

To Councillors: J Aldridge (Chairman), A Baker, 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 Forward Planning Committee to be held in Rickards Hall on 29 September 2025 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
24 September 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

1	Apologies for Absence	2
2	Declarations of interests or predetermination	2
3	To receive, approve and sign the minutes of the Forward Planning Meeting held on 14 October 2024 (pages 2023-068/1-3).	2
4	The Strategic Plan and Objectives 2024-27	2
	4.1 To receive the updated Programme of Projects and Aspirations	2
5	Devolution and Reorganisation and to consider impact on council budgets	2
6	Emerging Local Plan and consider budgets for advertising the Plan, and professional reports, and professional fees.	3
7	To make recommendation to the Finance Committee any additional increases to the budget and Precept to cover any proposals or projects in the Strategic Plan	3
	7.1 To receive a summary of the 10 and 30 year maintenance plan	3
	7.2 To receive a copy of the end-of-year reserves position	4
	7.3 To make recommendations to the Finance Committee for 2026-27 budget	4
8	Date of next meeting - tbc 2026	4


Meeting Papers & Report

1 **Apologies for Absence**

2 **Declarations 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 **To receive, approve and sign the minutes of the Forward Planning Meeting held on 14 October 2024 (pages 2023-068/1-3).**

 Forward Planning | 14 October 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-068/1-3)

4 **The Strategic Plan and Objectives 2024-27**

The Strategic Plan and Objectives sets out the vision for the Council including future projects, aspirations, and infrastructure for the town. The programme and forward planning sets a time frame and is updated annually. A copy is attached of the document with an update on the projects and aspirations.

 Annex 1: 250929 updated 240701 adopted ETC Strategic Plan.pdf

4.1 **To receive the updated Programme of Projects and Aspirations**

See pages 7-9.

Do members have any questions? Do members have any comments or considerations?

5 **Devolution and Reorganisation and to consider impact on council budgets**

In March, after the government confirmed in February that Kent was not included in its Devolution plan, the leaders of Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, and Tunbridge Wells councils wrote to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution. They expressed a collective wish to develop a proposal for local government

The councils favour a three-unitary model, which best meets the Government's criteria. A full proposal is due by 28 November. If approved, enabling legislation will be required, with

This has raised questions for parish and town councils about the future of community assets. Some councils are already seeking to acquire and manage assets locally. Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) has therefore developed a Disposal Policy setting out how surplus assets can be transferred.

Reminder of May 2025 Council Report

- Asset Categories: SDC classifies assets as operational, surplus, or strategic; all may be considered for transfer.
- Future Authority Risk: There are concerns that future unitary authorities could revalue assets, potentially for development ("asset dumping").
- Financial Impact: Any transfer will affect T&PC budgets and likely require a precept increase.

Recommended Actions:

Members are asked to consider the following actions to protect community interests and prepare financially.

Members are asked to:

1. **Nominate a Working Group to prepare a strategy assessing the potential impact of local government reorganisation and to propose risk-mitigation measures.**
2. **Recommend to the Finance Committee the creation of a new Earmarked Reserve (EMR) to meet legal and professional costs associated with any future Community Asset Transfer business plans. (Item 7.3(3)).**

6

Emerging Local Plan and consider budgets for advertising the Plan, and professional reports, and professional fees.

The emerging Local Plan Regulation 18(3) will be open for consultation from **23 October to 11 December 2025**. Following this consultation, Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) intends to proceed to the Regulation 19 consultation in summer 2026, with submission for examination by the end of 2026 to meet the December 2026 deadline. If this deadline is not met, Sevenoaks District would enter the new unitary authority without an adopted Local Plan.

Members are asked to consider and confirm recommendations to the Finance Committee for part of its budget recommendations:

1. **Budgets for consultation-event promotion for both the Regulation 18(3) consultation in 2025, and the Regulation 19 consultation in 2026.**
2. **Budgets in 2026–27 for professional fees to support representation at the Examination Hearing.**
3. **Creation of an Earmarked Reserve (EMR) for professional reports - such as a Spatial Settlement Plan - once Local Plan sites are identified, to guide infrastructure planning.**
4. **Increasing the Neighbourhood Plan EMR to ensure sufficient funds for future requirements.**

Budget levels to be consider under item 7.3.

7

To make recommendation to the Finance Committee any additional increases to the budget and Precept to cover any proposals or projects in the Strategic Plan

Members are asked to consider the timescales and planning for upcoming projects, and whether funding allocations should be included in the 2026–27 budget to support their delivery. This may involve both short-term and long-term funding, with implications for the forthcoming budget and longer-term financial planning. Recommendations from this discussion will be forwarded to the Finance Committee for inclusion in its budget calculations. The draft budget and precept recommendations will then be presented to Council at the December meeting for consideration.

Where appropriate, applications will also be submitted to the CIL Board for infrastructure maintenance or new infrastructure projects. For example, the Bandstand and the replacement playground at March Green which the Open Spaces Committee has already supported submitting these bids to the December CIL Board.


7.1

To receive a summary of the 10 and 30 year maintenance plan

Attached is a copy of the 1&10 and 30-year maintenance plans for information, illustrating the current proposals (note: the detailed 1&10-year plans are on separate spreadsheet and not included here). The plans have been updated to reflect feedback from the recent building surveys, although the full Church House report is still awaited. Marsh Green playground remains in the forecasts as the CIL bid is yet to be considered. It is also

anticipated that the cost of the playground will exceed £54k, although the CIL bid will request the full amount, following pre discussions with potential providers.

Members are asked to note the plans. Do members have any questions?


 Annex 2: 250924 1&10 and 30 buildings and open spaces plans.pdf

7.2

To receive a copy of the end-of-year reserves position

Attached is a copy of the end-of-year reserves position. During 2025-26 there will be some movement of the reserves notably from the Buildings Reserves which has funded additional costs to Rickards Hall redecoration and floor repairs; costs relating to the Pavilion heating and hot water investigations and professional reports, and some projects carried-over 2024-25 with delivery in the current year. The movement in reserves will be reported to the Finance Committee.

Do Members have any questions?

 Annex 3: 2024-25-EOY-annual-reserve-summary.pdf

7.3

To make recommendations to the Finance Committee for 2026-27 budget

Members are asked to consider and confirm the following recommendations to Finance Committee, and suggested budgets:

1. **Buildings EMR - To replenish some of the spend in 2025-26.**
2. **Equipment, tools, & vehicles reserves - To increase IT equipment replacements and future replacement vehicles.**
3. **New EMR for reorganisation and community assets.**
4. **Strategic Plan Projects EMR (created 2025) - to add to the new EMR to enable delivery of future projects.**

Following agenda item 6, to confirm recommended budget levels:

1. **New Local Plan budget - To fund consultation events and Examination Hearing representation**
2. **New Local Plan EMR for professional reports - such as a Spatial Settlement Plan - once Local Plan sites are identified, to guide infrastructure planning.**
3. **Increase the Neighbourhood Plan EMR to ensure sufficient funds for future requirements.**

Do Members have any other recommendations?

8

Date of next meeting - tbc 2026

The annual calendar of events is yet to be presented to Full Council. Forward Planning Steering Group usually meets annually, with additional meets called where necessary.