Yateley Town Council

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee on
Monday, 16 November 2026, 7pm at The Oak Room, Reading Road, Yateley

Present – Councillors (committee members):
Cllr Stuart Bailey (Chairman for this meeting)
Cllr Graham Cockarill
Cllr Alex Drage
Cllr Mark Higgins
Cllr Mark Vernon

Absent - Councillors (committee members)
Cllr Greg Easterbrook
Cllr Bob Harward

In attendance – Non-Committee Members, Public & Officers:
Julie Routley - Town Clerk

2226 Apologies for Absence

In the Chairman's absence, the meeting was chaired by Vice-Chairman, Cllr Bailey.
Apologies had been received from Cllrs Easterbrook and Harward.

2227 Declarations of Interests

No interests were declared.

2228 Minutes of the Last Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes and the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 19 October. The minutes were signed by the acting Chairman.

2229 Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

2230 Capital Projects and Budget Considerations 2027/28

Members reviewed the updated schedule of proposed capital expenditure projects for 2027/28.

During discussion, Members considered the proposal to install air source heat pumps at Town Council buildings. It was noted that the project estimate currently included the Darby Green Centre; however, as the future of the building remains under consideration and no decision has yet been made regarding longer-term plans for the site, Members agreed that the Darby Green Centre should be excluded from the project at this stage. The Committee therefore requested that the capital estimate for the air source heat pump project be revised to reflect works at the remaining Town Council buildings only.

Subject to this amendment, Members supported the ongoing refinement of the capital programme as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process

DRAFT

Chair …….

2231 Draft Budget 2027/2028

Members received the draft budget and detailed budget breakdown in advance of the meeting. It was noted that the Environment Committee had previously considered the budget on 28 September 2026 and that the draft budget would be subject to further review by the Finance & Policy Committee on 11 January 2027.

Members reviewed the draft budget and considered a number of budget lines in detail. In relation to the proposed installation of air source heat pumps at Town Council buildings, Members noted that the project would support the Council's environmental objectives by reducing reliance on traditional heating systems and may provide longer-term savings in energy costs. Members further noted that the systems would improve the comfort and usability of community buildings throughout the year by providing both heating and cooling, benefiting the wide range of community groups, organisations and residents who make use of the facilities.

Members also discussed the continuing demand for allotment provision within the town and considered whether additional allotment space could potentially be created at Darby Green Playing Fields. Following further investigation, it was confirmed that the site is registered common land and that the restrictions associated with this designation would prevent the land from being enclosed for allotment use, as unrestricted public access must be retained, making the location unsuitable for allotment provision.

Following discussion, Members requested further information to assist with the continued development of the draft budget, including:

- estimated costs associated with the 2027 local elections;
- information regarding the costs and operating arrangements for Town Council-owned street lighting; and
- a draft job description for the proposed new position.

The Committee noted the draft budget and requested that the additional information be provided for consideration as part of the ongoing budget-setting process.

The draft budget will be presented to Full Council on 18 January 2027 for final review and approval.

2232 Pond Improvement Works – Darby Green and Goose Green Ponds

Members considered a report regarding a programme of improvement works at Darby Green Pond and Goose Green Pond, to be funded through an external grant award of £9,000.

It was noted that the proposed works formed part of the Council's wider biodiversity objectives and included footbridge replacement, pond desilting, bank works, improvements to aid amphibian movement, vegetation management, habitat creation, planting, and the installation of new signage and seating.

Members noted that the programme was fully funded through external grant funding, with all expenditure to be recorded against a dedicated cost centre, and that any unspent balance would be required to be returned to the funder in accordance with the funding agreement.

Chair …….

It was **RESOLVED** that:

i) the receipt of £9,000 grant funding for pond improvement works at Darby Green Pond and Goose Green Pond be noted;

ii) expenditure of up to £9,000 (excluding VAT) on the programme of works be approved, such expenditure to be funded entirely from the grant award; and

iii) any balance unspent at 31 March 2027 be carried forward in an Earmarked Reserve.

2333 Financial Statements, Bank Reconciliation & Overdue Account

i) Members received the financial report, statements and overdue accounts for the period ending 30th September 2026 which were **NOTED**.

ii) Members received the projected outturn report based on data for the period ending 30th September 2026 which was **NOTED**.

iii) Cllr Easterbrook will sign off the bank reconciliations against the bank statements for October 2026 at the next available opportunity. The statements were **NOTED.**

2334 Council Policy Reviews

Members considered the proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which had been prepared to replace the Council's existing Equality Policy. It was noted that the policy was based on the latest model guidance produced by National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy be approved and adopted.

2335 Town Council Strategic Plan Monitoring

Members reviewed the Town Council Strategic Plan 2024-2028 (Operational Plan).
Members were pleased to note the positive progress made against a number of objectives since the previous review, with several objectives having improved from amber to green status. Members further noted that no objectives were currently assessed as red.
The Committee noted the progress update and ongoing monitoring of the Operational Plan.

2336 Information Items

i) Bus Shelter Grant: The Council has been awarded grant funding of £13,424 from Hampshire County Council to fully fund the purchase and installation of a replacement bus shelter. Once received, the funds will be transferred into the existing EMR 346 (Bus Shelters). The purchase and installation costs will be brought to a future meeting for approval.

ii) Budget Timetable The budget timetable for 2027/28 budget is as follows:

- Final draft review by Finance & Policy – 11th January
- Full Council approval – 18th January 2027

Date of next meeting: 11 January 2027, 7pm in the Oak Room, Council Offices, GU46 7RP

Meeting closed at 8.07pm

Chair …….