



Minutes of the **Finance & Scrutiny Committee** held at 7:00PM on Tuesday, 14th April 2026 – Held at: Filton Town Council Conference Room, Elm Park Leisure Centre, Filton, Elm Park, BS34 7PS

PRESENT: Cllrs D.Harris (*Chair*), J.Baverstock (*Vice Chair*), A. Bird and E.Adjeivi.

IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Davies (*Town Clerk*), Robert Hutton (*Deputy Clerk*), & Peach Jones (*Support Officer*).

APOLOGIES: Cllrs A.Doyle, B.Mead (*Deputy Mayor*), T.Mewies (*Mayor*) and S. Milestone.

NON-ATTENDANCE: None

MEETING STARTED AT 7:05PM

01. EVACUATION PROCEDURES – Noted.

02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Noted: Cllrs Doyle, Mead, Mewies & Milestone.

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

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| A. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda. | Personal Interest - Cllr Harris - Kraken Explorer. |
| B. To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any). | None. |
| C. To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate. | None. |

04. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: No items were declared for exclusion, with no public or press in attendance.

05. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10TH MARCH 2026

RESOLVED: The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record and duly signed by the Chair.

06. MATTERS OF REPORT ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT OTHERWISE COVERED BY THE AGENDA

NOTED: No matters were raised on this item.

07. ACCOUNTS: INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO FEBRUARY 2026

NOTED: The Income and Expenditure report for the period ending February 2026 was unavailable for presentation at the meeting, as the Council's accountants were unable to produce the report due to ongoing technical issues.

Members were advised that the matter is being addressed and that the report will be presented for consideration at the next meeting.

08. ACCOUNTS: DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO FEBRUARY 2026

NOTED: The Detailed Income and Expenditure report for the period ending February 2026 was unavailable for presentation at the meeting, as the Council's accountants were unable to produce the report due to ongoing technical issues.

Members were advised that the matter is being addressed and that the report will be presented for consideration at the next meeting.

09. ACCOUNTS: BANK RECONCILE TO MARCH 2026

NOTED: The Bank Reconciliation report for the period ending March 2026 was unavailable for presentation at the meeting, as the Council's accountants were unable to produce the report due to ongoing technical issues.

Members were advised that the matter is being addressed and that the report will be presented for consideration at the next meeting.

10. ACCOUNTS: PAYMENTS MARCH 2026

NOTED: The Payments report for March 2026 was unavailable for presentation at the meeting, as the Council's accountants were unable to produce the report due to ongoing technical issues.

Members were advised that the matter is being addressed and that the report will be presented for consideration at the next meeting.

11. LEISURE OPERATOR BASE TRADING ACCOUNT (LOBTA)

NOTED: Members were advised that the December 2025, January 2026, and February 2026 LOBTA reports have not yet been received. The delay is understood to relate to an outstanding utilities billing issue.

As a result, there was no rebate figure available for presentation at the meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed that the matter is being actively pursued with the relevant parties and that an update will be provided once the outstanding information has been received.

12. GRANT APPLICATION FROM FILTON BASED KRAKEN EXPLORER SCOUT UNIT

The Committee considered a grant application from the Kraken Explorer Scout Unit, a Filton-based Scout group providing activities and support for young people aged 14-18 years within the local area.

The Committee welcomed Dave Buchan, Lead Volunteer for the Unit, who attended the meeting to present the application and respond to Members' questions.

Members were advised that the Kraken Explorer Scout Unit is currently the only Scout provision for 14-18 year olds within the Filton area, supporting approximately 24 young people, the majority of whom are Filton residents. It was noted that many members have progressed from the 1st Filton Scout Group, with the Unit acting as the next stage in the local Scouting pathway.

The application outlined that the group operates on a limited budget, generating approximately £2,880 annual income from subscriptions, whilst covering fixed costs including rent, insurance, and membership fees. Members noted that the Unit had operated at a small financial loss during the 2025-2026 financial year due to financial hardship affecting some young members and equipment breakages, with the deficit personally covered by the Lead Volunteer.

Members further noted that the requested £500 grant would support a programme of activities between April and September 2026, including:

- Subsidising a group camp for young people
- Participation in activities with the Avon Scout Caving Unit

- Purchase of equipment to support members undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and
- Financial support for two young people experiencing hardship to ensure continued participation.

During discussion:

- Cllr Baverstock queried whether the Council could presently accommodate the number of grant requests being received. The Town Clerk confirmed that sufficient provision remains within the approved grants budget.
- It was also asked how Scout groups are generally structured financially. Dave explained that operational costs are largely self-funded and that the group's work is centred on youth development, volunteering, and positive community engagement.

Members recognised the value of the Unit's contribution in supporting young people, promoting positive behaviour, reducing anti-social behaviour, and providing opportunities for leadership and community involvement.

RESOLVED: The Committee approved a grant of £500 to the Kraken Explorer Scout Unit to support activities between April and September 2026. The motion was carried. Cllr Harris abstained from the vote due to a declared interest.

Dave Buchan left the meeting at 7:15pm

13. GRANT APPLICATION FROM FILTON CONCERT BRASS BAND

The Committee considered a grant application from Filton Concert Brass requesting financial support towards the purchase of additional percussion equipment and hearing protection measures for the band.

The Committee welcomed Andrew Jackson, Treasurer and representative of Filton Concert Brass, who attended the meeting to present the application and respond to Members' questions.

Members noted that Filton Concert Brass was established in the 1970s and has a long-standing history of performing both locally and nationally, including appearances at the British National Brass Band Championships at the Royal Albert Hall, the British Open Senior Trophy and being four-time Welsh Open Champions.

It was further noted that the band now rehearses at St Andrew's Methodist Church close to Elm Park and has strengthened its links with the Filton community through local performances, collaborations with choirs and community engagement events. Members were advised that the band had recently delivered a successful open rehearsal in partnership with Aerospace for a VE Day event and is continuing to encourage wider participation through regular open rehearsal sessions.

Andrew Jackson explained that the band had previously been unsuccessful in obtaining Council grant funding due to not sufficiently meeting the local connection criteria. However, the band can now demonstrate a stronger Filton connection, including rehearsing regularly within Filton and having members residing locally.

The Committee was advised that the band is currently expanding its percussion section and seeking funding support for:

- A new Tam Tam (gong), including stand, case and mallet, *and*
- Acoustic acrylic shields to improve hearing protection for band members positioned near percussion instruments.

Andrew Jackson explained that the acoustic shields were being sought as a proactive health and safety measure to help protect members from hearing damage and mitigate long-term risks associated with prolonged exposure to high sound levels.

During discussion:

- Cllr Harris queried whether the quotations obtained for the equipment represented good value for money. Andrew confirmed that the band had undertaken appropriate research and was satisfied that the proposed equipment offered suitable quality and value.
- Cllr Baverstock asked whether the band provides instruments to members. Andrew advised that some smaller instruments are owned personally by players, but that the band remains relatively asset-limited and is not yet in a position to provide a wider range of loan instruments to support developing musicians.

Members also discussed the importance of maintaining strong links between grant recipients and community events within Filton. It was noted with disappointment that Filton Concert Brass would be unable to perform at the Filton Festival 2026 due to prior commitments associated with the production *Brassed Off*. Councillors commented that, where possible, organisations supported through Council grants should continue to maintain a visible presence at key community events such as the Filton Festival.

Further discussion took place regarding opportunities for the band to continue engaging younger people through music and community participation initiatives.

Following discussion, Andrew Jackson left the meeting at 7:25pm during Committee Member deliberations and returned at 7:29pm following the conclusion of debate.

RESOLVED: The Committee approved the grant application from Filton Concert Brass, subject to the amendments and community engagement considerations discussed by Members.

Andrew Jackson left the meeting at 7:32pm

14. GRANT APPLICATION FROM SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARMED FORCES DAY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: The Committee considered a grant application from the South Gloucestershire Armed Forces Day Committee requesting £2,000 towards the delivery of the South Gloucestershire Armed Forces Day event.

As no representative from the organisation was able to attend the meeting, the Town Clerk presented the application on behalf of the Committee.

Members were advised that the annual event is organised to recognise, commemorate, and show gratitude to serving Armed Forces personnel, veterans, cadets, and the wider Armed Forces community, whilst also providing a free public event for residents across South Gloucestershire. The event is due to take place at Page Park, Staple Hill, and will include military displays, community stalls, live entertainment, pageantry, and family activities.

The application stated that the requested funding would contribute towards the provision of entertainment, including three live bands, a public flight simulator attraction, and other family entertainment activities.

The Town Clerk advised that, to his knowledge, the organisation does not receive an automatic grant from South Gloucestershire Council and is instead seeking contributions

from parish and town councils, grant funds, and other sources to meet the overall estimated event cost of approximately £11,000.

Members recognised the value of the event in supporting the Armed Forces community, promoting public engagement, and providing a free community event accessible to residents, including those from Filton.

RESOLVED: The Committee unanimously approved a grant of £2,000 to the South Gloucestershire Armed Forces Day Committee in support of the 2026 Armed Forces Day event.

15. IN YEAR ASSURANCE AUDIT REPORT

The Committee received the 2025/26 In Year Assurance Internal Audit Report together with the Town Clerk's accompanying response and action update.

The Town Clerk presented the findings of the Internal Audit and advised Members that, whilst the language of the report was necessarily direct in nature, he did not disagree with the majority of the observations raised by the auditors. Members were guided through the key findings, recommendations, and proposed actions identified within the report.

The Committee noted that the Internal Audit opinion was assessed as "Improvements Required", with key areas highlighted including financial controls, earmarked reserves, website transparency, procurement processes, leisure centre compliance documentation, and governance procedures.

Particular discussion took place regarding the management of Earmarked Reserves (EMRs). The Town Clerk advised that, aside from the Elections and CIL reserves, historical records explaining the purpose, operation, or movement of a number of legacy reserves could not be clearly identified. It was therefore considered necessary to restructure and clarify the Council's reserve arrangements moving forward. Members noted that future EMRs would be formally defined with stated purposes, clearer reporting arrangements, and publication on the Council website.

The Committee also discussed the recommendations relating to debit card controls, procurement procedures, website transparency, leisure centre compliance records, asset management, and data protection requirements under the new "Assertion 10" audit standards.

During discussion:

- **Cllr Baverstock** raised concerns regarding the ethical, environmental, and governance implications surrounding the use of Artificial Intelligence systems within local government operations, including considerations around energy consumption, data protection, and Freedom of Information compliance.

The Town Clerk advised that AI tools had primarily been used for communications, design work, draft documentation, and analysis functions where personal data was not involved, and confirmed that a formal policy aligned to the Council's IT Strategy would be investigated.

- **Cllr Bird** suggested that the matters raised within the audit were of sufficient importance to warrant an Extraordinary Full Council meeting in the following week, replacing the scheduled Assets & Open Spaces and Planning & Climate Committee meetings, in order to allow focused consideration of the audit findings and required actions.

Members agreed on the importance of giving careful scrutiny to the audit recommendations and ensuring a fuller understanding of matters being presented for approval in future.

The Town Clerk further advised that a significant number of governance and procedural changes had already been implemented since May 2025 following the leisure centre collapse and restructuring of Council operations, with additional improvements continuing to be developed to bring processes up to an appropriate standard. Members noted that several actions identified by the audit would require additional officer capacity and resources to implement fully.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Internal Audit Report and Town Clerk's response update, and recommend that the outstanding matters and associated action plan be brought forward to Full Council in April 2026 for further consideration and implementation planning.

16. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - FY 2024-2025

The Committee received the External Audit Report and Notice of Conclusion of Audit for the financial year ending 31st March 2025.

Members noted that the external audit had now been completed and that the statutory Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been published in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The External Auditor confirmed that, on the basis of their review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), the information presented was in accordance with proper practices and no matters giving cause for concern had been identified in relation to relevant legislation or regulatory requirements.

However, Members also noted that the External Auditor had highlighted a number of weaknesses identified through the Internal Audit process, particularly relating to governance, financial controls, reserve management, and the completion of the Annual Governance Statement.

During discussion, Cllr Baverstock proposed that both the In Year Assurance Audit Report and the External Audit Report be considered together at an Extraordinary Full Council Meeting to allow Members sufficient time to review the findings and associated recommendations in full.

The Town Clerk further advised Members that both audit items were already scheduled to be included for consideration at the forthcoming Full Council Meeting on the last Tuesday of April 2026. Members were advised that, should councillors wish to convene an Extraordinary Meeting specifically for these matters, this remained a decision for Council to determine.

RESOLVED: That an Extraordinary Full Council Meeting be arranged for Tuesday, 21st April 2026 at 7:00pm to consider both the Internal and External Audit Reports and the actions arising from them. The motion was carried unanimously.

17. STATEMENT OF COUNCIL RESERVES

The Committee received and considered the Statement of Filton Town Council Reserves as at 1st April 2026.

The Town Clerk presented the report, outlining the Council's current reserve position, including:

- **Statutory Reserve:** £244,632
- **General Reserve:** £105,185

- **Earmarked Reserves (EMRs):**
 - Elections: £12,838
 - CIL 2024/25: £23,006
- **Restricted Reserves:**
 - Greening the High Street: £3,200
 - High Street Fund: £5,000
 - Christmas Fund: £3,200

giving a total reserve balance of £397,061.

Members also noted the breakdown of funds currently held across the Council's accounts and investments, including holdings with CCLA Bonds, Unity Trust Bank, and NatWest Bank.

The Town Clerk further advised Members of proposals previously discussed by the Finance and Scrutiny Committee for the creation of several new Earmarked Reserves for 2026/27, including funds relating to sports development, play areas, Christmas lights, education and play equipment, skatepark refurbishment, elections, and community grants.

It was noted that future EMRs would require formal resolution by the Committee together with a clear statement outlining the intended use and drawdown arrangements for each reserve, with all reserve statements to be published on the Council website in the interests of transparency.

RESOLVED: The Committee approved the Statement of Council Reserves as presented and agreed that the document be published on the Council's website for public information and transparency purposes.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - NOTED: Tuesday, 12th May 2026 at 7PM.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7:59pm