Battle Town Council

MINUTES of the ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING
held on TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST 2026 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.15pm

Present: Cllrs A Barton (Chairman), S Burton, V Cook, J Exley and D Silk.
In attendance: Cllr ML Neill, Carol Harris (Town Clerk)

Public question time – None.

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1. **Apologies for absence** – Cllr P Morley.

2. **Disclosure of interest** – Cllr Cook declared a personal interest in items 11b and 11c as a member of Battle Marketing Group. Cllr Barton declared a personal interest in item 10 as Battle Tree Warden.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 June 2026** were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Barton.

4. **Clerk's report**

- The new **car park barrier** at the recreation ground car park is now fully installed.
- As reported to Full Council, insurance reports and indicative costs have been received for **Coronation Gardens and Darvel Down play areas**. Tree condition surveys and full devolvement package is outstanding.
- Signage erected at **Tills Courtyard**.
- The essential **electrical works at the Cemetery** have been completed.
- The repair to the existing **roundabout lights** at a cost of £435.38, plus an additional sum of up to £200 for timer controls, has been instructed and will be completed shortly.
- The deterioration of the **bank reinforcement at Western Avenue / footpath BAT84/1** has been reported to East Sussex Highways.
- Following a conversation with grounds staff and contractor, it had been agreed that the laying of **turf and planting around the Pavilion** should be postponed until September. One quote has been received and further quotes will be sought for discussion at Full Council.
- The **Freedom of Information** in relation to the Pavilion café had been responded to and no further communication has been received to date.
- There had been some concerns raised at excess litter surrounding the bin close to the exit of the recreation ground, near to the car park. There will be a social media request to take bulky litter home for sorting. The Council's Pavilion cleaner / caretaker has agreed to empty the bin on a Saturday evening, as required, during the summer season.

5. **Allotments**

a) The **Assistant Clerk** had circulated a report to confirm that:

Cherry Gardens

No vacancies with a waiting list of 10. Due to a fault, the water is currently turned off. A repair is being contracted. A recent inspection saw overall great cultivation and plot activity, with four plot holders reminded of their obligations. All 4 plots will be revisited and reviewed at next inspection.

Netherfield

Only two plot holders with five vacancies. The water tank is currently empty and the plot holder attempting to take water to the site which is further challenged by the restriction of not parking adjacent to the site. No new plot holders invited due to the parking issue.

Virgins Croft

No vacancies with a waiting list of 6. Recent inspection saw overall good cultivation and plot activity with one plot holder reminded of obligations. This plot will be looked at closely at the next inspection.

Watch Oak

No vacancies with a waiting list of 3. Recent inspection saw mainly good cultivation and plot activity with six plot holders reminded of their obligations. These plots will be looked at closely at the next inspection.

b) The Clerk reported that there has been some disturbing confrontation at the **Netherfield Hill allotment site** in relation to allotment tenants parking on the private road access to the allotment site for the first time since Council took the 99 year lease on 1 April 2009. Contact has been made with Southern Housing in an attempt to resolve the issue, although it was originally agreed with Amicus Horizon Limited. A basic AI search suggested that the road is part of the public highway network. The Clerk was asked to continue the endeavours to resolve this matter with Southern Housing, as no vehicular access is untenable for maintenance of the allotment site.

c) Members carefully considered the **Allotment Agreement**, noted that rabbits are statutorily permitted and **agreed amendments,** as highlighted on the attached document.

d) Members considered the annual **provision of skips at some allotment sites,** and the comments made at a recent Senlac Allotment Association meeting, and **agreed that no skips will be provided at allotment sites for May 2027.** The allotment tenants will be required to notify the Council if they wish to provide a skip at an allotment site.

e) Members noted the poor condition of the **shed based at Cherry Gardens** and **agreed that an asbestos check should be carried out** prior to any decision made on further action. The Clerk was asked to notify Battel Bonfire Boyes.

f) The **Action Plan for allotment 2023-2027** was noted as attached.

i. *To review fees and charges* Members agreed that, following the decision at d) not to provide skips next year, that the allotment fees should not increase for 2027/28.

ii. *To review usage of allotments with regard to rationalisation of plots/sites* Members noted that one plot at Watch Oak has been reinstated to accommodate a move from Netherfield following issues reported at item 5b. No further action required at this time.

The Assistant Clerk was thanked for her work on the allotment matters.

6. Recreation grounds

a) Members noted that six years ago the Council entered an agreement with Battle Town Football Club (then Battle Baptist FC) to allow free pitch use for two teams in return for a pitch maintenance agreement, which allowed for a grant to be received from the Football Foundation towards pitch improvements. This has been a successful scheme, with good reports now received on the main pitch. The six years is now complete, although the agreement for BTFC to continue maintaining the pitch continues for a further three years. The Clerk highlighted that BTFC have recently funded new goals, following the deterioration of the Council's goals and have recently taken on responsibility for purchasing materials and marking the pitches. **In lieu of these additional responsibilities, Members agreed that one adult BTFC team would not be charged pitch fees for the 2026-27 season.**

b) Members noted that, due to some challenges in obtaining trades people to undertake the fitting of equipment, the **Café lessee has only recently opened on a restricted basis.** Once fully operational, the Clerk was asked to discuss portable, concertina screening with the lessee.

c) Members considered the use and location of **two Community Noticeboards** in the Pavilion and the existing one by the tennis courts. **It was agreed that the one to be provided in the Pavilion should allow community events** throughout the town, and be located on the wall close to the entrance from

the internal corridor. The existing, **external notice board** requires some maintenance and could be **used for activities on the recreation ground with commercial users providers paying a fee for the advertisement.** There would be no business cards or notices permitted.

d) Members considered the **decoration of Pavilion Club Room** following concerns of echo and lack of atmosphere. There was some discussion on appropriate wall covering and pictures. The Clerk was asked to research costs and effectiveness of sound boards for consideration at the next meeting.

e) Members noted the **purchase of fire extinguishers for Pavilion**, as recommended by Fire Inspector: six fire extinguishers, one fire blanket and one alarm for the public area extinguisher, at a cost of £606.53 from the Pavilion Ear Marked Reserve (374)

f) The Clerk reported that works to comply with an **Electrical Installation Condition Report at the workshop** had been completed at a cost of £834.

g) The **Action plan for the recreation ground 2023- 2027** was noted, as attached.

i. *To review fees and charges* **Members agreed to increase the peppercorn rent for access to its land to £5pa, to reflect the increase in administrative costs.**

7. Street furniture & lighting

h) The **Action Plan for Street furniture & Lighting 2023-2027** was noted, as attached.

i. *Undertake review of current seating provision* Cllrs Silk was thanked for his work on the schedule. A further update will be provided by Cllr Morley. The Clerk was asked to pass the document to grounds staff for action.

ii. *Recommend improvements to signage & notice boards* the grounds staff were thanked for the attempted graffiti clearance work. The Clerk was asked to arrange for refurbishment of notice boards to include the painting in white of the backing material, where possible.

iii. *Review street lighting service contract* Members noted that the current contractor has provided a consistently good service over many years, with many Town and Parish Councils being unable to find a reliable contractor. **Members agreed to continue with Streetlights for a further year**.

8. Grass mesh at the Cemetery

The Clerk reported that following agreement at the previous meeting to allow grass mesh to be placed from a pathway to graveside for ease of wheelchair access, it had been noted that a maximum width available between headstone and foot of grave / kerb stone is 780mm. Following advice, it was confirmed that 1.2m is required for permanent surfacing. Members agreed that it is not possible to allow a permanent surface and the Clerk was asked to research alternative temporary surfaces for discussion at the next meeting.

It was noted that the new cemetery area will allow for large spaces between grave space lengths to allow for better access, although a portable ramp may be necessary as there are kerbs.

9. Agricultural Agreement for George Meadow / Upper Stumbletts

The Clerk reported that, as previously agreed, the original Agreement had been reproduced and a site visit undertaken to update the fencing schedule. The Farmer has been advised that a professional surveyor will be employed to agree a suitable rent at the end of the initial period. It was noted that the Farmer is carrying out positive work and has a long-term plan for the replacement of fencing and removal of brambles. He has highlighted large unusable areas due to long-overgrown vegetation. **Members agreed the request to include Mr Wheatland's son and daughter to the 3 year**

lease. The Clerk was asked to seek approval from Mr Wheatland to include an additional statement on the Agreement for only natural, biological and cultural methods of maintaining soil fertility and controlling weeds, pests and diseases.

Cllr Barton repeated his personal interest in the following item.

10. Compost at the Cemetery

Members agreed that, once the compost is ready for use, the Tree Warden may collect and use for the newly planted trees at Lake Field**.**

Cllr Cook repeated her personal interest in items b and c below.

11. Abbey Green

a) Members considered the request for a **monthly banner on Abbey Green for First Foody Sunday Market** and agreed that this would be permitted to assist with the initial promotion of the Market for **a period of ten days each month until October.**

b) Members noted the **request from the Battle Marketing Group for A1 size A frame boards** and asked to Clerk to request more information on frequency and security for discussion at the next meeting.

c) Members agreed the **request for use of Abbey Green on 8 September for a French Art Project.**

12. Financial matters

a) The **budget report to 30 June 2026** was noted, as attached.

b) Cllr Burton had circulated a report on suggested **electric all-terrain vehicles,** as a replacement for the existing Kawasaki Mule. It was noted that no costs had been included, although it had been indicated that one vehicle was in the region of £60k. It was highlighted that a grant may be available towards this cost. Members agreed that further information should be obtained prior to any decision or applications for funding are made. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

21.40: ***Members agreed to continue the meeting to complete the final items.***

13. Six monthly report for October Full Council meeting

Cllrs Exley and Silk agreed to prepare this report.

14. To receive Correspondence & Communications

- Following further research and communication with Council, the owners of **Sexton Cottage** had carried out repair work to the top of the septic tank and patching work to the cottage's sewer pipe so that the septic tank is now up and running and is compliant with all the current regulations. The owners had been advised that Council would take no responsibility for the septic tank or the area in which it is located.
- Notification had been received that one of the **BTFC training goals** had gone missing from the recreation ground, with the other one moved and attempted to be used. Officers had attempted to view the CCTV but had been unable to see anyone moving goals. An appeal on social media had also been made by BTFC. Due to concern that the match goals could be vulnerable, the Clerk had agreed that, with the approval of grounds staff, a bracket could be fixed to the side of the workshop wall to chain the goals to. This would be at BTFC's cost.

15. Matters for information / future agenda items

- Scheduled matters relating cemetery and remainder of Battle Town Council's estate

- Cemetery mortuary building, consider contacting Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) for advice
- Review Cemetery fees and charges
- Review Cemetery Policy and Funerary Agreement
- To consider renewal of agreement to manage Abbey Green
- Recommendations for replacement grounds maintenance equipment and Ear Marked Reserve for replacement of major equipment
- Budget considerations 2027-28

16. Date of next meeting: **6 October 2026**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21:52

Cllr A Barton
Chairman

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