

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye on
Monday 8 December 2025**

PRESENT Councillors David Bookless, Mike Boyd, John Breeds, Cheryl Creaser, Bernardine Fiddimore, Vagn Hansen, Chris Hoggart (**Deputy Mayor**), Pat Hughes, Andi Rivett, Shaun Rogers, Andy Stuart (**Mayor**).

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall – Town Clerk; Jessica Neame – Deputy Town Clerk; Paul Goring – Town Sergeant; District Cllr Simon McGurk; County Cllr Keith Glazier; Colonel Anthony Kimber – RNP Coordinator; Jane Brook and Sarah Broadbent – Rye & District Chamber of Commerce; Barry Nealon and Daniel Lynn – Rye Recreation and Wellbeing CIO; James Stewart – Rye News; 9 members of the public.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm.

98 PRAYERS

These were said by the Town Sergeant, Paul Goring.

99 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reason as lodged with the Deputy Clerk – were accepted from Councillors Sue Learoyd Smith, Dena Smith Ellis and Sophie Thorpe.

The Reverend Paul White also sent his apologies.

100 CODE OF CONDUCT

The following disclosures of interests were made:

Cllr Hoggart 106 Chair of Trustees, Rye Heritage Centre

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for Mayoral announcements, the report(s) of the District Councillors; the report of the County Councillor; the appointment of the Mayor Elect 2025-26 – and Public Question Time (See Appendix A).

The meeting was reconvened.

101 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve – as an accurate record – the Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 15 September 2025 (C8), 13 October 2025 (C9), 27 October 2025 (C10) and 3 November 2025 (C11).

102 COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED to receive and note the Draft Minutes (including any recommendations) of the Planning and Townscape Committee meetings held on 10 November 2025 (PT10) and 24 November 2025 (PT11).

103 RYE LEISURE CENTRE

Members received an update from Chairman of Rye Recreation and Wellbeing CIO, Barry Nealon and Rye Leisure Centre Director, Dan Lynn

See Appendix B

104 CHRISTMAS LIGHTING

The Mayor provided an update, explaining that lights were now installed along the High Street and sections of Lion Street and Market Street. This year's installation was restricted by the availability of compliant power sockets and the time available. The fundraising campaign raised £30k, which means there is £10-11k remaining towards next year's installation, when it is hoped to expand the lights to other streets.

105 PALESTINE FLAG

Members considered a request from a member of the public that the Palestine flag be flown at the Town Hall.

Comments included:

- There are wars going on all over the world, and that whilst the situation in Palestine is awful, where would we stop if flags were flown for them all?
- There is a risk of the Council being viewed as anti-Semitic.
- There is a difference between Ukraine and Palestine – Ukraine is defending the democracy of Europe.
- Rye has a historic connection with Ukraine and continues to provide a home to Ukrainian refugees.

RESOLVED Not to fly the Palestine flag at the Town Hall.

106 STRAND QUAY

Members considered the Environment Agency's request for views on the use of the land at Strand Quay, currently regularly used for motorbike parking.

Comments included:

- Being against any use of the land aside from that prioritising pedestrian access and enjoyment of the riverside.
- Concerns were raised that motorbikes will just park elsewhere, becoming a nuisance.
- The Heritage Centre experienced issues when the area was previously closed, with motorbikes parking along the pavement and blocking fire exits from the building.

- The visitors on motorbikes are an asset, spending money locally when they visit and then returning with friends and family.
- It is understood there are issues with the new tarmac being damaged by bike stands.
- When the area was previously closed, there was less traffic and noise from motorbikes.
- Could another car park on the other side of the river be utilised for motorbikes?
- RTC previously agreed to request a PSPO from Rother District Council in relation to anti-social parking of motorbikes on the pavements in the area. Enforcement would then mitigate against nuisance issues caused by motorbikes being unable to park on the EA land.
- The land belongs to the EA and therefore it is a matter for them to decide on its use.

RESOLVED To support the Environment Agency in excluding motorbikes from parking on their land at Strand Quay and to request that they resist making the area available for car parking also, so that it can be preserved for pedestrian enjoyment.

107 CONSULTATIONS

RESOLVED Not to respond to the consultations following and to leave it to members to decide whether to respond in a personal capacity:

- (a) [Rother District Council budget 2026-27](#) Deadline: 5.1.26
- (b) [Proposals for Local Government Re-organisation in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove](#) Deadline: 11.1.26.

108 AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION

The Clerk highlighted that, after paying the Tilling Green design scheme consultant, bid social value consultant, bid scheme viability consultant, Community Land Trust Network membership, Rye CLT incorporation fees - and an outline planning application fee for a possible small social housing scheme elsewhere - the Affordable Housing Earmarked Reserve is forecast to be overspent at the year-end by an estimated £1,000.

RESOLVED To note the projected overspend and agree that the Clerk should attempt to identify £1,000 elsewhere to top up the Affordable Housing Earmarked Reserve.

190 DEVOLUTION

Members considered the assets offered by Rother District Council:

- 1 Landgate Tower
- 2 Rye Cemetery
- 3 Station Approach Public Conveniences
- 4 Cricket Salts (excluding Bedford Place Car Park)
- 5 Town Salts (Fair & Iron Salts – excluding Lucknow Place Car Park and Public Conveniences)
- 6 Masons Field
- 7 Kings Avenue Play Area

Cllr Hoggart commented that insufficient information had been provided to date and that it was too short a timescale to make anything more than a decision in principle.

The Clerk highlighted that it was unlikely that any more information would be forthcoming from RDC, or that any revenue generating assets would be transferred.

Cllr Fiddimore expressed concern about the Landgate and the work to it that could be required, saying that Rye can't afford to take on the iconic landmark, but also can't afford not to if it may be neglected by other authorities.

Cllr Boyd requested that representation be made to RDC to take on the Cricket Salts car park, along with the Cricket salts.

Other suggestions included requesting Gibbets Marsh car park on the basis that it is more costly and generates less than other car parks as it is under utilised.

Cllr Hansen commented that, in the event RTC did not take on the Landgate, it would be transferred up to the new unitary authority. Whilst no significant work may happen to it, it would not just be left to crumble – particularly in light of the fact that it spans a public highway. He added that, regarding the Station Approach public loos, work is ongoing to find a sustainable funding solution, meaning RTC would not be required to fund these ongoing.

It was noted that the new unitary authority could also decide to charge a special expense for any specific assets transferred up. There was also no certainty that RDC would not continue to charge a Rye special expense in the meantime. The tax base in Rye is small compared to the number of assets in the parish.

Cllr Rivett suggested that the Landgate Tower be struck from the list on the basis that it was the lowest priority for many parishioners – with toilets and green spaces being of greater importance to most – and it could be one of the largest costs. It was also pointed out that should Rye request it in the future, it is unlikely that any new authority would refuse.

RESOLVED To confirm Rye Town Council's interest in principle in all the listed assets, aside from the Landgate Tower, and also request that the Cricket Salts car park be included - subject to finalising the budget in January.

110 RYE TOWN CLERK RECRUITMENT

The Clerk confirmed that the suggested back-up plan could be disregarded as there had been sufficient interest to proceed with shortlisting and interviews.

111 RYE GREENWAY

RESOLVED To provide a letter of support for Sussex Greenways application towards an Awards for All grant.

112 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (1)(2), to exclude the press and public from item 113 as includes consideration of commercially sensitive information and item 114 as it relates to a staff member's terms of employment.

113 FORMER TILLING GREEN SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD

Members considered a draft bid proposal and agreed a price to be submitted to East Sussex County Council.

RESOLVED To submit the draft proposal and a bid for an agreed sum, subject to any refinements made to the bid proposal prior to the deadline of 12 December.

114 TOWN CLERK: OUTSTANDING LEAVE

RESOLVED To pay the post holder's outstanding leave at the end of their employment.

The meeting ended at 8.35pm

Date Chairman

Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reported that it was a busy time of year. He praised the high standard and variety of the entries to the recent Chamber of Commerce Christmas Window competition, which he helped to judge. He also reported attending the Tilling Green Christmas event to turn on the Christmas lights; the Conquest Hospital courtyard of Christmas trees; St Michael's Hospice Community Choir in St Leonard's and the Lights of Love service in St Mary's church.

Rother District Council

Cllr McGurk reported that he was involved with the loos working group, along with the Chamber of Commerce and Rye Town Councillors, to explore future options for the Railway Station public conveniences. He explained that he is happy to support RTC taking over assets in the course of devolution and is keen to see the town take control of as much as possible. He will be attending next week's RDC full council meeting which has a very full agenda.

East Sussex County Council

Cllr Glazier's report included:

- The Highways Steward is currently extremely busy trying to keep up with potholes. Cllr Glazier highlighted the need for members of the public to continue reporting them via the ES Highways website.
- Elections for the Mayor of the Sussex Strategic Authority have been delayed until 2028, however this will not delay the creation of the combined unitary authority.
- Frustratingly, the £38m per year government funding associated with the strategic Mayor and the formation of the new unitary authorities is reduced to one third until the Mayor is elected.
- Bids are currently in for the proposed formation of the new unitary authorities, with a decision expected in early 2026. A consultation is taking place currently – details can be found on both the ESCC and government websites.

Cllr Fiddimore enquired as to who was responsible for requesting landowners to cut back trees or hedges that overhang the public highway. Cllr Glazier explained that usually parish or Town Councils contacted the landowner informally first, otherwise ES Highways can contact them.

Colonel Kimber asked about the progress to reinstate the wall-mounted street lamp outside Lamb House, including the removal of the new 'temporary' street light column. Cllr Glazier advised he would enquire. Cllr Creaser mentioned that she had spoken with the RDC Conservation Officer and that reinstatement was not possible as the wall was in private ownership.

Public Question Time

Colonel Kimber commented on:

- Item 109, Devolution - that RTC should also try and secure the Salts car park along with the Cricket Salts, to allow continued access to the Salts and for Southern Water.
- Item 111, Rye Greenway – that this is mentioned in the Rye Neighbourhood Plan, which should be highlighted in any bids for funding.

Sarah Broadbent from Rye Chamber of Commerce gave an update on the Railway Station loos, where RTC have taken the lead on forming a CIO/ Co-operative to take on a sublease. The group has put in a bid for funding from 'Your Station, Your Community' for £10k towards feasibility assessments and initial research.

Mayor Elect 2026-27

Cllr Creaser proposed – and Cllr Fiddimore seconded – Cllr Hoggart.

There being no other nominations, Cllr Hoggart was declared to have been appointed.

RYE LEISURE CENTRE

Rye Recreation and Wellbeing CIO completed its first six months of operating Rye Leisure centre at the end of September, and the Trustees are pleased to report that the performance has been ahead of budget, galvanised by the substantial increase in membership from the budgeted 460 to the current 725, and pleasingly driven by both the older and younger members of the community. This has been achieved through the efforts of the well-trained staff, and we thank Dan Lynn for his capable leadership.

The capital investments from the Levelling Up Fund have improved the appearance of the Centre and the Sport England investment in the photovoltaic cells has brought down the utility costs. Support from the Lottery Fund has given us the headroom to manage the increase in users at the Leisure Centre and has helped our cash position. It is our belief that we will achieve the break-even position that we had predicted would happen at the end of year three much earlier. This is further validated with our cash position at the end of September, which remains well above the working capital raised at commencement.

We are also pleased to report that the Centre is viewed positively for its community engagement. The range of sport and leisure activities has increased significantly and Pickleball is now played in the sports hall over three sessions a week. At the end of the year, we will be upgrading the appearance of the gym.

The trustees were disappointed that the Christmas festivities are reduced this year in Rye and so have decided to have a Christmas Santa for the 2- to 8-year-olds on the 20th and 21st December. For a £2 investment the children will leave with a present with a value of over £10. We have raised the funds for 120 presents. This will further increase our engagement with all ages.

When we have a full year's experience, we plan to raise funds for a major refurbishment of the reception area and possibly the introduction of an electric car charging platform. In all, the Trustees are confident that the charitable investment it has made will bear long term value for the community.

Barry Nealon
Chairman