

MINUTES of the MEETING of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE on THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2026 at 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Richard Lees – Elected Chair for the meeting
Councillor Ann Duke (substituting for Councillor Lorna Cross)
Councillor Peter Harris
Councillor Dawn Johnston
Councillor Hazel Stephens
Councillor Graham Taylor

ALSO PRESENT: Jack Turner – Locum RFO (via Teams)
Graham Blew – Town Clerk
Indigo Allred – Administration Officer
Councillor Denise Butler
DBC Councillor Carol Gale
DBC Councillor David Mote
x1 Member of the Public

ABSENT: There were none.

472/25-26. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING.

As both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were unable to attend the meeting it was duly proposed, seconded, and agreed.

Recommended: That Councillor Richard Lees be elected as the Chairman for the meeting.

473/25-26. ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS REGARDING FILMING OR RECORDING THE MEETING.

The Chairman explained the arrangements and constraints relating to the filming or recording of the meeting.

474/25-26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Emma Ben Moussa due to not feeling it was appropriate to sit in the committee meeting without having had training first.

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Lesley Howes, due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Lorna Cross, due to other commitments.

475/25-26. SUBSTITUTES.

Councillor Ann Duke substituted for Councillor Lorna Cross.

476/25-26. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.**

There were none.

As per Standing Order 34 c) the Chairman adjourned the meeting at this point to allow members of the public to address the meeting in relation to the business being transacted at the meeting.

477/25-26. **TO RECEIVE ITEMS DEEMED URGENT BY THE CHAIRMAN / MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES.**

There were none.

478/25-26. **TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2026.**

Recommended: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2026 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

479/25-26. **MONTHLY BANK RECONCILIATIONS.**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.2 a member of the council other than the Town Mayor or a cheque signatory is required to be appointed to verify the bank reconciliations produced by the RFO for all the council's accounts on a regular basis, Councillor Richard Lees was appointed (minute 30/25-26).

Recommended: That the bank reconciliations for January 2026 be noted.

480/25-26. **BANK TRANSFERS.**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 5.5 (c) Members were provided with a list of bank transfers undertaken between December 2025 and January 2026.

The Locum RFO confirmed these were all the Bank Transfers for December 2025 and January 2026.

Recommended: That the bank transfers undertaken between December 2025 and January 2026 be approved.

481/25-26. **TO RECEIVE FINANCE STATEMENTS AND PASS ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT.**

In accordance with Financial Regulation 5.5 (a) Members were provided with details of all receipts and payments for authorisation between December 2025 and January 2026.

Recommended: That the receipts and payments between December 2025 and January 2026 as per the annexed list, be approved.

482/25-26. SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS.

Members were provided with details of the Flex-Budget Report balanced to 31 January 2026.

In response to a member enquiry the Locum RFO confirmed that the gaps were due to different codes being used previously and not due to missing information.

Members noted the overspends in some of the Cost centres / Budgets and that these would need to be investigated going forward.

It was also agreed that the Council would need to ensure they used previous years actual positions when setting budgets in the future.

Recommended: That the summary of accounts to 31 January 2026, be noted.

TOWN CLERK & RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S (RFO) REPORT.

483/25-26. TO CONSIDER ANY BUDGET VIREMENTS FOR THE 2026 – 2027 FINANCIAL YEAR.

Members welcomed the Locum RFO report.

Members discussed the report and highlighted the proposal to remove the RFO/ATC Role, as well as further review the overall staff structure at subsequent Personnel Committee meetings. The Locum RFO advised that proposed virements 2026 – 2027 could be deferred to a budget to be reviewed by the council.

It was proposed, duly seconded and agreed:

Recommended:

1. That the proposed budget virements totalling £74,364.00 be approved.
2. That the creating / strengthening of a contingency budget heading to hold these savings be approved.
3. That the surplus funds be directed towards rebuilding the General Reserve be agreed.
4. That an urgent review of the Old Fire Station Community Café operations be commissioned.
5. That a a staffing structure review during 2026 – 2027 be undertaken.

484/25-26 **TO CONSIDER THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL.**

Members welcomed the Locum RFO's report on the projected financial position of the council and thanked the Locum RFO for his work in producing such a clear and well documented report.

Whilst acknowledging that the council had significant challenges ahead Members wished to record the gratitude to Dartford Borough Council who had significantly helped during this period.

It was proposed, duly seconded and agreed:

Recommended:

1. That the current cash flow position and historic overspend impact be noted.
2. That the reserves are effectively nil entering 2026-2027 be noted.
3. That the £40,383 structural variance identified by the Locum RFO be acknowledged.
4. That the expenditure reductions must be implemented to avoid further reserve erosion be agreed.
5. That a 2–3-year reserve recovery plan to restore General Reserve to at least £170,152 be developed.
6. That a review of income-generation services and staffing levels be continued.

485/25-26 **TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES / COMMUNITY HALL – HEATING SYSTEM.**

During a routine service visit the boiler room was discovered to have 1 to 3 inches of water on the floor from a leaking pressurisation unit In accordance with Financial Regulation 11.1 (iv), and in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, and to ensure continued operation of the Town Council building a quote was obtained and approved for the replacement of the leaking pressurisation unit with a new unit at a cost of £1,795.63 exc VAT.

The pressurisation unit maintains pressure in the system and is a safety device which monitors high and low pressure, without it there is no heating.

Recommended: That the actions taken be noted and endorsed.

486/25-26 TO KONICA MINOLTA – DIGITAL AUTOMATION

Member considered a report detailing the contract situation after the transfer from Konica Minolta to Digital Automation for the printers/photocopier.

Recommended: That Option 2 – Incorporating into Existing Agreement be proceeded with.

487/25-26 CCTV MODIFICATIONS – GROVE CAR PARK.

A quotation had been received regarding the CCTV camera in the Grove Car Park.

Members discussed the quotation and agreed that this item should be deferred for consideration when the 2027 – 2028 budgets were considered.

Recommended: That the item be deferred for consideration when the 2027 – 2028 budgets were considered.

488/25/26. SCHINDLER LIFT.

A quote had been received regarding an GSM SIM upgrade to the lifts auto dialler in the Council Offices (£1,250.00 exc VAT).

Members discussed the possibility of alternative solutions (cabling solutions). After discussion it was proposed, duly seconded and agreed.

Recommended: That quotations be obtained for at least x1 wired solution and one other GSM SIM quotation and for the item to be deferred until the 2027 – 2028 budget considerations.

489/25-26 BUSINESS RATE EVALUATION

An email had been received from gov.uk regarding the Business Rates which would be effective from 1 April 2026. Members were asked to consider how they wished to proceed with this.

Members confirmed that there were x2 factors involved, changes to rateable values and changes to the multipliers used.

Recommended: That a request be made to Dartford Borough Council for when they would be sending out the NNDR bills which would then indicate exactly what properties were being charged for and what the properties were being classed as.

490/25-26 **REQUEST FOR CIL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING**

The Chairman of the Greenhithe Community Centre had submitted a request for CIL Infrastructure Funding from the Town Council towards Eco Heating.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Chairman of the Greenhithe Community Centre had since advised that they had obtained the required funding from the National Lottery Fund, so the application had been withdrawn.

Recommended: Members noted the withdrawal of the application and congratulated the Greenhithe Community Centre on obtaining the funding.

491/25-26. **PRECEPT PAYMENT RESTRUCTURING.**

Members were updated on what had happened regarding the request to Dartford Borough Council for the following restructuring of the payments for the 2026 – 2027 Precept.

1 March 2026 – 3120,000
30 April 20236 - £280,305
30 Sept 2026 - £280,305.

Members acknowledged the assistance that Dartford Borough Council had given with this matter.

Recommended: That the actions taken in arranging the precept payment restructuring be endorsed.

492/25-26. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.**

MOVED BY Councillor Graham Taylor and seconded by Councillor Dawn Johnston.

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following item(s).

No members of the press or public were present during discussion of the following item of business.

493/25-26. **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PREVIOUS RFO LAST BEING IN THE OFFICE AND THE CURRENT LOCUM RFO HAVING SUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO TAKE UP HIS RESPONSIBILITIES.**

The Town Clerk introduced the report and confirmed to Members that the funds from the CCLA Investment Account had been transferred to the Active Saver 1 account during this period.

The Locum RFO advised members that the Town Councils Financial Regulations were adequate.

After discussion it was proposed, duly seconded and agreed:

Recommended: That the recommendation contained in the confidential report be agreed.

There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairman)