

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL
ON MONDAY 29TH JANUARY 2024 AT 7PM.

Present: Councillor F Visser (Town Mayor)
Councillor S Ody (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillors Barnett, J Belsey*, M Belsey, Dabell* Farren, Gibbs,
Gibson, Hughes, Mockford, Peacock, Pond, Reeves, Scott* and
Whittaker.

* = absent

Others present: Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer, 2 members of the public
and 6 members of public in the zoom room

The Town Mayor welcomed all and reminded the public that questions are governed
by the standing orders. He invited any questions on the agenda items.

Four persons spoke, none of which confirmed whether they were East Grinstead
residents. They illustrated their statements with personal experiences and asked what
the Town Council was doing to safeguard others from similar experiences, and asked
why the Councillors were willing to support the accused organisation.

The Town Mayor reiterated that the public questions were for questions on the agenda
items. These questions did not relate to the agenda. He was sorry to hear of the
matters raised, however, the seriousness of these allegations must be reported to the
Police as they were not matters under the council remit.

He then moved to the substantive agenda.

65 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was advised that Cllr Scott may be late.

RESOLVED: To accept the following apologies

Cllr J Belsey	Personal Commitment
Cllr Dabell	Unwell

66 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES**

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes, of the meeting of 8th January and that
the Town Mayor sign them as a correct record.

67 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No new interests were declared

68 TOWN MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor advised that he had attended a volunteers fair and the Lions Senior Citizens event last weekend and these were well attended.

69 TO RECEIVE SUCH COMMUNICATIONS AS THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL MAY DESIRE TO LAY BEFORE THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council reflected back on the 2023/24 financial year did throw up some challenges for the council. There was the obvious ones like the energy price increases that affected everyone as well as the hidden increased costs on insurances and materials needed to maintain the premises that the town council are responsible for.

Having said that, we still managed to deliver so much. The purchases of St. Barnabus Church, now the newly named Sunnyside Barn, which will open this month, the delivery of 3 incredibly successful East Court Live events with all 3 days having not only amazing line-ups but amazing weather too. The crowds were some of the highest that I can remember!

The cemeteries and the War Memorials have all had work on them this year to keep them in the best condition they can be and to ensure their longevity in the community.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors and the officers for the delivery of the aforementioned.

70 TO DISPOSE OF ANY BUSINESS OUTSTANDING FROM THE LAST MEETING

There was none

71 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEES

Cllr Ody proposed the planning committee minutes. Thanking the committee members for their work.

Cllr Whittaker proposed the minutes of the Public Services Committee.

Cllr Hughes in the absence of Cllr Belsey proposed the minutes of the Amenities and Tourism Committee

Cllr Ody proposed the Environment and Sustainable Travel Committee

Cllr Farren proposed the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Meeting.

RESOLVED: To accept the minutes and decisions therein of the below meetings:

	Date	Page Nos	Minute No
(a) Planning	10/01/2024	144-148	265-271
(b) Public Services	22/01/2024	149	272-275
(c) A&T	22/01/2024	150-151	276-280
(d) E&ST	22/01/2024	152-153	281-284
(e) F&GP	22/01/2024	154-155	285-289

The Town Mayor stated that through the preceding item, the Council has accepted the recommendations from the Finance & General Purposes Committee, so the Council now need to consider and formally resolve two of these recommendations for the 2024/2025 financial year: namely.

- (a) Town Council Revenue Estimates, and
- (b) The Precept to be made on Mid Sussex District Council.

The recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee are as set out in the minutes and the Final Draft budget book was re-issued electronically with the agenda, but with no financial amendments from the draft which was discussed at committee.

The Town Mayor deferred to the leader of the Council who thanked the councillors who have been part of the working party on this budget. She also thanked Mr Chambers and Mrs Holden, the Town Clerk and the Finance Officer for their hard work on the budget and especially when asked to look at elements in more details and re-write some sections.

She stated that we have made sure that we are able to deliver the very best that we can to the residents of our town, ensuring that we continue to have the best environment to live in and enjoy. To maintain the outside spaces including East Court for the free outdoor summer events including the additional D Day Commemorations this year.

To maintain our cemeteries to the highest standard for our residents to visit, reflect and for those who choose it to be their final resting place.

We also have our buildings to maintain for youngsters to start their pre-school journey, where others wish to celebrate events and have their weddings. They are also used for community events on health such as prostate screening, blood donation and flu vaccinations. As well as that we now have Sunnyside Barn in the Sunnyside area of the town for the hire by residents and community groups to enjoy.

Let us not forget the support we have for tourism that is so important to our historical town and so beneficial for businesses.

Finally, we have been able to budget to ensure the continued support of our beloved town theatre – The Chequer Mead Arts Centre – with a grant and the town museum. We also have grants to support local sports and community groups.

As the precept was kept low last year due to rises in energy and the cost of living crisis, this year the precept has had to increase to achieve everything that had been mentioned. We have worked hard on this budget to deliver everything that we believe is good for our town and a benefit to our residents.

She then proposed the budget for 2024/2025

Questions followed:

The leader of the Liberal Democrat group thanked Officers and Councillors for their worked on the budget, and stated that the budget is supported by the opposition, the budget increase is an honest budget based on the increase last year being kept to 1%, which in retrospect may have been a give-away budget. To fix this financial hole and pay for the projects that the council is supporting this year it is necessary and supported.

Other comments were made to support the budget as it has been proposed. Mentioning the difficulties of the pressures on the principal councils for their finances. The cost of living crisis has not gone away and support for the residents is something that will be needed. The residents of the parish come and ask for help from the Town Council staff and councillors. Some of the principal authorities in the Country are suffering under the financial strain with some facing bankruptcy.

The Town Mayor summed up with the pleasure to see the cross party support and that the work that has gone in to the budget is appreciated by all, especially the Leader.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the revenue estimates 2024/2025, as set out in the published draft Budget booklet become the Town Council's budget for 2024/2025 financial year.
- (ii) That the Town Council's capital programme for 2024/2025 be laid down as in the published draft budget booklet;
- (iii) That the grants to the named community organisations contained in those papers be approved for release in the 2024/2025 year, subject to the receipt of annual accounts.
- (iv) That the Town Council's estimate payments of £1,601,433 (one million six hundred and one thousand, four hundred and thirty three pounds) and estimated income of £364,355 (three hundred and sixty-four thousand, three hundred and fifty-five pounds) in the 2024/2025 financial year be approved, resulting in a net cost to the Town Council of £1,237,078 (1 million and two hundred and thirty-seven thousand and seventy-eight pounds).
- (v) That Council, now be requested to approve an actual precept for the 2024/2025 financial year, which the Committee recommends should be set at £1,237,078 (one million two hundred and thirty-seven thousand, and seventy-eight pounds), (representing an annual council tax, increase of 10.9% at £103.44 per Band D property) based on the known tax base of 11,959.5.

The Town Mayor then advised that the second part of this item is to approve the precept be levied on Mid Sussex District Council.

RESOLVED: that the precept be made on Mid Sussex District Council to be paid in 2 equal instalments of six hundred and eighteen thousand, five hundred and thirty-nine pounds (£618,539), the first to be paid by 30th April 2024 and second by 30th September 2024

The Town Mayor thanked the public again for coming to the meeting and again urged them to speak to the appropriate authorities.

The meeting was closed by the Town Mayor who reminded all that the date of the next meeting was Monday 8th April the meeting closed at 19.34 pm.

Town Mayor