

Minutes of the Meeting of Open Spaces held in Rickards Hall on 10 November 2025 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge, Angela Baker (*Chairwoman*), Michael Gemmell Smith, Alan Layland, Michael Stockdale (*Vice-Chairman*)

In attendance: Open Spaces Officer and Head Groundsman. No members of the public or press were present. The meeting started at 19:30

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received, noted and accepted from Cllrs Compton, Sumner, McGregor and Jacques.

2 Declarations of Interests, or Predeterminations

None.

3 Public Questions

19:31 *The Chairman closed the meeting.*

There were no questions or statements.

19:31 *The Chairman re-opened the meeting.*

4 To Receive and Sign Minutes of The Open Spaces Committee 15 September 106/01-12

Resolved: that the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee 15 September 2025 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting (106/01-12).

5 To Receive Analysis of Receipts and Payments to 5 November 2025

Members noted the income and expenditure from 1 April to 05 November 2025.

Members further noted that the bulky waste collection had been reinstated for 22 November.

5.1 To review annual subscriptions to Open Spaces organisations

It was noted Committee had considered the below subscriptions two years ago, and Council confirmed May this year, together with all its subscriptions. Invoices had been received for the current year and processed for 2025-26.

5.1.1 Open Spaces Society Membership renewal

Resolved: to end membership of the Open Spaces Society and the annual subscription fee of £45 for 2026-27.

5.1.2 Kent County Playing Fields Association renewal

Resolved: to end membership of Kent County Playing Fields Association and the annual subscription fee of £20 for 2026-27.

6 To Ratify Operational Decisions for Open Spaces Activity

The Jubilee clock had stopped working and the cost to investigate and rectify (including call out charge and two lithium 3.6 volt batteries) was £455.00

Additional road closure signs for Remembrance Sunday were required, four signs in total costing £403.20. Members,

Ratified: the expenditure of £455.00 to repair the jubilee clock and £403.20 for the additional Remembrance Sunday road closure signs.

7 Correspondence

None.

8 Head Groundsman's Report

Members noted the Head Groundsman report including:

Routine seasonal works continued across Council sites, including weed treatment, planter maintenance, cemetery upkeep, grave topping, pruning, grass cutting, sports pitch marking, tree work, and autumn leaf clearance.

In October, the Council attended the South & South East in Bloom Awards at RHS Wisley, entering five categories after a busy summer of preparations, and achieved Silver for the Town Centre and Overall Town, Silver Gilt for the Cemetery, Gold for Stangrove Park, and Silver Gilt plus Category Winner for Millennium Wood. Plans were already being made to improve results for 2026.

The team also progressed actions from the latest tree inspection report, disposing of waste through controlled burns at Forge Croft Allotments without complaint. Repairs were completed to the Street Snooker gates in Stangrove Park, and a new gate post was installed at Doggetts Barn.

Annual PAT testing began and was due for completion shortly.

Autumn pitch aeration at the Recreation Ground and Nomads sites was scheduled for mid-November, alongside completion of the PitchPower report to support future grant funding.

The Market Yard height barrier was modified to lock securely, avoiding the cost of full replacement.

The Grounds Team also assisted with bonfire safety fencing and supported the Remembrance Sunday parade.

8.1 To approve the expenditure of £500 to repair damaged fencing at Stangrove Park

Some of the fencing at the front of Stangrove Park had been damaged or fallen in to disrepair over time. A quotation of £500 had been received from the manufacturer of the replacement parts. The grounds team would install the replacement parts. Members,

Resolved: to confirm to approve the expenditure of £500 for parts to repair the damaged fence at Stangrove Park.

8.2 To approve the expenditure of £880 for a two new manual push lawn mowers

Two of the Council's manual push lawn mowers had broken down. Both machines had exceeded their expected service life and were considered uneconomical to repair. A quotation of £440 + VAT per unit had been received for like-for-like replacements.

While the team could have continued operating with the remaining equipment through the winter months, replacement of these mowers was necessary by the spring to ensure adequate capacity for the start of the next grass cutting season.

Equipment budget 3040 had capacity for this. Members,

Resolved: to confirm to approve the expenditure of £880 for two new manual push lawn mowers.

8.3 To approve the expenditure of £600 for a 30% crown reduction to the silver maple tree at the old police station site

The Head Groundsman met with a tree surgery contractor to seek professional advice regarding the silver maple located on the Council's newly acquired parcel of land, formerly part of the old police station site. Following inspection, the tree was assessed to be in good health, and it was agreed that felling a healthy tree would be unnecessary and undesirable. Instead, a quotation of £600 had been provided for a 30% crown reduction, which would help manage the tree's size

and maintain its long-term health. Members,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £600 for a 30% crown reduction to the silver maple tree at the old police station site.

8.4 To approve the expenditure of up to £700 to install grass reinforcement mesh to stabilise the parking area at the Depot

The grounds team had experienced recurring issues with parking of both work and personal vehicles at the Depot during the winter months, primarily due to soft and deteriorating ground conditions. After considering a range of potential solutions, it was felt that the most practical and least intrusive option would be to install grass reinforcement mesh to stabilise the affected area. The estimated cost of the required matting was approximately £700, and the Grounds Team would carry out the installation in-house. Members,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of up to £700 to install grass reinforcement mesh to stabilise the parking area at the Depot.

9 Open Spaces Business

Members noted the Open Spaces Business which included:

Land outside Old Police Station: Quotations to carry out works to improve the site were being obtained. Works would include remedial brickwork for safety and aesthetical purposes as well as some land sculpting and tree works. This would then allow the grounds team to undertake some replanting and making good in the spring to make this area a real community asset. A further update would be provided at the February meeting.

West Kent event, Stangrove Park: West Kent held an event in Stangrove Park on 28 October to advertise the work they do in Edenbridge, focusing on youth services and the HOUSE project.

Playground Inspections: Had been booked for Marsh Green, Blossoms Park, Stangrove Park and Lingfield Road Recreation Ground. The inspections were due to take place on 25 November 2025. The Spitals Cross playground had not been included as an inspection took place earlier this year, but would be included in the yearly inspections from 2026 onwards.

Skatepark Repairs: At the September meeting Members resolved to approve the replacement of three riding surface sheets at the skate park at a cost of £975.00 (part of 10 year Open Spaces maintenance programme). The repairs were completed on 9 October.

9.1 To receive the Burial Report

Members noted the following burial report:

September: One burial, two ashes interments.

October: No burials or ashes interments.

November: One burial.

9.2 Fly Tipping

Members noted that two reports of fly tipping had been received:

A mattress had been left next to the track at Marsh Green. This was reported to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and had been collected.

Two oil cans and other debris (tree stumps, rubbish etc) was left at The Platt. SDC had cleared.

9.3 Vandalism report

Members noted that some damage to the grass had occurred in Stangrove Park (close to the beacon) as a result of someone riding a motor bike or dirt bike. This had been reported to the police.

On 31 October the picnic bench next to the playground in Stangrove Park was set on fire. Four

table top slats and two seat slats required replacement. A cost for this had been requested, estimated expenditure was £327.98 based on the last occurrence in 2024.

Following bonfire weekend, the insect houses at Millennium Wood had been removed from the trees and thrown in to the pond, along with the life buoy. The life buoy at Stangrove Park was also thrown in to the pond. All items had been retrieved and reinstalled.

9.4 Allotment matters

None.

9.5 Market activity

Members noted that there were 14 traders who attend the market, although not all were regular. Averaging around 8 stalls per week.

Market rents were on target.

Trader numbers were lower on 23 October due to heavy rain and wind, only one stall was present.

9.5.1 To receive an update on Market Archway at Market Yard Car Park (MYCP) access road

The two bollards are on order (min. six weeks delivery from order), the archway was constructed, and was due to be powder coated and sprayed. Works were delayed but it was hoped they would be completed by December. The gazebos had proved a little more difficult to order due to considering branding and artwork. Members had no questions.

9.6 Cemetery matters

9.6.1 Damage to Cemetery wall

A crack had formed horizontally across approximately 20 meters of the Cemetery wall close to the skip. This was suspected to be due to growth and movement of tree roots from a tree close by. The roots had lifted the structure, causing displacement of the footings and visible cracking to the brickwork.

The wall wasn't unstable, although there was some slight movement.

Four contractors had assessed the wall and four quotes had been received, three to demolish and rebuild the damaged section of wall, and one to reinforce the existing wall. Members noted that whilst reinforcing the wall may have been a solution, contractor D had not engaged with a structural engineer nor addressed the issue of tree roots.

There was £27,270 budgeted for cemetery wall work for 2026/27 in the 10 and 30 year maintenance plan, of which £17,740 was towards MYCP/Cemetery wall.

The view was this work should be carried as soon as possible and therefore would be an overspend on current budget. £9,530 could be released from Earmarked Reserves (EMR). For reference, Open Spaces EMR was £280,000.

Contractor A - £17,000.00

Contractor B - £17,128.05

Contractor C - £11,890.00

Contractor D - £4,840 (To reinforce existing wall only, not to rebuild). Members,

Resolved: to proceed with the wall work fully funded from EMR and select 'contractor C' to carry out the work.

9.6.2 To review the updated Cemetery Rules and Regulations booklet for approval

The Cemetery Rules and Regulations booklet had been reviewed to ensure that it remained clear, accurate, and fit for purpose. The review identified the need to simplify wording, improve

layout, and provide more detailed guidance on key processes for the benefit of the public and funeral directors. Included was a detailed explanation of the Grant of Right, setting out the rights and responsibilities of grave owners. Members had no comments and,

Resolved: to approve the updated Cemetery Rules and Regulations booklet, subject to the Town Clerk reviewing.

9.7 South and South East in Bloom (SSEIB) judging results and to consider entries for 2026/27

This year the Council submitted five entries, the Head Groundsman and another member of the grounds team attended the awards ceremony at Wisley last month, picking up Gold for Stangrove Park – Parks category; Silver-Gilt for the Cemeteries category; Silver for Town/city Centre category; Silver for Town category; and Silver-Gilt and overall winner for the Millennium Wood – conservation category.

Members noted the following judges comments:

Cemeteries: Silver Gilt - The overall management of the churchyard was to a very high standard, the grass was neatly cut and the strimming and maintenance around the grave stones was undertaken with consideration and great care. The churchyard was very clean and tidy throughout. The avenue of Limes recently pollarded created an attractive avenue walkway through the ground. The Grounds Maintenance Team should be commended on the general maintenance and excellence of the site, which was very apparent throughout the tour of the churchyard on the overall management and maintenance of the site. Look to see if the wildflower area could be extended, to create a small meadow area for pollinators and wildlife within the churchyard.

Stangrove Park: Gold - The Town Councils Grounds maintenance team should be commended on the general maintenance of the park, the grass was short and managed with care considering the exceptional hot and dry weather at the time of judging. The park has a team of volunteers as well as the staff litter picking. At the time of judging the grounds were spotless. The signage throughout the park was clear and the Notice boards worked well promoting the Towns events and activities located in prominent locations. The New planters at the main entrance works very well. The planters consist of drought tolerant plants creating colour and all year round impact which are located adjacent to the main entrance to the park and promoted the celebration of 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council. The judge was informed that the planter was built and planted by the Grounds maintenance team and this is credit to the team involved.

Town: Silver - This was a good first entry in the Town category. Edenbridge Town is a attractive place to work and live. The main high street had colourful coordinated displays throughout the main high street together with a few prominent planters to complement the baskets, the adjacent areas including visits the land managed by the Great Stone Bridge Trust running along the adjacent river, which was clean, tidy and managed to a good standard. The open spaces seen on the tour were clean tidy and were managed to a high standard. It would be nice in future judging to see some of the Edenbridge in Bloom front garden entries including in the tour, especially where this would contribute to Edenbridge being such a colourful, welcoming town.

Town/City Centre: Silver - The main aspect is the High Street where the main contribution is made by hanging baskets paid for by the local council. The range of old buildings is superb, giving a wide variety of style/colour to the landscape. And excellent historic town leaflet has been produced also highlighting the ancient leather trade aspect of the local history. There appears to be a good local community, although it appears some buildings are struggling. If shops, pubs and houses could be encouraged to put out small window type displays it would add tremendously to the street appearance.

Conservation - Millennium Wood: Silver Gilt and Category Winner - The maturing of this site in a pleasant rural setting is an asset to the town. Age and maturity of the trees will inevitably change and the management of this is one of a light touch to avoid over formalising the area. Information boards have improved but at an appropriate level to preserve its natural aspect. A new series of nature trail guides for children are now available which is great. The site made for an enjoyable visit. Pathways are an important factor in encouraging visitors and some extra maintenance would, I feel, be needed in the winter period.

Members were delighted with the results of the Council's five entries in this year's SSEIB competition and wished to place on record their thanks to the ground staff and Open Spaces Officer. Members also,

Resolved: to confirm to enter SSEIB again for 2026, with the exception of the Town category. It was felt this was similar to the Town Centre category.

9.8 10 and 30 year maintenance plan update for 2025-26

Members noted that the 10-year budget allocation had allowed for:

- Path repairs in the churchyard and cemeteries, which were assessed and will be reviewed in 2026.
- Re-pointing sections of Doggetts Courtyard. This has been assessed and very minimal work is required, quotes will be obtained for 2026/27.

30-year budget allocation has allowed for:

- Streetlights.
- Playground contingency.

9.9 To confirm the budgeted expenditure of £869.12 for the annual Market Yard Car Park interceptor cleansing

The MCYP interceptor cleansing was due in December. A quote had been received totalling £869.12 (£100 under budget). Members,

Resolved: to confirm to approve the budgeted expenditure of £869.12 for the annual MYCP interceptor cleansing.

9.10 To receive an update on the self defence classes for women and girls and consider budget for 2026/27

The self-defence classes began on 26 October in Rickards Hall and were running for five weeks, held every Sunday evening. A total of 24 women and girls had registered for the course. Feedback had been very positive.

Based on this year's costs, running a similar course next year was estimated to cost approximately £2,600. Members considered whether to include funding for self-defence classes in the 2026/27 budget and,

Resolved: to confirm support for budgeting for self-defence classes in 2026/27 in principle should budgets allow. External funding and grants to be explored.

10 Byelaws update and to approve amendments

Byelaws update: The draft new byelaws, based on the update model byelaws (2018) was first submitted to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in 2022 (was then Department for Levelling Up). After some toing and froing and further evidence,

January 2024 - an application was made to the Secretary of State. These did not make clear which enabling powers the Council was proposing to make byelaws under and did not include a specific report.

April 2025 - the byelaws were declined.

June 2025 - an amended version of the proposed byelaws was reviewed by Committee June 2025 (copy was provided with those meeting papers, if need to look back).

July 2025 - this updated version was resubmitted to MHCLG.

August 2025 - it was advised that we had them informally reviewed.

October 2025 - the following feedback had been received having been reviewed by its legal team:

1. Clause 4.2 – Interpretation and purpose As mentioned in our previous outcome letter, it remains unclear whether clause 4.2 is intended to resolve the issue of trotting carts and horses being driven across the sports fields. If the intention behind this clause is to address that behaviour, are you intending for the phrase 'other landscaping purposes' to include the sports fields? If so, we would recommend redrafting this clause to make this more explicit, to ensure the byelaw achieves its intended purpose. Care should also be taken to avoid drawing the clause too narrowly, as this could unintentionally allow continued use of trotting carts in other parts of the recreation ground, which may still cause damage or pose risks to users.

2. Meaning of “ground” As a general drafting point, “ground” in sub-paragraph (b) refers to soil rather than to the park or recreation ground as a whole.

3. Schedule of grounds – Churchyards and cemeteries We note the addition to the Schedule of Grounds of “Churchyard and Cemeteries”. This reference is too vague for inclusion as it stands. In addition, we would be grateful if you could clarify the basis for including such grounds under these powers.

4. Schedule of grounds – Licensed land (Watermeadows) The Schedule also refers to “Lingfield Road Recreation Ground (and adjacent Watermeadows land managed under licence)”. Please clarify the intention behind the phrase “managed under licence”. If only part of the Watermeadows area is subject to a licence, the description may need to be refined (for example, “that part of the Watermeadows land which is managed under licence and as indicated on a map”).

It would also be helpful if you could set out how the Council determined whether the 1875 Act or the 1906 Act is the appropriate enabling power to use for the Watermeadows land, as this can depend on the nature of the Council’s interest in the land. In any case, the land should be clearly identified.

The Town Clerk was yet to work through these comments and make the necessary amendments. Members acknowledged the above comments and that the byelaws should be amended accordingly to address these observations and,

Resolved: to give delegated authority for the Town Clerk to amend the draft byelaws and resubmit to the MHCLG for informal review before submitting to the Secretary of State.

11 To receive an update on the proposed Bandstand at Stangrove Park

At the Open Spaces Committee meeting on 15 September, Members resolved to confirm support for a bandstand in Stangrove Park, to proceed with design and cost investigations and to proceed with a CIL application to the CIL Board.

Indicative costs and a design for a 6.1 meter bandstand had been received, along with estimates for the groundwork, including foundations, paving, soakaways and the creation of a new path. The original estimate for all works was £95,000, with SDC providing funding of £72,430 from the 15% CIL allocation for local spending. An application to the CIL board has been made for £22,570. Should the CIL application have been successful, the project could proceed to the tender stage. Costs would depend on chosen design, additional planting and possible seating (benches) which had not yet been included.

Having considered several possible locations at Stangrove Park, it was proposed that the Bandstand be situated at the top of the hill close to the beacon, making it a focal point of the park whilst still being visible from the road and enabled it's use in conjunction with any event requiring the beacon. Additionally, the ground conditions in this area of the park were much more favourable than the area near the pond, which becomes saturated over autumn and winter thus requiring less groundwork preparation/concrete and materials. Members discussed the location and raised the possibility of lighting/power to the bandstand which can be investigated and,

Resolved: unanimously to approve the style, size and proposed location of the bandstand.

12 To receive an update on the proposed replacement of the playground at Marsh Green

Members were reminded that at the Open Spaces Committee meeting on 15 September, Members resolved to confirm support for the replacement of the playground at Marsh Green and to submit a bid to the CIL Board.

The Open Spaces Officer had met with two providers to explore options and costs for the replacement of the playground, including new play equipment, surfacing, fencing and the introduction of a path to the playground.

Based on the initial quotes from the providers a budget of between £50,000 and £85,000 would be required, a CIL application had been made for up to £70,000.

The 30 year maintenance plan for 2026/27 had £54,000 allocated for this. Given other budget pressures, it was proposed to apply for full CIL funding for the playground.

Members had no questions.

13 To receive an update on the damage to the height restriction barrier at the entrance of Market Yard Car Park

At the September meeting Members were advised that on or around 21 August a vehicle had caused damage to the height restriction barrier at the entrance of MYCP. It appeared that an over height vehicle had driven or reversed into the gate causing it to bend and it was now not able to lock properly. The gate had been secured with a chain and padlock as a temporary measure. Members resolved to approve the expenditure of £4,047 for a new height restriction barrier, subject to confirmation that alternative quotations had been sought to establish best value.

Members noted that an alternative solution had been found and the barrier was straightened, enabling it to be locked and unlocked again, and avoiding a costly replacement. The cost for this was £250.

14 To consider improvements to the disabled access at The Pavilion, Lingfield Road Recreation Ground

Members were advised that Edenbridge Rugby Club had highlighted the fact that the disabled access at the Pavilion was inadequate due to the way the door opens outwards, making it extremely difficult for people in wheelchairs, mobility scooters or with prams to access the building.

Three quotes had been obtained to improve the disabled access. Work would include enlarging the top step to the main entrance to create more space for turning. This work was not budgeted for, it would be an overspend in Buildings or Open Spaces.

Contractor A - £2,800

Contractor B - £2,230

Contractor C - £5,900

Members considered the improvement to the disabled access and,

Resolved: to support improving the disabled access at The Pavilion, approve the expenditure of up to £5,900 and as the work was unbudgeted, proceed with the work in 2025/26 and make a late CIL application to fund this. Members also,

Resolved: to select 'Contractor B' to carry out the work, subject to a successful CIL bid.

15 To consider using Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for Churchyard/Market Yard Wall work, if required.

Members were reminded that in 2018, a survey identified the need to rebuild a section of the boundary wall at the western end between the Churchyard and the MYCP. Although the works have not yet progressed, funding remains allocated within the EMR. The wall has continued to be monitored, with minor repairs undertaken as required.

The estimated cost to complete the rebuild was approximately £30,000. There was £17,740 reserved in the EMR for this project, and the overall Open Spaces EMR balance stood at £280,000. Members,

Resolved: to confirm funding the balance from the existing EMR should the works proceed.

16 2025-26 Streetlight programme update

16.1 2025-26 Streetlight programme

Members were reminded of the replacement programme for the current year. Streetlights maintenance programme payments to UKPN were made in June, but due to an administration error on their behalf, the replacement programme was delayed. These were all programmed for 20 November.

Members also noted that annual maintenance inspection and works reported to June Committee had been instructed and completed.

16.2 To ratify CIL application for streetlight replacements on Cedar Drive and Park Avenue

A CIL application had been made for £40,000 to fund the vast majority of streetlight replacements on Cedar Drive and Park Avenue. There was a total of 10 old concrete columns, estimated average replacement 2025-26 was £3,900 each (UKPN and Streetlight costs). This would complete the replacements required on these two roads.

The office considered a CIL bid necessary to help alleviate budget pressures for 2026/27. Members,

Ratified: the CIL application for £40,000 for streetlight replacements on Cedar Drive and Park Avenue, based on infrastructure maintenance.

16.3 To confirm the budget for 2026-27 replacement programme (part of the 30-year maintenance plan)

The Council's 30-year maintenance had spread the cost of replacement columns. Each year the Council had been replacing the concrete and older columns.

Outstanding were:

Concrete columns - 10 (8 at Cedar Drive and 2 at Park Avenue).

Old steel columns (1975s) - 1 column, and 1 pole boxes

Modern (old) steel (1985s) - 16 columns

Conversion to LED - approx. 100 remaining

The 30-year budget had £45k, this was planned to be one of the higher years (alternates between £25-45K). Due to other budget pressures, and given that the remaining concrete columns could potentially qualify for CIL funding, Members,

Resolved: to reduce the 30-year streetlight funding from £45k to £20k (subject to the CIL bid outcome),

Resolved: to fund replacement of the remaining two steel columns, and four 1985 columns for 2026-27 from the 30-year plan and,

Resolved: that Stangrove Park and Park Lane 10 replacement columns be funded by CIL - if the bid was not successful, to increase the 30-year plan to fund just the concrete columns.

17 To consider and confirm budget recommendations for 2026-27

Reserve Movements

Kent Brook: Budget £2,160 - this was an in case and to build-up reserve if not used.

Seats - Recreation Ground general replacement programme: Budget £820 - Unlikely to be used

this financial year.

Skate Park sheet repairs: Budget £4,000 - Spent £1,950. Any surplus moved to EMR will help reduce need for 2026/27 budget.

Equipment surplus move to EMR and reduce 2026/27 budget .

Re-point section of courtyard concrete slabs: Budget £1,026 (propose to move to EMR).

Churchyard, path and roads to repair: Budget £2,052 (propose to move to EMR).

Allotment deposits: £450 - to new EMR. Members,

Resolved: to support the proposed reserve movements.

17.1 To approve draft budget recommendations

Members were presented with the budget comparisons, along with the year end forecast. There was also a draft proposed budget for 2026/27. Some budgets had been reduced in light of overall budget pressures. Members,

Resolved: to confirm the recommendations to the Finance Committee.

18 News Release

The reinstated bulky waste collection date for 22 November was identified for news release.

The meeting ended at 20:14