

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING

Meeting 16th July 2026

10:00am Parish Offices

Minutes

- 1) **Present:** Cllrs Sharp, Ash, Alesi, Hotson, Perry & Arger (remote via Teams) along with the RFO/Deputy Clerk.
- 2) **Apologies for Absence:** Cllrs Riordan & Martin
- 3) **Dispensations:** None Requested
- 4) **Minutes of last meeting** – Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Perry seconded that the minutes of the last meeting dated 18th June 2026 were an accurate reflection of the meeting. Resolved with a majority vote: 5 for, 0 against, 1 abstained.
- 5) **Action Plan** – the action plan was discussed. No formal decisions made.

A verbal update was given by Cllr Ash on the status of the Lloyds banking error that is still impacting the RFO's ability to make payments. The issue is still being worked on diligently by Cllr Ash but resolution remains frustratingly slow due to Lloyds Banking Group's inability to solve the problem promptly. The RFO remains in a state of not processing any payments, this falls to the Clerk until the issue is resolved in order to ensure compliance with internal policy and financial procedures.

The RFO gave an update on the status of setting up Scribe. The RFO feels her work is ~50% complete in regards to the initial set up, with the reconciliation of Q1 complete along with a coding check complete on Q1 data and much of the initial set up work now having been done, the system is currently functioning well as a bookkeeping platform. However, the RFO shared concerns regarding the remaining work not having been completed with the following outstanding;

- Minute number data not yet input
- Invoice evidence still to be scanned & uploaded for some month 1 & 2 payments.
- Budget data not yet complete (inc. phasing)
- EMR data not yet entered with EMR spending not yet assigned.
- Asset register data not yet entered
- Q1 Budget Analysis still to take place (once budget work above has been completed)

RFO is keen to have a small group of Cllrs be given access to Scribe as soon as possible on the understanding that the Scribe data is still not complete.

6) RFO update

- a) Draft s137 Policy – Now named the Grants & Donations Policy, covering s.137 as part of it's content. It was proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Alesi that the policy be recommended for formal adoption to full council. Resolved with a majority vote: 6 for, 0 against, 0 abstained.

Action: RFO to ensure the online application form is up to date in regards to matching the wording of the policy. Also that the form includes the policy on the same page as the application from with a statement ensuring applicants read the full policy document before filling out the

form. Applicants will need to agree to the policy as it forms the terms and conditions they will be bound by.

b) Virtual Phone bill /SEHT – verbal

A discussion took place improving clarity surrounding the responsibility of payment of this bill.

Action: RFO to have the itemisation on this bill changed to reflect that the service is provided to the council, not to SEHT. Bill itemisation to be changed to “Council Emergency Support Line”.

c) Minor budget virement – RFO spoke regarding minor changes to the councils bookkeeping coding structure along with some larger changes that allow the council to monitor costs in more detail through the addition of more codes. A written report was provided. It was proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Perry that it be recommended to full council to vire budget amounts as per the report below:

18	Council Administration & Support		33,587.30	Q1 Spend	
19	Courses & Training	2,000.00			2,000.00
20	Hire of Halls 36 meetings incl. APM & Xmas Social	2,000.00			2,000.00
21	Insurance	3,800.00			3,800.00
22	Running Costs				
23	Sundry Items	3,292.00			1,000.00
24	Office Rent	6,500.00			6,500.00
25	Council Tax	1,347.30			1,347.30
26	Electricity	1,648.00			1,648.00
27	Waste Collection			225.92	1000.00
28	Stationery	500.00			500.00
29	Colour & Mono Printing			80.85	330.00
30	Postage	60.00			60.00
31	Administration Equipment Hire (laptops, printer)	2,850.00			2850.00
32	Bank Charges	90.00			90.00
33	Computer Support - Hosted Exchange	5,000.00		462.00	1848.00
34	New Office Equipment & Repairs	1,200.00			1200.00
35	Professional Subscriptions	3,300.00		200	1000.00
36	Software Licences & Cloud Subscriptions			3053.41	1816.36
37	Office Phone & Broadband			£285.18	1150.00
38	Staff Travel, Mileage & Subsistence				100
39	Outsourced Administration (Payroll & HR, H&S)			721.91	3247.64
40	Cllr Travel, Millage & Subsistence				100

Highlighted yellow cells (columns 1 & 2) are additional codes added to the administration cost centre to enable more detail for spending analysis. Column 2 contains the prior agreed budget for this year, column 4 is the actual spend against this code in Q1 2026/27 with the final column highlighting recommended changes to go to full council for approval.

It was noted that this does not change the budget overall, simply adds more detail to cost analysis. It was also noted that the council will be vastly over it's budget for Software Licences & Cloud Subscriptions by the end of the year given the Q1 costs already assigned to this code.

Action: RFO to provide a copy of the 'sundry' cost code expenses to EFS Working Group members.

7) Support for Staplehurst Community Planning Group

A discussion on support for planning group took place.

Deferred indefinitely. It was felt that in the absence of a formal request for support (containing a full budget based on sound research of costs), there is no discussion that needs to take place at this time.

Other Business Raised – (no formal decisions made)

Cllr Hotson raised questions regarding the timing of the management company taking over management of the 3G pitch once building is complete. Cllr Sharp explained this is being discussed with the parties involved and via solicitors so is as yet unknown.

The question of the responsibility for insuring the 3G pitch once it is complete was also raised. The RFO explained that a quote has been requested to cover the pitch within the council parish policy. It was felt that perhaps insuring the 3G pitch will be covered by the management company as part of the formal agreement with them.

Action: Clerk to liaise with the management company and solicitors and/or check the management agreement for clauses relating to the responsibility of insurance and report back to the council with the outcome.

Cllr Sharp raised the matter of sending a letter to the Scout Group clarifying the permission given by SPC to use our land as access to the Scout Building.

Action: Clerk to add the matter onto the next Full Council agenda for discussion.

Cllr Sharp also raised that there have been two informal funding requests. Both parties are to be advised to make a formal application for Grant/Donation funding via official processes.

Action: Cllr Sharp to advise parties.

8) HR GROUP

The RFO left the meeting for the purpose of confidentiality.

9) Next Meeting 13th Aug 2026