Battle Town Council

MINUTES of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on TUESDAY 26 MAY 2026 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.15pm

Present: Cllrs S Burton (Chairman), A Barton, V Cook, M Howell, N McLaren
In Attendance: C Harris (Town Clerk)

Public Question Time - None

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1. **Apologies for absence** – Cllr Wheeler.

2. **Disclosure of interest** – None.

3. **The minutes of the meeting of 30 April 2026** were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Burton.

4. **To receive the Clerk's report**

- Ironworks have now formally measured for the wrought iron handrails in the rear garden area, and a firm date for installation is awaited.
- Advice is waited for works to the double gates and the Western Avenue gate.
- There is a delay to works to the windows due to concern at the required specification. Reports used for the works to the Almonry has been passed to the contractor and we are awaiting further advice.
- The unsightly sign has been removed from the loggia and investigation found that the external water supply is restricted during use of the toilets due to small pipework.
- The Rialtas Business Suite finance package has now been added to the second computer and two additional users have been applied.
- Amy Onyett has accepted the 6 month secondment to Assistant Clerk from 1 June 2026. Training on the accounts package has commenced.
- Terms for the Lease with the Museum have been agreed and confirmed to respective Solicitors.
- Rebecca Fitzgerald has accepted the temporary position of Administrative Officer and two satisfactory references have been received. She will join the Team on 1 June 2026, working 5hours on both Mondays and Wednesdays.

5. **Minutes and recommendations from Sub Committees**

a) **Cllr Burton presented the draft Minutes of the Climate & Ecology Sub Committee** meeting held on 23 April 2026. These were noted. She highlighted the People's Emergency Briefing at the Memorial Hall on Friday 12 June. All welcome.

b) **Cllr Cook presented the draft Minutes of the Marketing Sub Committee** meeting held on 14 April 2026. She highlighted the initial recommendation for storage fees at the Pavilion of £2per square meter(psm) and suggested that, following comparison by Officers of other storage charges for Council facilities that this should be further discussed. Following a detailed discussion, **Members agreed an initial storage charge at the Pavilion of 50p psm from 1 September 2026.** The Clerk was asked to report the rates for all Council storage facilities to the next meeting of the Marketing Sub Committee.

c) Cllr Cook presented the draft Minutes of the **Personnel Sub Committee** meeting held on 22 April 2026. She highlighted that following agreement to take on the play areas at Coronation Gardens

and Netherfield, it is recommended that **recruitment of a seasonal experienced grounds person from 1 April 2027 to 31 October 2027 is discussed by Personnel in September 2026. This was agreed.**

6. Membership, Terms of Reference for Sub Committees and to note meeting dates

a) Climate & Ecology Sub Committee

Councillor Members agreed: Cllr Burton – Chairman; Cllr Exley; Cllr McLaren; Cllr Silk; Cllr Wheeler. The Terms of Reference were agreed with no amendments, as attached. Dates of the meetings were noted as 23 June; 27 October; 23 February; and 27 April at a time to be agreed. It was noted that the Assistant Clerk will clerk these meetings.

b) Marketing Sub Committee

Councillor Members agreed: Cllr Cook – Chairman; Cllr Howell; Cllr Wheeler. A further member to be invited at the next Full Council meeting**.** The Terms of Reference were agreed with no amendments, as attached. Meetings were agreed for the second Tuesday in June, October, February and April at times to be agreed.

c) Personnel Sub Committee

Membership agreed: Cllr Cook – Chairman; Cllr Barton; Cllr Burton; Cllr Wheeler. The Terms of Reference were amended to add "annual" before "appraisal" at items 3 and 4, following the lack of action following the Clerk's 2025 appraisal, and agreed, as attached. Meetings to be held as required, to include March and September.

7. Financial matters

a) The **budget report to 31 March 2026** was noted as attached. The Clerk highlighted that Ear Marked Reserves reflect the actions agreed by Council, however, the budget report still shows unspent funds. She reported that this is part of the accounting process, whereby EMR are taken from General Reserves and unspent budget will be returned to General Reserves.

b) Members noted the Council's **budget position and General Reserves** at 31 March 2026. The Clerk highlighted that the General Reserves are currently a little above the standard position but that this will be drawn down against works including to the St Mary's Churchyard wall, potential Christmas lights infrastructure and essential works at the Chapels. The Internal Auditor had not raised any concern at the level of reserves.

c) The Deputy Clerk had carried out research on three **online booking system** for the Almonry and Pavilion and a report had been circulated. Members raised questions on how much Officer time would be saved with an online system and how onerous to users an online system would be. It was highlighted that enquiries and bookings are increasing, with the Almonry and Pavilion now available. Following a detailed discussion, it was agreed that this item be postponed to the next meeting allow for further research to identify if a free system would be adequate or investment in a software package is required. The Deputy Clerk was thanked for her work to date on this item.

d) Following a request for **regular income and expenditure reports for the Pavilion and Almonry**, the Clerk will utilise a Pavilion maintenance budget line 210 4330 that will include items such as cleaning materials and additional items for maintenance. Some items, such as cleaning/caretaking, CCTV and electricity will be allocated to this but funded from Ear Marked Reserve (379) for the current year. The Clerk highlighted that all budget reports are provided to the relevant Committee for scrutiny and transparency. The Clerk was asked to provide the income and expenditure for the Almonry and Pavilion for the Marketing Committee.

8. Internal Auditor's Report

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit had been successfully completed with no recommendations, although it had been highlighted that a Data Audit will be an external Audit requirement next year. The Clerk was thanked for her excellent work on this.

9. Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 (Section 1)

Members noted that the Internal Auditor is satisfied that we can respond positively to all statements, including item 10 in relation to the IT and data management and had positively responded to all items on the Annual Internal Audit 2025/26 document. In accordance with the Terms of Reference and Action Plan, the Committee examined each statement with the Clerk highlighting specific actions taken to support a positive response. **Members unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Chairman of Council sign the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.**

10. Accountability Return 2025/26 (Section 2)

In accordance with the Terms of Reference and Action Plan, the Committee examined the Accountability Return. The Clerk reported on the explanation of variances. Members noted that the Internal Auditor had examined the accounting statements against documents produced and is satisfied that these are correct. **Members unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Chairman of Council sign the Accountability Return 2025/26.**

11. Almonry building

a) The Fire Risks Assessment and summary of the document had been circulated to Members. The Clerk reported that the unlocking of the door from the Hall to the courtyard is now part of the opening and closing procedures for the building. It was noted that there are no plans to use the fireplaces in the Almonry building.

12. Almonry garden

a) Reports on garden actions since the last meeting which included the addition of a new volunteer and that the garden tubs have now been planted.

b) A proposal from Beautiful Battle to level the path adjacent to physic garden by the shed was comprehensively discussed. The Clerk was asked to obtain Conservation Officer advice on the whole garden to allow addition to the list of proposed Council projects. She was asked to arrange for improved signage and monitor for comments.

13. Council project priorities

A draft project assessment form had been circulated to assist with consideration of priority projects and schemes that Council has previously identified. **The Project Assessment form was agreed, as attached.** Forms for potential projects were allocated:

- Cllr Barton – Civic Actions for 2027;
- Cllr Burton – bins along cricket pitch footpath;
- Cllr Cook – town model refurbishment;

- Cllrs Howell / Wheeler– Marley Lane footpath extension. The Clerk was asked to provide the feasibility appraisal;
- Cllrs Burton / Wheeler – Shared use footpath between Park Lane and Saxonwood Road;
- Cllr Burton – water harvesting at the Almonry;
- Cllr Cook – play areas at Coronation Gardens and Netherfield, subject to devolvement;
- Clerk – St Mary's Churchyard wall;
- Clerk – Christmas lights infrastructure;
- Clerk – cemetery buildings.

These will be considered at the next meeting, if available.

14. Review and consider allocation for any amendments/updates to policies:

a) Privacy Notice – new to compliment new IT & Digital Use Policy – Members agreed to adopt this, as attached.

b) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Policy – Members agreed this with no revisions, as attached.

c) Data Protection Members agreed this with no revisions, as attached.

15. British Museum film about the Bayeux Tapestry

A request from the Battle Museum of Local History [BMOLH] to support the exhibition of the Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum from September 2026 until July 2027. To help promote the exhibition an audiovisual content will be displayed in partner venues. This material is still being developed and one is offered as a single, longer video of 15-20 minutes as a standalone context and highlights of the story of the tapestry. As the Museum is not a suitable venue, Council is asked to consider the Chamber as a beneficial viewing option for visitors and residents. On the basis that the Battle Museum of Local History will be the lead organisation, with little impact on Officers' time, this was agreed.

16. Office work experience student

Members agreed that work experience for the Deputy Clerk's daughter for week commencing 13 July 2026, subject to appropriate work being identified, that East Sussex County Council are involved and that supervision is not by the Deputy Clerk.

17. Action Plan, items not elsewhere on the agenda

a) *Agree purposes for Almonry building: Agree priorities for: Council offices; offices for rental and rooms to hire; exhibition space; tourist information point; tourism purposes / visitor experience.* Members agreed that this item should be discussed at the next meeting, with comment invited by the Marketing Sub Committee.

b) *Request Personnel Sub Committee review Health & Safety Policy and ensure its implementation* This will be included on the next Personnel SC meeting Agenda.

18. Correspondence and communications received post agenda publication

- Members noted that the travel expense allowance has increased by 10p to 55p per mile, backdated to 1st of April 2026 and agreed to update the Expenses Policy at the next meeting.

19. Matters for information and future agenda items

- To consider provision of CCTV

- To consider options for energy efficiency
- To consider proposed cycles of maintenance and replacement for Council's assets – at budget setting.

20. Date of next meeting: due to annual leave, Members agreed to bring forward the scheduled meeting for 28 July 2026 to **30 June 2026.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.48.

Cllr S Burton
Chairman

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