

Employment Finance and Strategy Group

12th June 2025

Minutes

Present: Cllrs Sharp, Martin, Perry, Hotson plus Clerk and RFO

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Arger – Absent Cllr Riordan
2. **Dispensations** - NA
3. **Minutes of last meeting** – Cllr Perry, proposed and Cllr Martin seconded agreed 3 for, 0 against and 1 Abstained

4. **Contracts**

The RFO led the debate and EFS Group agreed unanimously to recommend to Council the contracts below

Activity	Company	Annual Value 2024-25	Cost per annum 2025-26	Contract End Date	Notes
Bell Lane Toilet Clean/Open/Sundries	P&F Cleaning Services Ltd	£12,120.00	£12,120.00	Ongoing	One month's notice - annual price increase
Data Protection Officer Agreement	GDPR-Info Ltd	£350.00	£350.00	11/07/2025	12m F&SG for SPC Approval
Unmetered supply Xmas Lights	Npower	Est. £55.00	Est. £55.00	Ongoing annual roll-over	12m RFO/Clerk - minimal value
Music Licence - Youth Club	PPL PRS Ltd	£322.71	£322.71	13/06/2025	Annual Auto renewal
Premises Licence - Jubilee Field	Sevenoaks District Council	£180.00	£180.00	31/05/2025	Annual Auto renewal

The RFO raised SAGE payroll costs

1. The payroll cost has increased by £1 per month per user from £10 to £11per user per month.
2. If a Cllr does not forgo their Basic Parish Allowance they will be added to the SAGE Council payroll list. Cllrs will forward NI number, Tax Code. Then a Cllr will need to claim tax back.

3. Also, Cllrs who received BPA last year had no Tax deducted. Therefore, will be deducted 20% tax this year and Cllrs will need to claim Tax back
4. Clerk to send out reminder as closing date to forgo Basic Parish Allowance is 5pm, Monday 23rd June 2025 – then report to July Council meeting.

Clerk noted that the Cleaning Contractor for the Youth Club and Jubilee Field pavilion is settling in well. As a company they can obtain cleaning products easier and cheaper than the Council can. EFS Group agreed in principle. subject to a meeting with the cleaning company next week, to pay the receipts for cleaning products – then update Council.

5. Discuss Council priorities / funding

Group discussed in depth the Council Strategic Action Plan priorities being linked to Council Reserves and CIL funding (Capital projects).

Group agreed do not need to do everything this year and can spread out over 3 years.

General Reserves guidance is not less than 3 months or 25% of its annual expenditure / precept but no more than 6 months of 50% of its annual expenditure / precept – currently £141,601.15 – as at the 31st March 2025

Earmarked Reserves total £59,988.10 – are earmarked for a project, but can be reallocated – current projects

- Surrenden Playing Field project £27,500.00
- Jubilee Field - £15,000.00
- Youth Club Building - £13,485.10
- Wimpey Field -£2,000.00
- Neighbourhood Development Plan - £2,000.00

Ring fenced Reserves total £1,528.52 - cannot be used for anything else, currently

- Greener Staplehurst Group – £200.00
- Youth Club activities and activities - £1,338.52

CIL funding can be used for projects that benefit the community – currently £78,176.39 as of today

A lengthy debate is summarised below

- 3G pitch – Grant of £741,879, £210,616.98 S106 £15,000 reserves
- Surrenden Field pavilion – potential new pavilion £27,500
- Youth Club – needs roof repairs £13,485
- Community Centre – longer term
- Jubilee Field skatepark- aspiration (2028)
- Playground equipment replacement – focus on maintenance
- Youth Equipment – focus on maintenance
- Outdoor Gym equipment – focus on maintenance

3G pitch - how would we fund the shortfall? We will not know exact amount until final costs, following planning permission.

Option to move around funding from earmarked reserves / CIL / adjust percentage of General Reserves / Public Works Loan

I.e. £50,000 from General Reserves (still be £91,601.15 = 30%) or £50,000 from CIL or £14,000 from savings on youth club revenue project

Youth Club and Surrenden Field Pavilion – is there demand for two community buildings, could we merge into one quality building.

Are roof repairs to the Youth Club building, a 40 year-old wooden building, throwing good money after bad

Could seek grant aid for community building projects

Need usage plan for community buildings to assess demand

Potential option to develop Youth Club site – seek early purchase of youth club site?

Agreed need more information

- Teams meeting with KALC – EFS group and RFO / Clerk to discuss Public Works Loan process
- Seek advice from KALC on developing usage plan for Surrenden Field / Youth Club pavilion.
- Clerk seek cost for patching Youth Club roof
- RFO seek early purchase of Youth Club site from KCC

Once further information collated, debated in EFS Group arrange Cllr workshop.

6. Review schedule of policies

Group discussed the Schedule of Policies.

Agreed SCEnic review Risk Assessment for Youth Club, Surrenden Field and Bell Lane Toilets and then report onto Council – Clerk forward drafts.

EFS Group consider Annual Investment Strategy and Finance, Asset and Activities Risk Assessment.

First, six-month monitoring report on Council Strategic Action Plan 2025 – 2028 to this group and then onto Council.

AOB

The Clerk updated group on initial discussions with YMCA potential Youth Club provision.

YMCA are keen to work in Staplehurst and run a Youth Club session one evening a week.

They are registered / trained / insured etc. Currently run 11 weekly sessions in the Weald of Kent – just starting in Cranbrook and Paddock Wood.

They are National Lottery funded, and the sessions will be free – to the young people and if we provide the building free, no charge to the Council.

They have one local Youth Worker and are looking recruiting a second.

Initial discussion is to do some outreach work during the summer- attend Skate Jam, Village Fair etc and start weekly Youth Club sessions in September.

Potential to use “Youth Club Activities” for one off items i.e. Gaming Bus, trips etc

Once we have firm details will report to SCENic / Council.

HR update

Staff training

DJ – FILCA qualification

Jean - ILCA qualification

Council has fully qualified staff for first time ever.

Potential Training for Cllrs

Civility and Respect – about better understanding and empower Cllrs to call out poor conduct

Potential joint training with neighbouring Parishes for Planning Committees members
– Clerk will chase up and report back

IT Contract

The changes is challenging, everything takes more time to complete as get used to new system.

Still problems with website

Need to change email address on contracts / bank – complicated time consuming

Still Cllrs Rhodes, Riordan and Pett not joined new emails

Cllr Disclaimer for IT equipment - the aim is to protect Council and Cllrs – until agreed cannot go to next stage of MS 365 of sorting out equipment and Cllrs accessing the Shared Council drive.

So far 2 Cllrs asked for a Council laptop – will seek option of either lease or purchase.

Agreed Clerk to chase Heliocentrix and copy in Chairman on Disclaimer.