

To Councillors: J Aldridge (*Vice-Chairman*), A Baker (*Chairwoman*), S Compton, B Cummings, M Gemmell Smith, C Jacques, A Layland, M McArthur, S McGregor, V Parker, A Read, M Stockdale, J Streets, S Sumner, B Todd.

Notice is hereby given of a Council Meeting of Edenbridge Town Council to be held in Rickards Hall on 7 July 2025 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
3 July 2025

To assist in the speedy and efficient dispatch of business members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the Town Clerk prior to the day of the meeting. Council Meetings may be recorded.

Any person intending to make recordings is advised to notify the Clerk in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made

Agenda

In view of the confidential nature of Agenda Item 21 to be discussed, the Chairwoman will move that the press and public be excluded from the Chamber. Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 s100 and 102.

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Meeting Papers & Report

1 **To receive Apologies for Absence**

2 **Declaration of Interests or Predetermination**


The disclosure must include the nature of the interest. If an interest becomes apparent to a member during the course of a meeting that has not been disclosed under this item, the member must immediately disclose it.

3 **Public Questions and Statements**

Members of the public, and members with prejudicial interests on items on the Agenda, may make representations, answer, ask questions and give evidence at this meeting in respect of items on the Agenda. (This is the only opportunity for members of the public to make a contribution during the meeting.)

Both public and members are limited to three minutes per person to speak and the total time designated for public questions shall not exceed fifteen minutes unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting.

4 **To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 12 May 2025 (pages 2023-094/1-19).**

 Full Council | 12 May 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-094/1-19)

5 **To receive County and District Councillors Reports**


5.1 **County Councillor**


Following the Planning and Transportation Committee meeting, 09 June, the Town Clerk has written to Cllr Mayall highlighting highways safety issues across the town and as identified in the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). She also provided an update on upcoming speed surveys following her recent meeting with the Highways Community Engagement Officer.


5.2 **District Councillors**

6 **To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings**

6.1 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held 19 May (pages 2023 095/1-3) and 09 June (2023-097/1-8); and Planning and Transport Committee (2023-099/1-2)**

 Planning and Transport | 19 May 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-095/1-3)

 Planning and Transport | 09 June 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-097/1-8)

 Planning and Transport | 30 June 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-099/1-2)

6.2 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 2 June 2025**

(pages 2023-096/1-11).

Open Spaces | 02 June 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-096/1-11)

6.3 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on 13 June 2025 (pages 2023-098/1-4).**

Personnel | 13 June 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-098/1-4)

7 **To receive recommendations from Committees**

7.1 **Personnel Committee Recommendations**

- 7.1.1 **Subject to the return date of the Community Warden, to advertise for a temporary person on a 6-month fixed contract 11 hours per week.**
Do members confirm and ratify subject to the return date of the Community Warden, to advertise for a temporary person on a 6-month fixed contract 11 hours per week?
- 7.1.2 **To confirm the estimated expenditure of £600 for an occupational health assessment for Community Warden for a return to work.**
Do members confirm the estimated expenditure of £600 for an occupational health assessment for Community Warden for a return to work?
- 7.1.3 **To ratify the pay scale increment for the Open Spaces Officer from 17 to 18 in recognition of the ILCA qualification.**
Do members ratify the pay scale increment for the Open Spaces Officer from 17 to 18 in recognition of the ILCA qualification?
- 7.1.4 **To ratify the additional hours (to date 27) for the Tourism Officer to help cover in staff absence; and flexibility to cover as needed over the coming months staff shortage.**
Do members ratify the additional hours (to date 27) for the Tourism Officer to help cover in staff absence; and flexibility to cover as needed over the coming months staff shortage?
- 7.1.5 **To confirm a request for a six-week sabbatical period of leave for one of the grounds personnel.**
Do members confirm a request for a six-week sabbatical period of leave for one of the grounds personnel?
- 7.1.6 **To confirm Ian McPherson permanent contract and align the scales for a skilled grounds person starting at SCP level 7.**
Do members confirm Ian McPherson move to a permanent contract and align the scales for a skilled grounds person starting at SCP level 7?
- 7.1.7 **Kent Pension Fund - Pooling of Town & Parish Council - Formal Consultation - Deadline: 4 August. Members are asked to consider Council's response regarding pooling of funds for town and parish councils.**
Personnel Committee noted this consultation raising the following questions/concerns:

- Is this going to safeguard town and parish councils to changes in the LGPF.
- It is difficult to know or understand what the impact could be.

However, they did not feel qualified to consider a response and referred this to Council and KALC.

Introduction

In preparation for the 31 March 2025 triennial valuation results, the Kent Pension Fund (the Fund) is formally consulting with town and parish councils currently participating in the Fund, and other interested parties (e.g. borough, district and city councils), on proposals to form a Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funding pool (the Pool) specifically for town and parish councils as at 31 March 2025, with a possible universal LGPS pooled employer contribution rate for all involved, operative from 1 April 2026.

Background

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a Defined Benefit pension scheme in which the funding risks lies with the employer and not with the individual members. Employer admission to the LGPS is currently governed by the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended from time to time).

The Fund is not formally segregated so individual employers do not have legal ownership of any of the Fund's assets. However, in order to set contribution rates for individual employers, the Fund Actuary notionally allocates assets in the Fund to employers based on how much has been paid in and out of the Fund in relation to the employer's membership, and allocates a proportionate share of the investment returns achieved on the Fund's assets (which may be positive or negative). Employer contributions are set by calculating the cost of benefits accruing to the employer's employee members (net of employee contributions) and making adjustments as required where the notional asset share is more or less than the value of the employer's liabilities.

Town and parish councils do not participate as employers in the Fund by default as do for example, bodies such as county, borough, district or city councils. Instead town and parish councils may resolve to join the Fund by making a written resolution in accordance with Regulations 2, 3 and Schedule 2 Part 2 of the Regulations LGPS regulations Schedule 2 PART2 2. As a town or parish council participating in the Fund, you have been included in this consultation.

There are currently 61 town or parish councils participating in the Fund who vary in membership, size and by the longevity of their participation in the Fund. However, most are small employers with a small number of active members. In order to deliver greater stability of contributions for employers (which is easier to achieve based on a greater number of members), as well as reduce the burden on the Fund of administering separate contribution rates for all 61 councils, we are proposing to "pool" contributions for town and parish councils. In simple terms this means calculating a single contribution rate across the group.

Further details of the proposals and why we are suggesting pooling are set out in the attached note which has been prepared with input from the Fund Actuary.

Next steps

In advance of the expected consultation on the Funding Strategy Statement, the Fund is offering a formal period of consultation, allowing you to comment, ask questions regarding and to give feedback on the proposed pooling of the individual funds of town and parish councils for funding purposes.

The attached Report explains the options regarding pooling and the consequences of those options.

If, after considering the outcome of the consultation process, the Pension Fund Committee, decide to proceed with entering into a Pooling arrangement it is anticipated that those arrangements will be implemented on and from 1 April 2026 in line with the operative date of the 31 March 2025 triennial valuation results.

How do members want to proceed?

https://www.kentpensionfund.co.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/149165/Kent-Pension-Fund-Funding-Strategy-Statement.pdf

Confidential Annex 1 (omitted from public documents):

8

To receive reports and recommendations from the Town Clerk and Officers; Working Groups; and Delegated Reports

8.1

Clerk's Report

Annual Report 2024-25: Work on this is in progress and it is hoped to published within the next few weeks on our website - <https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/annual-report/>.

Byelaws update: Following our application to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) advising that in its current form there were several clauses conflicting with current legislation, Open Spaces Committee has approved the amendments and they are ready to be resubmitted.

Car parking issues in Council car parks and Audit: Parking audit of several car parks and location took place in May. Data is being collated and a meeting with the Parking Group will be organised in September.

Church House damp works interventions: The Buildings Manager and Town Clerk are monitoring. Once quotes for the works have been received these will be presented to Council.

Civic Medallions: it had been intended to include on this agenda for Members to receive details how to make nominations. However, this has been deferred to September.

Edenbridge Gardens in Bloom competition: Details have been published on the website (<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/edenbridge-gardens-in-bloom-2025-enter-now/>) and has been published on noticeboards and the Edenbridge magazine. Deadline for entries 14 July. The awards presentation event will be on Wednesday 03 September 2025.

Grace Church Community event – thank you: “to the Town Council for their support/permissions etc for the Community Fun Day that we held on Sunday. Stangrove Park proved to be such a great venue for the event and we were pleased to see so many people turn out and have such a fun time. There was a real sense of the community coming together to enjoy themselves. From our point of view all went really well and of course we had great weather, if a little hot”.

Highways Improvement Plan 9HIP) and meeting with Highways: I attended a productive meeting with the Highways Community engagement Officer recently. Action items included:

- Conduct new ATC survey Station Road near Lidl and also other side of the bridge up towards the Swan Lane junction. Booked for one week in September.
- Conduct new ATC speed surveys on Main Road north of the Swan Lane/Swan pub junction and at the entrance/exit to Edenbridge near to the new white gates.
- Review the impact of the new white gates installed on Main Road - conduct

additional speed surveys if necessary.

- Conduct new speed surveys on Crouch House Road south of the railway bridge in both directions.
- Amend the HIP (Highway Improvement Plan) to include the new speed survey data.
- Four Elms Road - two surveys were requested on the HIP - by Medical Centre and before the railway bridge. Check if were done, if not to rebook for September.
- Mill Hill. Agreed to carry out another speed survey between the welcome sign and Blossoms Park/or old hospital site.
- Mill Hill investigate possible white gates again, opposite side of entrance sign to help improve signage.
- Speedwatch - to ensure data reported to Kent Police speedwatch. They can assess for a speed area and then have signs.

Legionella reports: Seven of the Council's buildings have had legionella risk assessment surveys carried out in March. We are now in receipt of the reports, and are yet to go through recommendations. A meeting with Buildings Manager, Open Spaces Officer and Town Clerk is arranged for July.

Local Council Award Scheme: Documents/evidence is currently being compiled ready to submit to NALCs council accreditation award scheme. However, as we need to submit page links in the website, we need the new site to be live first.

Remembrance Sunday: A meeting took place last month with representatives from groups who were involved bringing the event together. It was agreed to follow a similar format to last year. There a debrief and some recommendations to carry forward to this year which were noted. In addition, this year's event will clash with the Bonfire Society event the evening beforehand so they will not be able to provide the usual marshals for road closures. It was agreed to approach local groups for marshal volunteers initially. The road closure cannot be applied for until Council has renewed its insurance, so will be applied for early July. NHS Properties has confirmed that access again, and that they will ensure the area is suitably clear. A follow-up meeting has been arranged for late September.

Rickards Hall redecorate and repairs work: Following March Council confirming contractor to carry out the work, the appointment has been made with works booked to take place from 04 August, expected to take two weeks. The contractor is aware of a couple of bookings which can be accommodated.

SDC CIL Bids: We have submitted two bids: (1) Bandstand at Stangrove Park; (2) Pavilion heating and hot water system replacement. The former did not pass validation, but has been selected for consideration under SDC's 15% allocation fund – additional information has been submitted. The later bid for the Pavilion passed validation and was successful at the CIL Board meeting on 02 July – this needs to be ratified by Cabinet on 15 July.

Staffing: The office is currently has been down two personnel on long term sick. Delighted one returned mid June.

Millennium Wood trail: In addition to the main walks, we are working on a new nature trail aimed at children. New signage, rubbings and a new notice are now at Millennium Wood. <https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/tag/mowshurst/>

Website: Progress for the new site is progress.

8.2

Community Warden

The Community Warden (CW) has been on long-term leave since March so the office and groundstaff have been covering some of the work such as reporting fly-tipping, graffiti, liaising with the police and agencies, and volunteers.

One of the volunteer litter pickers has volunteered to run the litter picks, there were two in June and a couple more scheduled for July.

The Groundstaff has started to rotate the portable Speed Indicator Device (SID) between the five approved sites.

Speedwatch will start up soon, Cllr Stockdale working with officers will co-ordinate sessions and upload data. We hope to be in receipt of the new speed device early August.

The CW grant front Great Stone Bridge Trust is up for renewal with an application to be submitted.

9

Draft Local Plan - update

Last month, Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Layland, McArthur, Stockdale, Town Clerk and Planning and Admin Officer, meet with Sevenoaks District Council officers to discuss the emerging Local Plan and site allocations, and Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP).

The meeting focused on Edenbridge's Local Plan and the IDP catch-up, discussing the new local plan program adopted in February due to changes in government policy; this included a 63% increase in housing targets. Key dates include Reg 18 consultation in autumn 2023 and Reg 19 final draft by summer 2026. The housing target for the district is 17,235 units over 15 years. Concerns were raised about the impact on local infrastructure, including pedestrian crossings and the leisure centre. The need for updated evidence bases, such as green belt assessments, and the importance of securing funding for infrastructure projects were emphasised.

The Local Plan programme, back in February, members adopted a new local plan programme, noting the new government policy and the amended National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December which had quite a few fundamental changes. For Sevenoaks District this meant , a new housing target which had increased by 63%, and new concepts with Green Belt introducing grey belt, Other elements include a different approach to transport, focus on health and well-being.

An updated timetable was submitted to government in the spring, and the key milestone dates are now:

- Reg 18(C) consultation this autumn. Already been Reg 18 twice before, but none of those previous options met the new targets.
- Reg 19, summer 2026.
- Submission for examination end of 2026 to meet the December 2026 deadline.

After this, the planning system changes, and SDC wants ensure a Plan within this current planning system.

A call for sites earlier 2025 to place; it was quite specific asking for brownfield, urban or potential grey belt which was defined as being in a sustainable location. These are in the process of being assessed.

Housing Allocation and Local Plan priorities discussion included the importance of meeting housing targets and the challenges of finding suitable sites, with a focus on grey belt and non-AONB sites.

Concerns about the housing allocation numbers from the previous Reg 18 and the impact on Edenbridge was raised and a focus on defending specific sites.

The new overall housing figure had increased significantly:

- From 703 per annum to 1149 per annum.
- Total now 17,245 units district-wide target over 15 years.
- Specific numbers for Edenbridge are not yet determined, but was noted previous Reg 18 was over 1,600.
- Pedham Place had an allocation of 2,500 but this is set in the National Landscapes which government are keen to protect., but is likely to have to include in the Plan to meet the numbers.

It was noted the importance of sequential development, with larger towns like Sevenoaks and Swanley expected to take a larger share of the housing need. However, ETC said this did not necessarily reflect the percentage increase on an area, Edenbridge was looking at close to 50% increase.

It was acknowledge that the targets were challenging and finding suitable sites, with a focus on grey belt, and non AONB sites. There is something in the NPPF that says you can have a lower housing requirement, but have to demonstrate really cannot meet the numbers, district. However, these then need to be accommodated in neighbouring area which there isn't capacity.

There were constructive conversations including discussion for infrastructure needs for the town. Agenda item 15 will open the discussion on this for members.

Do members have any questions or comments?

10 **Service Level Agreements (SLA) payments for 2025-26: to confirm release of funds**

The Council currently has two ongoing SLA agreements which have been budgeted. Both SLAs do need update Agreement terms prepared for future an will be looked at later this year, and presented to Finance and Governance Committee. The Museum has requested Council confirms its commitment and review dates, which came up during the Lease negotiations.

10.1 **Eden Valley Museum £6,500**


Do members confirm the annual SLA payment of £6,500?

 Annex 2: SLA Letter April 2025.pdf

10.2 **HOUSE £9,000**

Cllr Baker and the Town Clerk attended a meeting with WKH Youth Services about a year ago when it was noted that there changes to services in Swanley and Sevenoaks town, but wouldn't affect Edenbridge and they planned to delivering the HOUSE youth project and some detached provision in Edenbridge in 2025/6. However, we have not heard if this remains the case. Attached is a copy of the quarterly review for March.

Do members confirm the annual SLA payment of £9,000, subject to new progress report received and clarification of services for the current year, and invoice? It is proposed that the councillors Baker and Todd, Youth reps, be satisfied with the report.

 Annex 3: Quarterly Report - All areas Jan to March.pdf

11 **Matters arising from the minutes for report and not elsewhere on the agenda**

11.1 **Insurance**

11.1.1 **To confirm Council arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks and the annual expenditure (2025-26) of £16,217.27.**

May Council meeting approved an estimated expenditure of up to £18,217.27. However, Gallagher have been able to secure a similar fee arrangement, based on a Long Term Agreement Option. In order to ensure rate stability, Edenbridge Town Council may choose to set up a three-year binding long term agreement (LTA) with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited, at an LTA premium of £16,217.27. This means Edenbridge Town Council will commit to keep their policy with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited for the period of the LTA, which will expire 3 years from the original inception date.


In return Hiscox Insurance Company Limited agrees not to increase the annual insurance premium, except for the following reasons:

- When there are changes to the material facts concerning your policy.
- Policy changes where the sums insured for assets covered against loss or damage are increased or decreased.
- The annual inflationary increase (index linking) applied to the sums insured for the assets covered against loss or damage. *The above fee will increase each year accordingly.
- The imposition by the Government of a higher rate of Insurance Premium Tax (IPT).

We have been trying since May to obtain three comparison quotes, but either brokers/insurance companies have not responded despite chasing or are not as competitive. The above quote is under the Council's approved amount which was based on last year's fee and index increases; a saving on resolution of £2,616.73

Do members confirm the insurance cover and premium for 2025-26 £16,217.27?

 Confidential Annex 4 (omitted from public documents):

 Confidential Annex 5 (omitted from public documents):

 Confidential Annex 6 (omitted from public documents):

- 11.1.2 **To confirm a new three-year agreement with Gallaghers (broker) and Hiscox (insurer) insurance.**
Do members confirm the continuation with Gallaghers and Hiscox on a new three-year Longer Term Agreement?

- 11.2 **Leases: to receive updates on the progress of:-**

- 11.2.1 **Eden Valley Museum Lease renewal.**

Following the May meeting, representatives from the Lease Negotiating Group and the Town Clerk met with representatives from the Eden Valley Museum early June to discuss the new Lease and finalise outstanding queries. The outcome of the meeting and changes were submitted to the Council's solicitor for inclusion and final draft of the Lease.

The Museum had requested, if possible, for the Lease to be completed and signed by 13th June, to meet its deadline for Arts Council accreditation. I am pleased to confirm that this was achieved. The Lease also incorporates new layout drawings for Church House, clearly defining the areas included within the Lease.

Post-Signing Matters Raised by the Museum's Solicitor

The Museum is responsible for registering the new Lease with the Land Registry. They have engaged a commercial property solicitor who has raised three key issues:

1. Old Lease Cancellation

- The previous Lease, which expired on 31st March 2025, named trustees who are now deceased.
- The Eden Valley Museum Trust, the named tenant in that Lease, was dissolved on 31st March 2025.
- To tidy up the legal position, an application must be made to the Land Registry to cancel the registration of the old Lease against both the leasehold and the landlord's freehold title.

Action Required:

As landlord, the Town Council must initiate this cancellation process. The Council's solicitor has been instructed accordingly and has advised the Museum that there is a £20 Land Registry fee for this process.

Decision point:

The Council is asked to consider whether the additional legal fees associated with cancelling the old Lease should be paid by the Council or passed to the Museum.

2. Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) Return

- In order to register the new Lease, the Museum (through their solicitor) is required to submit an SDLT return to HMRC.
- Although no SDLT is payable on the passing rent, submission of the return is a legal requirement where there is any transaction for value.
- The Land Registry will not register the new Lease without confirmation that this has been completed.

Current Status:

It is understood that this return has been submitted by the Museum.

Note:

Responsibility for registering the new Lease rests with the Museum.

3. Charity Provisions in the Lease

- The Museum's solicitor has advised that the new Lease does not contain specific "charity provisions" normally required to satisfy the Charity Commission's requirements for charities holding an interest in land.
- In particular, they reference the need for a statement under Land Registration Rules 2003, Rule 179, recently modified to include:

"The land transferred will as a result of this transfer be held by a charity and the restrictions imposed by sections 117 - 121 of the Charities Act 2011 will apply to the land (subject to section 117(3) of the Act)."

- I sought clarification from the Council's solicitor as this wording implies a transfer of land, which is not the case—the Museum is a tenant, not being granted ownership of the land or building.

Council's Solicitor's Response:

While the term "transfer" was used in error, the grant of a Lease is classed as a "disposal" of land, similar to how taking out a mortgage is considered a disposal.

There are various standard clauses applicable when a charity takes property, depending on the charity's constitution. However, as the Council's solicitor does not act for the Museum, they are not in a position to advise on the Museum's internal governance or confirm which charity-specific clauses are appropriate.

Additional Legal Work:

To accommodate the requested charity provisions, a **Deed of Variation to the Lease**

would be required, incurring further legal fees.

Summary of Current Position

- New Lease signed and master copy sent to Council's solicitor.
- Instruction given to Council's solicitor to cancel the old Lease with the Land Registry. Museum notified of the £20 Land Registry fee for cancellation.
- Town Council's legal fees for the new Lease to date: £4,415.
- Deed of Variation could be prepared to include charity provisions if required.

Council is asked to consider:

- 1. Who should bear the legal costs of cancelling the old Lease?**
 - **Town Council**
 - **Museum**
 - **Costs shared**
- 2. Whether to proceed with a Deed of Variation to incorporate the charity provisions, and accept any further legal costs?**

How do members want to proceed?

11.2.2 **Forge Musical Theatre Group new lease.**

The reviewed and edited lease has been sent to the Forge Musical Theatre Group in May. We are currently trying to confirm a date to meet and discuss the draft Lease again.

Do members have any questions?

11.3 **Pavilion update on works:**

Pavilion Heating, Boilers, and Water Supply – update and next steps

At the May meeting, Council resolved to appoint Intrinsic to oversee the preparation of the heating and boilers specification, manage the tender process, report on outcomes, and oversee delivery of the project. The appointment of the successful contractor will be made by the Town Council in line with its procurement procedures. This project is to be funded from the Council's buildings earmarked reserves.

11.3.1 **New replacement heating and hot water boilers.**

Intrinsic attended last month (five hour site visit) to undertake its survey. We are now waiting the specification, and will then discuss the tender timescales and advertising of this including on the .gov Contract Finder site, with Intrinsic.

The SDC CIL Board meeting on 2 July, Council was successful with its application of £110k towards the Pavilion upgrade including the replacement heating and hot water boilers; this is yet to be ratified by the SDC Cabinet.

Do members have any questions?

11.3.2 **Water tanks and legionella controls.**

Council also approved expenditure for sample testing of the five water tanks at the Pavilion for legionella. Following this, the attending engineer reported that the tanks were significantly stagnated and has provided a quotation of £1,439 plus VAT to clean and disinfect the tanks.

In addition, the engineer recommended that the Council consider commissioning a site survey to assess the feasibility of converting the Pavilion's water supply to a direct mains feed. This would eliminate the risk of stagnation and remove the need for legionella testing of the tanks in future.

Given the scope of the upcoming heating and boiler survey, it was considered both timely and practical to explore the conversion to mains water alongside that work. An initial estimate for this additional survey was in the region of £1,500, which was presented to the Open Spaces Committee in June. Committee approved the expenditure to coincide the two surveys.

However, in the meantime Intrinsic has provided a quotation of £4,325 for a more comprehensive feasibility study and option appraisal. This would cover both the conversion to mains water and a review of the existing domestic cold-water storage and distribution system. A copy of this quotation is attached (confidential).

It is understood that a mains feed already supplies the water tanks, though the tanks themselves remain in use. It is not clear why this is necessary, but it may be that the tanks are required to ensure adequate supply for the Pavilion's 40 showers operating simultaneously, as the mains supply alone may not be sufficient.

An alternative approach would be to seek the views and quotations of a couple of independent plumbers regarding the feasibility and cost of conversion to a full mains supply.

It had been hoped that, subject to the outcome of the feasibility survey, if conversion to mains water was viable, the tanks would not need to be cleaned in the meantime. However, given the time that has passed and the imminent start of the rugby and football seasons, the tanks will now need to be drained, cleaned, and disinfected regardless. The potential change to mains supply would therefore become a separate, future project.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider how they wish to proceed regarding:

- **Approval of Intrinsic's quotation for the comprehensive feasibility study and option appraisal.**
- **Whether to seek independent plumber quotations as an alternative.**
- **Arrangements for the cleaning and disinfection of the existing water tanks in advance of the sports season and the approval of £1,439.**

How do members want to proceed?

 Confidential Annex 7 (omitted from public documents):

11.4 **To receive an update on the project for new Market Archway at Market Yard car park access road**

There is no update since the last meeting, other than the archway is in construction stage at the blacksmiths. The gazebos are yet to be purchase but we have been looking at designs and branding.

Do members have any questions?

11.5 **Events updates**

11.5.1 **Chairman's Reception**

Invitations have been sent out – so far we have had 65 replies. All other arrangements are in hand including the caterer. This year's theme is celebrating the work of local organisations, the power of partnerships, and the Council's 130th anniversary.

Do members have any questions?

11.5.2 **VJ Day 15 August - Flag raising**

We are planning a similar flag raising event to the VE 80 commemorations on 15 August to commemorate VJ Day - end of World War II in Asia, it marks the day on which Japan surrendered to the Allied forces on 15 August 1945. We will be raising a flag, there be a reading given by Cllr Aldridge, and we hope to have a representative from the Town Band again to play the bugle - Last Poste and Reveille The RBL with attend with its Standard. There will be a two minute silence to remember those who fought bravely and made sacrifices for freedom, those who were lost to love ones and those who survived. Members of the public are invited to join us.

Do Members have any questions?

11.5.3 **Edenbridge Gardens In Bloom - presentation Wednesday 3 September**

11.6 **Walks leaflets wallet - to consider the expenditure for bespoke wallets or DL envelopes to hold up to 10 walks funded through CIL Tourism and Walks award - budget for 500 wallets £1,250 or 1,000 DL envelopes £510**

The new walks leaflets are proving very popular. We are now looking at the three trails, updating them and incorporating the new banding.

When we first looked at revamping the walks leaflets, we consider booklet or individual leaflets, and went with the later. However, as people do like to vary their walks, they often take several and a form of keeping them together would be useful. The Darrent Valley walks have a nice wallet which fits all of its walks. We have investigate similar, and also a bespoke DL envelope, short side opening. Price options:

1. Wallets/walk holders based on 200 holders - between £350-£450, plus an additional £150 to make the dye. Potentially, each holders could cost £3, though less for more printed (£2.50 approx. for 500).
2. DL envelope (bespoke artwork) - £509.20 per 1,000 (50p each). Artwork would need a 4-5mm white boarder round the edge; cost would be more for artwork running off the edge.

The benefit to be able to provide an option to keep the walks leaflets together are to be able to issue them in neat packs, kept together, is more professional, and useful to those who collect and use several of the leaflets.

Members are asked to confirm if there is a need for this, and if they support which option wallets or DL envelopes?

12 **OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision**

12.1 **To ratify the expenditure for AI web-based apps**

12.1.1 **ChatGPT - business annual membership three users £452.45**

ChatGPT has been used recently to help provide some useful summaries of reports and

transcript of the Annual Town Meeting. During this learning process it became apparent that there were various limitations without the business model. Moving to the business model removes any use from the ChatGPT training model.

ChatGPT Business enhances the Open Platform by providing organisations with secure, enterprise-grade AI tools that integrate seamlessly into their workflows. It offers advanced conversational AI with robust data privacy, administrative controls, and the ability to customise AI behaviour to suit business needs.

Benefits of this includes:

- Improved productivity.
- Maintaining control over data - Chat GPT promotes data protected and privacy controls.
- It is web-base app, and is not integrated in Microsoft Sharepoint so council files are not shared on it unless we choose to upload them.
- Enables colleagues to work on same document thus able to share ideas with work helping to develop new ideas and improved processes.

We are all learning with AI, but importantly we need to ensure we follow processes and procedures to ensure safe use. We are reflecting this in our policies and subscribing to ensure correct controls.

Do members ratify the expenditure for a three-user business annual licence, £452.45?

12.1.2 **Otter annual subscription £375**

ChatGPT does not provide audio transcripts. Otter is also a web-base app providing a solution for recording, transcribing, and summarising meetings and conversations. It saves time, improves accuracy, and ensures important information is captured and easily accessible. By automating note-taking and producing real-time transcripts. We have found this useful for some training webinars and meetings. Whilst it is not always quite accurate, it provides a good starting point saving officers time with notes. Recordings are deleted once no-longer needed.

Do Members ratify the annual subscription for five users of £375.

12.2 **To receive amendments and adopt the updated Digital IT Cyber Security Policy and Strategy to reflect use of AI**

With the growing use of AI technologies (like ChatGPT, Otter, and emerging planning application tools) Council needs to include formal recognition in both policy and strategy to address privacy, GDPR compliance, ethical use, and cybersecurity risks.

12.1.1 and 12.1.2 includes amendments to recently adopted Digital IT and Cyber Security policy and strategy to incorporate AI governance, data protection, and security assurance into the current documents.

12.2.1 **Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy**

Do members approve the amendments to the Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy to reflect the use of AI?

 Confidential Annex 8 (omitted from public documents):

12.2.2 **Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy**

Do members approve the amendments to the Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy to reflect the use of AI?

12.3 **To receive and adopt the new Code of Conduct**

I have for some time wanted to review and reconfirm the council's code of conduct. Parish and towns often follow the district council's, which has been the case for the Town Council - the current code of conduct here is dated 2016. Whilst members have reconfirmed this over the years. Having contacted the Monitoring Officer at SDC, he has confirmed the SDC this year the Council adopted the Local Government Association's (LGA)Code in full. Having reviewed and reflected to this Council, and noting the much clearer clarity of declarations of interests and representation at meetings, I attached a new Code of Conduct which I ask members to adopt.

Do members confirm and adopt the new Code of Conduct reflecting the LGA model code?

Confidential Annex 10 (omitted from public documents):

12.4 **To consider piloting an AI planning platform - Gpeto - initial monthly expenditure £25 (restricted to officer users; additional costs for all councillors)**

Gpeto is designed to help parish clerks and councillors deal with planning applications more easily. It allows users to upload application documents into the platform, which then checks the documents against a large number of criteria for issues and errors. You can:

- See exactly where any application sits within your parish.
- Instantly overlay key layers like conservation zones, flood risk, listed buildings, greenbelt (60 Data layers).
- AI Validation: Automatically checks if the application meets validation rules.
- AI Assessment: Flag policy conflicts (national, local, and your own Neighbourhood Plan). Answering 'Does it match against the LDP, NFFP, NP policy etc'
- Drawings and Reports: Labels and Identifies drawings clearly. Creates clear, planning-based PDF outputs in just a click

Gpeto has already saved parish clerks and councillors hours each week, giving them additional clarity and a stronger voice in the planning process with the LDP.

Cllr Aldridge, the Planning and Admin Officer and myself recently attended a demo. It has useful mapping tool with different layers to areas for example, boundaries, flood zones, AONB and Green Belt, conservation areas, listed buildings. It also collates the planning documents and looks at local areas planning policies and concerns. It would also be an excellent planning training tool getting to understand nuances of planning.

The AI platform has been successfully piloted with several parishes. However, as a larger council, they are keen to expand the selected trials to aid development - we have already identified a couple of possible changes to suit us which they are looking at. We have been offered a discounted rate of £25pcm (£300 annually). If after a few months use, we would like to move to a yearly subscription for budget purposes it is recommend discussing it between 3-6 months, to negotiate and firm the annual fee.

Initially, the pilot would be officer use (though we can share the access with nominated councillor/s but this would not be good practice). If it was consider a useful tool, a user licence for the councillors on the planning committee could be set up for a one off fee (cost to be confirmed approx.£250-500 for 12 members), plus a monthly read only fee of £35.

Total monthly cost, if it was extended to councillors, £60 pcm. This is a heavily discounted fee as we would part of a few selected trials to aid development.

Do members have any questions, and are asked to confirm a trail of Gpeto AI Planning platform with monthly expenditure of £25, or £60 pcm to provide a view only access for

the planning committee members, and to be reviewed in 3-6 months?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vs1p7A-dixQ>

12.5

Spatial Settlement Plan - to consider the expenditure of £4,950 to create a specific SSP for Edenbridge to help support responses to the emerging Local Plan (and possible integrate with a future Neighbourhood Plan)

Spatial Settlement Plans (SSPs) are strategic land-use planning documents that help to guide how areas are organised, developed, and managed within a specific geographic area. They also provide a useful tool for responding to planning applications and the emerging Local Plan. In addition, if a Neighbourhood Plan is considered in the future, it would be a supporting evidence document.

Key Features of Spatial Settlement Plans

- **Settlement Hierarchy:** They often define a hierarchy of settlements — for example, identifying key towns as growth hubs, while protecting the character.
- **Land Use Designations:** Specific zones may be allocated for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, or conservation uses.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** Plans consider necessary transport, utilities, schools, healthcare, and other essential services. Looks at transport links (roads, paths, cycleways) connect different parts of the area and helps avoid problems like overcrowding, traffic congestion, or environmental damage.
- **Environmental Considerations:** They incorporate policies to protect landscapes, biodiversity, flood plains, and heritage assets.
- **Community Vision:** Ideally, SSPs are shaped with community input, ensuring they reflect local needs and aspirations.

Funding could come from either the professional fees or contingences budget.

Do Members have any questions? Do members consider a spatial settlement plan beneficial and approve the expenditure of £4,950 to create a SSP for Edenbridge?

<https://www.oneillhomer.co.uk/services/settlement-plans>

13

Devolution and local government reorganisation

Extract from update from SDC: **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

As you may be aware, independently of all other Councils, and without prior notification, Kent County Council had written to the Minister to request an extension to the deadline for submitting local government reorganisation plans for Kent & Medway.

It is our understanding the Minister will not be accepting that request and continues to expect Kent & Medway to submit their plans for LGR by the end of November this year.

Work is underway to procure a strategic partner to support all of the Kent & Medway authorities, to produce and submit their plans in accordance with the requirements the Government has set out. That procurement is expected to conclude at the end of this month. The costs of contracting the strategic partner will be met by funding provided from Government.

From that point forward it is anticipated that a project plan will be developed with clear timelines and work-streams to inform future decision making. It is increasingly clear that work required to manage the LGR process will need greater investment of Council's resources in terms of both staff and money.

In terms of progress in the wider Kent area on geographies that they are willing to support and put forward to Government, progress has been limited. As set out in the report to Council in

March this year, reorganisation in West Kent continues to be focussed on a three unitary council model, with a West Kent area of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone. This remains subject to the data and evidence that will arise with the support of the strategic partner, the views collected from consultation with residents, the decisions of Councillors and ultimately the decision made by Government.

Since receiving the feedback from Government to the interim plan, which I have shared previously, they have confirmed they very much remain open to securing a devolution deal for Kent & Medway. Whilst there are no commitments to any particular timeline, it remains an important part of the LGR process to put Kent & Medway in a place to secure the powers and critically the funding that is now directed through Mayors and Strategic Authorities. Announcements in the Spending Review emphasised the point, the areas with devolution and those able to secure integrated financial settlements will increasingly be best place to secure improvements for residents and businesses in their region.

On 23 June the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk attend the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) event on devolution and reorganisation - Powershift 2025. It was an informative event with a good selection of speakers from Baroness Sharon Taylor, and representatives from research analysts, other councils and NALC. To summarise briefly, they stressed the importance of communication between parish/town councils and principal authorities, urging councils to report issues to NALC and the government. There was discussion around the complexities of asset transfers during the formation of unitary authorities, suggesting that local management of assets may be more effective. They also mention a King's Fund survey showing higher trust in local councillors compared to district or county councillors.

There was an excellent presentation from Yeovil Town Council discussed the council's evolution and devolution journey over the past five years. She highlighted the council's expansion from managing community events to taking on additional services, including the Oval Recreation Centre, Westlands Entertainment Venue, Yeovil Country Park, and open spaces. The Council faced significant challenges, including tight timescales, budget constraints, and legal complexities. Despite these, they successfully transferred services, maintained community engagement, and improved local facilities. The Council's budget increased significantly, over £8m.

Do Members have any comments?

14 **SDC Assets - to note update**

Council May meeting requested several assets in the town to be submitted to SDC for the Community Asset Register. This has not yet happened, and will be a project over the coming months.

Do members have any questions?

15 **Infrastructure Development Plan and needs for Edenbridge**

At the meeting last month with SDC officers, we requested that the Town Council be able to provide input to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), this identifies strategic infrastructure needs to support growth.

Existing infrastructure will be covered in community facilities policy in the Local Plan. These should be retained wherever possible, unless there's a very good reason not to, in terms of improvements to and new infrastructure.

New projects would be identified in the IDP. This sits outside of the Local Plan almost as a sister document to the Plan, but each go hand in hand, so they're intrinsically linked. The IDP

sets out the infrastructure projects that are needed to support the growth.

Infrastructure need takes a baseline view at what infrastructure is existing and what needs improving and then put that into projects, working with the infrastructure providers and finding other funding opportunities as well. Developers are expected to fund any funding gaps through S106 agreements if it's new infrastructure. Ideally though, the developer would provide it on site, so to provide the land and the facility.

Infrastructure priorities and funding points raised to be included and action for the Council to feed back to SDC on:

- List of infrastructure priorities for Edenbridge to inform the IDP and ensure that key projects are considered.
- View to be included in the IDP and the importance of identifying strategic infrastructure needs, such as roads, railways, and community facilities.
- IDP helps with potential for securing funding for infrastructure projects through S106 agreements and the importance of having a clear list of priorities.

A meeting has been set up with the Council's Planning Consultant to discuss this, mindful of sites proposed in the Reg 18 (2) consultation and the changes to the NPPF. It is important, that whatever the outcome of the emerging Local Plan, that we have not ignored or considered infrastructure and try to secure the best possible outcomes for Edenbridge.

SDC has provided the Council with a short time frame to respond, **members are asked to approve the Local Plan Working Group to make representation to SDC on infrastructure needs for consideration of the IDP and emerging Local Plan Reg 18(2)?**

Do members have any questions?

16 **To resolve delegated powers to Planning and Transportation Committee for July and August**
Do members confirm to resolve delegated powers to Planning and Transportation Committee for July and August?

17 **Consultations**

17.1 **Proposal to expand provision at Broomhill Bank School, Tunbridge Wells - Kent County Council - deadline 18 July.**

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/broomhill-bank-school-expansion>

17.2 **National Highways and Transport Survey 2025-26 - Kent County Council - February 2026**

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/nht-2025-26>

18 **To receive reports from councillors who have attended meetings of outside bodies**

19 **To consider any press releases**

20 **Matters for future agendas**

In view of the confidential nature of Agenda Item 21 to be discussed, the Chairwoman will move that the press and public be excluded from the Chamber. Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 and the

- 21 **[CONFIDENTIAL] Land outside Old Police Station: to receive an update on the Transfer of part of registered title and Deed of Covenant**
Confidential item omitted from public papers.

- 22 **Date of next meeting - 08 September 2025**
Items to consider outside the meeting (and will be report on the September agenda):

1) To approve additional hours for the Communications Officer to complete the new website ready for early autumn:

All the pages we wanted have been set up and most pages have some info if not all the info on them. The bulk of the time is now going to be needed to be spent on uploading documents,

If we're aiming at September launch extra hours will be needed. We are estimating a total of 16-20 hours; approx. budget £400-500.

Do members approve the additional budget for the website?

2) To approve the children's fun fair return to Stangrove Park – open 8 August two weeks.

The children's fun fair is keen to attend again this summer. They would be charged two weeks for fun fair, and we still hold the deposit from May. Play Days are happy for the fair to be at the park at the same time as its days.

Do Members confirm the children's fun fair for two weeks, opening 8 August?

3) Request for the Council office to sell charity post cards with all the proceeds to the Museum

A resident has produced postcards with paintings of various buildings in the town, they are provide free, cost £1.50 each to purchase. All proceeds to the museum.

Do members support the postcards sold for all proceeds to the museum.be sold at the council office?