

PARISH OF GODALMING

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

OF THE PARISH OF GODALMING HELD

ON THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

- * Town Mayor (Cllr Crooks)
- * Deputy Town Mayor (Cllr Kiehl)

* Councillor Adam	* Councillor Holliday
# Councillor Clayton	* Councillor Martin
* Councillor Crowe	L Councillor PMA Rivers
* Councillor C Downey	L Councillor PS Rivers
* Councillor S Downey	* Councillor Steel
* Councillor Duce	* Councillor Thomson
* Councillor Follows	* Councillor Weightman
* Councillor Heagin	* Councillor Williams

* Present # Absent & No Apology Received 0 Apology for Absence L Late

241. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 July 2025 were signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

242. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and recorded as above.

243. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Members made no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda for this meeting, which is required to be disclosed by the Localism Act 2011 and the Godalming Members' Code of Conduct.

244. **PETITIONS/STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

In accordance with Standing Order No 5 the following question was received from Mr Ian Williams a resident of Godalming

If the town council had been aware that the school and hockey club were going to exclude all community-based football group bookings from 1st September before they agreed to the CIL grant for Broadwater astro floodlight replacement, would it have affected the decision? Is there any opportunity to revisit the application and include the condition that these bookings need to be reinstated/honoured as part of the agreement? My group has played there every Thursday for 25 years and contributed over £65,000 in pitch fees in that time, the regular Wednesday group also there for over 10 years contributing over £20,000 and I am also aware of many other groups with long-standing bookings in a similar position. If this cannot be revisited then can the council suggest alternative local astro pitches for community hire for groups over a certain age please?

Additionally, a petition containing 106 names and a letter from the Moss Lane Dads' football group, which is shown below:

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are a local community group, who have been playing veterans' football on a quarter of the astroturf pitch at Broadwater School, every Wednesday night at 8pm throughout the year, for the last 10 years.

A few weeks ago, we were told that our block booking was to be cancelled from September, with only 3 weeks' notice.

As we understand it, Guildford Hockey Club is now to take all time slots at Broadwater School, so that all local community football groups are now left homeless, affecting hundreds of local players.

We note that following the town council meeting on 24 July 2025, a total of £100,000 of CIL funding was granted to Guildford Hockey Club for a floodlight replacement project, which was granted on the basis that it "*supports increased community access, youth and women's sport, and long-term sustainability*" (as per minutes).

We also note that a condition imposed on GHC was to report back within 12 months on "*growth in community usage*".

Given the funding, we would ask the Council to consider:

- This was a vital community resource, used by our group every week for the last 10 years, and for some football groups for over 25 years.
- As a result, we have provided some £20,000 in total funds to Broadwater School over 10 years, while the 25yr group has provided over £65,000.
- For many within our football group, this is the highlight of their week, essential to their physical and mental health.
- There is an obvious shortage of available similar astro pitches, available with floodlights, within the wider Godalming area (as already identified in the Waverley Infrastructure Development Plan).
- We note that this has adversely affected hundreds of male and female football players, most if not all of whom are based in Farncombe and Godalming (not necessarily the case for the Guildford Hockey Club).
- We absolutely understand that Guildford is a leading club which deserves support, and which serves a large community of committed hockey players. However this support should not come to the detriment of equally dedicated local footballers, many of whom also set aside significant time to coach 1000's of children at Milford Pumas and Farncombe Youth FC, and when not coaching football are involved in other sports or community projects.
- We can consider any realistic compromise to assist the group, including use of the blue Astro pitch, or a change of weekday or time.
- The Council is perfectly entitled to assess that the cancellation of all longstanding football bookings appears to run directly counter to the condition imposed by the Council for GHC

to ensure **growth in community usage**, and may not have gained Council approval if the plans had been made known.

- We understand that the Council does not have overarching control over how GHC operates its pitches at the Broadwater site, but we would ask the Council to pass the following resolution:

“Following the CIL grant to Guildford Hockey Club, the Council requests that it reconsider with care whether the removal of all football groups, including longstanding male and female teams who have limited other alternatives within the local area, fits with the condition attached to the grant to ensure growth in community usage”.

- GHC is required to report back to the Council as to its efforts to expand community usage, and it is submitted that this resolution may assist in requesting them either to reconsider or to justify the change of usage they have initiated. Further conditions may be imposed on the grant if the change was unjustified, given the Council's statutory obligations to use CIL funds to advance sport and recreation in the local area.

Many thanks in advance for considering this letter, and the importance of this issue to hundreds of local football players.

The Mayor provided the following response at the meeting:

Whilst responding to Mr Williams question and the Moss Lane Dads' letter separately, the Mayor sought to avoid repetition of any points made in response to the initial question, when responding to the letter. To provide context, the Mayor requested the letter be included in the minutes (see above).

In response to the question from Mr Williams

Thank you, Mr Williams, for your question and for your group's long association with the Broadwater facility. We fully recognise the strength of feeling here—25 years of weekly bookings and pitch fees are not taken lightly. I will set out why the Council supported the grant, what has happened since, and what options are available.

The Council supported the grant because it provides a clear public benefit—replacing end-of-life floodlighting to ensure safe and sustainable community sports facilities. The grant helps increase access overall, particularly for youth and women's participation. It also funds permanent lights for the netball courts and allows the mobile floodlights to be redeployed onto grass, creating more capacity at Broadwater.

Without this funding the facility would have faced a “patch and limit” scenario—improving one astro while light levels on others continued to fail. That would have reduced safe hard-ball training capacity and squeezed evening access overall. Likewise, the permanent lighting for the netball courts: unlocking women's and girls' activity growth, would not happen, meaning the reallocating of the mobile floodlights to grass: creating more winter football capacity on grass elsewhere on the site, would also not happen. Taken together, the funded scheme increases the number of viable, lit spaces and spreads benefit across user groups. It is because of this potential for wider benefit the Council supports the upgrading of the flood lights at Broadwater.

At this point it's also important to say that bookings at Broadwater are the responsibility of the school, not the Hockey Club.

We cannot rewrite private hire contracts retrospectively. However, following discussion with the school, we have been informed that Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evening hours have been provided for community users this Autumn and Spring, and a further review will take place at Christmas for the summer term. The school has confirmed that outside of the hours set out in the original usage agreement, the hockey club does not have exclusive rights, but rather a first request option which is considered with other requests to seek to maximise the use of the facilities and time is being rebalanced to maximise use and keep the facility sustainable.

On alternatives: if your group does not wish to use grass pitches, there are other local astro or 3G pitch options including Prior's Field School, Charterhouse, Surrey Sports Park, Kings College Guildford, George Abbot School, and PlayFootball Guildford. Availability does vary by term, but these are possible providers. We have also been informed that one group has been put in touch with King Edwards.

GTC will:

- Ensure the new lights are installed.
- Ask the school to contact long-standing groups first if slots become available.
- Seek to open discussions with partners about the feasibility for an additional 3G or 4G pitch in the Godalming area.

In response to the Moss Lane Dads' letter the Mayor responded that:

Once again, we note the Moss Lane Dad's long association with the Broadwater facility and the concerns raised about autumn bookings.

Again, for clarity, Broadwater School manages the astro pitch bookings and sets the timetable; Guildford Hockey Club does not control community bookings.

We acknowledge the usage data we have received indicating around 2,000+ individual users per week on the astros during the Autumn and Spring terms, which includes use by groups other than the Hockey Club and Farncombe Youth Football Club on a Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evening with additional summer slots to be released after Christmas. The School also advises that five former astro users have moved to lit grass pitches (enabled by redeploying the mobile lights), and that the revised pattern of bookings supports the sinking fund for future carpet/pad replacement.

As previously acknowledged, we also recognise there is a general shortage of local floodlit all-weather capacity, which affects community football groups. And that we will write to Broadwater School, as the booking authority, asking that any available mid-week slots are offered first to displaced community groups and that this approach is communicated clearly to users this term

In Summary to both question and letter

It is the role of the Council to make decisions to improve infrastructure, it is not the Council's responsibility to manage infrastructure. The grant was awarded to grow use of the facilities. We cannot insist that every long-standing slot is reinstated. Midweek hours are being offered, and local alternatives exist. We also hope that a long-term solution—more all-weather provision for Godalming, might be achievable.

Mr Edward Fedder, a resident of Godalming asked:

Who should the groups contact at the council to liaise about future availability of pitches for community football groups and regards to the possibility of additional provision once a location been identified

On behalf of the Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer informed Mr Fedder that as stated in the Mayor's response the management, including the booking of pitches is the responsibility of Broadwater School, but as stated GTC will write to the school to request that any future

availability is first offered to displaced groups. If the groups have concerns on this matter, then they are asked to contact the Chief Executive Officer. In regard to any potential future provision, this is something that will need to be explored with others to seek to establish what the need is and how it might be achieved with an eye on making a bid to the Strategic CIL fund. This will require input from a wide range of groups and consultation.

Mr Ian Williams, a resident of Godalming asked *why a grant from Godalming Council had been given to Guildford Hockey Club.*

On behalf of the Mayor the Chief Executive Officer informed Mr Williams that although the hockey club is called the Guildford Hockey Club they are based at Broadwater school, which is in the civic parish of Godalming and the facilities that the grant will support are also located within the civic parish of Godalming and therefore meet the Neighbourhood CIL criteria.

Mr Dan Wood, a resident of Godalming asked *whether the usage data could be reported upon earlier than 12 months on completion of the upgrade of the floodlights.* **Mr Joseph Brooks a resident of Godalming** asked a similar question.

On behalf of the Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer informed that 12 months has been set as a reporting period because the use of the pitches varies over the different terms and that a single point in time or a shorter period would not provide an accurate reflection of pitch use.

Mr Jon Nichols, a resident of Godalming *referred to the usage and asked whether it referred to just for the Hockey Club?*

On behalf of the Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer informed Mr Nichols that although the Hockey Club provides the information on usage by the Hockey Club, the school provides the usage data for Farncombe Youth Football Club or other community users. As such the usage data is for the pitches as a whole, and once received will be reported to the Council.

245. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

No questions from Councillors were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 6.

246. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS, LETTERS, ETC

Members to receive a letter of thanks from ChoirBLAST – attached for the information of Members.

247. COMMITTEE REPORTS

The reports of the following Committees setting out decisions taken pursuant to delegated powers were RECEIVED

Audit Committee – Cllr Thomson updated the Council on the work of the Audit Committee – no recommendations were moved for consideration by Full Council.

Environment & Planning Committee – Cllr Kiehl updated the Council on the work of the Environment & Planning Committee – no recommendations were moved for consideration by Full Council.

Policy & Management Committee – Cllr Follows updated the Council on the work of the Policy & – no recommendations were moved for consideration by Full Council.

Staffing Committee – Cllr Heagin informed Council that an update would be provided as a separate agenda item relating to recruitment.

Members received an update on recruitment and appointments in the exempt session.

248. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The reports of the following committees setting out decisions taken pursuant to delegated powers were RECEIVED:

	Meetings Dated
Environment & Planning	7 August 2025
Policy & Management Committee	7 August 2025

249. SUPPORT FOR CHOIRBLAST 2026

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive Officer regarding a request from the organisers of ChoirBLAST for grant in kind use of council facilities and direct financial support towards the delivery of ChoirBLAST 2026, and the associated requirement to make provision within the 2025/26 Arts, Culture & Community Budget.

Members noted that ChoirBLAST is a registered charity (No. 1210483) and a nationally recognised free-to-attend, non-competitive choral festival which, in 2025, featured 78 choirs and international performers, attracted some 3,000 participants and an estimated 10,000 visitors to Godalming, and engaged singers from ages 3 to 98. The 2026 festival is scheduled to take place from 12–14 June, with the main event on Saturday, 13 June.

The report set out the facilities requested by the organisers, including use of the Wilfrid Noyce Centre (Caudle Hall, Wyatt Room, Oglethorpe Room), stage and bandstand, as well as licensing of The Burys Field and the Jack Phillips Memorial Ground under the Council's licence. In addition, the Facilities/Maintenance Team would provide janitorial support across the Wilfrid Noyce Centre and Crown Court areas on the main festival day. To enable full use of the Caudle Hall on the Saturday, it would be necessary to relocate the regular Saturday morning user of the Centre at a cost of up to £300.

Council noted the indicative costs submitted by the organisers for essential infrastructure such as accessible transport, additional toilets, accessibility works for staging, and waste management, estimated at £4,300–£5,300 subject to quotations. Members also acknowledged that final confirmation of direct financial support can only be determined once Council has approved its 2025/26 budget in December/January.

In considering the request, Members recognised the substantial economic, cultural, social and reputational benefits of ChoirBLAST for Godalming, including its potential to generate significant local economic activity, to enhance community wellbeing through inclusive group singing, and to raise the town's profile as a centre of cultural vitality. Council also recognised the strong commitment of ChoirBLAST to equality, diversity, and inclusion, particularly through free access for performers and audiences, inclusive programming, and provision for disabled performers and attendees.

Council further noted the forthcoming requirements of Martyn's Law (The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025), and supported Officers' intention to work proactively with the organisers to ensure that planning for ChoirBLAST 2026 takes into account the Enhanced

Tier security obligations that will be in force from 2027, ensuring readiness for future compliance.

Council RESOLVED: That—

- a. the grant aid in kind use of council venues and facilities for ChoirBLAST 2026, as set out in the report, be approved;
- b. support from the Facilities/Maintenance Team be allocated on Saturday, 13 June 2026 to provide janitorial support across the Wilfrid Noyce Centre and Crown Court areas;
- c. expenditure of up to £300 be approved to relocate the regular Saturday morning user of the Wilfrid Noyce Centre to enable full-day use of the venue for ChoirBLAST;
- d. Council recognises the economic, social, and reputational benefits that ChoirBLAST brings to Godalming, including its contribution to local businesses, its community wellbeing impact, and its role in enhancing the town's cultural identity;
- e. Council further recognises the festival's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, noting that ChoirBLAST provides free access for participants and audiences, celebrates choirs of all abilities and backgrounds, and takes practical steps to ensure accessibility for disabled performers and attendees;
- f. the Chief Executive Officer be requested to include provision for direct financial support to ChoirBLAST 2026 within the 2025/26 Arts, Culture & Community Budget at an indicative level of £4,300–£5,300, subject to confirmation of quotations;
- g. it be noted that final confirmation of both financial and venue support can only be given once Council has approved the 2025/26 budget in December/January; and
- h. Officers be authorised to liaise with the organisers of ChoirBLAST to finalise operational and financial arrangements in line with this resolution, including consideration of Martyn's Law obligations and security planning.

250. NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2024-25

Members to note that the External Auditor's report for the financial year 2024/25 was received on 11 August 2025 and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit published on 12 August 2025. The External Auditor's report is attached to record minutes. Members further noted that it is an unqualified report, which is to say that there are no findings or recommendations to be addressed.

251. LOSS OF STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE BOOK

Council received an update regarding the recent report of a missing Council book. Members were advised that the book has now been found and returned.

In considering the matter, Members noted the assurances given that Officers had acted quickly once the potential loss was identified. Officers were clear on the steps required, took prompt action, and had already carried out the recommended measures to safeguard against the likelihood of a repeat incident.

Council expressed its satisfaction with the manner in which the issue had been handled, noting that the swift response and the implementation of safeguarding actions provided confidence in the Council's procedures. Members agreed that while the book had ultimately been recovered, the lessons learned and the preventative steps now in place would strengthen the Council's arrangements going forward.

Council RESOLVED: That—

- a. the actions undertaken by Officers to prevent a recurrence be noted and endorsed; and
- b. the further safeguarding measures set out in the report be approved.

252. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS, ETC.

The following resolution was passed nem con.

THAT THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER BE AUTHORISED TO SIGN OR WHERE APPROPRIATE, TO HAVE SEALED ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN COUNCIL ANY ORDERS, DEEDS OR DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO GIVE EFFECT TO ANY OF THE MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE REPORTS RECEIVED AT THIS MEETING OR IN ANY RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL.

253. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Full Council meeting is scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 13 November 2025 at 6.30pm.

254. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were informed of the Duck Race to be held on Saturday, 6 September, the Museum Quiz on 19 September and the Mayor's Quiz on Friday, 24 October.

IN PURSUANCE OF THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 S.1(2), THE COMMITTEE RESOLVED TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS FROM THE MEETING AT THIS POINT PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEM(S) 15 BY REASON OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED I.E STAFFING MATTERS.

255. STAFFING MATTERS

Members received an update from the Chair of the Staffing Committee on the recruitment and appointment of staff, noting the appointment of a Deputy Chief Officer who will be starting on 1 December 2025 and a Finance Manager on 20 October 2025.

For both recruitment processes the Chair of Staffing noted that GTC attracted applications from high calibre candidates.