FILTON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Finance & Scrutiny Committee** held at 7:00PM on Tuesday, 9th December 2025 – Held at: Filton Town Council Conference Room, Elm Park Leisure Centre, Filton, Elm Park, BS34 7PS

PRESENT: Cllrs: D. Harris *(Chair)*, A. Bird, T Mewies *(Mayor)*, E.Adjeivi
IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Davies *(Town Clerk)*, Robert Hutton *(Deputy Clerk)* & Peach Jones *(Support Officer)*
APOLOGIES: J. Baverstock *(Vice Chair),* D. Boardman, B. Mead *(Deputy Mayor)*, A.Doyle.
NON-ATTENDANCE: S. Milestone

MEETING STARTED AT 7:10PM

01. EVACUATION PROCEDURES – Noted.

02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Noted: Cllrs Baverstock, Boardman, Mead & Doyle.

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

i.	To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda.	None.
ii.	To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any).	None.
ii.	To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate.	None.

04. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC
RESOLVED: No items were declared for exclusion to the press and public and with no public or press in attendance.

05. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2025:
RESOLVED: The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

06. MATTERS OF REPORT ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT OTHERWISE COVERED BY THE AGENDA
NOTED: No matters arising from the previous Minutes.

07. ACCOUNTS: INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO OCTOBER 2025
Councillors discussed the variances in figures and clarified finance headings which were set up by previous council administration.

RESOLVED: Committee members voted to approve the Income and Expenditure from October 2025 as presented.

08. ACCOUNTS: BANK RECONCILE TO OCTOBER 2025
The Town Clerk presented the bank accounts to reconcile from October and clarified that due to staff limitations, Filton Town Council are at least two months behind.

RESOLVED: Councillors voted to approve and reconcile all payments and account figures stated from October 2025 as presented on both account reports.

09. ACCOUNTS: PAYMENTS

Due to a technical error the payment report from October 2025 was not available to view during the meeting.

RESOLVED: Councillors voted to approve and reconcile all payments from October 2025.

10. TENDER UPDATE

NOTED: The Town Clerk provided an update on the ongoing tender process for the Long-Term Leisure Centre Operator contract. Members were informed of the legal considerations involved in developing a robust and future-proof agreement. The Committee noted that tenders received to date will be reviewed in January 2026.

11. PRECEPT AND BUDGET 2026-2027

RESOLVED: The Town Clerk invited councillors to raise any queries regarding the draft budget projections for 2026–2027. Members were advised that January 2026 will provide a final opportunity to refine and adjust figures ahead of the new financial year, and that South Gloucestershire Council requires timely submission of the Council's final precept request to ensure smooth processing.

The Town Clerk clarified that existing budget headings and nominal codes cannot be deleted for audit reasons, as financial records must be legally retained for at least seven years. It was therefore proposed to re-establish and restructure headings and nominal codes from 2026–2027 onwards to provide clearer monitoring of budgets, while still allowing meaningful comparison with historic data.

The Town Clerk then provided an overview of each section of the Budget Projection 2026–2029 (v9), after which questions were invited on a section-by-section basis.

Section 1 – Elm Park Leisure Centre PWLB and Parks & Open Spaces	
Councillor queries	**Town Clerk response**
Cllr Bird queried whether the £20,000 provision for the pump track was realistic, suggesting official costings be sought. She also questioned whether the £55,000 allocated for Plant & Machinery would be sufficient.	Confirmed that the plant allocation primarily accounts for replacement parts for the tree shredder, which will enable a free Christmas tree disposal service to residents in January.
Cllr Bird asked if local high street businesses had been consulted about participating in or supporting hanging basket schemes.	Confirmed consultations would begin in January 2026.
Cllr Bird raised concerns about the ongoing issue of bin storage behind high street businesses.	Advised that an update should be sought from Cllr Monk via South Gloucestershire Council.
Cllr Bird suggested exploring whether the Filton Community Centre could contribute toward car park works depending on the terms of their lease.	Noted no supporting documentation had yet been identified and further investigation is required.
Cllr Mewies questioned whether the sum allocated for the Elm Park Play Area reflected the true cost of replacing equipment - estimating a more realistic figure of £120,000-£150,000.	Clarified that the current figure relates only to repainting, and it was agreed this heading be amended to an Ear Marked Reserve (EMR) for future equipment replacement.

Cllr Mewies suggested the Bus Shelter Cleaning budget was too low.	Agreed to increase this budget line to £3,000.
Cllr Mewies expressed reservations about the proposed dog training area, questioning whether further fenced-off areas conflict with the park's multi-use nature.	Clarified the proposal relates to redeveloping the old pump track area, providing a safe, enclosed space for dog training.
Cllr Mewies advised that costs for full car park resurfacing would likely be significantly higher.	Confirmed the current figure is for maintenance only (line marking and pothole repair) and that the surface is expected to last another year.
Cllr Mewies also queried environmental considerations regarding future vehicle procurement.	Agreed that the Head Ranger would research environmentally responsible vehicle options, with a preference for British manufacturers where possible.
Cllr Boardman (in written submitted comments) queried the budget relating to the MUSP and pump track relocation.	Confirmed that current figures reflect available resources and that the project, including lighting, is expected to be costly and long-term.

Section 2 – Outreach and Community

The Town Clerk reported on recent engagement with Filton Hill School, noting a proposal for a "scrap hut/pot" facility that would allow the school to repurpose discarded or surplus materials for educational use. During the visit, it was observed that the surrounding road, boundary fencing, and elements of the school environment were in noticeable disrepair and created an uninviting appearance. To support general improvements - potentially including bollards, fencing, and road surface renewal - a provisional allocation of £18,000 was discussed, with an indicative overall investment of £40,000 to be considered for longer-term works.

The Town Clerk also summarised the Council Tax analysis report, highlighting projected impacts across the various tax bands as part of the wider precept discussion.

Members were advised that a meeting with Four Towns Transport had not yet been scheduled but that discussions are expected to take place in January 2026.

Cllr Mewies raised a concern regarding equitable support for local schools. With proposed funding identified for refresh projects at Shield Road School and Filton Hill School, it was noted that it may appear inconsistent if similar investment was not considered for Charborough Road School, particularly given recent community sensitivities surrounding development on the green space opposite the school.
- The Town Clerk confirmed that all three schools are eligible to apply for support through the Ear Marked Reserve (EMR) Grant process.

Cllr Mewies also expressed concern regarding future public toilet provision given the imminent closure of the Church Road shops, where Filton's only public facilities are currently located. Members discussed whether maintaining the facility would remain viable in terms of security and maintenance costs relative to usage.	The Town Clerk shared a conceptual proposal for a combined service arrangement, potentially involving Four Towns Transport, Filton Library, and possibly the Citizens Advice Bureau or South Gloucestershire Food Bank, with further exploration required to assess feasibility.

Section 3 – Executive Operations

The Town Clerk reported that a website refresh remains planned and discussions have taken place with the Council's website contractor to develop a more streamlined and interactive

user experience. This will include an automated system for publishing agendas and minutes through a secure Google Drive-based upload process, which is expected to improve efficiency and accuracy once implemented. Regarding the Office and Councillor IT Equipment Upgrade, the Town Clerk noted that legacy hardware inherited from previous staffing arrangements had not been routinely refreshed or maintained, resulting in outdated devices, slow performance, and insufficient storage capacity. This has increasingly hindered the operational demands of the current team, particularly given the expansion of project work and digital workload.	
Cllr Bird queried whether the Council currently purchases devices outright and suggested exploring alternative procurement models - such as a rolling technology contract that would allow equipment to be replaced or upgraded every two years. Ongoing issues with the conference camera in the main hall were noted, which have affected both livestreaming and Microsoft Teams accessibility during meetings.	The Town Clerk agreed that a rolling contract option may be advantageous and should be researched further. He also confirmed that the conference camera may require replacement if repairs are not viable, noting that it remains under warranty until May 2026.
Cllr Boardman queried whether continued investment under this budget heading was necessary, given that some councillors do not regularly use the digital tablets or equipment provided.	Presently, it cannot be assumed that all councillors have access to uniform software or consistently functioning devices. This is why printed agendas, minutes, and annexes are still routinely provided to ensure accessibility and visibility during meetings. He added that improvements anticipated from the website refresh should also support better digital engagement going forward.

Section 4 – Corporate Management	
The Town Clerk reminded members that committee members of Staffing Committee did not participate in voting on matters relating to staffing structure, including the proposed part-time Events Officer and Finance Officer roles. He emphasised, however, that these roles remain essential to delivering effective council operations, supporting the increasing volume of projects, and sustaining the enhanced service standards now expected by the community.	
Councillor queries	**Town Clerk response**
Cllr Mewies queried the -£12,700 adjustment shown under the Employee Services budget line.	The Town Clerk explained that this figure reflects expenditure that had not been incurred under the previous staffing arrangements, meaning this amount was never drawn from the budget during the past financial year. The revised projection therefore rebalances the heading to accurately reflect actual expenditure and future requirements.

Section 5 – Income
The Town Clerk explained that the rebate figures relating to the Leisure Centre arrangement are typically released in March, as the operator requires approximately one month to collate, reconcile, and invoice Filton Town Council. As a result, the Council may not receive confirmed figures until later in the financial cycle, and projections may need to be adjusted once the final rebate is known.

In relation to the Leisure Centre Agency Agreement, the Town Clerk highlighted that an alternative legal mechanism exists under which funds owed could instead be payable to HMRC. This represents a significant legal distinction with potentially serious implications. Further specialist legal advice would therefore be required before considering whether such a mechanism could be incorporated into the long-term leisure centre contract. If not adopted, the Council would need to identify £150,000 to fund the associated Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) commitment.

Councillor queries	Town Clerk response
Cllr Bird recommended obtaining a clearer estimate of the legal costs associated with this advice, preferably from a specialist tax consultant, and questioned whether the current budget allocation was sufficient - suggesting an amount closer to £20,000.	The Town Clerk agreed and confirmed that the budget within this heading can be increased accordingly.
Cllr Bird also queried whether indemnity insurance and associated risk assessments had been factored into the financial planning.	The Town Clerk undertook to raise these questions with the relevant advisers and report back to the Committee.

Section 6 – Capital and Project Expenditure
The Town Clerk informed Members that a meeting has been arranged for the following week with a representative from ALCA to hold a preliminary discussion regarding upcoming capital and project requirements. It was noted that an estimated £25,000 may be required before the start of the next financial year to ensure that essential preparatory work is in place ahead of the forthcoming Council elections.

Section 7 – Net Expenditure
The Town Clerk reported that the confirmed Council Tax Base (CTB) for the forthcoming financial year, as issued by South Gloucestershire Council on 9th December 2025, is £3,238. This updated CTB figure will be used to calculate the final precept requirement for 2026–2027. In reviewing the net expenditure position and the projected increase in the precept (shown in Annex D as 2.99% for each forecast year), the Town Clerk proposed that councillors consider an increase in the Filton Town Council element of Council Tax in the region of 2.99% to 3%, noting that this would align closely with the modelled assumptions used in the budget projection.
Cllr Mewies noted that while the Council has full discretion in setting its precept, any increase - particularly anything approaching 5% - would require strong justification to maintain public confidence and ensure transparency. It was emphasised that any rise should be accompanied by a clear explanation of the benefits delivered to residents and the financial pressures necessitating the adjustment.

Section 8 – Reserves
The Town Clerk advised that the Council will need to retain a minimum reserve level of approximately £150,000, as indicated within the budget projection model, to ensure financial stability and compliance with good practice *(Annex D shows a minimum reserve requirement of £260,400 for 2026–27 based on 25% of precept)* While reserves are projected to dip slightly in the forthcoming year, they are forecast to increase again in Year 2. The Town Clerk also noted that decisions regarding the future use of reserves will ultimately fall to the newly elected Council following the 2026 elections.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Members acknowledged that the draft budget presented is ambitious, reflecting both the volume of projects underway and the service improvements planned. Councillors were encouraged to remain attentive to emerging needs within the community as the budget progresses toward final approval.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Councillor queries</th><th>Town Clerk response</th></tr>
<tr><td>Cllr Bird queried the statutory timescale for submission of the precept.</td><td>The Town Clerk confirmed that South Gloucestershire Council has indicated a deadline of 26th January, although they generally accept precepts submitted by the end of January, and he would be prepared to negotiate a short extension if necessary.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cllr Harris expressed support for the budget as drafted and indicated willingness to propose its adoption.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cllr Bird stated she was broadly satisfied with the overall figures but suggested that some adjustments between budget headings may be beneficial.</td><td>The Town Clerk advised that moving £15,000 from reserves would not significantly affect the overall reserves position and may assist in strengthening particular budget areas. He emphasised the importance of avoiding the situation where the next Council inherits a weakened financial position, especially given the number of live projects.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cllr Mewies proposed identifying an additional amount of under £10,000 to help achieve a 3% increase in the Band D Council Tax figure.</td><td>The Town Clerk confirmed he can model variations in budget headings and produce alternative percentage adjustments for comparison.</td></tr>
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RESOLVED: Councillors agreed that the Town Clerk will prepare and present a set of variant budget models, including adjusted budget headings and precept scenarios, with the aim of achieving a 3% Band D Council Tax increase, for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

12. LESIURE OPERATOR BASE TRADING ACCOUNT (LOBTA)

NOTED: The Town Clerk went over figures for September 2025, (due to the two month delay in processing and billing period) reporting continued positive performance into the new year, with Elm Park Leisure Centre operated by Parkwood Leisure - showing an upward trajectory and achieving a surplus of approximately £10,000 for the period. It is anticipated that by January 2026 that this will be zero-cost.

The Deputy Clerk provided a brief update on operational considerations, including the need for replacement parts and potential renewal of gym equipment, following findings from the Sports Development Ranger's Gym Use Survey. It was further noted that, should Parkwood Leisure be appointed as the long-term leisure centre provider, they have already indicated a willingness to invest in replacing worn or outdated equipment.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - NOTED: Tuesday, 14th January 2026 at 7PM.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 9:10pm