

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING

Meeting 18th June 2026

Minutes

- 1) Present:** Cllrs Sharp, Martin, Ash, Alesi, Hotson, Perry and Cllr Arger (part Teams) plus Clerk and RFO.
- 2) Apologies for Absence** Cllr Riordan
- 3) Dispensations** Cllr Perry and Martin item 7
- 4) Minutes of last meeting** – Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Martin seconded that the minutes were accurate – agreed majority 5 for, 0 against, 0 abstained.
- 5) Action Plan.**
 - 23 - Still chasing Girl Guides lease / annual licence
 - 30 – SCCT fees just come through
 - 35 – MBC Complaint RG to double check
- 6) RFO update**
 - a) Utility Contracts**

Clerk explained that the market changes daily – so if this group can consider which suppliers they prefer and length of contract, then we can go back to the Brokers and ask for update on Monday 22nd and take to Council.

Group discussion led to several points; Prefer 2 year term, check when Bell Lane lease expires Parish Office no night storage check fees.

b) Scribe verbal update

Going well caught up to end of May 2026 so on track – Scribe support helpful and headed out reconciliation up to end of May 2026.

Aim to bring draft quarter 1 budget monitoring report to next meeting – group can discuss and change headings etc.

Then take to Council and roll out Scribe access to Cllrs realistically autumn 2026.

Cllrs must understand that live access to Council accounts is confidential and queries should go to the RFO for any answers.

c) Lloyds bank issues

Summary – LS submitted payments for authorisation on 11th June 2026, all went through as paid. This is not in her permissions. LS raised this immediately with RG.

They jointly checked and the funding had gone through. Cllr Ash was asked to double check payments – which are correct against invoices. Contacted Lloyds Bank

RG did one payment on 13th June 2026, which asked for two signatures as per normal, and went through fine

Discussion

Firstly, no blame on LS. Cllr Ash has done checks, and all is correct. Joined RG and LS on phone call to Lloyds, all felt we were being fobbed off. Council has raised a formal complaint INC13477752. The banking system still shows that LS does not have the permission to authorise payments, so how did the system **NOT** prevent the payment going through.

LS asked for another Cllr to check payments from the 11th June 2026 – Cllr Martin to do so – so two Cllrs have checked the 11th June 2026 payments as per Financial Regulations.

LS aims to do another payment with two Cllrs as witness, if still a problem then RG do payments until issue resolved.

(After the meeting Lloyds sent through instructions to change permissions – LS and Cllr Ash to follow instructions and see if it works)

7) Churchyard Maintenance – discuss

The RFO introduced the issue for discussion.

- An historical anomaly, Council has an agreement dated 1.4.2014
- Budget in 2026/27 = £19,267
- LGA 1894 Act – partially set up to split local democracy from the Church – as Parochial Church Council previously “managed” areas. The new Parish Councils had the power to execute works on property “not being the property relating to the affairs of the church or held for an ecclesiastical charity”
- LGA 1972 Act – reinforced the division and that Council’s should not directly fund Church but allowed under s137 powers (s214(6)) to donate to Churches.
- Levelling Up Act 2023 – allowed for Councils to fund religious groups from “Discretionary Budgets” – In our case s137 budget made up of Grants and Donations.
- Adopted SPC Grant Policy - maximum grant £1,000
- Adopted SPC Donations Policy - should be consider annually
- Therefore, the current churchyard agreement breaks our Policies
- We can make payment under s137 Powers but suggest revising s137 Policy to replace the current Council Grant and Donations policies into one policy

Discussion

General discussion

- The churchyard maintenance is an important, emotive issue
- It is an important “open space” in the village
- Cllrs generally supportive but costs have increased rapidly in last year or two
- Should honour this year’s payment, update s137 policy and give notice on agreement to ensure we are within our financial rules and policies

Moving forward recommend

- Under Clerks report at Council meeting 22nd June 2026 note payment of donation for 2026/27 under s137 powers “ as it is in the interest of the area and will bring direct benefit to the area”
- Once payment made arrange meeting with Vicar and Verger to explain the situation.
- Council report to give six months’ notice on existing Churchyard Agreement 1.4.2014 as an agreement infers a service arrangement rather than an annual donation
- Revised s137 Grant and Donations policy to next EFS group meeting and then onto Council
- Request the Church applies under new process with Churchyard maintenance budget for 2027/28, i.e. Church funds, fund raising, how it is to be funded and what donation requested from the Parish Council.

8) 3G pitch update

Construction progressing well- note

- Number of items being done to get the Jubilee Field site ready for handover
- Hot Water Tank – vessel repairs 22nd June 2026
- Container being relocated this week, getting quotes for gates
- Check electrics in pavilion – 29th June 2026
- Legionella tests sent off
- Pumping station serviced
- Deep clean awaiting quotes
- CCTV report to Council discussion led to view that the Council could cover cost of installation linked to 3G pitch (£5,0773.56 plus VAT) but SCL cover cost of CCTV. Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Martin seconded to propose that Council should cover cost of installation linked to 3G pitch (£5,0773.56 plus VAT) but SCL cover cost of CCTV – agreed majority for 4, against 1 and abstain 0

9) LGR update

- **Services**

Previously circulated – worth a recap in near future

- **Assets**

MBC circulated map of assets but KCC despite requests and asking KALC for help have not yet done so.

Discuss – mostly open space plus a playground, policy infers sale, but do we want it and if so how much? For instance, Surrenden Field – SPC manage on long term lease from MBC - do they want to sell it? no doubt haggling will take place.

Verbally inform assets will be transferred to new Unity Authority first, but no doubt they will want to rationalise assets in near future.

Note MBC voted for the formation of a Maidstone Town Council for the existing unparished areas.

We should to consider policy for asset acquisition? i.e. must be a condition survey, made good etc.

Clerk to draft Asset Acquisition policy and bring back.

Asset management

Currently the Parish Council undertakes conditions reports on asset and recently started sinking funds to help cover long term costs but needs to be more vigorous robust approach with a costed planned preventative maintenance (PPM).

Key assets moving forward.

Using asset register, check for condition survey maintenance /inspection / outstanding actions /costed PPM feed into Budget Setting proposal.

Discussed street furniture – such as seats, notice boards etc – Currently informal visual checks by caretaker but need more detailed checks formally - say twice per year

Memorial benches – emotive subject need to check and liaise with families if work required. Do we have a memorial benches policy.

10)Health and Safety - verbal update

- a) **COSHH in Air Raid shelter** – only 5 items – COSHH data sheets will be held in RED folder in Air Raid Shelter
Other items being thrown out – mostly opened paint, out of date.

- b) **Green Working group** is a Council group should have risk assessments for work carried out and people signed up to Volunteer agreements.

11)HR GROUP held meeting

12)Next Meeting 16th July 2026