

MINUTES of the **ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING** held in the Conference Room, Epping Hall on **Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 8pm.**

PRESENT:

Cllr Janet Whitehouse	(Town Mayor & Chair)
Cllr C Burgess	Cllr L Burrows
Cllr H Pegrum	Cllr G Scruton
Cllr Jon Whitehouse	Cllr M Wright

OFFICER: Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

332 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N Avey, Cllr R Sharif and Cllr J Duffell and Cllr Jon Whitehouse for lateness.

333 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

334 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations.

335 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions or comments.

336 CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 9th December 2025 be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council, subject to the following amendment/addition:

Minute 312 from December minutes:
Cllr G Scruton was present at the meeting and presented the financial report.

337 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was **RESOLVED** that the signed Minutes of the following Committee meetings be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council.

Planning & General Purposes Committee	10 th December 2024 (Attachment B)
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338 COMMUNICATIONS TO NOTE/REQUIRING DECISION

(i) BUS PROPOSAL: HIGH EASTER PARISH COUNCIL

Council discussed the proposal from High Easter Parish Council, as per **Attachment C**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Town Clerk would write to the Clerk at High Easter in support of the proposal and highlight the additional facilities in Epping such as Epping Station, the new leisure centre and St Margaret's Hospital.

339 TOWN MAYOR & DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR'S DUTIES

The duties undertaken by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor since the Ordinary Council meeting on 9th December 2025 were **NOTED** with the following amendment:

Christmas card presentations: 9th December 2025 not 12th December 2025

Additions:

Loughton Police Station

6th January 2025

Opening of Epping Leisure Centre

12th January 2025

340 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Reports from members were received on meetings or visits since the Ordinary Council meeting on 9th December 2025:

Cllr M Wright	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 25
	Cllr M Wright explained how this had progressed over the last 22 years into a big event. Likely most well attended (maybe 700).	
Cllr Jon Whitehouse	Lighting of the Menorah	14 th Dec 25
	Opening of the sports centre	12 th Jan 26
Cllr C Burgess	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 25
	Cllr C Burgess is on the working/planning committee and advised of the work involved and high attendance.	
Cllr H Pegrum	Removal of Christmas tree	8 th Dec 25
	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 25
Cllr H Whitbread	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 25
	Epping Leisure Centre opening	12 th Jan 26
Cllr C McCredie	Wrapping Christmas presents for children without presents at Epping Forest District Council's Civic Offices. Approx 700 presents	11 th Dec 25
	Epping For Everyone lunch	13 th Dec 25
	Loughton Police Station (protest talks)	6 th Jan 26
	EALC Webinar on Unitary Authorities	8 th Jan 26
	Meet Police Epping Market	12 th Jan 26

341 REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK AND COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS

The Town Clerk highlighted that there were still some issues to resolve surrounding the delivery of the path.

The Clerk also highlighted that the Mill Mound Fields decision would be challenged, liaising with Epping Forest District Council initially.

Members **NOTED** the report of the Town Clerk.

342 REPORTS FROM EPPING FOREST DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Epping Forest District Council

Cllr Jon Whitehouse:

Epping Forest District Council:

Mentioned EFDC looking at ideas to spend \$106 million on. One suggestion was improved drainage at Stonards Hill recreation ground as the drainage is poor. (The Town Clerk is pursuing this directly as advised.)

Cllr H Whitbread:

Essex County Council:

Highways initiatives. ECC Highways are one of most responsive. Much more than they were. January is a bit quieter.

Epping Forest District Council:

Budget. Challenging. Scrutiny. Amendments. Scrutiny February. Aim to balance budget. Opening of Epping Leisure Centre for all ages.

343 **FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31ST DECEMBER 2025**

Council considered the summary financial report for December 2025, presented by Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and **APPROVED**;
- (ii) No further action was required at the current time.

344 **ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton presented the payment schedules for December 2025 totalling £88,151.97. Barclays £75.75, The Co-operative £87,403.33 & The Co-operative online £672.89).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- (ii) The list of payments for December 2025 were **APPROVED** as presented in the schedule.

345 **BUDGET 2026/27 SECOND ESTIMATES**

Epping Town Council's first draft budget was presented at the Ordinary Council meeting on 9th December 2025 (Minute #314 of 25/26) and this showed predicted expenditure only, as the crucial tax base figure from Epping Forest District Council had not been received. That tax base figure has now been built into the draft budgets presented here. The tax base has increased by 17.

The budget (second draft) presented as per **Attachment H** showed a 3% increase to the precept. **Please note:** inflation for November 2025 was approximately 3.2%. This budget had been drafted by the Town Clerk/RFO & Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton. The draft charges 2026 showed a 3% increase towards inflationary/running costs across all services except Epping Market.

Council's auditor had advised that Council's reserves are far lower than desired and it was satisfactory, providing this was rectified promptly. The desired reserve range should be approximately £390,000.

It was presented that an increase of 3% to a band D equivalent property through Epping Town Council's share of the precept would be £3.59 per annum. This would require a precept demand to Epping Forest District Council of £667,238 for the 2026/27 financial year. This would result in an overall reserve position of £303,493 at the end of the 2026/27 financial year. (£253,136 in the projected outturn of 2025/26.)

Please note: the Town Clerk advised that after the papers had been drafted, the tax base figure had changed from 5420.5 to 5439.5. This meant that a 2.6% increase to the precept would equate to a precept demand to Epping Forest District Council of £666,977 for the 2026/27 financial year (with all expenditure remaining the same).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Audit Commission Act 1998 s44; Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- (ii) The 2026/27 budget (second estimates) was **APPROVED**, with the Town Mayor **AUTHORISED** to sign the precept demand for the 2026/27 financial year of £666,977 (£3.16 per annum increase per band D equivalent) on behalf of the Town Council (**Attachment H**);
- (iii) The draft charges 2026/27 were **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H2** (2.6% increase across all services except the market which is 0% increase);
- (iv) The budget with funds transfer amounts was **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H1**, with the 5 year forecast being monitored against reality/real time situation.

346 **BANK BALANCES AT 31ST DECEMBER 2025**

Council **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the bank balances on 31st December 2025 for all accounts, as per **Attachment I**. This was recommended by the auditor as an end of quarter agenda item.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

347 **REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

Council considered the representatives on outside bodies to ensure all were still actively operational and determine if any should be added.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act, s111;
- (ii) The correct position for Local Councils Liaison Committee, Essex Association of Local Councils, Larger Local Councils would be checked;

- (iii) The history of the Town Clerk as trustee of Epping Forest Band would be researched;
- (iv) Cllr C McCredie should be listed Council's representative on The Epping Society;
- (v) Epping Air Cadets would be added with Cllr C Burgess as Epping Town Council's representative and the Air Cadets would be written to accordingly;
- (vi) Epping Forest Countrycare would be removed from the list as they had ceased to be Epping Town Council's working partners.

348 PLAY IN THE PARK 2026

Council discussed the Play in the Park sessions, as per **Attachment K**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s19;
- (ii) 1 session would be booked at Easter and 2 in the Summer;
- (iii) Epping Town Council would request that their funding support is better advertised for the sessions.

349 CHRISTMAS TREES

Council considered the Christmas tree information.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act 1972, s145;
- (ii) The Town Clerk was **AUTHORISED** to dispose of the Christmas Trees in the most appropriate way.

350 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

351 JULIE'S CAFÉ: LEASE/LICENCE DETAILS

Council considered the information regarding Julie's café, as per **Attachment L**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act 1972, s126 & s144;
- (ii) The Town Clerk would pursue quotations for the required strengthening of the roof and obtain quotes;
- (iii) Cllr H Pegrum and Cllr Jon Whitehouse would **AUTHORISE** the Town Clerk to proceed with the most appropriate quote;

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- (iv) The cooker canopy/splash back would be replaced to the required standards and this would be dealt with by Epping Town Council;
 - (v) Insurance details regarding the kitchen would be checked towards cost mitigations;
 - (vi) The information would be revisited once full costs and timescales were known;
 - (vii) The tenant would look at internal security measures.

CLOSURE

The Town Mayor, Cllr Janet Whitehouse, closed the meeting at **9.55pm**.

Signature of Chairman

Date