WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Governance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 29th September 2025 at 7 pm in Russell House, Market Square, Westerham

Present:	Councillors:	Mrs S Sheen (SS) - Chair Mr E Boyle (EB) Mr I Breminer (IB) Mr A Hussain (AJH) Dr J Lord (JL)
In attendance:	Town Clerk: Finance Officer:	Mrs A Howells (AH) Mrs D Marshall (DM)

Item		Action
1.	**Apologies for Absence** None.	
2.	**Declarations of Interest not previously declared** None.	
3.	**Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th June 2025** Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th June were approved at Council on 7th July.	
4.	**Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda** 4.0 Signatories – The Finance Officer was still working on changing signatories and opening the new bank account. 5.1 Cllrs Boyle and Breminer had reviewed the KCC Pension Consultation and passed comments onto the Finance Officer who had submitted comments from WTC. The Finance Officer reported that the outcome of the consultation was that KCC had pooled the pension fund. 5.1 An office chair had been purchased for the Finance Officer. 5.3 The Utility Suppliers Record had been updated. 6.4 The WTC Child Protection Procedures for hirers had been circulated to the Committee.	DM
5.	**Finance** **5.1 Responsible Finance Officer Report (Finance Officer) –** The Report was received with thanks, and the following items were noted: - **External Audit -** The external audit had been completed and was completely clear, with no minor matters to report. The notification to the public that the audit had been completed had been displayed on the Council website and	

noticeboard as required. Thanks were given to the Finance Officer for all her hard work under difficult conditions.

Public Sector Deposit Fund - CCLA had announced that subject to regulatory approval, they were being acquired by Jupiter Fund Management PLC. They had informed WTC that local government associations and member councils, would see no difference in working practices.

Insurance - Whilst WTC received a 5% index linked increase to the insurance premium, WTC were in the final year of the contract. WTC provider, Zurich Insurance, had advised that WTC should expect in the region of a 30% increase in the renewal rate next year to reflect the increases in the marketplace over the past two years of our contract.

April 2025 Pay Award - The National Employers for Local Government Services full and final pay offer of 3.2% on all NJC pay points was accepted and the uplift paid in August's payroll (backdated to 1st April).

Crockham Hill Business Rates - The Business rates appeal system was called check and challenge. Firstly, a check was raised. Whilst receipt was acknowledged within the month, it could take up to 12 months for the check to be undertaken. Challenge could not take place until a check had been undertaken. The Business Rate charges were on hold until the appeal process was complete, and WTC had received a ruling.

KGF VAT advice – The Finance Officer had instructed the Parkinson Partnership as agreed. A number of detailed questions had been answered regarding activities and a site visit had been arranged for the end of the month, after which WTC would receive the full report.

The overtime claimed between March and July was noted. Cllr Sheen enquired if the figures to date were reasonable and the Town Clerk confirmed they were in line with expectations.

Sick Leave update

Due to the extended absence on sick leave of the Finance Officer, she became behind in managing the financial workload. She had worked additional hours since her return and was now less than a month behind. The Finance Officer thanked Cllr Sheen and the Town Clerk for support during this time to ensure invoices/payments were processed. It was agreed that Cllr Sheen and the Town Clerk would continue to support as required.

5.2 Payments and receipts list to 31st July 2025 – Cllr Sheen had no issues to bring to the Committee's attention. The Payment List would be recommended to Council for approval.

The Finance Office reported that there were no areas of concern to bring to the Committees attention at this point in the year.

H&L had received their streetlight inspection report, requiring the replacement of a number of lampposts. Their reserve was adequate to cover the unexpected costs, although this may impact on the ability to deliver other planned projects this financial year.

The Finance Officer reported that a very high water invoice had been received for KGF and this was being investigated. CBD/AH

Committee Accounts to 31st July 2025 – The Accounts had been circulated and there were no queries.

5.4 Bank charges passed on for payment by cheque – The Santander Current Account would start making monthly charges for its service from October at a

	cost of £9.99 per month. This had been notified after the budgets were set for the year hence there was currently no budget line for bank charges – the expenditure would be taken from the contingency budget. There was not a charge for cash paid into a Santander cash machine, but there was not one anywhere nearby and the Post Office was used to pay in cash, this would cost £1.25 per £100 deposited. There would also be a charge of 70p per cheque deposited. Following discussion, it was agreed that the cost for cheques would not be passed to current allotment holders but would be passed to any new allotment holders who wished to pay by cheque and for any other cheques received. Cllr Sheen requested that the new Allotment Agreement clarified the method of acceptable payment. **5.5 Budget Process –** Cllr Sheen had circulated a paper regarding the Budget Process. Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend the paper to Council subject to minor amendments. **5.6 Investments –** The Finance Officer reported that the Nationwide had restricted the WTC account and earmarked it for closure as it had not been used. WTC used the account to distribute funds and spread the risk. The Finance had completed their requested information forms and updated signatory details and advised that WTC did not wish to close the account and intend to re-invest in a 1-year fixed term bond. This was agreed. **5.7 Grant application from Citizens Advice –** Cllr Sheen had reviewed the Grant Application form and following discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council a grant of £1,500. **5.8 Grant application from The SupaJam Foundation' -** Cllr Sheen had reviewed the Grant Application form and following discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council that the applicant be asked to re-apply next year and provide evidence of supporting residents in Westerham & Crockham Hill. **5.9 Grant application from Darent River Preservation Society (DRIPS) –** Cllr Sheen had reviewed the Grant Application form and following discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council a grant of £250. **5.10 Grant application from Westerham Society –** Cllr Sheen had reviewed the Grant Application form and following discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council a grant of £500.	
6.	**<u>Governance</u>** **6.1 Gold Award -** The Action Plan had been updated and circulated. Following discussion it was agreed that Cllr Lord would make the final adjustments to the Strategic Business Plan and then the Plan would be ready to be placed on the website. Following discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Lord and Cllr Breminer would review and make suggestions to update the Community Engagement page on the website, The Finance Officer would update the KGF Redevelopment Plan for the website page. The Clerk reported that the Website Contractor could add a 'stop press' for under £100 and this was agreed. All actions further to be completed by the end of November with the Working Group reconvening at the beginning of December. **6.2 Action Plan for Strategic Business Plan –** The updated Plan had been circulated and the Action Plan was now ready to be placed on the website	JL/AH JL/IB DM AH

	along with those of the other Committees. **6.3 ECO Policy –** The updated Policy had been circulated. Following discussion, it was agreed to add a plan for the Russell House borders in partnership with the Open Spaces and Amenities Committee. **6.4 Risk Assessments -** The Clerk had circulated the list of FG&GP responsible risk assessments and confirmed that these had been reviewed by Cllr Sheen and the Clerk for the Health and Safety Committee to approve. Minor amendments had been made and these were approved. Following discussion, it was agreed to expand the section on key personnel in the Financial Risk Assessment. **Policies and Procedures to review/approve:** **6.4 Disclosure and Barring Policy –** The Policy had been circulated and following discussion and review it was approved with a minor amendment. **6.5 Grant Awarding Policy –** The current Policy had been circulated. Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend approval to Council.	AH AH/CBD
7.	<u>**General Purposes**</u> **Land Issues** **7.1 Doctors Surgery Lease –** The Surgery had still not received a response from the ICB – Integrated Care Board regarding the rent. **7.2 Churchill School Lease –** The potential Academy had still not received the Academy Order from the regions group and thus the conversion process could not move forward. It was hoped that this would be provided within the next couple of months. **7.3 KGF Footpath SR341 re-diversion –** The Clerk reported that on 1st July together with the Deputy Clerk a meeting took place with two KCC PROW Officers regarding the proposed extinguishment and creation of part of the footpath in KGF. A walk took place of the current and proposed path. The two Officers had no issues to raise with WTC with the new route. This would now go out to informal consultation for a period of 28 days. The Ramblers and local walking groups etc. would be consulted as well as KCC and SDC Cllrs. If there were no queries, then this would proceed to a formal consultation. The whole process should take about six months. If there were any comments these would be communicated to WTC and these might be able to be accommodated depending on what they were. There was a possibility that if there were objections to the formal consultation then the matter could go to a Planning Inspector, there was no cost to this just additional time for the hearing and WTC would be able to make representations. The cost to come out of Professional fees budget. Both Officers were very complimentary regarding the state of the field and all the facilities provided for the public. **7.4 Clerks Report –** The Clerk reported that there had been various issues with Russell House including a water leak however the stop cocks for the building were stuck and the outside stop cock could not be accessed. This had been reported to Thames Water for them to deal with. The Fire Alarm had gone off on a Saturday, Cllr Boyle and the Clerk had attended but nothing was found and following a check by the Contractor, no reason for this was found. Smart meters had been installed at the Groundsman's Hut, KGF Pavilion,	

	Crockham Hill pavilion and the public toilet. Work was ongoing to set up a suitable date for the meter to be installed at Russell House. The redundant electricity meter in the KGF pavilion had been decommissioned on 15th September. The Company that hosted the WTC domain .gov would cease to be a registrar on 31st December. This had now been transferred to WTC IT Contractor at an annual cost of £60. **Russell House** **7.5 Maintenance Plan –** The updated Maintenance Plan was noted. The Clerk reported that she had been in contact with SGN for a quote to replace the gas pipes across the RH car park. In the first instance an engineer was called out to assess the gas pressure and a report was provided that the pressure was within an acceptable range. SGN had now requested gas consumption figures so they could provide a quote to replace the pipes. Cllr Lord agreed to help the Clerk provide these figures. A quote had been obtained to connect the new pipes to the new meters adjacent to the building for £600 from the WTC Gas Boiler Contractor. **7.6 Alarm maintenance and monitoring quotes -** The Contractor who had maintained and arranged the monitoring of RH building alarm was retiring. The Clerk had requested two quotes; one had been received. Following discussion, it was agreed to obtain a second quote and delegate the decision to the Clerk for a contract up to £1,000, this sum to include any additional work needed to take over the alarms. **7.7 Small office paint and carpet quotes –** The Clerk had obtained a quote from the Contractor who painted the chamber of £550 to repair and paint the walls and ceiling. This work would take place over a weekend. Following discussion, this was agreed. The new carpet contractor in Westerham, had quoted £200 to lay the carpet using a free offcut. Following discussion, this was agreed. To enable this work to go ahead, the office would need to be cleared and several Cllrs volunteered agreed to help, the Clerk to coordinate a suitable date. **7.8 Lift repair quote -** The lift had broken down three times in the last few months. A quote had been circulated for £538.01 to replace the faulty switches and resolve the issue. Following discussion, this was agreed.	JL/AH
8.	<u>**Consultations**</u> **8.1 KCC Budget Consultation –** Cllr Sheen reported that she had sent the consultation to the Committee and received some responses. Cllr Sheen had then submitted the response and this had been circulated.	
9.	<u>**Correspondence**</u> None.	
10.	<u>**Reports from Councillors**</u> None.	
11.	<u>**TN16, Crockham Hill Village newsletter and Website**</u> None.	

12.	**<u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u>** None.	
13.	**<u>Further Matters for Consideration at the next meeting</u>** Draft budgets	
14.	**<u>Date of next meeting</u>** Monday 24th November 2025	
	Part 2 Pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (admission meetings) Act 1960. The Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the under mentioned item on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business concerned.	
15.	**<u>HR Minutes - 29th September 2025</u>** The minutes from the HR meeting on 29th September had been circulated and were approved.	
16.	**<u>Policies to approve: -</u>** **16.1 Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Policy-** The draft Policy had been circulated with a recommendation from the HR Committee, following discussion it was agreed to approve the Neonatal Care Policy. **16.2 Equality and Diversity Policy –** The draft Policy had been circulated with a recommendation from the HR Committee, following discussion it was agreed to include Neurodiversity to the list of characteristics in the Policy alongside the disability characteristic. **16.3 Dignity at Work Policy -** The draft Policy had been circulated with a recommendation from the HR Committee, following discussion it was agreed to approve the Dignity at Work Policy.	

The meeting was concluded at 9.30 pm.

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman