again. The Town Council echoed this experience, however they had not been offered a daily rate for using their site.

A resident question was raised regarding the new emergency plan, and how this compared to the previous plan? SEW explained that a generic emergency plan existed, that more specific local plans had been developed over the past 3 years meaning some areas now had quite well defined plans, others less well developed. The previous emergency plan had to cope with 35k customers, now they were planning to cope with 400k customers.

Workshops to work on hyper-local plans would be run in May, but would be open to emergency planning resources only rather than members of the public. SEW would advise the Clerk when these would take place.

Being Neighbourly shared that many vulnerable people had been missed, and that the size of the bottles were too large/heavy for many vulnerable customers to open. Also reports of water being left at the end of driveways rather than on doorsteps had been received. It was anticipated this would be discussed further at the workshops.

Clarification was requested regarding the power outage mentioned in the presentation. SEW explained their system resilience had been an issue, as a short 10 second power outage required a manual system restart which could take 3-4 hours. Battery backup options different to the generators already in place were being explored across Kent initially, to reduce power fluctuations. Barcombe had 2 power supplies (overground and underground) for resilience, and until recently no issues had been experienced here. Normally it was the smaller sites impacted, and this combined with more sensitive treatment equipment meant fluctuations had a higher impact.

It was noted that communications with the local MP and WSCC Councillor had been productive, and it was recommended SEW consider extending their thanks to them for their support throughout the outage. Businesses had been let down, and committee felt SEW should reconsider their stance and offer reparation for this.

It had now been agreed that the Town Council could become part of the Sussex Resilience Forum, which would help to ensure they would be engaged with as a key stakeholder in future. Town and parish councils were key contacts who had access to critical information to support any future disaster situations.

It was commented that it appeared nothing had been learned from the last major outage in 2022, what work has been done to identify and rectify leaks? SEW advised they were committed to learning from past mistakes and to building a resilience plan, but that was not going to happen overnight. They were planning to install smart metres over the next 5 years in residential properties, which would provide better leak data, within installations starting in Kent this year.

Finally, when asked how the new pipe in Imberhorne Lane would benefit the community, it was advised that this will allow water to be moved around the area better thereby reducing the risks of future outages.

Thanks were expressed to all who attended and for responding to the questions raised.

The members of South East Water and six members of the public left the meeting.

39. **EAST GRINSTEAD RUGBY CLUB**

Committee noted the impressive feasibility study for the proposed installation of an artificial pitch. Efforts would continue to press MSDC for S106 funds to be allocated to this initiative.

40. **TO CONSIDER THE COMMUNITY TEAM REPORT**

The Community & Tourism Manager was thanked for the detailed report provided.

Regarding Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs), Enerveo had advised that the weight limit for SIDs to go on their lampposts had been reduced from 25kg to 20kg. Therefore the only option identified that met this criteria was the Westcotec mini SID weighing 16kg and costing £2,980 for the SID, battery, spare battery, battery charger, weatherproof cover and mounting kit, plus £379 for the data recording and software including training session. There was an extra option for a dual colour screen at £395, making a total of either £3,359 or £3754.

The process for mounting the SID on a lamppost was to submit an application to Enerveo which took 4 weeks to process. Once submitted, they may request structural testing of the lamppost which would be at our cost (approx. £400).

This portable option would give the EGTC the option to put a SID where residents request, assuming there was a viable mounting option.

RESOLVED: The Clerk was instructed to purchase the new portable SID.

Regarding Pubwatch meetings, it was enquired whether it would be possible to explore alternative venues for their meetings whilst the Dorset was closed?

The committee noted that our Facebook presence was going from strength to strength, and that the attendance numbers at the Kings Youth Club lower than had been targeted. It was advised that we would be tracking returnees as well as new attendees, and that we were still positive attendance would pick up further in the summer.

41. **TO NOTE THE ACTIONS LIST**

The committee's actions list was reviewed; monitoring of Evergreen Farm was ongoing, but traffic was very quiet at this time.

Work on the new QVH Community Diagnostic Centre had started but had slowed down recently; Abigail Jago would be invited to a summer Full Council meeting to provide an update.

This being the final Public Services meeting, members reflected that this was a sad occasion, however expressed their belief that it would be beneficial to have these great presentations made to Full Council.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.25pm.

SIGNED:

CHAIRMAN: