MINUTES of the TOWN COUNCIL MEETING of the SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL held on THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2026 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Councillor Dawn Johnston – Town Mayor
Councillor Emma Ben-Moussa
Councillor Denise Butler
Councillor Lorna Cross
Councillor Ann Duke
Councillor Lesley Howes
Councillor Hazel Stephens

ALSO PRESENT: Adil Iftakhar – Interim Town Clerk & RFO
Indigo Allred – Assistant Town Clerk
X4 Members of the public

ABSENT: Councillor Alan Reach

289/26-27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Celedonia Krawczyk, due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Richard Lees, 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 Baptiste Reynaud, due to other commitments

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

An apology for absence was received from Dartford Borough Councillor Carole Gale, due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was received from Dartford Borough Councillor David Mote, due to other commitments.

RESOLVED:

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

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290/26-27. 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.

Councillor Lorna Cross declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item due to her role as the Local History Group Treasurer.

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.

291/26-27. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2026.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 22 October 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record and be signed.

292/26-27. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Town Mayor thanked the Grounds Maintenance Team for their work on the recent Pumpkin Hunt, which was well attended and raised over £200 for the Town Mayor's Charity. Members were reminded of upcoming community events and forthcoming Remembrance Sunday services, where the Town Council will lay wreaths at Dartford, St Mary's, St Paul's and St Peter's churches, with thanks expressed to councillors assisting with the ceremonies. The Town Mayor also reminded Members that officer reports are non-political documents and encouraged councillors to raise any comments or concerns directly with officers. Thanks were given to members of the public who attend Council meetings. Members were further advised that the former kiosk has been partially opened as a community book exchange, with plans to install a notice board to create a small local history display and hold a further opening event in due course.

293/26-27. HERITAGE PARK – POND SITE

Members received and noted the update regarding the funding proposals for the Heritage Park, which included community engagement activity improvements to footpaths, signage, accessibility and the potential development of an audio trail.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted, and the lower maintenance redesign of the pond area be approved.

294/26-27. REPORT FROM KENT COUNTY COUNCILLORS.

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

295/26-27. REPORT FROM DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

Dartford Borough Councillor Emma Ben Moussa reported that the local street sweeper was subjected to racial abuse whilst undertaking his duties. Although those responsible were identified and video evidence was provided, Kent Police have advised that no further action can be taken as the individuals' faces are not sufficiently visible.

Dartford Borough Councillor Carol Gale submitted a report in her absence regarding the Greenhithe PITT 11 development application. Following discussions with the planning officer, she has received a further document from Kent County Council relating to traffic movements and access arrangements onto London Road. The document remains confidential; however, she advised that Kent County Council has raised several queries in relation to the application. Councillor Carol Gale noted that she has been unable to identify any traffic flow analysis undertaken since the collapse of Galley Hill and therefore current assessments are largely based on observed traffic conditions. She highlighted that, prior to the closure, London Road carried approximately 28,000 to 30,000 vehicle movements per day and expressed concern that current traffic conditions differ significantly from those historic patterns. Issues identified include increased congestion on London Road and Swanscombe High Street, the diversion of traffic onto residential roads, disruption to local bus services, and impacts on local businesses. Cllr Gale also highlighted the ongoing government-funded development of the Swanscombe Peninsula as a recreational destination for residents and visitors as part of the wider Ebbsfleet Garden City programme. It was noted that this project is expected to generate additional traffic movements and that Kent County Council is aware of these future transport implications as part of its planning considerations. Finally, she noted a recent Dartford Borough Council press release providing an update on progress with the Greenhithe Superhub Medical Centre.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update from Councillor Emma Ben Moussa be noted, that the report supplied by Councillor Carol Gale be noted, and that Officers write to Kent Police to formally express the Town Council's concerns regarding the handling of the incident regarding the street sweeper.

296/26-27. LAND AT LEWIS ROAD – ASSET REVIEW.

Members considered the asset review report produced and presented by the Interim Town Clerk / RFO. Discussion took place regarding the history of the site, consultation with the current allotment holder, the Council's possessory title, and the potential implications of future disposal. Members noted that the site is well maintained and to retain the land as green space for allotment use whilst securing the Council's legal interest in the asset.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Option 1, to apply for an upgrade from Possessory Title to Absolute Title, be approved.
3. That Option 2, to maintain the current use of the land as an allotment, be approved.

At this point in the meeting, Councillors Lesley Howes and Lorna Cross left the Council Chamber and took no part in the discussion, or decision of the following agenda item.

297/26-27. THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES BUILDING – ASSET REVIEW

Members considered the asset review report produced and presented by the Interim Town Clerk / RFO. Discussion took place regarding the future use of the former Cashier's Office, and the arrangements for letting the space. Members supported the proposal to let the office under a formal agreement once cleared

RESOLVED:

1. That the findings of the asset review report be noted.
2. That the letting of the former Cashier's Office space be approved.
3. That the Town Clerk/RFO be authorised to market the opportunity once the space has been cleared.
4. That the Town Clerk/RFO report back to Council as required.

298/26-27. COUNCIL OFFICES CHRISTMAS OPENING ARRANGEMENTS.

Members considered the proposed Christmas and New Year office opening arrangements, which provided for home working from 21 to 24 December 2026, office closure from 25 December 2026 to 3 January 2027 inclusive, and a return to normal office hours on 4 January 2027

RESOLVED: That the Christmas and New Year office opening arrangements for 2026/2027 be approved and that appropriate public notices and answerphone messages be put in place to advise members of the public.

299/26-27. FINANCIAL REPORTING – PETTY CASH.

Members considered the financial reporting detailing the banking of petty cash as per the recommendation of the Locum RFO and internal auditor.

RESOLVED: That the financial reporting be noted.

300/26-27. PARKS WARDEN – JOB DESCRIPTION.

Further to minute 287/26-27 members considered the draft job description for the proposed Park Warden role, which encompassed responsibilities relating to park security, public safety, sports facilities, community engagement and operational support. It was agreed after much discussion that:

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft Park Warden job description be approved in principle, subject to further consideration of the proposed hours of work and salary
2. That officers arrange a meeting between Councillor Emma Ben Moussa and the Senior Groundsman to discuss the operational requirements of the role.

3. That officers liaise with Councillor Richard Lees and undertake further benchmarking of comparable roles in respect of hours of work and remuneration.
4. That a further report on the proposed hours of work and salary be submitted to the Town Council for consideration prior to the commencement of recruitment.

301/26-27. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING.

RESOLVED: That the date of the next Full Council meeting, 26 November 2026, be noted.

302/26-27. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

MOVED BY Councillor Hazel Stephens and seconded by Councillor Denise Butler.

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.

303/26-27. LANDSCAPE SERVICES CONTRACT REVIEW – UPDATE.

Members considered the confidential update report reviewing the Town Council's Landscape Services contact. Discussion focused on the capacity of the Grounds Maintenance Team to undertake the work in-house and the associated financial implications.

RESOLVED: That the update report be noted, and that Option 1 to terminate the Landscape Services contract, and to bring the work under direct management of the existing internal outdoor maintenance team be unanimously approved.

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairman)

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