

MINUTES of the SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING of the SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL held on WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL 2026 at 7.20pm

PRESENT: Councillor Dawn Johnston – Town Mayor
Councillor Denise Butler
Councillor Lorna Cross
Councillor Ann Duke
Councillor Peter Harris
Councillor Lesley Howes
Councillor Richard Lees
Councillor Claire Pearce
Councillor Hazel Stephens
Councillor Elizabeth Wickham

ALSO PRESENT: Graham Blew – Town Clerk
Indigo Allred – Administration Officer
Jack Turner – Locum RFO (via Teams)
x1 Member of the public

ABSENT: Councillor Alan Reach

561/25-26. ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS REGARDING FILMING OR RECORDING THE MEETING.

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

562/25-26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Emma Ben – Moussa, due to other commitments.

RESOLVED:

That the reason/s for absence, for the above Town Councillors, be formally accepted and approved.

563/25-26. 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.

564/25-26. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2026.**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 26 March 2026 and be confirmed as a true record and be signed.

565/25-26. **ITEMS DEEMED URGENT BY THE TOWN MAYOR / MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES AND THEIR POSITION ON THE AGENDA.**

The Town Clerk advised the meeting that Councillor Graham Taylor had submitted his resignation as Town Councillor for Greenhithe Parish Ward.

566/25-26. **INDEPENDENT FORENSIC FINANCIAL INVESTIGATION REPORT (UPDATED DATA REVIEW) – ACTION PLAN.**

The Locum Responsible Financial Officer had been instructed to carry out a forensic financial investigation, and members discussed the report that had been provided. The Locum Responsible Financial Officer detailed the executive summary of the report to the meeting.

A draft Action Plan addressing the issues highlighted in the report had also been submitted by Councillor Graham Taylor and the Locum Responsible Financial Officer.

The Chairman acknowledged the significant amount of work Councillor Graham Taylor had undertaken in producing the draft Action Plan.

In response to a member enquiry the Locum RFO clarified what the reconciliations in 15.1.2 were and confirmed that he would be producing these details/reports for future Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings.

Members agreed that the wording for 15.14.14 (14b) should be amended from mandatory to expectation.

After further discussion on the draft Action Plan, and the financial position of the Town Council it was proposed, duly seconded and agreed unanimously:

RESOLVED:

That the Action Plan, to include the amendment detailed above, be finalised and agreed.

567/25-26. **CIL REVIEW (P).**

Members discussed the report and the Locum RFO confirmed that there was a need for a formal CIL reconciliation exercise (restricted fund ledger) and action to regularise any prior misapplication.

It was confirmed that Dartford Borough Council would be notified of the CIL re-allocation and that this would also be published on the Town Council website in the normal manner.

It was then proposed, duly seconded and agreed unanimously:

RESOLVED:

1. That a formal resolution be passed to reallocate the CIL as detailed in the papers.
2. That the CIL position is corrected, in line with the workbook strategy, so that the Council does not have to replace CIL from General Funds.

568/25-26. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

MOVED BY Councillor Lorna Cross and seconded by Councillor Peter Harris.

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.

569/25-26. INTERNAL AUDIT.

Members discussed the report and information provided and the actions required to be undertaken in relation to the internal audit. The Town Clerk advised the meeting that, due to the timescale restraints, the Locum RFO had engaged PATAS to undertake the end of year internal audit for the Town Council and that the Locum RFO would be working with them on this.

The Locum RFO informed members that he had worked with PATAS previously and that they were a nationally recognised company who would provide a robust and comprehensive report.

It was then proposed, duly seconded and agreed unanimously:

RESOLVED:

1. That the actions taken in appointing PATAs as the Town Councils Internal Auditor, for the year end 2024 – 2025, be endorsed.
2. That the previous Internal Auditor be notified that they were no longer required.

570/25-26. **OLD FIRE STATION COMMUNITY CAFÉ – COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS APPRAISAL.**

Members were provided with a confidential report from the Locum RFO, regarding the cost benefit analysis and the two options, dated 31 March 2026, proposed by the Locum RFO.

Whilst Members acknowledged the benefits of the Community Café the confidential report and advice from the Locum RFO were clear.

There followed a lengthy and in-depth debate, and it was proposed, duly seconded and agreed:

RESOLVED:

1. That the first of the two options provided by the Locum RFO be implemented with a timeframe of the end of the month (April) and that the Lease holder be informed.
2. That professionals be engaged to ensure correct procedures are undertaken.

There being no further business to transact the Meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Signed: _____

(Chairman)

Date: _____