FILTON
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Finance & Scrutiny Committee** held at 7:00PM on Tuesday, 9th June 2026 – Held at: Filton Town Council Conference Room, Elm Park Leisure Centre, Filton, Elm Park, BS34 7PS

PRESENT: Cllrs D.Harris *(Chair)*, T.Mewies (Mayor), B. Mead (Deputy Mayor) M. Elmorssy.
IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Davies *(Town Clerk)*, Robert Hutton *(Deputy Clerk)*, & Peach Jones *(Support Officer).*
APOLOGIES: Cllrs A. Bird and A. Doyle.
NON-ATTENDANCE: None

MEETING STARTED AT 7:05PM

01. EVACUATION PROCEDURES – Noted.

02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Noted: Cllrs Bird and Doyle, together with Benjamin Roberts (Finance & Governance Officer).

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

A. To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda.	Simon Davies (Town Clerk) with Councillors Mewies, Mead, and Harris, declared personal interests in relation to Item 21.
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: That no items on the agenda required the exclusion of the press and public.

05. ELECTION FOR CHAIR OF COMMITTEE
RESOLVED: That Councillor Mckenzie Elmorssy be elected Chair of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee.

06. ELECTION FOR DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE
RESOLVED: That Councillor Brian Mead be elected Deputy Chair of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee.

07. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2026
RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th May 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to an amendment to councillor attendance and duly signed by the Chair.

08. MATTERS OF REPORT ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT OTHERWISE COVERED BY THE AGENDA
NOTED: No matters arising from the previous minutes were raised under this item.

09. FINANCIAL SERVICES PROVISION

In the absence of the Finance & Governance Officer, the Town Clerk provided councillors with an update regarding the ongoing review of financial service provision arrangements for Filton Town Council.

The Town Clerk advised that significant work had been undertaken to review the current delivery of finance services across the Council, including consideration of future staffing capacity, the effectiveness of existing financial processes, and the potential benefits of bringing additional financial services and expertise in-house. Members were informed that the review forms part of a wider programme of financial improvement and governance strengthening currently being undertaken by the Council.

Reference was made to the work currently underway to improve financial reporting, budgeting oversight, audit readiness, and long-term financial resilience, together with reducing reliance on external accounting support where appropriate. It was noted that these improvements were intended to support clearer financial accountability, improved operational efficiency, and strengthened governance arrangements moving forward.

The Town Clerk further updated councillors on ongoing discussions relating to the proposed Disclosed Agency Model for leisure centre operations. Members were advised that, subject to further professional and financial review, the model could potentially provide financial efficiencies through revised VAT arrangements relating to leisure service provision. It was explained that under such arrangements the Council may be able to improve the recovery of VAT associated with leisure operations, subject to compliance with HMRC requirements and the appropriate contractual and governance structures being established.

A brief overview of the proposed model and the wider financial considerations associated with the project was reiterated to members. The Town Clerk stressed that detailed financial scrutiny and verification of the figures would still be required before any formal recommendations could be made to Full Council.

Members were informed that a meeting of the previously established working group had been arranged for Wednesday, 10th June 2026 at 7pm to consider the Disclosed Agency Model of Leisure Delivery Report provided by PWC in further detail. It was confirmed that the findings and recommendations of the working group would subsequently be reported back to Full Council to allow members to fully consider the proposal and make an informed decision regarding future arrangements.

NOTED: The update was received and noted.

10. ACCOUNTS: DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO MARCH 2026

Members were advised that the Income and Expenditure Report for March 2026, had not yet been finalised and therefore was unavailable for presentation at the meeting.

The Town Clerk informed councillors that work on the year-end accounts remained ongoing following the cessation of communication from DCK Accounting. It was noted that the recently appointed Finance & Governance Officer had been working alongside Rialtas support services to progress the reconciliation and review of the Council’s financial records, including bringing the accounts up to date, reviewing historical entries, and assisting with the completion of outstanding end-of-year accounting processes. Members were also advised that ongoing audit requirements and supporting evidence requests had created additional workload and time pressures in relation to completing the accounts.

RESOLVED: It was confirmed that the completed March 2026 Income and Expenditure Report would be presented to the next meeting of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee for member consideration and approval.

11. ACCOUNTS: INCOME AND EXPENDITURE APRIL AND MAY 2026

Members were advised that the Income and Expenditure Reports for April and May 2026 had not yet been completed and therefore were unavailable for presentation at the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised that this remained part of the ongoing financial catch-up and restructuring work referenced under the previous agenda item, including the completion of year-end accounts, implementation of revised budget headings, and reconciliation work currently being undertaken with support from the Finance & Governance Officer and Rialtas following the cessation of communication from DCK Accounting.

RESOLVED: It was confirmed that the reports would be presented to the next meeting of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee for review and approval.

12. ACCOUNTS: BANK RECONCILE TO MARCH 2026, APPROVE PAYMENTS REPORT AND TO SIGN BANK STATEMENTS

The Town Clerk presented the Bank Reconciliation to March 2026 together with the accompanying bank statements for member review.

A statement of the reconciled account balances were presented:

Unity Trust Bank Reconciliation Summary – March 2026				
Bank Account	**Statement Balance (£)**	**Unpresented Payments (£)**	**Unpresented Receipts (£)**	**Cashbook Balance**
Unity Trust Current Account	£ 123,278.88	£ 0.00	£ 0.00	£ 123,278.88

Natwest Bank Reconciliation Summary – March 2026				
Bank Account	**Statement Balance (£)**	**Unpresented Payments (£)**	**Unpresented Receipts (£)**	**Cashbook Balance**
NatWest Imprest Account	£ 100.00	£ 0.00	£0.00	£ 100.00
NatWest Business Account	£ 19,772.43	£ 93.81	£0.00	£ 19,678.62
Total NatWest Accounts	**£ 19,872.43**	**£ 93.81**	**£0.00**	**£ 19,778.62**

Total Reconciled Council Funds – March 2026	
Account Group	**Cashbook Balance (£)**
Unity Trust Current Account	£ 123,278.88
NatWest Accounts	£ 19,778.62
Total Council Funds	**£ 143,057.50**

Members were advised that the NatWest reconciliation included two unpresented purchase card transactions dated 31st March 2026, both relating to Tesco Express (Filton), totalling £93.81.
The Unity Trust Bank reconciliation showed no unpresented payments or receipts outstanding at the reconciliation date.
Supporting documentation was made available for sign-off by the Chair and a further councillor, following confirmation that the figures contained within the reconciliation statements corresponded with the bank statements presented.

RESOLVED: That the Bank Reconciliations to March 2026 for both the NatWest and Unity Trust accounts be approved, and that the associated bank statements be signed accordingly.

13. PAYMENTS TO BE AUTHORISED BY DEPUTY CLERK

Members received the schedule of payments and supporting invoice documentation presented.

It was noted that, in order to assist with clearing a backlog of invoices, payments were being loaded by the Town Clerk and co-authorised by the Deputy Clerk in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. Councillors were advised that the payments presented had been reviewed by Robert Hutton, Deputy Clerk, and marked as cleared for Council approval.

Payments Report – Unity Trust Bank Account - March 2026	
Supplier / Payee	**Amount (£)**
Society of Local Council Clerks	£ 40.00
Rubicon Play Ltd	£ 1,177.20
Aitkens Sportsturf Ltd	£ 2,775.60
Chandlers (Farm Equipment) Ltd	£ 992.69
Chandlers (Farm Equipment) Ltd	£ 113.43
Chew Valley Trees Ltd	£ 117.79
DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd	£ 698.31
Everflow Ltd	£ 93.57
Filton Voice Ltd	£ 540.00
Liam Holden	£ 1,024.63
IT Resource Management Ltd	£ 109.44
IT Resource Management Ltd	£ 927.49
IT Resource Management Ltd	£ 51.00
IT Resource Management Ltd	£ 156.00
Microshade Business Consultant	£ 143.51
Microshade Business Consultant	£ 185.81
Monsoon Marketing Ltd	£ 513.84
Monsoon Marketing Ltd	£ 156.06
Monsoon Marketing Ltd	£ 410.95
South Gloucestershire Council	£ 46.80
South Gloucestershire Council	£ 221.40
South Gloucestershire Council	£ 104.28
Travis Perkins Trading Co Ltd	£ 200.43
Tadman Planning Consultancy Ltd	£ 600.00
YZDesigns	£ 192.00
FACE	£ 30.00
Total Payments Presented	**£ 11,822.23**

Urgent Invoices Presented	
Supplier	**Amount (£)**
Zurich Employer and Buildings Insurance	£ 13,785.72
Zurich Vehicle Insurance	£ 464.76
Total Urgent Invoices	**£ 14,250.48**

During discussion, the Mayor raised a query regarding the Council's financial position following receipt of the first precept instalment, together with the movement of approximately £134,000 relating to PWLB funds back into reserves during March. Officers referred members to the supporting documentation contained, and it was confirmed that the matter had been reviewed and satisfactorily addressed.

RESOLVED: The schedule of payments and supporting paperwork were received and approved.

14. ACCOUNTS: DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS FOR MAY 2026

The debit card payments report for May 2026 was presented to councillors for review, together with the supporting Purchase Card Transaction Log and the draft Debit Card Finance Report.

Debit Card Payments Report – May 2026			
Date	**Supplier**	**Description**	**Gross Amount (£)**
05/05/2026	Indeed	Job advertisement	£ 202.09
07/05/2026	Post Office	Delivery cost	£ 13.15
07/05/2026	Post Office	Delivery cost	£ 13.15
07/05/2026	Tesco	Fuel	£ 78.34
07/05/2026	Tesco	Fuel	£ 18.61
11/05/2026	Adobe	AI Assistant	£ 4.98
11/05/2026	Adobe	Subscription	£ 19.97
12/05/2026	Amazon	A4 printing paper refund	- £ 42.88
13/05/2026	Amazon	Phone case	£ 8.21
13/05/2026	Tesco	Fuel	£ 42.97
14/05/2026	Amazon	Refund - outdoor goods	- £ 6.49
14/05/2026	SP Flags	World Cup bunting	£ 71.82
14/05/2026	Amazon	Sun cream	£ 6.67
15/05/2026	Tesco	Fuel	£ 77.43
15/05/2026	Amazon	A4 printing paper	£ 43.72
20/05/2026	SLCC Enterprise	GDPR e-course	£ 46.20
20/05/2026	Costco	Food	£ 77.45
20/05/2026	Amazon	Tablet case	£ 12.73
22/05/2026	Tesco	Fuel	£ 86.83
28/05/2026	Amazon	Hot melt tape	£ 20.83
29/05/2026	Tesco	Fuel	£ 81.98
Total Debit Card Payments:			**£ 864.61**

Service Area Monitoring Summary – May 2026	
Service Area	**Gross Spend (£)**
Corporate Services	£ 308.17
Leisure Centre	£ 149.27
Parks and Recreation	£ 407.17
Total	**£ 864.61**

During consideration of the report, councillors queried the purpose of the purchase of hot melt tape. In response, members were advised that this had been obtained for use by the Open Spaces Team in undertaking minor remedial works to outdoor play equipment. In this context, councillors also discussed the importance of managing operational risks associated with the ongoing maintenance and safe use of the play areas.

Councillors further queried whether expenditure made using the debit card could be under-reported, particularly in light of previous audit observations regarding financial controls and purchase card monitoring. It was confirmed that the purchase card is held securely at all times by the Responsible Finance Officer and may only be accessed upon request, subject to the intended use being disclosed and approved in advance.

It was noted that, although the Council would seek to reduce reliance on the debit card over time where practical, its use remained beneficial in certain circumstances as an alternative payment method. Members acknowledged that the card had, on occasion, enabled officers and the Open Spaces Team to obtain essential supplies, secure assets, support project delivery, and arrange training more efficiently.

The draft Debit Card Finance Report, prepared by the Finance & Governance Officer, was also presented as a more detailed monitoring tool for card expenditure. Members noted that this enhanced level of reporting may prove beneficial in future for both financial scrutiny and audit assurance.

RESOLVED: That the debit card payments for May 2026 be acknowledged and approved.

15. FILTON HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL SCRAPSTORE PLAY POD

Councillors considered a proposal to approve a grant to Filton Hill Primary School for the purchase of a Scrapstore PlayPod, to be funded as a Section 137 grant from the Council's allocated Education and Play Grant (EMR) budget line. The Headteacher, Kelly Dicks, had submitted a request for funding to support improved play provision for pupils during breaktimes, lunchtimes, lessons, after-school activities, and wider school community events. The quoted cost for the large Scrapstore PlayPod programme was £18,394.82 exclusive of VAT.

Councillor Harris introduced the item, noting that the proposal had arisen following ongoing correspondence with the school regarding possible grant support for a secure Scrapstore PlayPod. Members were advised that the project was intended to provide a valuable play and learning resource for pupils and was expected to deliver wider benefits for the local community. The programme outlined within the school's request included the PlayPod structure itself, initial stock, training for up to 15 staff, children's introduction sessions, parent and staff engagement sessions, four scrap top-ups during the first year, and Children's Scrapstore membership.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the relevant budget provision within the Council's Budget Projection, which identified £30,000 for the Education and Play Grant (EMR), with the note that this was to be supported by a 50% draw from reserves in Year 1 and precept in Year 2. Members noted that the proposed grant award could therefore be met from the existing allocation, while still leaving capacity within the budget for possible future support to other schools.

During discussion, the Mayor welcomed the proposal and expressed general support for the project, noting the wider educational, developmental, and community benefits that such provision could bring. Members also discussed the possibility of considering similar support for other local schools over a longer-term period, subject to future budget availability. It was further noted that, given the nature of the expenditure, the grant should appropriately be awarded as a Section 137 grant.

Councillors agreed that the PlayPod would represent a well-used and beneficial asset for the children and the school, and noted the evidence within the application that similar facilities had been successfully implemented elsewhere.

RESOLVED: That a Section 137 grant be awarded to Filton Hill Primary School from the Council's Education and Play Grant (EMR) budget line to support the purchase of a Scrapstore PlayPod, in the sum of £18,394.82 exclusive of VAT.

16. MODESHIFT: GRANT FOR BIKE-ABILITY FUNDING

Councillors considered a grant application from Shields Road Primary School to support the delivery of Bikeability training for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. It was noted that South Gloucestershire Council may only be able to provide funding for children eligible under the Pupil Premium scheme, and that the school had therefore requested grant support from Filton Town Council. The maximum grant requested was £319, with the expectation that, should Pupil

Premium funding be confirmed, the actual draw-down required from the Council may reduce to £231.

In the absence of Councillor Doyle, who had intended to lead on this item, the Town Clerk presented the report to members. Councillors were advised that the Council's broader objective was to support all schools in Filton to progress through the Modeshift accreditation process, with Filton Hill Primary School currently being the main focus for improvement. It was noted that Charborough Road Primary School and Shields Road Primary School were already working towards, or had achieved, a good standard within the scheme, with Charborough Road Primary School expected to receive a particularly positive assessment.

Members were reminded that the Bikeability scheme is intended to teach children how to ride safely and confidently, particularly in relation to travelling to and from school. Councillors further noted that the Modeshift process was comparable in principle to an Ofsted-style assessment, and that Filton Hill Primary School had only become aware of the accreditation scheme following Filton Town Council's introduction of the initiative. It was reported that Filton Hill Primary School was now aiming to achieve accreditation by the end of December 2026. Members also noted the Council's aspiration for Filton to become the first town in South Gloucestershire to secure area-wide accreditation at a basic level under the scheme.

The Mayor expressed support for the proposal and suggested that the Council approve grant funding of up to £319, with only the amount actually required by the school to be drawn down in support of the Bikeability programme.

RESOLVED: That a grant of up to £319 be approved for Shields Road Primary School to support Bikeability training, with the school to draw down only the amount required following confirmation of any available Pupil Premium funding.

17. IN YEAR ASSURANCE AUDIT REPORT - UPDATE

NOTED: Members received an update on the Internal Audit Report and the associated action plan from the Town Clerk and Finance & Governance Officer. The report set out the Council's progress in preparing for the 2025/26 year-end internal audit, which had been scheduled for 15th June 2026.

Councillors were advised that progress since the previous update had been positive. The report confirmed that the 2025/26 year-end accounting statements had now been completed and that the Council had received the Accounting Statements together with AGAR Sections 1 and 2, placing the Council in a position to submit its full audit evidence pack to Internal Audit.

It was noted that a number of items had already been completed and remained unchanged since the earlier pre-audit stage, including monthly bank reconciliations reported to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee, quarterly VAT returns, confirmation of the Council's loan position of £4.2 million outstanding with £150,000 repaid bi-annually, and the preparation of supporting documentation in relation to grants totalling £7,690, debtors, and creditors.

Members were further advised that some matters remained outstanding or subject to final confirmation, most notably the HMRC EPS documentation, of which the council await confirmation from South Gloucestershire Council Payroll, together with any final supporting papers required for completion of the audit evidence pack. The Town Clerk reported that no further correspondence had yet been received from the Internal Auditor. However, it was anticipated that a further update may be received on Monday, 15th June 2026, following the scheduled audit date.

During discussion, it was reiterated that there remained legacy balances within the accounts that had previously been difficult to attribute with certainty due to the absence of sufficient supporting paperwork confirming their original purpose. Members noted that this continued to be one of the key areas requiring clarification as part of the wider financial review and audit process.

18. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) AND END OF YEAR REPORT

Councillors received the draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 and the accompanying End of Year Report. The Town Clerk explained that the Council is required to prepare and approve the AGAR annually in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, with Sections 1 and 2 requiring approval and publication before 1st July 2026, and submission to the external auditor by 30th June 2026.

Members were advised that the draft Accounting Statements set out the Council's year-end financial position as follows:

Accounting Statement	31st March 2026 (£)
Balances brought forward	£ 695,598
Precept	£ 978,523
Other receipts	£ 183,302
Staff costs	£ 341,625
Loan interest / capital repayments	£ 299,484
All other payments	£ 1,016,893
Balances carried forward	£ 199,421
Total cash and short-term investments	£ 422,716
Total fixed assets and long-term assets	£ 7,425,327
Total borrowings	£ 4,091,270

The Town Clerk advised that, if recommended by the Committee, the draft AGAR and End of Year Report would be referred to Full Council for formal approval and the completion of the necessary signatures, subject to a final review by the Internal Auditor.

During discussion, the Chair queried the significant increase shown under "All other payments". In response, the Town Clerk explained that this increase was primarily attributable to costs incurred by the Council in order to support the Leisure Centre following the liquidation of the previous operator, including the settlement of outstanding obligations and related expenditure necessary to maintain continuity of provision.

RESOLVED: That the draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 and End of Year Report be recommended to Full Council for approval.

19. PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD (PWLB) APPLICATION

Councillors considered a proposal to recommend to Full Council that Filton Town Council apply for a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan of £500,000 to support delivery of the Conygre Regeneration Project. Members noted that the quote presented had been produced on 29th May 2026 and related to fixed-rate loan repayment options offered through the UK Debt Management Office's PWLB facility.

The Town Clerk explained that the PWLB is a government-backed lending facility available to eligible public bodies, including local councils, and is used to support capital expenditure over longer periods of time. Members were advised on the relevant legal and procedural requirements associated with a PWLB application, including the need for Full Council approval and the importance of ensuring that any borrowing remains both prudent and affordable.

Councillors noted that the Conygre Regeneration Project outline had already been considered by Avon Local Councils' Association (ALCA) as part of the preliminary application process for borrowing below the relevant threshold, and that no separate public consultation was required in this instance. It was further noted that provision for loan repayments had been addressed as part of the Council's budget-setting process in January 2026, with an annual budget allocation of £30,000, together with the potential use of additional funding previously held within the now-defunct Special Expenses budget.

The Town Clerk advised that the loan could, if approved, be drawn down in stages, with repayments commencing approximately one month after each draw-down. Members were also informed that if the approved loan was not drawn down within one year, a formal explanation would be required.

Councillors considered the repayment options shown within the PWLB quotation. In particular, members discussed the annuity option for a period of over 20 years but not over 20½ years, quoted at 6.01%, with a half-yearly repayment of £21,373.79 and a total repayment cost of £876,325.39. Members also considered the comparable Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) option, quoted at 5.88%, with an initial half-yearly repayment of £26,895.12, reducing by £358.54 each half-year, and a total repayment cost of £808,700.00.

During discussion, councillors considered the affordability of the various options and the potential impact on future council tax levels. It was noted that an earlier estimated figure of £12,000 had not fully reflected the long-term interest costs over the life of the loan. The Town Clerk clarified that this did not present an immediate affordability issue, but rather highlighted the importance of members determining their level of willingness to proceed with borrowing at the proposed amount and repayment profile.

Reference was also made to the wider case for investment in the Conygre area, including deprivation data previously circulated to members, which councillors felt demonstrated the need for targeted regeneration and improvement of local play and community infrastructure. It was noted, however, that any report circulated publicly would require appropriate redaction before publication where third-party area data had been included in error.

The Mayor raised a query regarding the long-term affordability of the EIP repayment option, and it was agreed that a further report should be prepared by the Town Clerk for Full Council setting out the differences between the available repayment methods in greater detail, in order to assist members in making a fully informed decision.

Councillor Harris expressed the view that the deprivation data for the Conygre area highlighted the importance of the project and stated that this represented a significant opportunity to improve that part of Filton for the long term.

It was further noted that delay in progressing the matter could place the project timetable at risk, particularly given the need to commence the tender process by the end of July 2026, the intention to achieve delivery on site before the end of the year, and the possibility that pre-election restrictions (purdah) and the winter holiday period could further affect delivery timescales.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommend to Full Council that Filton Town Council proceed with the application for a PWLB loan of £500,000 for the Conygre Regeneration Project, and that the Town Clerk provide a further report to Full Council setting out the differences between the available repayment options for member consideration.

20. FUND A REQUEST FOR A 'HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT'

Councillors considered a proposal to allocate £5,000 towards a Highway Improvement Request to be submitted to South Gloucestershire Council, with funding to be drawn from the Special Expenses budget, which was not expected to be utilised in the current financial year. Members

noted that the request would be progressed through the established Bus Gate Working Group, with the Town Clerk to complete and submit the required application form if approved.
The Town Clerk advised that the Council had received a Special Expenses Grant budget allocation of £35,000 from South Gloucestershire Council, and that, due to technical issues, this had not been consolidated into the Council's wider financial arrangements as originally expected. It was therefore noted that there remained potential to utilise part of this funding by reallocating it to support an alternative qualifying budget area, including the proposed highway improvement request.

Members were advised that South Gloucestershire Council's application procedure requires any Highway Improvement Request to be supported by the relevant local ward councillor(s) before it can be accepted for assessment. The application form specifically states that requests will only be accepted where the proposal has first been discussed with the local ward councillor(s), that evidence of their support must be provided, and that the supporting councillor(s) must be copied into the submission.

It was therefore noted that, if approved, the completed request form would need to be forwarded to the relevant Filton Ward South Gloucestershire Councillors for their support prior to submission to South Gloucestershire Council's Transport Services team.

RESOLVED: That £5,000 be allocated from the Special Expenses budget to fund a Highway Improvement Request and that the Town Clerk complete and submit the application through the Bus Gate Working Group, subject to the support of the relevant South Gloucestershire councillors being obtained in advance of submission.

21. TO SIGN THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT AND APPLY FOR THE 'DEFENCE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME' BRONZE AWARD

Councillors considered a request for Filton Town Council to sign the Armed Forces Covenant ahead of Armed Forces Day 2026, which will take place on Saturday, 27th June 2026, together with a proposal that the Council also apply for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award. Members noted that the Covenant is a public commitment to support the Armed Forces community, including Serving Personnel, Reservists, Veterans and military families, and to uphold the principle that no member of that community should face disadvantage compared with other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.

It was noted that South Gloucestershire Council had encouraged local councils to consider signing the Covenant in advance of Armed Forces Day. Members were advised that, whilst the Armed Forces Covenant legal duty applies to certain specified public bodies in areas such as healthcare, education and housing, signing the Covenant itself is also open to other organisations, including councils, businesses and charities, as a voluntary public pledge of support.

Councillors noted that the Covenant template provided commits the organisation to recognising the value that Regulars, Reservists, Veterans and military families bring to the organisation and to the country and to demonstrate that commitment through practical measures such as fair recruitment practices, support for Reservists, support for military spouses and partners, participation in national events and wider promotion of the Armed Forces community.

Members also considered the criteria for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award, which require an organisation to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, registered its interest for a Bronze Award, confirmed its understanding of the Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme with the appointed Defence Relationship Manager and informed its workforce of its positive support for the Armed Forces community. It was further noted that desirable measures include developing an HR framework to support Reserve mobilisation, considering additional leave for Reservists, promoting support for the Cadet movement and ensuring that members of the Armed Forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged in recruitment and selection processes.

Councillors agreed that the Council should demonstrate its support for the Armed Forces community by signing the Covenant and progressing the Bronze Award application. It was further agreed that the Town Clerk should make any necessary amendments to relevant Council policies and procedures in order to reflect the commitments arising from the Covenant and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, with any staffing-related implications to be reported back to the Staffing Committee if required.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommend to Full Council that Filton Town Council sign the Armed Forces Covenant and apply for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award and that the Town Clerk be authorised to make the necessary adjustments to relevant Council policies in order to support implementation.

22. SPECIAL EXPENSES CONSULTATION

Councillors considered the consultation issued by South Gloucestershire Council in relation to the proposed Special Expenses Policy, together with the supporting briefing pack, cost breakdown for Filton and the accompanying map of areas currently highlighted within the special expenses arrangements. Members noted that the consultation sought feedback on the summary proposals set out on pages 17 and 18 of the briefing pack, including the proposed treatment of closed churchyards, bus shelters and other parish-level services such as open spaces, play areas, playing fields, allotments and acquired housing land.

Members noted that the Filton Special Expenses Breakdown for 2026/27 showed a recommended total special expenses charge of £34,717, compared with £30,957 in 2025/26. The breakdown for Filton comprised £4,701 for closed churchyards, £3,451 for bus shelters, £4,699 for open spaces (plus parks), £2,045 for open spaces acquired housing land, and £19,821 for play areas. The same also showed a Band D Special Expenses charge (applied) of £10.72 for 2026/27.

Councillors further noted that the draft policy proposed that:

1. Charges associated with the maintenance of existing closed churchyards should remain as special expenses.
2. Charges associated with bus shelters currently maintained through this mechanism should move to South Gloucestershire Council's general expenditure.
3. All other categories of special expenses, including services related to allotments, play areas, public conveniences, playing fields and open spaces (including parks and acquired housing land), should become a local choice expense item capable of being funded through the Town or Parish precept.

Reference was also made to the Filton Special Expenses Map, which identified a number of smaller parcels of land highlighted in green within the Filton area. Members noted that these areas were already subject to routine cleansing activity by the Council's Street Cleanser and discussed the possibility that, in due course, the Council's Open Spaces Team may need to enter into appropriate arrangements or contracts with South Gloucestershire Council should routine maintenance of those areas be brought further in-house.

During discussion, the Mayor indicated broad support for the principle of absorbing the current special expenses into the Council's own arrangements, whilst also cautioning that the Council should remain mindful of taking on any greater costs than necessary. In response, the Town Clerk advised that the maintenance liability associated with the closed churchyard was not expected to be significant in overall cost terms and noted that the churchyard remained of local importance to Filton residents.

Members agreed that the Council should respond to South Gloucestershire Council indicating support for points 2 and 3 of the proposed policy, namely that bus shelters should move to South Gloucestershire Council's general expenditure and that the remaining relevant categories should be capable of being funded locally through the precept. In addition, councillors agreed that Filton Town Council should indicate its willingness to take on responsibility in-house for the closed churchyard and for the smaller areas of land identified in green on the Filton Special Expenses Map, rather than retaining a separate special expenses rate for those elements.

RESOLVED: That South Gloucestershire Council be informed that Filton Town Council supports the proposed policy direction in respect of bus shelters and the transfer of other local choice services into local funding arrangements, and that the Council is willing to take on the closed churchyard together with the smaller areas of land identified in green on the Filton Special Expenses Map, with a view to those costs being absorbed through the precept from 2027/28 rather than retained as a separate special expenses charge.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - **NOTED:** Tuesday, 14th July 2026 at 7PM.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8:35pm