

Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held in Rickards Hall on 27 October 2025 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker (*Chairwoman*), Alan Layland, Angela Read, Michael Stockdale, Jeff Streets, Stephen Sumner, Bob Todd

In attendance: Town Clerk, Buildings Manager; Councillor Councillor R Mayall; and no members of the public. There were no representatives from the press.

19:30 Meeting opened.

1 To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted, from Cllrs Aldridge, Compton, Cummings, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, McArthur, McGregor, and Parker.

2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

None.

3 Public Questions and Statements

19:31 *The Chair closed the meeting.*

None.

19:31 *The Chair reopened the meeting.*

4 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 8 September 2025 (pages 2023-105/1-11).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 08 September, and that they be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record, 105/1-11.

5 To receive County and District Councillors Reports

5.1 County Councillor

19:34 *Cllr Mayall joined the meeting.*

County Councillor Mayall mentioned he had met with residents from NEDRA recently who had put forward suggestions on what would be good for Edenbridge, this included two new pedestrian crossings - one opposite Manor Care Home on Mont St Aignan Way, and one near the Medical Practice along Four Elms Road. Following a tour of Edenbridge with the Highways Community Engagement Officer and Town Clerk, when several issues were discussed, it was clear that on technical issues it was not viable for a crossing on Mont St Aignan Way as it would not meet the Ministry of Transport guidelines. However, the Town Council and Highways had already noted investigating the possibility for a pedestrian crossing on Four Elms Road, and he was pleased that Highways was going to investigate the viability further. NEDRA had also requested for the Eden Centre be open in the evenings, and he had taken this back to Kent County Council (KCC) - this had been received positively and would be investigated to consider if financially viable. He also said that through his Members Grant he would like to support NEDRA's work monitoring the water quality in the river Eden. Finally, he mentioned some residents had been in touch with him regarding HGV lorries on Hilders Lane.

Cllr Baker mentioned that the the Eden Centre did use to be open in the evenings but due to costs of staffing and security, it had been considered not financially viable.

5.2 District Councillors

Cllr Layland reported that Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) had held an Extraordinary Meeting, where a vote of no confidence in the Leader of Council was carried. Cllr Baker said the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee had met in September.

19:46 Cllr Mayall left the meeting.

6 To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings

6.1 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning and Transport Meetings held on 22 September 2025 (pages 2023-107/1-3) and 13 October 2025 (pages 2023-109/1-3).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of Planning Committee meeting held 22 September 107/1-3; and 13 October 109/1-3.

6.2 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 15 September 2025 (pages 2023-106/1-12).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 15 September 106/1-12.

6.3 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Forward Planning Meeting held on 29 September 2025 (pages 2023-108/1-5).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of Forward Planning Steering Group meeting held 29 September 108/1-5.

7 To receive recommendations from Committees

7.1 Forward Planning Steering Group meeting 29 September

7.1.1 To ratify a budget of £1,200 for leaflets and distribution to ensure residents know about the Regulation 18 Local Plan and drop-in sessions to view the Plan

Ratified: the expenditure of £1,200 for leaflets and distribution to ensure residents know about the Regulation 18 Local Plan and drop-in sessions to see the Plan - noting the actual spend was £918 printing and distribution.

Members praised and thanked the Planning and Admin Officer, Debbie, for her work with this ensuring delivery within the short time frame.

7.1.2 To receive summary of recommendations to the Finance Committee

Members unanimously,

Resolved: the recommendations to be made to the Finance Committee for budgets 2026-27:

- **Buildings Earmarked Reserves (EMR) - to replenish some of the spend in 2025-26 to ensure a building reserves brought up to £100,000.**
- **Equipment, tools, & vehicles reserves - to increase IT equipment replacements budget adding £8,100 (as reported to Council September 2025); and £4,000 and future replacement vehicles.**
- **New EMR for reorganisation and community assets £5,000.**
- **Strategic Plan Projects EMR (created 2025) - to add £10,000 to the EMR to help enable delivery of future projects.**
- **New Local Plan budget - £1,500 to fund consultation events and Examination Hearing representation.**
- **Local Plan representation - to set a budget of £10,000 for 2026-27 for professional fees to support representation at the Examination Hearing.**
- **Neighbourhood Plan/Local Plan EMR for professional reports - £5,000 to support a Spatial Settlement Plan - once Local Plan sites are identified, to guide infrastructure planning.**
- **Neighbourhood Plan EMR - to maintain the current level of £15,000 and to explore CIL funding through SDC and Town Council CIL funds.**

7.1.3 To create a new Earmarked Reserve (EMR) to meet legal and professional costs associated potential future Community Asset Transfer

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to recommend to Finance Committee to create new Earmarked Reserve (EMR) to meet legal and professional costs associated with any future Community Asset Transfer business plans and to budget £5,000 towards this fund. (If eventually, it was not needed, it would be released back to the General Fund .)

7.1.4 To recommend to full Council to bring the Neighbourhood Plan further up the agenda of projects, to explore the viability of a NHP and review the 2018 Plan. However, it was agreed to wait until after the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation before nominating councillors to a new Working Group (initially just Council members at this first phase).

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to bring the Neighbourhood Plan further up the agenda of projects, to explore the viability of a Neighbourhood Plan, and review the 2018 Plan; but to wait until after the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation before nominating councillors to a new Working Group (initially just Council members at this first phase).

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

8.1 Town Clerk's report

Members received the Town Clerk's report. Of note,

Council Grants and CIL bids: The deadline for grants and CIL bids was 20 October. They would be presented to the committees on 1 December.

Council Budgets: This was now the time for preparing the draft budgets reviewing staffing, open spaces and other council expenditure.

Great Stone Bridge Trust: Two applications requesting support towards the Community Warden; and the annual bulb planting and general planting in the town to enhance the flower displays, were successful in September. Council is grateful to the GSBT for its continued support.

Highways: Last month the Clerk met with the KCC Highways Community Engagement Officer, and County Councillor Robert Mayall for a drive around the town viewing sites on the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) and other areas in the town which have been the subject of potential highways issues and requests for highways safety interventions. It was a positive meeting, with feedback going in to the next HIP review meeting in February 2026. It was also hoped that some highways traffic data would be made available beforehand, in particular to help with the review of the VAS at Mill Hill and the pedestrian crossing viability for Four Elms Road. KCC has said that the VAS could not be reinstated unless there was traffic evidence that this is needed.

Leases: Forge Musical Theatre (formally known as Forge Singers) had met with the Town Clerk and Lease Group. Proposed amendments had been submitted to the Council's solicitor and we await feedback.

New Website: The new website launched 29 September had received positive feedback, notably improved user experience.

8.2 Building Manger's report

Members received the Buildings Mangers report., there were no questions. Items noted included:

- Together with the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Open Spaces Officer, he had spent some time over the past months updating the 1 & 10 year maintenance plan. The plans would continue to be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis.
- He continued to carry out regular health and safety monitoring across all the councils buildings. This included weekly fire alarm and emergency lighting testing. Monthly and quarterly building inspections and legionella testing. Annual PAT testing and risk assessment and COSHH reviews. A new motor had been fitted on the roller shutter at the

- depot.
- Independent fire risk assessments had been carried out on seven of the Council's buildings: Doggetts Barn, Rickards Hall, Church House, Cemetery Depot, Tractor store, Recreation Ground Pavilion, Public Toilets. The reports and recommendations to improve fire safety were yet to be received.
 - All of the Council's buildings were risk assessed as part of a legionella inspection earlier in the year and recommendations were being worked through. Quotations for some aspects were being sought to help to improve the Council's legionella compliance.
 - The grounds team had undertaken some remedial works on the Council's buildings following last year's surveyors reports. This included clearing out and resealing the gutters at the Pavilion and the depot.
 - The specification for the installation of a new hot water and heating system at the Pavilion had gone out to public tender. Over the week of the 13th-17th October tenderers were invited to view the Pavilion. We now await said quotes before selecting an appropriate contractor to carry out the works. The tender process was being managed by Intrinsic and Town Clerk, with recommendations being presented to Council.
 - The annual emergency lighting testing was carried out in mid-October. Two lights were deemed to be defective and plans had been put in place to replace these lights asap.
 - Having received two separate reports regarding the damp in Church House quotations were being finalised before appointing a contractor to carry out works to aid in the drying out of the building. Although, due to the buildings age and build spec it will likely not be possible to completely resolve the issue, all contractors approached so far seem confident that we can vastly improve this damp issue. This will mainly involve repointing to the front elevation of the building and possibly installing a drain or open gully to allow air flow and divert water.
 - Having noticed a substantial crack that had appeared in the wall in cemetery, quotes were being obtained and would be presented to Open Spaces Committee. It's likely a section of the wall would need to be taken down and possible new footings poured before its rebuilt. It would appear that a nearby tree had caused the issue with its roots compromising the walls stability. If possible we will aim to save the tree.

9

Draft Local Plan

Members noted the SDC Local Plan aims to set out what can be built and where over the next 15 years taking the Plan to 2042. SDC Cabinet meeting 9 October had confirmed the the Regulation 18 (3) consultation would run for seven weeks from 23 October to 11 December 2025. The emerging Plan sets out the proposals for development sites across Edenbridge and the district, as well as infrastructure and development policies. For Edenbridge the allocation was a total of 2,131 new dwellings proposed. Including sites that already had planning permission (at 1 April 2025) and windfall sites the actual total allocation in the Plan was 2,801.

The Government had directed SDC to provide a housing supply across the district of 1,145 homes per year or 17,175 over 15-years. This was more than the 250 homes delivered each year over the past 10 years. SDC was challenged to meet this new figure, and following a new call for sites, had included some new sites to that of the 2023 Regulation 18 (2).

The Town Council, as a statutory consultee, would be responding to the site allocation proposals and polices in the Plan once it had considered details and with the help of its planning consultant. Following this consultation, SDC hoped to proceed to the Regulation 19 consultation summer 2026, with submission for examination by the end of 2026 to meet the December 2026 deadline. If this deadline was not met, Sevenoaks District would enter the potential new unitary authority without an adopted Local Plan. It was important that the town's views are represented through the consultation, whether this be to oppose, support, or make recommendations to policies. The Town Council was keen to ensure residents were aware of the consultation and would be hosting several drop-in sessions for residents to find out more about the Plan, to talk to councillors and to help residents make their own informed representations. The consultation and drop-in sessions would be promoted via door-to-door leaflet drop, social media and noticeboards. The drop-in session dates:

- Thursday 6 November 10am to midday, Leisure Centre

- Friday 21 November 4pm to 8pm, Rickards Hall
- Thursday 27 November 10am to 1pm, Rickards Hall
- Wednesday 3 December 10am to 1pm, Rickards Hall 6pm to 8pm, Rickards Hall

SDC would be holding its own consultation event on 10 November, at the WI Hall.

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

10.1 Finance Committee: To receive the Consolidate Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure reports for the second quarter (6-monthly review)

The October Finance Committee had been cancelled due to staffing. The reports for 6-monthly review were received by Council; members noted there were are no anomalies. The usual full finance pack including a budget comparisons report would be presented to the next Finance Committee meeting, 17 November.

10.2 AGAR: To receive the external auditors completion of the audit for the year ended 31 March 2025

Members noted the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) had been received from the external auditor, Mazars, and the Notice of Conclusion of the audit Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2025 was published 29 September. A clean audit had been given.

It was noted that in its letter, reference had been made regarding wet signatures left unredacted. However, after much investigation on their behalf, they confirmed "After discussing the issue with other external auditors and the National Audit Office (NAO) too, we have updated our view regarding the requirement for the AGAR to be added to the website with signatures not redacted. Following these discussions, we have determined that we will only raise reporting issues where the authority have placed an AGAR on their website with signatures redacted and have not provided an unredacted version to external audit. Where the authority has provided a copy of the AGAR with the signatures unredacted to external audit, we will accept this and will not be raising any reporting issues on the AGAR for this matter. We can confirm that there will not be an expectation for the Council to change their approach to this going forward (unless subsequent legislation mandates a change) so authorities can continue to place a redacted version online and provide the external auditor with an unredacted version".

The completion letter also made comments for some minor scope for improvement in 2025/2026 regarding the 30-days publication period, fixed assets detailed list to be provided with the audit papers to Mazars, and use the standard proforma provided in their guidance or in the Practitioner's Guide when preparing the bank reconciliation for end-of-year AGAR reporting. This will be presented to the internal auditor.

Members expressed their appreciation for the the hard work of the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk/RFO for the Council's finances and clean audit.

10.3 To ratify the appointment of Lin Larmer as Community Warden (six month contract)

Members unanimously,

Ratified: the appointment of Lin Larmer as Community Warden (six month contract).

10.4 Remembrance Sunday - 9 November

Arrangements for this year's Remembrance Sunday event were noted.

The organising group met recently to the confirm the details for the parade and service, which would follow a similar format to 2024 event. Marshals from Scouts, NEDRA, ECCA and Council staff would marshal the road closure - this was usually managed by the Bonfire Society but this year clashed with its event.

SDC had confirmed the road closure: 10:15am to 10.55am and 11.10am to 12.00 noon - Church Street (High Street end), High Street between Church Street and Hever Road), and Mill Hill

between Hever Road and the Hospital.

The Church would hold its annual afternoon remembrance service attended by the Town Band, at 2.30pm.

Councillors confirmed attendance at both events.

19:58 Cllr read joined the meeting.

10.5 Legionella Risk Assessments update

December 2024 Council had approved Legionella risk assessments for its buildings. These took place in March and subsequently received full reports. There were several remedial issues and recommendations which the Buildings Officer had been working through. Across all reports, recommendations included management controls:

- Keep risk assessments for at least 2 years
- Create a written scheme of control
- Need for Legionella Management Policy

One significant finding was with the Pavilion water tanks. Solutions were in the process of being investigate including a feasibility study and option appraisal - approved by Council at its July meeting. Once we have the recommendations this would be presented back to Council to consider its options.

10.5.1 To approve the Legionella Management Policy

Resolved: to adopt the Legionella Management Policy.

10.5.2 To approve the Legionella Written Scheme of Controls

Resolved: to adopt the Legionella Written Scheme of Controls.

10.6 Review and reconfirm the Council's Civility & Respect pledge

In support of the National Association for Local Councils (NALC) and Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC) work to ensure the wellbeing of all councillors, officers and staff in their duties, Edenbridge Town Council had signed-up to its Civility & Respect Pledge in December 2022. Members were asked to reconfirm this, and noting new council in 2023, to ensure it remained current and continued awareness. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to continue its support to the NALC Civility & Respect Pledge.

10.7 To consider establishing a new committee to oversee the Council's buildings and management, and lease arrangements; and approve new committee Terms of Reference

Following September's Council meeting, when members considered and reviewed the frequency of meetings, it was agreed to create a new committee specifically for Buildings and Leases and for the Town Clerk to bring back to Council to consider its terms of reference, including committee membership, delegated powers, frequency, and meeting times of meetings. A proposal with full Terms of Reference was presented for a new Buildings & Leases Committee.

10.7.1 To confirm a new Buildings & Lease Committee

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm establishing a new Buildings & Lease Committee to manage and oversee matters relating to all matters, administration, maintenance and use of the Town Council's 10 owned properties.

10.7.2 To confirm new Terms of Reference for Buildings & Lease Committee

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the new Terms of Reference for the Buildings and Lease Committee, and with membership of 10 councillors.

10.7.3 To appoint members to the new Buildings & Lease Committee.

Members noted that the new committee would replace the current Lease Negotiating Group; and that under the terms of reference the proposal was for membership to the committee run for the the council term (without annual reappointment at each annual meeting of the Town Council). Members resolved the following members to the Committee:

Resolved: Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, McGregor, Read, Streets, Stockdale, Sumner and Todd; and two vacancies.

10.8 Council meeting papers App/Software: To confirm a five-year commitment to the new software used for creating meeting papers and minutes, councillor platform and integrated public pages; and to confirm a budget for licence fees of £1,000 (similar to other packages)

In March 2023, the Council resolved to work with Councillor Aldridge to develop a bespoke Council Meeting Papers software application to create and manage Council and Committee agendas, papers, and minutes. This project had evolved into a comprehensive three-tier software system comprising:

- Officers' Meeting Papers Module
- Councillors' Portal
- Public Pages Integrated into the Council Website

The system was now fully integrated into Council operations, ensuring consistency across all published materials. It had improved the presentation, accessibility, and navigation of agendas, papers, and minutes for both councillors and the public. Additionally, it had streamlined the process for officers, saving time when preparing documents.

Compliance and Data Protection: The system meets relevant GDPR and Data Protection requirements, significantly enhancing security and governance procedures. Key measures include:

- Encryption of files both at rest and in transit.
- All systems are protected by firewalls and hosted on encrypted storage.
- All external communications (public and councillor) are conducted via secure HTTPS connections.
- Substantial reduction in paper copies — councillors now access meeting papers primarily through the App.
- Data storage located within the UK, compliant with government cloud storage standards.
- Data Processing Agreement (DPA) to formally underpin data protection arrangements.

Financial and Contractual Considerations: The Council officers had been involved throughout the development phase and to date, Council had not incurred any costs. However, to ensure professional continuity, impartiality, and transparency, members were being asked to consider formalising this arrangement under a paid agreement. To note, Cllr Aldridge had not made this request or suggested it, this was being presented by the Clerk for the reasons set out.

For comparison, the Council already paid annual licence fees to other software providers. For example, the Finance package currently operates under a five-year agreement at £897 per annum, plus costs for additional add-on modules.

Members discussed. They agreed that the arrangement should be formalised, particularly to ensure professional continuity, impartiality, and transparency. The Council Papers Software was fantastic, and this had been a unique opportunity to develop a bespoke package for the Council's needs. It ensured Council was compliant with the accessibility requirements, had improved efficiencies for officers producing the papers, and professionalism in presentation. All councillors were also able to benefit with access to online papers. Members noted the out of pocket expenses and there was discussion that no councillor should be out of pocket for providing facilities that aided the Council.

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to continue with the Council Papers software applications for its agenda, meeting papers and minutes, and

- **To formalise the agreement under a five-year commitment.**
- **To budget for annual cloud storage and software licence fees, with an estimated cost of £1,000 per annum.**
- **To reimburse Cllr Aldridge for Cloud storage costs.**

11 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

11.1 To consider and approve use of the Council's TN8 events licence to:

The Town Council hold the events licence for Edenbridge, annual cost to Council £1,070. Council can permit local groups to use this licence for its events, should it be satisfied that there is a community benefit, and that the group takes the appropriate proper measures for organising and mitigating risks. The licence does not include the sale of alcohol.

11.1.1 The Bonfire Society annual event and parade - Saturday 8 November

Resolved: to confirm Council's TN8 events licence for the Bonfire Society annual event and parade on 08 November 2025.

11.1.2 Edenbridge Community Christmas Association (ECCA) - Saturday 29 November

Resolved: to confirm its TN8 events licence for the Edenbridge Community Christmas Association (ECCA) on 29 November.

11.2 CiLCA qualification: to approve registering Dan Strugnell onto the CiLCA training and the expenditure of £400

The Open Spaces Officer had been with the Council for almost a year, and had completed the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA). The next level was the CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification. The qualification provides a broad knowledge of all the aspects of a clerk's work including roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance planning and community involvement. its is part of clerks professional development and enables councils to have legal powers under the General Power of Competence. The next SLCC enrolment is February 2026. Costs £300 registration, £75 for the Introduction training and £30 for portfolio webinars.

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to support Dan Strugnell's professional development with enrolment onto the CiLCA course and expenditure of £400.

11.3 To receive and approved Council and Committees Meeting schedule for 2026

Members received and unanimously,

Resolved: the calendar for Council and Committee meetings 2026. It was noted additional meetings may be added or scheduled at other times including daytime meetings.

11.4 To approve the office Christmas working arrangements

Each year the office closed for the main Christmas week, with staff using the two statutory dates, and the option to use annual leave for other dates or to work. This was a good time for staff to use additional leave days. This year Christmas Day was a Thursday.

Members unanimously,

Resolved: the closure of the Council office over the Christmas period with the office last day open to the public Tuesday 23 December (closes 3.30 pm), reopening Monday 5 January.

12 Devolution and local government reorganisation

Nothing to report.

13 Consultations

13.1 Kent Pension Fund Draft Funding Strategy Statement (FSS) - Formal Consultation- Deadline for responses 31 December 2025

Noted.

13.2 Local Government Reorganisation in Kent - closing 26 October

Noted.

13.3 Local Plan consultation October to December 2025 - SDC - closing date 11 December

Noted.

13.4 Edenbridge Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - Prioritising Routes - SDC - closing date 28 October

Noted. A response had been submitted - thanks was given to Cllr Aldridge.

14 Civic Medallions - to receive nominations

In view of the confidential nature of agenda item 14 to be discussed, the Chairman moved that press and public be excluded from the chamber. Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 s100 and 102.

There were no members of the public present.

Following resolution at October meeting, four nominations were received. Under the procedures, members were able to ask questions to the proposer about the nominee/s. No vote was to be taken at the meeting.

After the meeting, Councillors would be asked to submit their vote in confidence to the Town Clerk. For a nomination to be successful all 15 Councillors needed to support the nominee. The outcome of nominations would be reported at the next meeting under confidential business.

15 Date of next meeting - 08 December

Noted.

20:35 Meeting closed.