



How to contact us
Write to: Manor House, Church Street,
Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5EW
Email: lhc@littlehampton-tc.gov.uk

Call: 01903 732063

Find us online: www.littlehampton-tc.gov.uk
Town Clerk – Laura Chrysostomou

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee held in The New Millennium Chamber, Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Thursday 15 December 2025 at 18.30pm.

Present:

Councillor Butcher – Chair
Councillor Tandy – Vice Chair
Councillor May
Councillor Lee
Councillor Northeast
Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ
Councillor Woodman

In attendance:

Laura Chrysostomou – Town Clerk
Melanie Nicholls – Project Support Manager

2025 to 2026

23. Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures were noted.

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

The procedures were noted.

25. Apologies

There were none.

26. Declarations of Interest

- 26.1. 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. Councillor Walsh redeclared his personal interest as a member of Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council, particularly pertaining to item 8.6 Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex, Brighton and Hove, and West Sussex.

27. Non-Exempt Minutes

The Non-Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2025, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

28. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

There were none.

29. Public Forum

There were no members of the public present, and no written representations made.

30. Officer's Reports

30.1. Standing Orders / Urgent Actions

The committee received and noted an urgent action, previously circulated, regarding the Town Council's response to Arun District Council's Tax Reduction Scheme 2026 to 2027 consultation.

It was resolved that:


The urgent action and response be noted.

30.2. Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan Update

30.2.1. Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which provided an update on work being undertaken as part of the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan. Adaptations to the Wayfinder Project were highlighted to members, notably the replacement of the beach boxes due to lack of permissible locations, with provision being redirected to increase the amount of lamppost collars. The additional collars would have a bigger impact on creating the connectivity between the town and the waterfront. Furthermore, information boards about the project would be introduced, including siting one at the train station.

30.2.2. The Chair reported that the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan's short term and long-term goals were reported to Arun District Council's Economy Committee. They approved the actions taken and endorsed continued participation in delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan. The District Council's Economy Committee also sought to incorporate the Town Centre Strategy within its economic strategy in the future.

It was resolved that:

1. The notes from the Task and Finish Group held on 30 September be noted.
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2. The updates to the Wayfinding Project be endorsed and noted.
3. The updates and contents of the report be noted.

30.3. Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) Continuation Proposal

- 30.3.1.** Members had before them a report, previously circulated, requesting the Town Council's contribution towards this initiative be continued for two years. The report proposed funding of £12,000 per annum for 2026 to 2028 to support the scheme. Since the scheme started in March 2025, the BCRP Manager had become a direct link between the Littlehampton Business Forum, the wider business community and Sussex Police, assisting those affected by crime to report incidents effectively through the DISC system.
- 30.3.2.** The committee noted the positive impact which had developed from this piece of work. When reviewing the evidence provided by the District Council for continued funding, it was felt that data reflecting its specific impact on Littlehampton was needed. Members suggested a criterion of future funding included setting out clearer measurable achievements, a two-year plan, and a timeline to implement future priorities.
- 30.3.3.** Following review and consideration, Members agreed to continue the proposed level of funding of £12,000 per annum for 2026 to 2028 with a review of progress and impact in December 2026.

It was resolved that:

1. £12,000 for 2026 to 2027 and £12,000 for 2027 to 2028 be agreed to support the Business Crime Reduction Partnership, and included as part of the budget discussions.
2. The requests for further detailed reporting as set out above be taken forward by officers with Arun District Council.

30.4. IT Policy

- 30.4.1.** Members received a report, previously circulated, detailing rationale for the short summary IT Policy produced to supplement the suite of IT and data protection policies. The creation of this policy was following advice from the Internal Auditor to ensure compliance with upcoming introduction of Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

It was resolved that:

The draft IT Policy be recommended to Full Council for approval.

30.5. Quarterly Business Plan Progress Report

- 30.5.1.** Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which provided an update on progress with delivering goals as they related to the work of the committee. Members proceeded to review the action plan and noted updates on the High Street Hub, which included outline timelines for the delivery of

the hub during the course of 2026 following a meeting with the landlord of the preferred premises. Further details were provided under exempt business due to the information relating to the financial or business affairs of the organisations.

It was resolved that:

The updates and contents of the report be noted.

30.6. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in East Sussex, Brighton and Hove, and West Sussex

- 30.6.1.** The Committee were asked to consider responding to the above consultation. Forming a response on behalf of the Committee was supported. Members proceeded to discuss the proposals and their impact on the governance arrangements of Littlehampton. It was agreed to support the two unitary authorities across the whole area of West Sussex. Following a request, officers would investigate and try to align with Arun District Council's response to the consultation.

It was resolved that:

The above comments be used to form a response to the LGR consultation, and delegation be given to the Town Clerk to finalise the response in consultation with the Chair following the District Council's briefing later that week.

31. Finance

31.1. Committee Budget Monitor

- 31.1.1.** The Town Clerk presented a previously circulated report, which highlighted any significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to the Policy and Finance Committee's budget for 2025 to 2026.

It was resolved that:

The report be noted.

31.2. Committee Draft Budget Proposals 2026 to 2027, and projected funding 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029

- 31.2.1.** The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, setting out proposals for this Committee's Budget for the next three years. The Town Clerk reported that the proposals for the Committee would see its budget increase by 8.74% for 2026 to 2027.
- 31.2.2.** The committee budget had been drafted to take into consideration estimated increases in costs for the coming year and projected forward to 2029. Members proceeded to review the Policy and Finance budget proposals in more detail and the following points were noted:

- Staffing apportionment had been modified since the report was published. This updated apportionment did not affect the overall total of staffing across the Council's services.
- The movement of earmarked reserves to the general fund or combined into larger pots following advice from the Internal Auditor.

It was resolved that:

1. The draft Committee budget for 2026 to 2027 and the projected budgets for 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029 be approved and recommended for inclusion in the Full Council budget.
2. The Committee's Earmarked Reserve position be noted.

31.3. Council Funding

- 31.3.1.** The Town Clerk presented a report, previously circulated, which detailed the review of funding streams and how they would continue to support the capital programme. The committee were asked to consider and agree the future use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and to review the Council's earmarked reserves (EMR) as required by the Financial Regulations and recommended by the Internal Auditor.
- 31.3.2.** The Committee noted the timed spending restrictions upon receipt of these funds, from both developer contributions of Section 106 agreements (S106) and CIL. They endorsed their realignment from completed projects to future projects, strengthening the wider community infrastructure, such as; community facilities, transport, allotments, parks and open spaces. It was also highlighted that upcoming retail developments, pending approval, would be CIL liable. If approved, it was agreed any CIL received from these developments should be invested into the Town Centre, to support and offset any negative effects on local businesses in the High Street. Members noted the current position and agreed the recommended areas of allocation to be the most valuable use of these funds going forward.
- 31.3.3.** When reviewing the EMRs, members highlighted the smaller sums of Museum reserves should also be reviewed and consolidated further. This would be in line with recommendations from the internal auditor and would be assessed by officers and included in the recommendation to Full Council.

It was resolved that:

1. The allocation of CIL funding to date towards current projects was endorsed and the allocation of future CIL payments from retail developments into the Town Centre be approved.
2. The repurposing and consolidation of EMRs as set out in the appendix to the report, including the additional investigation of the Museum EMRs, be recommended to Full Council for approval.

3. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

31.4. Capital Programme Draft Funding 2026 to 2027, and projected funding 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029

- 31.4.1.** The committee received a report, previously circulated, which set out the funding arrangements to meet the Capital Programme including the financial implications of the major projects that were a priority for the Council. Members noted the background information regarding the capital receipts reserve, converted capital receipts and CIL Payments.

It was resolved that:

The draft Capital Programme funding for 2026 to 2027 and the projected funding programme for 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029 be approved and recommended to Council, as part of the overall Council Budget.

31.5. Full Council Draft Budget 2026 to 2027, and projected funding 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029

- 31.5.1.** The Committee received a report, previously circulated, which set out the proposed Council budget for 2026 to 2027 and the projected funding for 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029. The budget had been drafted following meetings held with political group leaders, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each Committee. As reported earlier in the meeting, should the overall draft Council Budget for 2026 to 2027 be approved, this would result in a precept increase for 2026 to 2027 of 6% percent. This equated to an additional £9.21 per household per year (£0.18 per week) in Band D Council Tax.
- 31.5.2.** Members proceeded to examine the budget proposals. They reiterated support for consolidating EMRs through repurposing or consolidation, as discussed earlier in the meeting. The committee sought clarification on areas of increase within the budget. It was noted that expected suppliers increases ranged from 5 percent to 20 percent, with most estimated to be 10%, which the budget sought to accommodate. It was observed that in 2025 to 2026 inflation meant costs exceeded budgets in several areas and that the nationally agreed salary pay award for 2025 to 2026 was 3.2% but only a 2.5% increase had been budgeted for. In considering the proposed 6% increase to the Precept, Members discussed the significant impact in the local community that additional funds sought to achieve, as set out in its ambitious Business Plan. This included an overall increase to community grant funding from £14,000 to £40,000 as well as building community capacity through forums such as the newly formed Business and Events Forums. With an increasing portfolio of assets to deliver the full range of services effectively, the committee agreed that further resources were needed as provided for in the draft budget. The Committee proceeded to vote on the draft budget proposals for 2026 to 2029.

It was resolved that:

1. The draft budget for 2026 to 2027 and the projected budgets for 2027 to 2028 and 2028 to 2029 be endorsed and recommended to Council for approval.
2. Council be recommended to set a precept of £1,729,069 for 2026 to 2027 which equates to Band D Council Take of £162.72 per annum for 2026 to 2027, an increase of 6% or £9.21 per household per year (£0.18 per week).

32. Exempt Business

It is **recommended** that:

The public and accredited representatives of the press be excluded from the Meeting under Section 100 Local Government Act 1972 due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted.

The following minutes are confidential for Members of the Council only in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

The meeting was adjourned at 19:40.

The Meeting was reconvened at 19:41.

33. Exempt Minutes

The Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2025, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

34. High Street Hub

There was an oral update from the Town Clerk about progress made to deliver the High Street Hub, through discussions with the landlord of the preferred premises and interested parties.

The meeting was closed at 19:45.

Chair