MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 27th JULY 2026 AT 7.30PM

*	Cllr Miriam Swainston (Chair)	*	Cllr David Jacobs
*	Cllr Alex Chapman	*	Cllr Martin Adams
*	Cllr Sarah Copley	*	Cllr John Wyllie
*	Cllr Calvin Horner (Vice Chair)		

* denotes present

In attendance:
One Member of the Press
Terrie Archer (Royal British Legion – Bishop's Stortford Branch)
Huw Jones (Chief Executive Officer)
Mark Westwood (Chief Finance Officer)

FP79. RECORDING OF MEETING

No Council Members or Members of the Public indicated an intention to record the meeting.

FP80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

FP81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

FP82. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No Member of the Public sought to address the Committee at this meeting.

Minutes Approved
Chairman:
Date:

FP83. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5TH MAY 2026

It was RESOLVED that:

the Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 5th May 2026 be approved and duly signed by the Chair with the amendment.

FP84. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS 2026/27

It was noted that since the previous meeting, the aged debtors list had improved following an exercise to chase outstanding debts and that the overall position was highly favourable in comparison to other Authorities.

It was RESOLVED that:

(i) the financial accounts to end of Quarter 1 2026/27 be received; and

(ii) the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the Town Council, previously agreed from 2025/26 (three year term), be reaffirmed having regard to the factors of "*independence and competence*."

FP85. GRANT TO BISHOP'S STORTFORD COMMUNITY TRANSPORT CIO

It was RESOLVED that:

a recommendation be made to Full Council at its meeting on 5th October 2026 to approve the Community Transport CIO (BSCT CIO) annual budgeted grant of £8,000 to supplement the running costs of the service to commence in the current Council year 2026/27.

Minutes Approved
Chairman:
Date:

FP86. CORPORATE IDENTITY

Members recognised the importance of ensuring that the Council's logo was used appropriately and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. The distinction between the role of individual Members and that of the Council as a corporate body was noted, with reference to guidance contained within the *Good Councillor's Guide* issued to Members at the commencement of their term of office.

Members also received an update on the Council's Logo and Tagline Design Competition, which sought to engage young people in developing a refreshed civic identity for the Town Council. It was noted that over 70 entries had been received to date from pupils and students attending schools and colleges within Bishop's Stortford.

The competition would close on 30th September 2026, following which entries would be assessed against the published criteria, with the winning design to be professionally refined for use across the Council's print and digital materials.

It was RESOLVED that:

(i) a recommendation be made to Full Council at its meeting on 5th October 2026 to approve the Corporate Identity Policy (Headed Paper, Logo and Branding) for Bishop's Stortford Town Council; and

(ii) the update report on Town Council logo competition concluding on 30th September 2026 be received.

FP87. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received a verbal update from Cllr Sarah Copley, Chair of the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee, on its activities and developing work programme.

Minutes Approved
Chairman:
Date:

Members noted the value of the Sub-Committee in considering how the Council could engage with and better understand the needs of different groups within the community, helping to ensure that accessibility, inclusion and equality were appropriately reflected in Council activities and decision-making.

Current areas of work included investigating the potential establishment of a Youth Council and progressing an Age Friendly Town Audit. The position regarding co-opted representation was also noted, with one vacancy remaining. Work continued in parallel with this on the desire to obtain Dementia Friendly accreditation for Bishop's Stortford.

A further meeting of the Sub-Committee would be arranged for October 2026 to progress these matters.

FP88. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

The Committee received an update on the proposed Four Authority model for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Hertfordshire and noted that, at this stage, the election timetable for Town and Parish Councils remained unchanged.

It was noted that the LGR proposals had not yet been finalised and remained subject to Central Government review. Members would be kept informed of developments.

In the meantime, the proposed transfer of District Council assets had been paused pending separate discussions with the County Council. It had also been indicated that any review of assets currently held by the District Council would need to be funded by the Town Council.

Minutes Approved
Chairman:
Date:

FP89. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was RESOLVED that:

under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the Press and Public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting and that reporting on the remainder of the meeting likewise be prohibited in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted relating to precontractual negotiations relating to Asset Acquisition.

FP90. ASSET ACQUISITION

Members received a verbal update from the CEO on Asset Acquisitions (pre-contractual negotiations).

The CEO was instructed to progress the potential acquisition of two County Council sites, with the intention that valuations, structural reports and draft Heads of Terms would be available for consideration at the next meeting.

In addition, The CEO provided a further verbal update on the proposed asset transfer (sale and leaseback) of South Mill Arts, following a meeting held earlier that day.

Members were advised that the current aim was to complete the transfer within the next three months. Following further due diligence, and consultation with the Charity Commission's solicitor, it had been determined that a Cy-près Order was required both to regularise the Trust arrangements established in 2002 and to provide the necessary express authority for the proposed transaction. The Charity Commission was progressing the Order.

Once the Order had been made, the Council's solicitors would be asked to confirm that they were satisfied with the arrangements, following which the necessary documentation could be executed. There was presently no indication of any further substantive impediment to completion.

Minutes Approved
Chairman:
Date:

It was noted that the proceeds of approximately £3 million arising from the transaction would be retained for investment in South Mill Arts' infrastructure rather than revenue expenditure. Further details of the proposed investment would be sought and, once the transaction had been concluded, it was anticipated that a joint press release would be prepared setting out both the completion of the transfer and the benefits arising from it.

Members noted the considerable length of time taken to progress the matter, much of which had resulted from the necessary Charity Commission processes. Throughout this period, the Town Council had continued to actively pursue completion of the transfer.

The CEO expressed confidence that, subject to completion of the outstanding legal processes and the speedy attention of the Trustees at South Mill Arts, the matter was now likely to be resolved before the end of the current Council term.

FP91. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

To note and receive items for future agenda:

- Financial Regulations Review against National Models
- Update on Sale and Leaseback of SMA
- Local Government Pension Scheme (September 2026)
- IT improvements and Security Arrangements at Meetings
- Fire Evacuation Drill (Evening Meetings)

FP92. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.53pm.

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 21st September 2026 at 7.30pm.

Minutes Approved
Chairman:
Date: