# TELSCOMBE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of Telscombe Town Council held on Wednesday 23rd September 2026 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber at Telscombe Civic Centre.**

Councillors Present:- Cllrs C Clarkson, C Gallagher ***Mayor***, M Lawrie, L O'Connor, B Page, I Sharkey & N Watts

Also present:- Stella Newman, Town Clerk & RFO *(minutes)*
2 members of the public

**2672. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A member of the public had 3 queries as follows:-

1) Parking on pavements – The resident queried that as part of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, local authorities can enforce bans on parking on pavements and therefore asked whether Telscombe Town Council had any views and would ask East Sussex County Council to take up the power.
*It was agreed to place this on the agenda for the next Planning & Highways Committee meeting for discussion.*

2) SGN roadworks – The resident asked if the Council had any updates. They advised that they had received a response to their letter.
*They were advised that it was discussed at the Planning & Highways Committee meeting on 16th September 2026 and the Amenities Officer had been asked to contact Brighton and Hove Buses and East Sussex Highways Department.*

3) New sign on Telscombe Tye - The resident advised they were sceptical regarding enforcement of no driving on the Tye and advised they had witnessed both motor bikes and e-scooters on the Tye and in Chatsworth Park.
*They were advised by the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee that this was a long standing issue and much consideration had been given regarding prevention of vehicles driving on the Tye. Reported instances are reported to the Police and it had been decided that signage was necessary to make the public aware.*

*The member of the public that asked the questions then left the meeting.*

**2673. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Robinson who was away, Cllr Williamson who was unwell and Cllr Judd due to a prior engagement. These apologies for absence were accepted.

**2674. TO RECEIVE MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN RELATION TO MATTERS ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**2675. MAYOR/CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:-**

The Mayor, Cllr Cathy Gallagher, reiterated that her charities were Boomerang Kids in East Saltdean and Develop Outdoors, and that the race night to be held in November would specifically be raising funds for The Sussex Heart Charity.

**2675. Mayor/Chair's Announcements (Contd):-**

The Mayor advised that she had recently attended the Girl Guiding International Camp open day in East Grinstead, the anniversary of the Dieppe Raid event and the Mayor of Seaford's Civic Service. She reminded everyone that her Civic Service is taking place this Sunday 27th September at 10.30am at the Telscombe Community Church.

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Watts, advised that he had attended the East Sussex County Council Chair's summer civic reception at Herons Ghyll.

**2676. REPORTS FROM:-**

District Councillors:- Cllr O'Connor advised a recommendation will be take to the cabinet meeting on 1st October to pause the preparation of the Lewes Local Plan and seek Government civil servant advice as to how to progress. This is due to the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which undermines many of the planned policies for Lewes District Council (LDC), as well as the uncertainty regarding the Local Government Re-organisation. He also advised that Policy S4 of the revised NPPF governs the principle of development within defined settlement boundaries and Policy S5 governs development proposals outside existing settlements in England, so areas such as Ringmer and Newick could see development around their town/village.
Cllr O'Connor also advised that LDC had supported the new Meridian Mayhem, indoor soft play and activity centre in Peacehaven and the new health hub in Newhaven which includes a gym and the 2 Newhaven doctors' surgeries.

County Councillor:- Cllr Chapman was not in attendance and had not provided a report.

**2677. TO APPROVE AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22nd JULY 2026**

It was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Sharkey and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Full Council meeting on 22nd July 2026 were a true record of the proceedings and were signed as correct by the Mayor, Cllr Gallagher.

**2678. TO AGREE MINUTES FROM THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES AND ADOPT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**a)** **Amenities & Civic Centre, 27th May 2026 –** Cllr O'Connor proposed that the minutes of the meeting on 27th May 2026 be accepted and the recommendations adopted, seconded by Cllr Clarkson and **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and recommendations adopted.

**b)** **Planning & Highways, 15th July and 5th August 2026 –** Cllr Gallagher proposed that the minutes of the meetings on 15th July and 5th August 2026 be accepted and the recommendations adopted, seconded by Cllr Watts and **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and recommendations adopted.

**c)** **Policy & Resources, 8th July 2026 –** Cllr Clarkson proposed that the minutes of the meeting on 8th July 2026 be accepted and the recommendations adopted, seconded by Cllr Page and **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and recommendations adopted.

## 2679. TO APPROVE PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS FOR JULY 2026

It was proposed by Cllr Page, seconded by Cllr O'Connor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the payments and receipts figures for July of £35,594.74 payments and receipts of £2,170.87 be approved and the sheets were signed as correct by the Mayor, Cllr Gallagher

## 2680. TO AGREE INCOME & EXPENDITURE FIGURES TO 31st JULY 2026 AND NOTE INVESTMENTS MADE

The full income and expenditure lists printed from the accounting package showing the budget and actual spend figures for all budget lines had been circulated to members. The Town Clerk/RFO's report also detailed the reasons for any significant differences between budget and spend figures to date and listed the investments that had been made since the beginning of the financial year.

It was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr O'Connor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the actual total figures at 31st July 2026 of £194,348 income and expenditure of £119,137 be agreed as correct and the investments made on 3rd August of £445,000 and 3rd September of £660,000 were noted.

## 2681. TO NOTE ACTION LIST AND AGREE ANY FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

| Date of Meeting | Issue Detail | Action Owner | Update | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20.11.24 | Min 2362, p 4243 – To consider purchasing Adobe Pro | SN | It was agreed at full Council on 17.9.25 to proceed with purchase & set a revised due date. | July '26 |
| 16.7.25 | Min 2480, p 4394 – To review possible merger with Peacehaven TC | SN | As agreed, I contacted PTC Clerk re a meeting, but no response received.<br>It was agreed at full Council on 17.9.25 to continue to try and progress this.<br>*Agreed at meeting on 21.1.26 to continue to pursue & Cllr Gallagher to follow up with PTC.*<br>*Noted at meeting on 20.5.26 that no progress to date and Cllr Gallagher to monitor with PTC.* | Jan '27 |
| 18.3.26 | Min 2589, p 4553 – To consider options for a possible repair café at the Civic Centre | SN | A working group is to be formed and a meeting arranged to discuss options. | Dec '26 |
| 18.3.26 | Min 2595, P 4555 – To consider estimate from the Parkinson Partnership on advice re VAT on café project | SN | A meeting has taken place with the Parkinson Partnership.<br>*Their report has now been received.* | See new agenda item |
| 18.3.26 | Min 2602, p 4556 – Update on café project & agree further actions required | SN | An initial working group meeting took place to discuss the café business plan and a follow-up meeting too. | See new agenda item |

**2681. To note action list and agree any further actions required (Contd)**

| Date of Meeting | Issue Detail | Action Owner | Update | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18.3.26 | Min 2605, p 4556 – Update on the Neighbourhood Plan, agree any further actions & associated cost to update the Council's website | SN | Proposed leaflet not approved by LDC and so was not printed. Referendum took place on 7.5.26 with a positive result.<br>TTC's website to be updated after the referendum – *the website has been updated.* | Complete<br><br>Complete |
| 20.5.26 | Min 2628, p 4595 – Agree bank mandate/ signatories to Mayor's charity fund bank account | SN | A Mandate update request was submitted to the bank & Cllrs were contacted by the bank for further info. *The bank advises they have completed the updates.* | Complete |
| 20.5.26 | Min 2629, p 4595 – Review & agree credit card spending limit | SN | An application to increase the spending limit by £1k was submitted. The bank have acknowledged the request & advised it is being assessed. | Sept '26 |
| 20.5.26 | Min 2631, p 4595 – To appoint an internal auditor for the 2026/27 financial year | SN | The internal auditor has confirmed they have capacity to undertake our audit for 2026/27 and their Terms of Engagement are awaited.<br>*Terms received.* | See new agenda item |
| 20.5.26 | Min 2633, p 4596 – To approve Councils Annual Governance Statement on the AGAR (Section 1) for year to 31.3.26. | SN | The approved AGAR was submitted to the external auditors.<br>*Their report has been received.* | See new agenda item |
| 20.5.25 | Min 2634, p 4596 – To approve Council's accounting statements on the AGAR (Section 2) for year to 31.3.26. | SN | The approved AGAR was submitted to the external auditors.<br>*Their report has been received.* | See new agenda item |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2660, p 4645 – Business plan update/ review | SN | The agreed update to No 4 Sea Defences was carried out and No 1 Review Member Allowances has also been updated following the review undertaken at the meeting on 22.7.26. | Complete |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2661, p 4645 – To agree Cllr allowance amount for 27/28 financial year | SN | The Cllr allowance notice has been put on our website and the figures agreed will be taken into account when setting the 27/28 budget. | Complete |

**2681. To note action list and agree any further actions required (Contd)**

| Date of Meeting | Issue Detail | Action Owner | Update | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22.7.26 | Min 2662, p 4645 – To agree CIL report for 25/26, note CIL funds received to date for 26/27 and agree possible future CIL ER spending. | SN | CIL report put on our website & emailed to LDC.<br>Agreed ER spending has been taken into account for the proposed future projects. | Complete |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2663, p 4646 – To adopt reviewed Co-option Policy & agree whether to advertise vacancies through co-option | SN | The updated report has been put on our website.<br>As agreed, no notice of co-option has been advertised. | Complete |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2664, p 4646 – To agree café layout option and appointment of legal services as recommended by LDC/ EBC | SN | LDC/EBC have been notified of our preferred options for position and layout and agreement given for appt of legal services. | Complete |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2665, p 4646 – Update on telecoms equipment at Civic Centre & agree way forward | SN | United Infrastructure had been advised that reluctantly TTC agree in principal subject to proposals and terms of a new lease. An update is awaited. | Nov '26 |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2666, p 4647 – To agree change of meetings dates | SN | Website updated with agreed change of meetings dates. | Complete |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2667, p 4647 – To consider environmental data for Telscombe & E Saltdean & decide what action could be taken | CC | Cllr Clarkson to draw up suggested proposals to tackle some elements in the report. | Nov '26 |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2668, p 4647 – to agree to dissolve the NDP Steering Group & form a Neighbourhood Plan oversight group | TTC & PTC | NDP Steering Grp dissolved.<br><br>Draft Terms of Ref for new group<br><br>Order for 25 copies of NDP & 25 copies of Design Guides has been placed. | Complete<br><br>TTC & PTC's Clerks working on draft<br><br>Complete |
| 22.7.26 | Min 2669, p 4647 – To note Gov's announcement re LGR & consider the Council's response including whether to issue a public statement | SN | Draft statement agreed & put on website.<br><br>Complaint to ESCC issued & a response is awaited. | Complete<br><br>Sept '26 |

Min 2480, p 4394, To review possible merger with Peacehaven TC – Cllr Gallagher queried if the Council wanted to pursue this. Following discussion it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **recommended** to remove it from the action list and add it to the Business Plan.

**2681. To note action list and agree any further actions required (Contd)**

Min 2667, p 4647, To consider environmental data for Telscombe & E Saltdean & decide what action could be taken – Cllr Gallagher asked if there was any progress and she was advised that Cllrs Clarkson and O'Connor are working on this and will report back to a future meeting.

Min 2669, p 4647, To note Gov's announcement re LGR & consider the Council's response including whether to issue a public statement (Complaint to ESCC issued & a response is awaited) – The Town Clerk was asked if she had received a response from ESCC regarding the complaint put in and she advised that the complaint had been acknowledged along with which parts of the code we believed had been breached, and that ESCC would be in touch in due course. The Town Clerk advised she will follow this up with ESCC.

The remainder of the action list was noted.

**2682. BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE/REVIEW**

There was discussion regarding the Local Government Re-organisation and it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr O'Connor and unanimously **RESOLVED** to add an item regarding preparation for the Local Government Re-organisation as well as addition of a possible merger with Peacehaven Town Council as agreed under the previous agenda item.

**2683. TO CONSIDER ADDING THE ADMIN/FINANCE ASSISTANT FOR ONLINE BANKING ACCESS**

Following consideration it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr O'Connor and unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree that the Admin/Finance Assistant, Angela Greenfield, be added for online banking access.

**2684. TO CONSIDER OPENING A CURRENT AND SAVINGS ACCOUNT WITH UNITY BANK**

After review of the information regarding accounts offered by Unity Bank and as the Nationwide are still not accepting new applications, it was proposed by Cllr Watts, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **RESOLVED** to open a current and savings account with Unity Bank and for the account signatories to be the same as for the Nat West account being Cllrs Gallagher, O'Connor, Page and Robinson, as well as the Town Clerk & RFO, Stella Newman and Admin/Finance Assistant with the Officers to also be registered for online banking.

**2685. TO AGREE BUDGET SETTING PROCESS FOR THE 2027/28 FINANCIAL YEAR AND WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr O'Connor, seconded by Cllr Clarkson and unanimously **RESOLVED** to form a working party consisting of the Chair and Vice Chairs of all Committees, being Cllrs L O'Connor, C Robinson, C Gallagher, N Watts, C Clarkson and M Lawrie as well as Cllr Page and the Town Clerk/RFO to formulate draft budgets for all committees.

**2686. TO AGREE THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT/CONCLUSION OF AUDIT**

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the External Auditor's Report and Certificate, being Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2025/26.

**2687. TO AGREE THE INTERNAL AUDITOR'S TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR THE 2026/27 FINANCIAL YEAR**

At the full Council meeting on 20th May, it was agreed to appoint April Skies Accounting as the internal auditor for the 2026/27 financial year as they were met the requirement of independence, competence and relevant public sector knowledge. Their Terms of Engagement were subsequently received and it was proposed by Cllr Sharkey, seconded by Cllr Page and unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree April Skies Accounting's Terms of Reference as internal auditor for the 2026/27 financial year and that the Town Clerk/RFO signs their agreement.

*A member of the public joined the meeting.*

**2688. UPDATE ON THE CAFÉ PROJECT, AGREE WAY FORWARD AND TO ADD CLLR GALLAGHER TO THE WORKING GROUP**

There was lengthy debate regarding the report from the Café Working Group following its previous meeting. The Working Group had raised concerns about the financial commitment associated with the project and questioned whether it was financially and practically viable to proceed.

The discussion that followed reflected differing views amongst Councillors present as to whether the project should continue, with both the potential benefits of the project and the financial implications of proceeding being considered. Cllr Clarkson had not been present at the previous Working Group meeting and outlined a number of proposals for progressing the project while also seeking to mitigate the anticipated project cost of £460,000. The main points raised were as follows:

- That a loan repayment of in excess of 15 years would be more practical to reduce the repayments
- We have already secured £150,000 CIL funding from Lewes District Council
- We are awaiting the outcome of a further £80,000 CIL bid to Lewes District Council
- Grants can be applied for from other sources
- The Council could register for VAT to save the VAT element of the project
- The Council will have an asset once the project is completed

Councillors asked the Town Clerk for her comments on the proposed project. She advised that whilst she could see the merits of the project and was supportive of it in principle, she had significant concerns regarding the financial commitment it would place on the Council and the potential impact on the Council's budget and future precept requirements.

She highlighted that the Council was already facing increasing expenditure in maintaining its existing assets including bus shelters, street lighting, the Civic Centre and in particular, the Council's playgrounds, where equipment was deteriorating rapidly and significant refurbishment works would be required. In addition, the grass verge cutting contract and three grounds maintenance contracts were due for renewal, with increases to the associated budgets likely to be necessary.

The Town Clerk advised that given these existing and anticipated financial pressures, taking on a significant additional financial commitment for the café project could place a considerable burden on the Council and may result in a substantial increase in the Council Tax precept payable by local residents. She also noted that, if external grant funding was pursued for the café project, this could potentially reduce the Council's ability to secure grant funding for other priorities, particularly the refurbishment and improvement of the Council's playgrounds.

**2688. Update on the café project, agree way forward and to add Cllr Gallagher to the working group**

The Town Clerk further advised that registering the Council for VAT could potentially provide opportunities for savings in relation to the project. However, she explained that VAT registration would also bring additional administrative and accounting implications for the Council. In her joint role as Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, she has limited working capacity and expressed concern that she would not have sufficient capacity to fully assess, administer and manage the VAT implications of the project effectively alongside her existing responsibilities.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr O'Connor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

a. a further Café Working Group meeting be held to fully consider the financial and other implications of the project, enabling the Council to make an informed decision on whether to proceed
b. Cllr Gallagher be added to the Café Working Group; and
c. the findings and recommendations of the Working Group be presented to the next Full Council meeting, scheduled for 11th November 2026.

**2689. TO ADOPT THE REVIEWED SINGLE USE PLASTICS POLICY**

It was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Watts and unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the reviewed Single Use Plastics Policy with no amendments necessary to the existing Policy, and that a review be carried out in 3 years' time.

**2690. TO ADOPT THE NEW MAYOR'S CADET POLICY**

It was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Watts and unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the new Mayor's Cadet Policy, with an initial review in May 2029 when the Mayor's Policy and handbook are due for review, and thereafter a review every 3 years.

**2691. TO CONSIDER AND AGREE GRASS VERGE CUTTING CONTRACTOR FOR 2027/28 FINANCIAL YEAR**

A working group meeting had been held to review all the quotations for the grass verge cutting contract and associated documentation in detail. The working group considered the tenders taking into account the information and experience provided by each contractor. No formal scoring matrix was used; instead, the working group considered the submissions as a whole, having regard to previous experience, the proposed cost and the proximity of the contractor to the Council's area, with the latter being considered in terms of minimising unnecessary travel and associated environmental impact. The working group recommended the appointment of Grasstex for the following reasons:

- The contractor had advised the number of hours of verge cutting during the contract period, demonstrating a clear level of resource allocated to the contract.
- The contractor has held the Council's verge cutting contract since 2025, during which time there have been minimal complaints and the work has been carried out to a good standard.
- The contractor has established experience of undertaking similar work for other local authorities in the area, including East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Kent County Council.
- The contractor's proximity to the Council's area was also considered beneficial in reducing travelling distances and the associated environmental impact.

**2691. To consider and agree grass verge cutting contractor for 2027/28 financial year**

It was therefore proposed by Cllr O'Connor, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **RESOLVED** to appoint Grasstex to carry out the grass verge cutting for the Council's area for the 2027/28 financial year at a cost of £3,963.75 per cut, overall contract price £15,855.00.

**2692. TO APPROVE THE RATES OF PAY APPLICABLE FROM 1st APRIL 2026 FOR ALL STAFF MEMBERS AS RECENTLY AGREED BY THE NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

It was noted that the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services had reached agreement on salary rates for the 2026/27 financial year and that NALC, ESALC and the SLCC had sent through the updated scale list. They recommended that Councils implement the pay award as swiftly as possible and backdate it to 1st April 2026. The agreed figures represented a 3.3% increase for all NJC pay points which is equivalent to a .44p per hour increase for the lowest paid staff member and an .86p per hour increase for the highest paid staff member. This was similar to last year which was 3.2% for all pay points. The lowest pay point, SCP2, has been deleted with effect from 1st April 2026, with last year's hourly rate for that point being £12.65. That means the lowest pay point is SCP 3 at £13.28 per hour with the current National Living Wage being £12.71 (.57pence less).

After consideration of the pay scales for employees, it was proposed by Cllr Watts, seconded by Cllr Sharkey and unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the increased salary rates at 3.3% for all staff members and that it be back-dated to 1st April 2026.

**2693. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODY REPRESENTATIVES**

None.

**2694. URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

The Town Clerk advised that she had received notification from United Infrastructure together with plans, of a proposed upgrade to the telecommunications mast at the Civic Centre, which the company intended to submit as a planning application. The Council had been given 14 days within which to provide any comments prior to the application being submitted. Councillors noted that this notification had been received despite the Council having only agreed in principle to the proposed upgrade and having not yet received details of a new lease agreement for the additional area required for consideration. Cllr O'Connor advised that a planning application could be submitted without the applicant having obtained the landowner's consent.

Members raised a concern regarding the proposed orientation of the doors to the equipment cabinet, noting that the plans showed the doors opening onto the patio, whereas the Council had previously been advised that they would open towards the car park. It was also noted that the initial plans provided showed a 20-metre-high telecommunications pole. A revised plan was subsequently received the following day showing a reduced height of 17.5 metres.

It was unanimously **resolved** that the Town Clerk respond within the 14-day consultation period, raising the Council's concern regarding the direction in which the cabinet doors would open and advising United Infrastructure that the Council would instruct solicitors, at the appropriate stage, to negotiate the terms of a new lease in respect of the additional area required at the Civic Centre.

**2694. Urgent matters at the discretion of the Chair for noting or inclusion on a future agenda**

There were no other urgent matters and the Mayor closed the meeting at 9.23pm.

**Signed** ……..……
**Mayor**

***Date of next Council meeting – 11th November 2026***