



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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ESTATES AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 September 2026

Committee Members: Cllr S Ody (Chair)
Cllr. R Whittaker (Vice Chair)
Cllr. S. Barnett
Cllr. I Gibson*
Cllr. C Pond
Cllr T Scott*
Cllr F Visser*

In attendance: Deputy Town Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were in attendance

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs. Visser and Gibson were absent and apologies were received and noted.
Cllr. Scott was absent, no apologies were received.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

12 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman noted that discussions regarding Moat Pond and St Georges Field were still ongoing with the Town Clerk and Mid Sussex District Council. The recent announcement that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) may be paused was highlighted. It was noted that these discussions had been taking place on the basis that LGR was progressing, and therefore any changes to the position could potentially have an impact on the discussions.

13 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE REGARDING OPEN ACTIONS (APPENDIX A)

The following were noted in relation to the open actions.

Minute No 20 - action closed in respect of land outside of Mount Noddy cemetery.

Minute No 29 – action to remain on list until automatic light switch on has been completed.

Minute No 46 – St Margarets Loop: it was noted if the land does not sell the next steps will need to be considered.

Minute No 26 – Cllr. Ody requested to attend the Town Improvement Plan Group meeting in November, Cllr. Whittaker will also be attending.

14 TO RECEIVE A QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT FROM CEMETERY & COMPLIANCE MANAGER (APPENDIX B)

The report was reviewed. The poor condition of the southern wall at Queens Road Cemetery was discussed and indicative repair costs, estimated to range between £100,000 and £250,000. As there is currently no public access to the cemetery, the risk to the public is considered low. The risk assessment has been updated to reflect the current general grounds maintenance work that will continue to be undertaken by the outside services team, together with any necessary tree work by outside contractors.

The Committee noted and agreed the officer's recommendation that the cemetery remain closed to the public and that the previous plans to potentially reopen the cemetery should not be progressed. It was agreed that the related action item be closed.

The cemetery and outside services team were congratulated on the Silver British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) Cemetery of the Year Award, and it was noted that the team will be working towards achieving the Gold level in 2027.

15 TO RECEIVE A QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT FROM DEPUTY TOWN CLERK (APPENDIX C)

The report was reviewed. Thanks were given to the Head of Estates & Civic Pride for the completion of the separation and boiler replacement works at the Old Court House during the summer period.

The application for grant funding from ArtRoots is awaiting a decision, if this is successful the project to install three artistic planters to promote the traffic-free sections of the Avenue Verte (Route 21), Worth Way and Forest Way will move forwards. These planters will tie in with the two already installed in Railway Approach, consideration will be given to the planting to ensure it is sustainable and the plants are drought resistant.

The installation of Wi-Fi is still being considered for the Old Court House, which would be required should solar panels be installed. It was requested that the possibility of satellite internet service is considered, such as Starlink.

It was suggested that booking information could be exported to Excel and analysed using AI to identify periods of lower occupancy. This additional data could then be used to help target and promote the facilities during quieter periods.

16 TO RECEIVE A QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT FROM HEAD OF ESTATES & CIVIC PRIDE (APPENDIX D)

The report was reviewed. Sustainable planting was discussed, the bed in the High Street, behind the bus stop is being replanted to make it more drought tolerant with drainage also being considered, with the beds to either side of the war memorial being changed to a hybrid planting scheme to see how this works next year. Some plants/trees at East Court have died

due to the long hot, dry summer. The Committee noted that the hanging baskets and planting around the town is welcomed and much appreciated by residents.

It was confirmed that the small retaining wall around the tennis club is being repaired to include pillars and inhouse works for approximately £2,000 as detailed in the report.

17 To receive an update on the position with replacement boilers at East Court and funding sources. (Appendix E)

The report was presented to highlight the complexity and high costs involved with the replacement boilers. It was noted and appreciated by the Committee that the project has lots of challenges, including the listed building and complication of the installation of flues to comply with legislation as condensing boilers will be installed, plus the additional building works that will be required. The Conservation Officer has been presented with the options, which currently have been limited, and they have provided feedback with their concerns and comments. However, it has been highlighted that there is a balance in the fact the buildings must be heated, to ensure they can continue to be used over the winter period and the high costs of the project, which could be in the region of between £100,000 and £150,000.

Officers continue to make progress and a further option has come to light today in respect of the boilers potentially being installed in the electrical cupboard in the Meridian Hall which is in the curtilage of a listed building so does not have quite so much impact, although an external flue would still be required.

It was noted that there is still a lot of work to be done before any work can commence, including the submission of a planning application and the project would have to go to tender to comply with the Councils Financial Regulations due to the projected costs of the works.

The Committee raised concerns regarding back up heating systems if the current boilers failed over the winter months, prior to the works being completed.

In respect of funding for the project this would have to come from either earmarked reserves allocated to other projects (subject to Council approval) or general reserves; there being approximately £104,000 currently available, although any further use of general reserves would reduce the Council's available contingency below the recommended minimum level of three months. The Town Clerk continues to liaise with Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) in respect of S106 funds that could potentially be available. Cllr. Whittaker advised the Committee that he had today received a positive response from MSDC Officers in respect of S106 deeds of variation and reallocation of funds and would forward this communication to all Councillors.

Officers will continue to seek further guidance from the appropriate specialists in respect of the best way forward for the replacement boilers and will update Council at the next meeting.

18 To consider the report and costings in relation to car parking control and management at East Court (Appendix F)

The report was presented to the Committee to highlight the potential impacts of parking at East Court in relation to the redevelopment of the Old Police House to 33 residential apartments.

It was noted that parking is always a contentious issue within the town and so needs to be managed carefully and thoughtfully. The suggestion of free parking for several hours if a management system was put in place was viewed as a good solution which would prevent

people from parking on site all day but allow the use of the facilities, with hirers registering their vehicles, so they would not be charged.

The staff/tenant car park barrier is now open at the weekends, when possible, as a new sensor system has been fitted. The Committee thanked officers for implementing this which made the space available for the community.

The wooden bollards along the verges were mentioned and if it was possible to extend these to prevent parking on the verges, which currently is not an issue. The Head of Estates advised that they would need to liaise with MSDC regarding this as not all the verges were in the Town Council's ownership.

In respect of the management of the issue of tickets if a system was put in place it was questioned if the Council could pay a set fee and manage this themselves, so any issues with tickets could be dealt with directly by the Council.

The Council are aware that the car park is being used by a few people that are not necessarily using the facilities at East Court, although this has minimal impact currently. It was suggested signage could potentially be installed outside the Old Court House to state 'parking enforcement is currently being reviewed' to highlight that parking is not available for residents of the new development.

RESOLVED: To recommend to full Council 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 is completed to see what the impact is on parking and review the situation and put a management plan together if required at that stage.

19 To consider the report and costings in relation to renewable energy options at the Old Court House (Appendix G)

The report was reviewed, and it was agreed that installing solar panels at the Old Court House would support the Council's sustainability objectives. However, concerns were raised that the projected savings may be overestimated in the figures provided. The priority and high cost of replacing the boilers at East Court was also noted, and, as these costs remain uncertain, it was agreed that the solar project should not proceed at this stage until the full boiler costs have been confirmed.

It was agreed that the community-owned solar panel scheme was too complicated and was not considered a suitable option for the Council, so this option would not be pursued further.

The issue of VAT was discussed, and the Responsible Finance Officer will be asked to review the matter of registering the building for VAT. It was noted that this would have a negative impact on the tenants, who would then have to be charged VAT. The question was also asked about claiming VAT retrospectively following the separation/boiler works that have been recently completed if the building was registered.

RESOLVED: Officers were requested to continue researching solar panel and battery storage options in greater detail, together with reviewing the current electrical usage, and to bring a further report to the next Committee meeting once the costs of the East Court boiler replacement have been confirmed.

20 To consider the historical car parking arrangement with Community Transport and to review the proposed licence arrangements (Appendix H)

The report was reviewed and the Committee wished to continue to support Community Transport by providing a free parking space under a licence arrangement as detailed.

RESOLVED: To approve the creation of a licence permitting Community Transport to use one designated parking space at East Court for the parking of a community transport vehicle when not in use, together with the associated storage and key boxes and access arrangements. This will be at no charge considering the community benefit provided by the service; with the requirement of an annual report to be provided by Community Transport which details the annual support to the Parish of East Grinstead. The Town Clerk is authorised to agree the final terms of the lease.

21 To consider the Tennis Club usage of East Court tennis courts and the proposed 25-year lease, in replacement of the previously held licence (Appendix I)

The report was noted and it was felt the issuing of a lease would provide the Tennis Club with more security and provide greater clarity for both parties regarding their respective rights and responsibilities. The proposed lease would be for a period of 25 years with the Club responsible for the repair and maintenance of the leased area.

RESOLVED: To approve replacing the existing licence with a 25-year lease of the East Court tennis courts, authorising the Town Clerk to agree the final terms of the lease.

22 To consider prioritisation of Business Plan items (Appendix J)

The Committee reviewed the items on the business plan and noted that they wished to prioritise those projects that were included in the Town Improvement Plan noting that any planting projects should be sustainable and consider appropriate planting; rewilding/conservation projects were the next priority and the Deputy Clerk was asked to put together a list on the above basis for the next meeting for consideration.

The Committee thanked the officers for the detailed reports that were presented at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 20.17 hrs.

Next meeting date: Thursday 3 December 2026 at 7pm.