

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING
Minutes of meeting 19.12.24

1. Present: Cllrs Riordan, Perry, Arger, Hotson and Sharp

2. Apologies for Absence Cllr Martin accepted
Cllr Wakeford absent

3. Dispensations – Cllr Sharp and Hotson as Trustees of the SCCT regarding item 5a and 6, agreed both could speak and vote on these matters.

4. Minutes of previous meeting – 21st November 2024
Minutes agreed

Cllr Riordan raised the issue of the parish office health and safety has taken time to get up to speed. The group agreed Parish Office now in a good place regarding Health and Safety and moving forward Health and Safety Check list will be used, liaise with SCCT.

Cllr Riordan raised the point that apologies should be given and accepted – if none given then Cllr shown as absent. Agreed.

5. Action plan

a) Decoration quotes

Following a discussion it was agreed to recommend JM Home and Garden to decorate downstairs office (x2) and inner hallway to include all walls, ceilings gloss woodwork window frames and sills. Also include cupboard painting in office 1. Fee is £650 plus paint estimated at £100.

In addition for JM Home and Graden to paint kitchen and bathroom areas upstairs £250 and seek a donation from SCCT as these are communal areas.

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Arger seconded the above – agreed unanimously.

SCCT would cover cost of communal rooms – Outer hallway / stairs and small landing plus rooms 3 and 4.

SCCT clarify their decorating contractor and who places order.

SCCT not proposing to do rooms 6 and 7 – used by the Staplehurst Society.

b) Review of Staff Grades

Following the Council meeting on 9th December 2025 draft information sent to EFSG 12th December for comment – no comments so sent to Worknest 16th December 2024.

On 17th December 2024 Worknest contacted the Clerk requesting for any previous Job Evaluations.

Clerk brought this to the meeting to discuss, suggested that report / mins of the 6th September 2021, the internal review of Job Descriptions and NALC contracts, should be sent.

Cllr Riordan confirmed this has already been sent to Worknest and would follow up. Clerk raised a point regarding Clerks contract – dealt with at end of meeting.

Clerk has chased Victim Support regarding number of clients from Staplehurst, no response suggested drop – agreed.

6. Draft working Budget setting 2025/26, revised following Council meeting 9th December 2024

RFO circulated yesterday and led discussion;

Has include all requests, amendments from Council meeting and percentage increases.

EFS Group then discussed and agreed as below

- Allotments – agreed
- CCTV – agreed
- Christmas lights – to include Christmas Tree / parade lights – agreed
- Churchyard Budget – already agreed by Council.
- Greens, Tubs & tubs - agreed
- Jubilee Field based on Council operating as is - agreed
- Noted that Jubilee Field expenditure, without skatepark is £18,565 and income £15,745.56. Also income from floodlighting electricity plus potential increase in income from lease rents
- Neighbourhood plan – agreed
- Playscheme – agreed
- Public toilets – agreed
- Street lighting and furniture, includes Heritage Information Boards - agreed
- Surrenden Field – agreed
- Village Update and Website – agreed
- SEHT – agreed
- Wimpey Field - agreed
- Youth Services includes £14,000 for Pilot Youth Worker – agreed
- Council administration and support – agreed
- Staff salaries – agreed
- Other expenses – agreed

Total expenditure £350,228.14 – agreed.

Summary of draft 2025/26 budget

Expenditure £350,228.14

Income £ 44,435.50

Draft precept £305,792.84

Rounded down precept £300,000

Compared to 2024 /25

	2024/25	Draft 2025/26	Increase
Precept	£262,247	£300,000	£37,753
Band D – annual	£75.02	£99.72	£24.70
Band D – monthly	£6.25	£8.31	£2.06
Band D - weekly	£1.44	£1.92	£0.48

A Band D property is the mid-range property and used for comparisons there is a 32.92% increase on 2024/25.

The Tax base (number of charged properties is supplied by MBC) = 3,008.50.

The Group discussed and agreed the following

- Clerk to email to all Cllrs to give opportunity for comment.
- Cllrs respond by 6th January 2025 if they have any issues / comments which need to be discussed.
- If so, can be discussed at Council meeting 13th January 2025, if none do not need Council meeting on 13th January 2025 and approve at Council meeting on 27th January 2025. This would be to approve the 2025/26 Budget not discuss amendments as there would be no time to make adjustments before submitting "precept request to MBC".

Note, If 3G pitch starts April 2025 building works continue to July 2025.

The Junior pitches would be fenced off – building site – but Main pitch, skatepark, and car park still in use.

Therefore no expenditure / income from junior pitches

Senior pitch / pavilion still operating – expenditure / income will continue

Then site would then be handed over to management contractor at end of construction phase - August 2025.

7. HR Group Terms of Reference

Group discussed T of Ref – some felt should be stand alone group and Chairman of group should be elected at first meeting of the HR Group others subgroup of EFS group.

Following HR training need review of appraisal policy, use simpler form – draft to next meeting then Council.

Any other HR policies to be developed?

Interview policy?

Clerk to finalise with Cllrs Arger and Martin then recirculate.

8. 3G pitch update – verbal update

a) Design and planning

Cllr Riordan and Clerk attended zoom meeting yesterday

1. KCC Highways meeting - discussed the various points they raised in their holding objection – Our consultants solutions to the points raised seemed to be acceptable – addition overflow car parking, programming issues I.e. no clash on a Saturday and Wednesday evening potential pinch point but with phased parking
2. MBC Planning meeting - with MBC talked through the various points discussed with KCC – again MBC Planning Officer seem content with everything discussed with KCC Highways
3. MBC planning officer discussed the following;

Cycle stand / shed they prefer a cycle shed? Maybe a condition?

Ecology – review BNG matrix as car parking being extended but aim to retain all BNG mitigation within site – Consultants resubmit early 2025.

MBC will have to readvertise / consult as overflow car park is new – officer proposed 2 weeks consultation once Transport Statement addendum has been verified

Need to clarify overflow car park surface - permeable

Noise management – condition not after 10pm weekdays and 9pm weekends (the proposed usage times) The MBC officer noted no housing particularly close

Rubber crumb – need to emphasise management to prevent getting into water course some MBC Councillors hot on this issue. Consultant already addressed and reemphasised in the meeting but will highlight in emails to MBC planning officer

BNG – S106 monitoring fee for 30 years is required– currently not budgeted for. Potential £10 – 20k depending on final BNG assessment

Note the BNG monitoring figure is a completely new figure.

Group discussed summary of the capital cost of the project, additional professional fees and implications.

RFO to review and report back to next meeting.

b. Timescale

Consultants liaising with KCC Highways before submitting Transport Statement addendum – week of 6th January 2025

Once MBC verified Transport Statement addendum consultation for 2 weeks or 21 days – completed by say mid-February 2025 (Note Ecology and KCC Highways key comments required)

MBC officer stated the application is not a "major application", potential delegated officer decision i.e. end of February 2025.

If application is called in to MBC planning committee – aim for mid-March 2025
Planning Committee

Arranging "teams meeting" with Football Foundation early January 2025, will invite all EFS group members.

c. Management contractor tendering

Met two bidders with several Cllrs.

Cllr Arger said positive meetings On track – circulated Q and A so far

JFWG must not discuss management contract as one of the bidders is present at JFWG meetings. Clerk will remind JFWG members.

Item 11 Bower Walk letter brought forward

Car parking in area a long standing issue, raised by residents again, discussed in RSG, 2nd December 2024 minutes – drafted letter with Cllr Sharp and sent out. Cllr Riordan felt should have gone to Council before been sent out, some sympathy with that view but EFS Group generally felt was acceptable

Note - meeting arranged with Police 13th January 2025, 10am to discuss school parking, Bower Walk, Wimpey Field Chapel Lane and other ASB in Village.

Cllr Riordan left the meeting.

9. SMFC CIC lease request – see A3 plan

- a) Clubhouse – but would also have to include footprint of new stands and footpath. Location of proposed "wildflower area" a concern as through fare from ticket booth / ground entrance to club house.
Still waiting for site plans as discussed with SMFC CIC in August 2024 – verbally said will do in the early 2025.
- b) SMFC CIC proposal - seeking lease for whole site within the fenced area, but when not using as a football pitch will be accessible to the public.

Discussion noted car parking limits on match days – do we want the gates locked open unless a match is taking place? Say locked Saturday 12noon – 7pm for instance.

10. Merit Awards – mid May 2025

Draft ideas to stimulate discussion

- Weekday Evening / Saturday – felt a set evening would be better

- Youth Club – no use North hall due to numbers and option of stalls for community groups
- Invite groups for a stall / display – yes liaise with JT
- Rolling presentation? Key points! – yes need to develop presentation
- Grants – awards i.e. School display on what the grant has been used for!
- Raffle?
- Refreshments? Hush Heath?
- Do we want to use KALC award scheme? – discuss at next meeting

Timescales

- Date for Annual Parish Meeting – should be soon after Council AGM Monday 12th May 2025, Weekday Evening
- Group finalise at next meeting and then recommend to Council.
- Send out invites early March 2025
- Promote via social media in lead up?

Clerks contract

Clerk raised a number of points regarding his contract.

Next Meeting 16th January 2025

- Council Strategic Action Plan
- Finalise Merit Award evening
- 3G funding update
- Review of Policies