EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING
Meeting 22nd October 2026
Minutes

1) **Present** Cllrs Sharp, Arger, Alesi, Ash, Hotson plus Clerk and RFO

2) **Apologies for Absence** Cllr Martin and Perry

   (Absent Cllrs Riordan)

3) **Dispensations** - NA

4) **Minutes of last meeting –** those present agreed the last meetings minutes.

5) **Action Plan – Group discussed the following points;**

23 – Girl Guides contract – chasing up

28 – Sport and Recreation Management Contract – chase up SCL

30 – Completed

32 – Draft procedure to bring to future meeting

35 – Ombudsman planning complaint - to do

47 – Cash Flow (VAT) – now urgent Council at risk – Initial discussion with HMRC – but still await VAT payment. weekly chase up

6) **Finance (RFO lead discussions)**
   a) **1st April – 30th September 2026 Jubilee Field**

Following a group discussion noted that

	Budget	**Actual**	**Comment**
Jubilee Field exp	£25,370	£17,555.01	
Skatepark Exp	£9,880	£0	Work just taken place
Total Exp	£35,250	£17,555.01	
Income	£17,408	£5,062.96	Query budget figure
Difference	£17,482	£12,492.04	

Note positive position £4,989.96 underspent– some committed expenditure still to come through Ditch Clearance, Skatepark event, final groundsman (work to set up goals delayed due to hard pitches)

Need to clarify income target.

b) 1st April – 30th September 2026 Budget monitoring report

Group welcomed budget monitoring report, note if items paid in October 2026 not included – i.e. skatepark

Check "Spare"

Playspace report just in. This will be paid as a donation, not a grant. RFO to bring this in line with current policy ready for next year.

Remove 3G pitch as funding from Earmarked reserves and grants

Skatepark – work done but not yet paid

Remove Surrenden Field Pavilion – Earmarked reserves and grants

Youth Service (club) – steady numbers but low (6 or 7) not engaging with older children.

Once Surrenden Field pavilion complete and open – review Youth Club

RFO adjust as suggested and take to Council in November 2026

c) Budget Setting 2027/28 programme

Key timetable

Asked for suggested projects services by 13th November 2026

Next EFSG meeting focus on budget setting – 19th November 2026, 10am

First draft budget 2027/28 – Council meeting 7th December 2026

Extra EFS Group meeting 10th December 2026 10am

Report to Council 11th January 2027 to approve budget and therefore precept for 2027/28

7) Reclaim VAT issue

Discussed under action plan item above. It was discussed that RFO should complete a weekly chase up of HMRC all the while the VAT refund has not been received. **(Note: payment received on 26.10.26).**

8) **Contracts – Photocopier**

Due to timing also sent to Council – otherwise contract expires and Council decision November.

Sharp is cheapest and we have had excellent customer service.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Alesi seconded to recommend Sharp – agreed unanimously

9) **Grant application – Hi Kent attached**

Group discussed application, Income is £580,000 so request of £440 is linked to usage in Staplehurst – around 360 residents have hearing aids checked / serviced during the year (McCabe Centre)– good value for money.

Should this be a donation as we aid them on a regular basis.

Cllr Hotson proposed, and Cllr Alesi seconded to recommend a grant of £440 to Hi Kent– agreed unanimously

10) **3G Pitch opening – verbal update**

28th October 2026

Numbers for reception 30 people – refreshments – coffee tea milk sugar

Who sets up Cllr Alesi, Adele and Arger

Food @£80

Hall hire – Girl Guide centre - £75

Balloon arch for photo – £250.

11) **Policy document – Cllr Sharp**

Cllr Sharp introduced the Policy and the following comments made

Change title to Supporting Councillors and Volunteers with ill health

Chairmans budget should be used for cards etc

Does not limit individuals from reaching out and supporting each other.

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Arger seconded to recommend to Council Supporting Councillors and Volunteers with ill health – agreed unanimously

HR meeting

a) **Staff report.**

Group discussed report and reiterated support for the paper.

Next meeting Thursday 19th November 2026.