



Wivenhoe Town Council

MINUTES of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held in the Council Chamber, 77 High Street on Tuesday 23 March 2026 at 7:00pm **Draft**

Present: Cllr Guy (Chair), Cllr Burke, Cllr Hailes-Morley, Cllr Luxford-Vaughan, J Beighton-Emms (Town Clerk) & E Buckley (RFO)

FP.03.26/01 Apologies for absence: Cllr Boughton and Widgery, apologies received and noted.

FP.03.26/02 Declarations of interest: None.

FP.03.26/03 Minutes of the previous meeting: The approval of the minutes for the committee meeting held on 23 February 2026 were proposed by Cllr Burke and seconded by Cllr Hailes-Morley, with all present in agreement as an accurate record of proceedings.

FP.03.26/04 To update the committee on the March 2025 Essex Pension Fund valuation report: The RFO reported that the Essex Pension Funds March 2025 valuation report had been received. The pension contribution rates for the next three years have been released and are:

- 2026/27 – 23.8%
- 2027/28 – 22.8%
- 2028/29 – 21.8%

This has been acknowledged by the Council and the payroll provider. The budget for 2026/27 was set at 24.8% for pension contributions, so this is within budget.

FP.03.26/05 To review and approve the risk assessment for 2025/26: A meeting is to be arranged with the Chair and TC to review the risk assessment for committee approval.

FP.03.26/06 To review and approve the asset register for 2025/26: The asset register will be updated at year end and approved by FTC as part of the AGAR requirements.

FP.03.26/07 To review and approve charges for the Cemetery and WLH extra charges: As per the attached report (appendix a) these charges were missed from the previous WLH charges review, it was recommended to the committee to increase these rates by 5%, which is the same as the daily rates for the WLH users. The Sun Life report for the cemetery charges has been released and reviewed by the RFO. It was again recommended to increase all cemetery charges by 5%. The committee discussed the report and would like to increase the Art Trial to £195 per hire, the hire is over 4 days, and this new recommended rate is in line with other venues in the town. The hire of the display boards was discussed as it was more time-consuming than originally expected for two members of staff. It is recommended that if the Art Trial requires these again, a full review will be made, and the charge will be reviewed.

Cllr Guy proposed the 5% on cemetery charges and 5% on WLH rates, with the Art Trial increasing to £195 and display boards charge on request. This was seconded by Cllr Luxford-Vaughan, with all in agreement.

Change to proposal after meeting:

After the meeting it was discussed that the actual charge for the art trial was £105 a day not £105 for the weekend booking as previously thought at the meeting. It was then agreed by email to increase the rate to £110 daily as originally suggested and not £195 for the total booking. This was agreed by Cllr Guy, Burke, Hailes-Morley and Luxford-Vaughan over email. The hire for the boards will still be quoted if the group requests the use again.

FP.03.26/08 To notify the Committee of the NALC contracts issued to all staff: The TC reported that all staff have been issued the new contract from the 11th March 2026.

FP.03.26/09 Budget update: The RFO reported that the current budget position is stable, there are overspends due to elections but there is also a predicted underspend on the payroll budget. The year end is approaching, so the RFO will be working on the budget and report at the next meeting.

FP.03.26/10 Minibus Working Group update: A new minibus has been reserved, the company will be installing the lift into the new minibus and will be selling the old minibus at auction on behalf of the Council. They have offered the signwriting for the minibus at cost, the RFO will ask for a quote and the working group will decide whether to go ahead. It was agreed on “Wivenhoe Town Council – Keeping our community connected” to be on the sides of the minibus and the email address and phone number on the back. The crest would also be placed on the sides. Cllr Guy proposed a vote for either Tahoma or Calibri font for the signs, there was two votes for each, Cllr Guy used his casting vote for the Tahoma font.

FP.03.26/11 Update from the Finance & Personnel meeting held on 23 February 2026: None.

FP.03.26/12 Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Monday 27 April 2026.

FP.03.26/13 Exclusion of Press and Public: Cllr Guy proposed to close the meeting and move to Part B, this was seconded by Cllr Burke, with all Councillors present in agreement.

Part A of the meeting was closed at 19:26

The Clerk holds a note of the Part B meeting

Appendix A

Fees and Charges Review March 2026

William Loveless Hall

The following charges were not included in the WLH fees review:

It is proposed to increase these rates by the same amount as the hire charges 5%.

Theatre/Panto Block Bookings – Current £959, Increase £1,007

All Day Rate – Current £203, Increase £213

Art Trial – Current £105, Increase £110

With the art trial this year we charged £60 for the hire of the display boards. (The reality of this is that it took 2 people 12 hours to install and remove the boards, working out at £2.50pp/ph). The Council needs to think about the charges for these hirers in future.

Cemetery – suggested 5% increase

Staff will charge on discretion for some searches which are time consuming, (usually over an hour). A suggest charge of £30 was set last year, for staff time on the more complex historical searches. It is not recommended to increase this again this year.

In 23/24 we managed to make space for an estimated 30 plots in the Cemetery, to date there are around 20 remaining. Ashes can still be interred into existing purchased plots at the cemetery and memorials and headstones.

For the 25/26 year up to February £9,295 has been received, which is slightly lower than the previous years income. The maintenance and overhead expenditure for the cemetery this year is £5,779, which works out at 62% of income. There has been no spend this year on the Cemetery wall repairs.

It was recommended that the charges for the Cemetery be increased as per The Sun Life Cost of Dying Annual Report 2026. The total funeral spend has increased by 5.3%, increase cost of a traditional funeral 5.3% and cost of a direct cremation is 1.9%.

The cemetery charges were increased by 5% in 22/23 and 23/24 and 25/26.

Looking at the figures from the Sun Life Cost of Dying 2026 report, it would be recommended to increase the cemetery charges by 5% for 26/27.

It is expected that the potential new cemetery will be available over the next couple of years, however the cost to get the cemetery suitable are estimated to be between £30-70,000.

Minibus

Further discussion is required for the minibus, this will be undertaken by the minibus working group.