

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee held in The New Millennium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Monday 9 June 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Butcher
Councillor Tandy *
Councillor Walsh KStJ
Councillor Daws
Councillor Wiltshire
Councillor O'Neill

In attendance:

Laura Chrysostomou – Town Clerk
Juliet Harris - Assistant Town Clerk
Sofia Chittenden – Communications and Marketing Manager
Lucy Hall – Town Centre Strategy project Officer
Melanie Nicholls – Temporary Project Support Manager
Miriam Nicholls – Business and Economy Manager

2025 to 2026

1 Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures were noted.

2 Filming of Council Meetings, Use of Social Media, and Mobile Phones.

The procedures were noted.

3 Apologies

There were apologies from Councillors Lee, May, and Woodman. Councillors Daws and Wiltshire attended as substitutes for Councillors Lee and May, respectively. Councillor Tandy was delayed and would join the meeting as soon as he was able and Councillor O'Neill was also in attendance.

4 Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the agenda. The standing declarations were noted, and

Councillors O'Neill and Wiltshire also declared personal interests across the agenda as members of Arun District Council.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2025, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the chair.

6 Chair's Report and Urgent Items

6.1. Business and Trade Select Committee Visit

Members of Parliament from this Select Committee were planning to visit Littlehampton to meet representatives from the local business community. A roundtable discussion about town centre regeneration and the challenges facing local businesses was planned to which Councillors were also invited. This was welcomed and whilst the detail of the visit had yet to be confirmed it was considered prudent that the local authority representatives on the Town Centre Action Group be invited to attend.

It was resolved that:

The update be noted.

7 Public Forum

There was one member of the public present, and no representations made.

8 Officer's Reports

8.1 Town Centre Action Group Representative

- 8.1.1 The Committee was asked to appoint a representative to the Town Centre Action Group for 2025 to 2026. Since the Mayor also served as Chair of the Committee, Vice Chair Councillor Tandy would join the group. It was proposed that Councillor May replace Councillor Northeast as the Town Council's representative and given Councillor May, as Mayor elect, would Chair the group next year the Committee felt this provided helpful continuity. It was noted that Councillors Dr Walsh KStJ and Wiltshire were Arun District Council's representatives on the Group.

It was therefore resolved that:

Councillor May be appointed as the Town Council's representative on the Town Centre Action Group for 2025 to 2026.

8.2 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Research Project



8.2.1. The Committee received a report, previously circulated that set out the findings of the UKSPF funded research into the role of the town centre in successful visitor economy development. The Project Support Manager explained that in the period since the inception of the Town Centre Strategy a great deal of work analysing the success factors in town centre regeneration had been published. This was timely as the Town Centre Action Group (TCAG) had begun to make considerable progress establishing itself as both an effective advocate for the Town Centre and local businesses. The Town Council was also well-placed to continue its work supporting the TCAG to achieve the primary goals of the Town Centre Strategy and this research had also contributed to the mid term review of progress and future priorities that was the subject of a report later in the meeting.

8.2.2. The role that local authorities can play in both engaging and empowering residents was emphasised and the report highlighted that effective community engagement needed dedicated resources. Creating this capacity had also emerged as a factor in the Town Council's events review and the development of the events and business forums were considered good foundations to take this forward. They also demonstrated the importance of focussing on the place rather than trying to develop a local brand. This resonated with the research findings. Reviewing the options, the committee prioritised fostering local pride, building community capacity, and creating forums to boost town centre use, aiming to support visitor economy growth.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. Options D one, two, three and four in the report be used to steer the work of the Town Council in supporting the development of the visitor economy, with the priorities of promoting civic pride, encouraging local people to spend more time and money in the area and building community engagement and capacity.
2. The report be otherwise noted.

* Councillor Tandy joined the meeting

8.3 Visit Littlehampton Website

8.3.1. The Communications and Marketing Manager presented a report, previously circulated, which set out a proposal to adapt and expand the Visit Littlehampton website to also support the Town Centre Business Forum and Events Forum. Using visuals of how the website could be structured she explained that the proposal aimed to develop the existing Visit Littlehampton web platform into a dual-purpose site, supporting both tourism and local community engagement. It was noted that the proposal had also recently been considered by the Community Resources Committee where it had been supported with a commitment of £8,000 from the Community Resources Initiatives budget and Earmarked Reserves.

- 8.3.2. She proceeded to explain that content relating to local businesses and community group activities would be published in different formats for different audiences enabling cross-posting to both sections of the website where appropriate. In considering the proposal, it was recognised that this would allow external users from the business and community to make submissions, which once vetted by officers, would be shared, better serving residents and visitors and promoting tourism. The committee also acknowledged that improving the functionality of the website in this way would deliver consistency and sustainability and supported the direction of the Town Council's work to support regeneration in the Town.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. The proposal to adapt the purpose of the Visit Littlehampton website including the appointment of the preferred supplier be approved.
2. £5,000 from the Town Centre Strategy Initiatives Budget be approved towards the costs to extend the functionality of the website to support information provision for the Town Centre Business Forum.

8.4 Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan Review

- 8.4.1. Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which provided an overview of progress made in delivering the Town Centre Strategy since its launch in 2023. It also included an evaluation of achievements against short-term goals, a review of the existing medium-term goals and actions, and proposed a revised set of short-term actions for the next three years aligned to other relevant strategic documents. The committee proceeded to consider the progress to date and the revised Action Plan in more detail.
- 8.4.2. The review demonstrated how the Town Centre Action Group had grown becoming the collaborative body envisaged in the Strategy and that with continued support, the Business Forum would also evolve to become an effective advocate for local traders. The recent introduction of the Business Crime Reduction Partnership, progress with the wayfinding project and success of the shop window wraps served as further examples of the partnership that was developing between the business community and other stakeholders. It was therefore hoped that these developments would encourage Arun District Council to formally adopt the Town Centre Strategy as a policy.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. The minutes of the Town Centre Action Group meeting held on 13 May 2025 be noted.
2. The short-term action achievements as outlined in the report be noted.

3. The revised medium-term goals and actions forming the basis of the 2026 to 2029 Action Plan be approved.
4. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

8.5. Quarterly Business Plan Progress Report

- 8.5.1. Members considered a previously circulated report providing an update on the progress made toward achieving the business plan goals reviewed and agreed by the Council in May and as they related to the Committee's work. It was noted that the District Council remained committed to working with the Town Council to explore a shared hub facility in the High Street and that officers were investigating options to take this forward.

It was resolved that:

The report and updates be noted.

9. Finance

9.1. Committee Budget Monitor

- 9.1.1. Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which summarised the committee budget year-end position for 2024 to 2025 and highlighted variances from the budget in Income and Expenditure for the first quarter of 2025 to 2026. Reflecting on the discussions earlier in the meeting, the committee acknowledged that prudent earmarking had enabled the Council to respond effectively to changing circumstances and emerging initiatives.

It was resolved that:

The report be noted.

9.2. Debtors Update

- 9.2.1. Members considered a previously circulated report providing an update on the progress with debt recovery.

It was resolved that:

The report be noted.

10. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.39pm.

Chair