Battle Town Council

MINUTES of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on TUESDAY 30 JUNE 2026 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.15pm

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

Public Question Time - None

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1. **Apologies for absence** – None.

2. **Disclosure of interest** – None.

3. **The minutes of the meeting of 26 May 2026** were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Burton.

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

- Ironworks have confirmed that **installation of the handrails** will be completed later this week.
- The **essential repairs to the Almonry windows** were completed on Friday. A split Oak fascia board above the window in Western Avenue was replaced at the materials cost of £92.80.
- The **changes to staff hours, roles and additional officer** all commenced on 1 June and is working well. This is being monitored carefully to ensure the spread of tasks is appropriate and timely.
- The **Annual Government and Accountability Return 2025/26** and associated documentation has been submitted and accepted by PKF Littlejohn, the External Auditor, and the Exercise of Public Rights displayed on all notice boards and published on the Council's website as required.
- There is a great deal of **filing and document sorting** that has been outstanding since the Almonry refurbishment work, and has proved impossible to complete during normal working hours. With authorisation from the Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Assistant to the Clerk has kindly agreed to work an **additional five hours to carry out this task. This will be funded from EMR Additional staff hours (385)**.
- The sensor light switch in the **ambulant courtyard toilet** has not been working consistently and the contractor has agreed to box off the switch and fit an LED motion sensor light free of charge.
- The **Deputy Clerk** had received her initial **Certificate in Local Council Administration** document and her salary will be increased by one spine point in accordance with her Contract of Employment in July.

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

a) Cllr Burton reported on the meeting of the **Climate & Ecology Sub Committee** held on 23 June 2026. She highlighted that she had been re-elected as Chairman. Cllr McLaren presented on the recommendation to add a statement to the Council's Statement on Climate Change and it was agreed as "consider how decisions regarding partnerships, sponsorships, advertising or marketing support the Council's policy on the climate and ecological emergency." The Chairmen of Town Development & External Relations Committee and Climate & Ecology Sub Committee will review and agree applications. It was agreed to accept advice from Energise Sussex Coast in relation to feasible energy saving options for the Almonry, arranged for 9 July 2026, prior to further

communication with the Conservation Officer. Members noted that an informal discussion will be held on the Rights of Trees prior to discussion at the next meeting.

b) Cllr Cook presented the draft Minutes for the **Marketing Sub Committee** meeting on 9 June 2026. She highlighted the discussion on Council's storage facilities and it was agreed to request that the Estates Committee to consider the condition and any action for the storage shed at Cherry Gardens. **Members agreed the recommendation to reduce the number of Councillor representatives on the Terms of Reference, and these were approved as attached.**

c) **Personnel Sub Committee:** no meeting held

6. Amendments/updates to policies:

a) The Clerk reported that the **Expenses Policy** requires amendment following the increase in car mileage allowance from 45p to 55p per mile, backdated to 1 April 2026. It was noted that the existing Policy is for staff only. **Members agreed to amend the Expenses Policy to reflect the car mileage increase and to add Councillors**, as attached, although there is a small paragraph relating to travel expenses within the Members' Allowance Policy which will require amendment at the next meeting. After some discussion, the Clerk was asked to research car parking allowances within the Parish.

b) Following incidents that had resulted in the Clerk dealing with issues whilst on holiday and over a weekend, the Clerk had circulated a draft **Out of Hours Policy**. It was noted that there is no mention of out of hours commitment within any current contract of employment. Members discussed the options and commitment required to ensure hirers and visitors to Council facilities have an emergency contact. **Members agreed that Officers be asked to consider a weekly out of hours stand-by commitment, using the office mobile phone and list of contacts. A flat rate of £30 for the week, plus recompense for any call-out time (including telephone calls) to be agreed.** The Clerk will finalise the Policy details after discussion with Officers. The Policy and its success will be presented to the next meeting.

7. Financial matters

a) The **budget report to 31 May 2026** was noted, as attached. The Clerk highlighted that the Professional Fees has been expended on the Café lease, and this will be offset against EMR COF Grant-Pavilion (379) revenue funds.

8. Almonry building

a) Members considered the **specification and provision of CCTV** and agreed that quotes should be sought for four external and a minimum of one internal camera for consideration at the next meeting, which includes budget setting.

b) Members considered a suggestion for a **handrail between the Parlour and Hall** and agreed that this was not appropriate due to the fabric and presentation of the room.

c) Members considered the **purposes and priorities for Almonry building**: Council offices; offices for rental and rooms to hire; exhibition space; tourist information point; tourism purposes / visitor experience and **agreed the recommendation from the Marketing SC that income growth is a priority for the Almonry.** It was suggested that the Marketing SC consider cohesion of the office furniture in the Parlour.

9. Almonry garden

a) Cllr Cook report that the **open garden event** had been a great success, with a large number of visitors moving through the garden and into the Almonry and Museum buildings. It was noted that there had been no negative comments in relation to the pathway, although the historic cobblestones had been highlighted for safety.
Members thanked J Gyngell, Cllrs Cook and Howell for hosting this event.

b) The **letter of thanks from St Michael's Hospice for the Battle Open Gardens event** which had raised an amazing £3287.86 was noted.

c) Members noted that some concern had been raised by **Beautiful Battle on** the condition of the **Judas tree.** The Clerk was given delegated authority to action the tree expert's recommendations for the health of this tree.

10. Action Plan

There were no items , not on the Agenda.

11. Six monthly report

Cllr Burton agreed to prepare a report for approval at the next meeting**.**

12. Project priorities

As this meeting had been brought forward by a month, **Members agreed to request Full Council to consider project priorities at the August meeting.** The Clerk was asked to offer guidance on priorities for discussion. The Clerk confirmed that work to progress the Christmas lights infrastructure is ongoing and will be reported to Full Council.

13. Correspondence and communications

- The Clerk reported that **Battle for Change** will hold an initial meeting in the Chamber with Council and other stakeholders in September, free of charge.
- On the understanding the **Battle Festival** are not charging for the '**meet the artist'** event on 11 July, the Clerk had agreed no additional charge.
- A response from **East Sussex Highways that the drains outside of the Almonry** do not require jetting, but are likely to be slow to drain due to limited capacity. The issue has been raised with the Drainage Manager for comment. A request for flood board signage is being considered.
- An invitation to signed to a further three year contract with **Mulberry as internal auditors** will be presented to Full Council for consideration.

14. Matters for information and future agenda items

- To consider proposed cycles of maintenance and replacement for Council's assets – at budget setting
- Signatories to review and sign statements quarterly
- To consider options for energy efficiency
- To consider room booking system for Almonry & Pavilion

15. Date of next meetings: 22 September 2026

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.11.

Cllr S Burton
Chairman