

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING
Meeting 9th April 2026
Minutes

1) Present: Cllrs Sharp, Martin, Arger, Hotson and Perry plus Clerk and RFO.

The group welcomed Lissi Smith the new RFO.

2) Apologies for Absence – NA

Cllr Riordan absent.

3) Dispensations - NA

4) Minutes of last meeting

Noted that working group meeting dates are guidance, will be confirmed at Council AGM. Cllr Martin proposed, and Cllr Arger seconded to recommend the approval of the minutes of March 2026 – agreed majority 4 for and 1 abstained.

5) Action Plan

Generally, on track

Clerk noted RFO doing 20 hrs per week to finalise End of Year and training on Scribe for 2026/27, flexibility as per contract – review hours in May 2026 – Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Martin seconded, agreed unanimously.

NNDR – emails sent to all 24/3/26. In simple terms the Council is above the threshold Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) so must pay NNDR for all sites. Once JF is managed by SCL then SPC will fall back beneath the SBRR threshold and can seek SBRR on Youth Club (August 2026?)

Need to amend JF maintenance budget (£400 Council Tax / NNDR) but stay within overall JF expenditure budget.- suggest reducing Mowing / White line etc fund by £400 to £5,800.

Scribe training this afternoon – make further adjustments – add in income streams.

6) AGM agenda

Group discussed AGM agenda.

AGM item 7 Delegation

Clerk has restructured to bring inline with other Policies, main change for discussion is delegated amount – whatever is agreed will be inserted into Financial Regulations.

Group discussed the finance delegation “in cases of serious risk.....” felt the level needs to be increased due to inflation – considered up to £5,000 but on reflection felt that 1% of precept up to £3,000 is more appropriate.

Group agreed to put into Delegated Authority.

AGM item 8 COMMITTEE AND GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Group discussed the groups remain unchanged but remove 3G Multi-Sport pitch group. Also, NDP review group remain but dormant as MBC take over next consultation stage of Staplehurst NDP review prior to adoption / made.

Maybe need to amend group to a “NDP and Local Plan Review group” as MBC about to start review of their Local plan. Also seek more residential volunteers.

HR Group membership – discussed make up of group.

Clerk to email all Cllrs asking them to consider which groups they would like to be on for 2026/27.

Agreed to bring draft Jubilee Field Management Group Terms of Reference to EFS group.

AGM agenda item 11 – Standing Orders and Finance

11.1 Financial Regulations

Group agreed to standardise point 5.15 and point 6.8 suggest the same levels also amend “in cases of serious risk.....” increased to 1% of precept up to £3,000. Same as Delegated Authority.

Other Policies unchanged, on website

11.2 Standing Orders

11.3 Council Code of Conduct

11.5 Civility and Respect

11.5 Strategic Action Plan 2025-2028

AGM item 13 APPOINTMENTS TO LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Group discussed the following

- Churchyard Liaison Committee – AM to drop out – JP/RA
- Staplehurst Community Centre - BM
- Staplehurst Patients Participation Group – AS / AM
- Staplehurst Community Events Group - ?
- Parish Police Liaison Committee - Chairman

- Staplehurst Emergency Help Team – MA/JM/CR
- Staplehurst Remembrance Group - AS
- River Beult Catchment Improvement Group – JP
- Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee = JP/MA
- Sobell Cheshire Homes - EH
- Staplehurst Community Speed Watch – need to support more
- KALC Area Committee – Chairman (often clashes with Council meeting)
- Staplehurst Library Users Group – AS / MA
- McCabe Day Centre - EH
- Village Sports & Social Group – Golf Club – PR / RA

Clerk to email all Cllrs asking for them to consider roles for 2026/27.

Group discussed merits of a “Cllr Workshop” to follow on from AGM, felt best option of getting all Cllrs together to discuss – no decision / just a discussion and then report to next Council meeting for a decision.

7) Contracts - RFO update Only two items

Hire of hall for meetings – awaiting fees 2026/27

Parish Online subscription agreed to recommend to Council

Group discussed and recommended Parish Online subscription of £135 plus VAT contracts to Council,

8) Health and Safety update

Group discussed the actions – currently being worked up and updated action plan

- Note SCCT seeking to resolve issues in Parish Offices
- SPC resolving items in Youth Club plus policies etc.
- Clerk to clarify if Councillors use cars for going to meetings

9) Volunteer Awards and Annual Parish Meeting – verbal update

Cllr Martin has asked Cllr Riordan for vases and certificates in office.

- £150 minus above split evenly between three winners – Cllr Arger kindly offered to make up the difference back up to £150, so £50 voucher each.
- Clerk to seek a “demonstration cheque”
- Currently, 30 confirmed plus 11 stalls – add in SCL and CSW
- AM / MA – seeking to obtain food from ASDA
- Lord Mayor not available – EH to ask Brian Clark if available (Elected Mayor)

10)Next Meeting 21st May 2026