FILTON
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of **FILTON TOWN COUNCIL'S – Extraordinary Full Council Meeting** held at 7:00PM on Tuesday, 21st April 2026 – Held at: Studio 1, Elm Park Leisure Centre, Filton, Elm Park, Bristol, BS34 7PS

PRESENT: Cllrs: T Mewies *(Chair & Mayor)*, B. Mead *(Deputy Mayor),* E. Adjeivi, A.Bird, D. Harris, J. Molloy, S. Milestone, J.Baverstock, A. Monk and A. Doyle.
IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Davies *(Town Clerk)*, Robert Hutton *(Deputy Clerk)*, Peach Jones *(Town Council Support Officer).*
APOLOGIES: Cllrs: None recorded.
NON-ATTENDANCE: B. Dewfall.

MEETING STARTED AT 7:08PM

1. **EVACUATION PROCEDURES - NOTED.**

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - NOTED:** No apologies for absence from councillors were received.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

4. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
RESOLVED: No declarations were raised to exclude any items from the press and public.

5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
RESOLVED: In the absence of members of the press, Council received questions from two members of the public. A question was raised regarding the audit report and future audit arrangements. The Town Clerk advised that the purpose of the meeting was to review the Internal Audit Report for the 2025/26 financial year, undertaken by South Gloucestershire Council. It was advised that the contract is planned to be renewed for Financial Year 2027/28. and that all matters identified within the Audit Report will be reviewed along with the Town Clerk's Update which contains responses to the key risk areas.

6. **IN YEAR ASSURANCE AUDIT REPORT**
Council received the In Year Assurance Internal Audit Report and considered the Town Clerk's response to matters raised within the report.

The Chair proposed that the Town Clerk first provide an overview of the report before councillors raised questions, in order to clarify key points prior to detailed discussion.

The Town Clerk advised that the internal audit represented a snapshot review of procedures and controls during the year rather than a fully holistic assessment and confirmed that the findings and recommendations contained within the report were accepted.

Debit Card Transactions & Financial Controls
Council considered the audit recommendations relating to debit card transactions and financial controls. The Town Clerk advised Members that a Purchase Card Transaction Log has been in operation since April 2025, having been introduced shortly after its development by the temporary Locum Clerk. It was confirmed that, at the time of audit, all relevant receipts were obtained and entered into the monthly logs, which have subsequently been signed off as approved by the Responsible Financial Officer (Town Clerk).

The Town Clerk further reported that the Purchase Card Transaction Log is embedded as a control measure to record and authorise expenditure for each use of the council debit card and that monthly payment reports will be presented to Council going forward to support transparency and any oversight. Members discussed the delegated spending limit associated with the Council debit card and it was agreed that this would be reviewed at the Annual General Meeting in June 2026. The Town Clerk confirmed that receipts relating to sampled transactions had been located and provided to the external auditors when requested.

Artificial Intelligence & IT Governance
Council considered the observations relating to the use of Artificial Intelligence software and its implications for IT governance. The Town Clerk confirmed that no personal or identifiable data had been uploaded to any AI platforms, as previously advised to the auditors in January.

Members noted that Microsoft Copilot is included within the Council’s existing Microsoft 365 package and referenced the emerging guidance from South Gloucestershire Council regarding the appropriate use of AI and data security. The Town Clerk further advised that reliance on external AI tools, such as ChatGPT, would be reduced, with a transition towards the use of Microsoft Copilot as the Council’s primary AI-supported solution going forward.

Councillor Monk left the meeting at 7:21pm

Earmarked Reserves
Members discussed the audit findings relating to earmarked reserves and historical accounting arrangements. The Town Clerk advised that a number of historic accounting practices pre-dated their appointment in October 2024 and referred Council to the reserves listed within the audit report, including EMR Leisure Centre Contingency, EMR Grants, EMR Festival, EMR 4 Towns Play Association, EMR Maintenance, EMR Community Fund, EMR Elections and EMR CIL 24/25.

It was noted that Council had previously agreed to abolish all earmarked reserves listed within the report, with the exception of EMR Elections and EMR CIL 24/25, as part of a wider review intended to improve clarity, transparency and financial reporting.

External Audit Report, AGAR Publication & Council Website
Council continued its consideration of the remaining matters identified within the Internal Audit Report, including those relating to the External Audit Report and AGAR publication and compliance in respect of the Council’s website. Members sought assurance that all required financial and governance documentation was being made publicly available in accordance with statutory transparency requirements.

The Town Clerk advised that the preparation of documentation requested by the auditors had required significant officer time, with all three members of the office team engaged for approximately two to three days. It was noted that, given limited staffing capacity, this process had been complex and resource intensive, with a consequential impact on service delivery.

Members expressed concern regarding website administration and the accessibility of information to the public. The Town Clerk acknowledged that some issues arose from legacy arrangements, whilst others related to current administrative pressures, including delays in uploading documents and challenges associated with managing the volume of material requiring publication.

Further discussion took place regarding delays in publishing annexes and supporting documentation alongside agendas and minutes. Members suggested that the introduction of a dedicated, content-focused role could assist in addressing these issues.

The Town Clerk acknowledged that the increasing volume of work and ongoing administrative demands would benefit from the introduction of a dedicated front-of-house and administrative support role, to assist with day-to-day responsibilities including resident enquiries, email management, telephony, and the preparation of minutes, with the potential establishment of such a role to be considered at a future staffing meeting. It was further confirmed that improvements to document accessibility, transparency, and compliance form part of the planned Filton Town Council website refresh programme, aimed at strengthening public access to information.

Leisure Centre Assets, Tender & Risk Register
Council discussed the section of the report relating to Elm Park Leisure Centre assets, tender arrangements and risk management. Concerns were raised regarding the ongoing financial pressures associated with the Leisure Centre following the collapse of the previous operator.

Councillor Monk returned to the meeting at 7:37pm

Cllr Monk referred to Elm Park Leisure Centre as both the Council's largest financial asset and liability and queried whether current tender arrangements and extensions should continue to be reported transparently to Council.

The Town Clerk expressed disappointment that the audit findings had not reflected the previously agreed three-month extension provision referenced within the minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on 6th October 2025 under Item 7, "Extension of Parkwood Leisure as Service Operator".

Cllr Monk commented on the operational and financial pressures associated with the Leisure Centre and proposed that financial risk reporting relating to the Leisure Centre be presented to Council on a quarterly basis rather than annually.

The Town Clerk advised that additional reporting requirements and compliance monitoring would likely need to form part of a future dedicated finance-focused role within the Council, noting that current staffing resources were operating under significant pressure in order to maintain service delivery and functionality. It was further noted that Council procedures and governance matters could often be complex and require significant time to review and interpret.

A concise annual snapshot-style risk report be presented to Council, summarising key risks identified within the Risk Register, in order to provide greater clarity and allow councillors to raise questions on emerging concerns year on year.

The Town Clerk acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the previous Locum Clerk during the preceding year, noting that the support provided had assisted Council in understanding the audit process and addressing several significant risks present at that time. It was further noted that elements of this work would form part of the proposed temporary specialist finance support role to be procured.

The Mayor queried when councillors were likely to receive documentation relating to the proposed Disclosed Agency Model intended to support financial recovery arrangements and risk mitigation in relation to the Leisure Centre provider.

The Town Clerk advised that an information pack had recently been received from suppliers and would require further review before a report could be presented to the next Finance & Scrutiny Committee Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 12th May 2026.

It was further noted that the Leisure Centre tender process was expected to commence within approximately two months and, if prioritised, could potentially be progressed by July 2026, otherwise likely later into the autumn period.

High Value Purchases - Failure to Obtain Quotes
Council discussed the recommendation relating to high value purchases and quotation procedures.

The Town Clerk advised that the matter had not been clearly reflected within the minutes at the time and clarified that three quotations had originally been sought regarding the Rialtas software packages, although only two suppliers had responded by November 2025.

Lettings & Pitch Hire
The Town Clerk acknowledged weaknesses in historic administrative procedures relating to lettings and pitch hire arrangements.

Councillors queried whether Council had formally approved the proposed booking system package.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the booking package had not received formal approval at the time the Rialtas recommendations were presented and advised that this matter had now been raised with the auditors and would be revisited following a six-month review period.

Asset Register
The Town Clerk acknowledged that the Council's Asset Register was outdated and advised that work had commenced on compiling a revised register, although progress had been delayed due to competing operational priorities and limited staffing resources.

It was proposed that Council undertake a comprehensive Asset Review to be brought to a future meeting.

Purchasing System & Invoices
The Town Clerk advised that the proposed temporary finance support role would assist with strengthening purchasing controls and invoice management procedures.

Investment Strategy
Council discussed the recommendation relating to the requirement for an Investment Strategy.

The Town Clerk suggested that a templated investment strategy be explored and advised that future investment arrangements would need to consider the Council's appetite for risk together with appropriate due diligence requirements, including consideration of CCLA-style investment arrangements.

Bank Reconciliations, Bank Statements & Accounts: Payment Approvals
The Town Clerk advised that bank statements themselves should not be publicly disclosed, but that Council sign-off and verification should continue to be formally recorded within meeting minutes.

It was further noted that signatories should review invoices and bank statements together to ensure transactions were properly authorised and recorded in line with best practice.

Data Protection Training
Council discussed the recommendations relating to Data Protection and Assertion 10 compliance.

The Town Clerk advised that a £1,000 training budget had been allocated and utilised to address compliance requirements. Members were informed that, during February 2026, the Council had identified that the necessary arrangements were not yet in place and had acted to appoint the Town Clerk as Data Protection Officer and complete the required training prior to receipt of the final audit report.

It was further noted that additional training opportunities remained available through National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Association of Local Councils (ALCA) for councillors and staff wishing to strengthen their knowledge and accreditation.

Specialist Audit & Finance Support
Members discussed the benefits of obtaining temporary specialist audit and finance support to assist councillors and officers in progressing the audit recommendations and improving financial oversight and understanding.

It was proposed by Cllr Doyle, seconded by Cllr Monk, that Council establish a temporary specialist support role, for an initial period of three months, to provide professional audit and finance assistance to support councillors and officers in addressing the audit findings, improving financial reporting processes and assisting Council in progressing outstanding audit actions and compliance requirements.

The Mayor noted the significance of the audit document and proposed that Council formally accept the Internal Audit Report and proceed with the actions discussed.

Members emphasised the importance of all Councillors thoroughly reviewing agenda papers, minutes and associated annexes in advance of meetings to ensure informed discussion and decision-making. It was noted that full engagement with supporting documentation is essential to the effective consideration of audit matters and the discharge of Members' governance responsibilities.

RESOLVED: That Council unanimously agreed to accept the In Year Assurance Audit Report, together with the Town Clerk's Update on the Internal Audit. Council further agreed to the establishment of a specialist governance and finance support role on a temporary basis for an initial three-month period, and endorsed the use of the report as a framework for identifying key milestones and objectives with detailed proposals and recommendations relevant to audit to be developed by the Finance & Scrutiny Committee and referred to Full Council for formal approval.

7. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FINANCIAL YEAR 2024 TO 2025
RESOLVED: Council received and noted the Notice of Conclusion of Audit together with the final External Auditor Report and Certificate for the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the financial year 2024/25. Council further resolved to accept both documents and approved the publication of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for public inspection, to be made available on the Council's website and displayed on Council noticeboards in accordance with statutory requirements.

8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS
NOTED: No other urgent business was declared.

9. DATE OF NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING
NOTED: Tuesday, 28th April 2026 at 7pm.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8:20PM