MINUTES of the TOWN COUNCIL MEETING of the SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL held on THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2026 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Councillor Dawn Johnston – Town Mayor
Councillor Richard Lees
Councillor Denise Butler
Councillor Lesley Howes
Councillor Celedonia Krawczyk
Councillor Baptiste Reynaud
Councillor Hazel Stephens

ALSO PRESENT: Adil Iftakhar – Interim Town Clerk & RFO
Indigo Allred – Assistant Town Clerk
X3 Members of the public

ABSENT: Councillor Alan Reach

258/26-27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Lorna Cross, due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ann Duke, due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Claire Pearce, due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Elizabeth Wickham, due to illness.

RESOLVED:

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

259/26-27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

Councillor Lesley Howes declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 20 due to her role as the Local History Group secretary.

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.

260/26-27. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2026.

Councillor Baptiste Reynaud noted that there had been a misspelling of his surname on minute 253/26-27 and requested this to be corrected.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Special Town Council meeting held on 14 October 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record and be signed subject to the above-mentioned corrections.

261/26-27. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Town Mayor Councillor Dawn Johnston greeted all those in attendance and specially extended a warm welcome to a visitor from the United States; noting her interest in observing how local government operates in England. The Town Mayor then announced her upcoming events; those being: A Halloween Pumpkin Hunt on 30 October 2026 at Swanscombe Park, a Charity Quiz Night on 27 November 2026 at Church Road Community Hall, and a Wreath Making Lesson on 28 November 2026 at the Town Council Offices Community Hall.

262/26-27. SENIOR GROUNDSMAN/GARDENER'S REPORT.

Members considered the report presented by the Senior Groundsman, which updated members on the work undertaken and planned by the Parks Department in the following areas:

Broomfield: Review of seasonal turf management, routine pitch maintenance, and ongoing boundary upkeep.

Eagles Road: Update on perimeter fencing repairs, scheduled shrub pruning, and addressing maintenance issues arising from recent playground inspection reports.

Heritage Park: Summary of recent landscaping tasks, pathway clearance, pond area upkeep, and adherence to the ongoing Heritage Park Management Plan.

Knockhall: Review of end-of-season football pitch renovations, goal mouth repairs, and planned shrub cutting and leaf clearance.

Swanscombe Park: General updates on sports pitch configurations, open space maintenance, and fixing ad-hoc play area asset damage.

Valley View: Update on completed playground equipment inspections, wet pour safety surfacing repairs, and seasonal grounds upkeep.

Equipment / Staffing: Review of the department's operational fleet, updated chemical and asset registries, and an update on staff training and availability.

Miscellaneous: Summary of ad-hoc community feedback items, administrative park updates, and reactive maintenance projects across the town's open spaces.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

263/26-27. ANNUAL SAFETY INSPECTION OF PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT.

The Annual Playground Safety Inspection was undertaken in September 2026 by a RPII (Register of Playground Inspectors International) / ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Certified Playground Specialist. Members were issued with the Inspection Finding Summary and the risk assessment matrix used by the Inspector.

When the report was received, a copy was passed to the Senior Groundsman/Gardener, which is under review to ensure any action required is being undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Playground Safety Inspection Report be noted.

264/26-27. INGRESS PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE – VERBAL UPDATE.

The Interim Town Clerk/RFO provided a verbal update on ongoing correspondence with Crest Nicholson regarding the completion and handover of the Ingress Park Community Centre. Members were advised that, although Crest Nicholson's Technical Director had indicated that a contractor's priced programme of works would be available by 16 October 2026, this had not been received. The Town Council has therefore formally requested the programme and confirmation of completion dates. Outstanding matters include structural designs for the bike and bin store foundations, utility connections, repairs to a roof-related leak affecting the men's toilets, and the completion of remaining snagging works, including electrical items and car park landscaping.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

265/26-27. SWANSCOMBE LEISURE CENTRE – VERBAL UPDATE.

The Interim Town Clerk/RFO provided a verbal update on the future commissioning of Leisure Services at Swanscombe Leisure Centre. Members were advised that constructive meetings had been held with Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL) to discuss matters including business rates, insurance, rent, subsidy reduction, the Craylands Lane car parking proposal, and the potential extension of the current agreement. To ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, a lifetime contract valuation will be undertaken to determine the appropriate procurement route. Members were further advised that a soft market testing exercise will be undertaken, with GCLL formally included in the process. Once the valuation and market testing are complete, all commissioning options will be assessed, and a detailed options report will be brought back to Council for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

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266/26-27. UPDATE ON ELECTIRC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT (EVCP) USAGE AT THE GROVE AND THE SWANSCOMBE LEISURE CENTRE (CRAYLANDS LANE) CAR PARKS.

Members were provided with details of the Flex-Budget Report balanced to 30 September 2026.

RESOLVED: That the summary of accounts to 30 September 2026, be noted.

267/26-27. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE REPRESENTATIVES.

Members were advised that this item provided an opportunity for Members appointed as representatives on outside bodies to provide a report at the meeting.

Ingress Park (Greenhithe) Management Limited (IPGM).
Councillor Dawn Johnston is the Town Councils representative on IPGM. IPGM have indicated that, although unable to supply any documentation, they would like a verbal update to be submitted to the Council.

Members received an update from Councillor Hazel Stephens regarding management and maintenance matters concerning the maintenance of the beachfront, and significant increase in associated costs. Members were advised that negotiations were ongoing regarding future management arrangements for public open spaces, with further information to be provided to residents once agreements had been finalised.

Whitecliffe Community Liaison Group (WCLG)
Councillor Dawn Johnston is the Town Councils representatives on the WCLG. As previously agreed, the agenda from the meeting on 21 January 2026 was available for inspection.

Councillor Dawn Johnston informed the meeting that unfortunately she is unable to attend the new date of the meeting due to prior commitments.

Borough and Parish Forum (BPF)
Councillor Dawn Johnston and the Town Clerk are the Town Councils representatives on the BPF.

Members were also informed that no recent meetings of the Borough Parish Forum had taken place, as a planned event had been cancelled and was awaiting rescheduling.

268/26-27. REPORT FROM KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR.

Unfortunately, Kent County Councillor for Swanscombe and Greenhithe, Mr Thomas Mallon, was not in attendance. No report was submitted.

269/26-27. REPORT FROM DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCILLORS.

Dartford Borough Councillor Carol Gale attended the meeting. She gave a brief report which detailed that:

She had attended a second workshop regarding the Swanscombe Peninsula, involving major landowners including Logica, and that concerns were raised that the exercise appeared largely academic, with limited feedback from landowners, and that references to the "Swanscombe Peninsula for Ebbsfleet Garden City" could impact the identity of Swanscombe and Greenhithe. Members also received an update on the proposed Greenhithe Medical Centre, with local GP representatives reporting significant service pressures and construction anticipated to commence in the New Year. The Community Grants Scheme was noted, including funding of up to £3,000 for environmental initiatives, with higher amounts potentially available for projects delivering wider community benefits. In relation to the Pit 11 development, concerns were expressed regarding Kent County Council's lack of objection to the application, inaccuracies within the supporting report, including references to Mounts Road as a two-way route, and potential environmental issues associated with the site's former use. Members were also advised that a request to purchase land from MCK had been declined due to foundation concerns, and that Dartford Borough Council would be asked to seek a further review of the Kent County Council report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

270/26-27. KENT POLICE REPORT.

Unfortunately, though an overview of the report to be given was provided to Council Officers, Kent Police Community Support Officers were unable to attend.

271/26-27. KENT COUNTY COUCIL (KCC) COMMUNITY WARDENS REPORT.

Unfortunately, Kent County Council Community Warden for Swanscombe and Greenhithe, Ms Angela Jarrett, was unable to attend the meeting.

No report was submitted.

272/26-27. COMMUNITY SAFETY LIASON.

Lorry Watch – Councillor Lesley Howes reported that the relocation of lorry parks had been discussed at a recent Stone Town Council meeting. It was noted that the previous working group no longer appeared to be active. Members were advised that the lorry parks within Manor Park had now been closed and discussions had taken place regarding the identification of a designated alternative location. Councillor Johnston agreed to liaise with Stone Town Council to obtain an update and explore opportunities for joint working on the matter.

RESOLVED: That the updates be noted.

273/26-27. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF CRIME STATISTICES FOR SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE.

Members were provided with, and discussed, the up-to-date detailed analysis of crime figures for Swanscombe and Greenhithe.

Councillor Celedonia Krawczyk queried whether Police have considered the early release of prisoners' impact on local crime. Councillor Richard Lees requested an update on actions being taken to address nuisance bikes within the area. Officers were asked to make enquiries with Kent Police and provide an update at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the statistics be noted and that Officers liaise with local police regarding the above-mentioned queries.

274/26-27. CRAYLANDS LANE CAR PARK – ASSET REVIEW.

Members considered the asset review report produced and presented by the Interim Town Clerk / RFO and after a detailed discussion it was agreed that:

RESOLVED: That officers liaise with Craylands Lane Primary School and that the proposed tariff structure be reviewed to align with other car parks in the area, before a final proposal is brought back to Council for consideration.

275/26-27. THE HERITAGE HALL – ASSET REVIEW.

Members considered the asset review report produced and presented by the Interim Town Clerk / RFO and after much discussion it was majority agreed that:

RESOLVED:

1. That the asset review update be noted.
2. That the recommendations as set out in the report be agreed.
3. That the Interim Town Clerk/RFO be authorised to progress the agreed recommendations and report back to the Council as required.

276/26-27. TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBER STOREROOM INVENTORY.

Members considered the inventory list produced and presented by the Assistant Town Clerk and after discussion it was unanimously agreed that:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chamber Storeroom Inventory be noted.
2. That the Assistant Town Clerk, in conjunction with the Local History Group, be authorised to reorganise the Chamber Storeroom, and to repurpose, donate, sell or dispose of the items which are of no practical or historical value.

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Lesley Howes left the council chamber and took no part in the discussion, or decision of the following agenda item

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277/26-27. THE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP USE OF TOWN COUNCIL FACILITIES.

Members considered the report regarding the Local History Group's use of Town Council facilities, which detailed use of storage space within the Chamber Storeroom, access to the Council Chamber for meetings, and heritage displays. Members recognised the valuable contribution made by the Group in preserving and promoting the Town's local history.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That use of the Chamber for meetings or events be a maximum of one booking per month.
3. That Town Clerk/RFO liaise with the Local History Group to finalise the proposed arrangements and any applicable charges for hire of the Chamber for meetings/storage. The Town Clerk/RFO to be given delegated authority to agree arrangements and charges for hire in consultation with the Town Mayor.

278/26-27. EBBSFLEET CRICKET CLUB REQUEST.

Members considered the request from Ebbsfleet Cricket Club for a discounted block booking of the hall over a nine-week period and the report which outlined the current hall hire charging structure, the existing concessions already provided to local cricket clubs, and the financial implications of the various charging options available to the Council.

RESOLVED: That the item be noted and that Ebbsfleet Cricket Club be offered the booking at the Regular Booking Rate of £24.60 per booking for the nine-week period.

279/26-27. LONE WORKING POLICY.

Members considered the proposed Lone Working Policy and discussed its intended application across Council operations and noted that the policy provided an appropriate framework for managing lone working risks, and that further consideration should be given to strengthening provisions covering out-of-hours lone working arrangements.

RESOLVED: That the Lone Working Policy be adopted; that the policy be reviewed annually; and that the policy be brought back to a subsequent meeting of the Town Council with proposed amendments relating to out-of-hours lone working.

280/26-27. BANKING STRATAGY.

Members considered the Banking Strategy and the arrangements proposed for the management of Council funds. Members agreed that transparency and accountability in relation to funds should be maintained at all times and it was unanimously agreed that:

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Banking Strategy be approved.

281/26-27. MONTHLY BANK RECONCILIATION.

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).

RESOLVED: That the bank reconciliations for September 2026 be noted.

282/26-27. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING.

RESOLVED: That the date of the next Full Council meeting, 5 November 2026, be noted.

283/26-27. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

MOVED BY Councillor Hazel Stephens and seconded by Councillor Richard Lees.

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.

284/26-27. STAFFING UPDATE.

Members considered the confidential staffing update report regarding the successful completion of a Level 2 Sports Turf Operative Apprenticeship by Employee 72 and the associated recommendation for salary progression. Members welcomed the achievement, recognised the additional skills and expertise gained within the Council, and unanimously agreed that:

RESOLVED: That the report be noted; that the successful completion of the apprenticeship by Employee 72 be recognised; and the salary increase be approved.

285/26-27. VAT COMPLIANCE REVIEW AND EVELUATION OF PROPOSALS FOR SPECIALIST SUPPORT.

Members considered the confidential report regarding a review of the Council's VAT arrangements following compliance concerns identified during the most recent Internal Audit. The report outlined the potential financial risks associated with the matter and presented options for obtaining specialist professional support to assist the Council.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that option 2 (BCA Accountants) be appointed to provide specialist professional support in relation to VAT compliance.

286/26-27. LANDSCAPE SERVICES CONTRACT REVIEW.

Members considered the confidential report reviewing the Town Council's Landscape Services contract. During discussion, Members sought further information regarding the operational implications, resource requirements, staffing capacity, training needs, equipment provision, and the overall financial impact of the proposals.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the matter be deferred to the next Town Council meeting with further information on the cost implications, resource requirements, and operational considerations of the proposals.

287/26-27. NIGHT & DAY SECURITY CONTRACT REVIEW.

Members considered the confidential report regarding a review of the Council's contract with Night & Day Security Ltd. After much discussion it was agreed that:

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the recommendations contained within the report be approved, including the termination of the existing contract, the transfer of appropriate duties to the Council's in-house Parks Team, and the progression of proposals for a dedicated Park Warden role, subject to the return of a formal job description to a future meeting for approval.

288/26-27. THE SWANSCOMBE CENTRE PREFORMANCE UPDATE.

Further to minute 186/25-26 the Finance Director GCLL had provided the Performance of Services Report which includes details for Finance and Attendances for May, June, July and August 2026.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

There being no further business to transact the Meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Signed:_____ Date:_____
(Chairman)

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