HEDGE END TOWN COUNCIL - MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD 21 JANUARY 2026

Cllrs. Present: Cllr Paul Carnell, Cllr Tonia Craig, Cllr Leigh Hadaway, Cllr Keith House, Cllr John Jupe, Cllr Rupert Kyrle, Cllr Jim Mitchell, Cllr Ron Nichols (Chair), Cllr James Paine, Cllr John Shepherd

In Attendance: Nigel Paterson, Kings Community Church

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Maggie Allingham, Cllr Helen Corben**,** Cllr Ian Corben, Cllr Cynthia Garton, Cllr Cliff Morris, Cllr Derek Pretty

2. **Public Questions not on the Agenda**

   A member of the public raised questions regarding the potential debt implications of merging councils under a unitary authority model. Specifically, they asked whether Eastleigh Borough Council's (EBC) borrowing is secured against the equity within its asset portfolio, and how differing levels of debt would be managed given the varying financial positions and perspectives of the councils involved, having recently attended a Southampton City Council meeting.

   Cllr House noted that the new arrangements would look and feel very different, as existing council spaces would not be able to accommodate a council of significantly increased size.

   Adult Social Care costs vary depending on the agreed unitary geography. On a per-head basis, Eastleigh Borough Area has more old people that Southampton. Hampshire currently operates a relatively expensive social care model, and alternative delivery models are in use elsewhere.

   In relation to debt and deficit, it was clarified that EBC's borrowing is supported by asset equity that exceeds both its level of borrowing and its income. Financial projections indicate that EBC is exceeding its income targets. By contrast, deficit is a concern where councils are spending more than their income allows; this is not the case for EBC. However, this issue does apply to the County Council, where rising costs—particularly in adult social care and special educational needs—have led to a significant deficit. Hampshire County Council's deficit is reported to be worse than that of Southampton City Council.

   As a result, it is likely that discretionary budgets, including services that have previously been protected, may come under increasing pressure.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

   None were declared.

4. To Receive a Police Report

PCSO Tracey Chilcott was not in attendance, however Sgt Ralph Akehurst was unable to attend at the last minute and had sent the stats across.

5. To receive the Speedwatch results

Cllrs noted the results including the 65mph on Kings Copse.

6. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17 December 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December be confirmed with an amendment to add that Cllr Kyrle was in attendance and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

7. Matters for Resolution: To consider and agree the Hedge End Town Council Budget for the financial year 2026/2027.

Recommendation from Policy & Resources Committee 6 January 2026 regarding the precept figure for 2026/27 – Minute P1506.

The Clerk outlined the detail of the budget discussions at Policy & Resources Committee noting that that the Eastleigh Borough Council Special Expenses figures had now been received. A provisional Council Tax increase of 4% was indicated; however, if Special Expenses were included, the increase would rise to 11.5%. The current precept of £131.19, with a 4% increase, would be £136.44. Accounting for the LGR assets, this would increase to £146.28, although this is offset by a corresponding reduction in the Eastleigh Borough Council Tax, resulting in a net increase of 7.5%.

Cllr House proposed that the precept be increased by 11.5%, reflecting the inclusion of Special Expenses that are no longer being charged by EBC. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Shepherd and carried, with two abstentions from councillors who do not live within the parish area.

RESOLVED: That an increase of 4% was applied to fees and charges. That the precept figure be increased to 11.5% to accommodate the inclusion of special expenses. That £1,169,463.23 precept be requested.

8. Chair's Remarks

Councillor Ron Nichols reported that he is receiving an increasing amount of spam emails.

9. Resolved Items for NOTING Only:

(a) Highways & Planning Committee – 3 December 2025 and 17 December 2025
(Minute H859 and H864)
That the Minutes of the meeting of the 3 December and 17 December be received.

(b) Policy & Resources Committee – 6 January 2026
(Minute P1502, P1503, P1504, P1505, P1506, P1509, P1510 and P1511)
That the Minutes of the meeting of the 6 January be received.

(c) Recreation & Amenities Committee – 14 January 2026
(Minute R591, R592 and R593)
That the Minutes of the meeting of the 14 January be received.

10. Borough and County Reports

Cllr Kyrle reported that a HEWEB meeting is scheduled to take place on 26 January 2026.

It was noted that Hampshire County Council continues to face a budget shortfall, with savings targets not yet fully achieved. The highways maintenance backlog is estimated to be in the region of £500 million, although additional government funding has recently been made available to support remedial works. Hampshire County Council is also working with the developer in relation to remedial works at Barnfield Way.

Cllr House reported that the Borough Chief Executive has announced their intention to stand down, and that arrangements will be made for interim cover while recruitment takes place.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 20:09pm.