

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 8 December 2025 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
3 December 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 16 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 27 October 2025 (pages 2023-110/1-9).**

 Full Council | 27 October 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-110/1-9)


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


5.1 **County Councillor**

5.2 **District Councillors**


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 3 November 2025 (pages 2023-111/1-3) and 24 November 2025 (pages 2023-115/1-2).**

 Planning and Transport | 03 November 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-111/1-3)

 Planning and Transport | 24 November 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-115/1-2)

6.2 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on 7 November 2025 (pages 2023-112/1-7).**

 Personnel | 07 November 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-112/1-7)

6.3 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 10 November 2025 (pages 2023-113/1-10).**

6.4 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on 17 November 2025 (pages 2023-114/1-6).**

Finance and Governance | 17 November 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-114/1-6)

6.5 **Charities & Grants and CIL Board minutes from meetings 1 December will be presented at the January Council**

To note.

7 **To receive recommendations from Committees**

7.1 **Personnel Committee 7 November**

7.1.1 **Budget 2025-26 update: To allocate some of end-of-year forecasted surplus to staffing earmarked reserves, and rest back to general reserves**

Having received an update and forecast of the staffing costs for 2025-26, committee resolved to make recommendation to Finance Committee and Council to move some of the end-of-year surplus into staffing earmarked reserves to bring it up to £45k, and to release into General Reserves the balance.

Do members support the recommendation?

7.1.2 **Recommendation for overtime payment for any additional hours worked between November to January for the groundstaff**

Members discussed and noted staff shortages in the grounds team, and concerns of work loads building up or potential increase on hours time owed. Members resolved to grant overtime payment for any additional hours worked between November to January for the groundstaff, and for this to be managed by the Head Groundsman.

Do members confirm the recommendation for groundstaff overtime.

7.1.3 **Grounds Apprenticeship - expenditure of £400 for exam resits; and extend fixed term contract before moving to a permanent contract on completion of exams**

Members resolved: the expenditure of £400 for exam resits to help ensure the grounds apprentice can complete the qualification.

It was also resolved to recommend extending the fixed-term contract, and once the Level 2 Horticulture qualification was completed, to move to a permanent contract (as previously resolved).

Do members confirm the recommendations?

7.1.4 **Market Officer to offer a permanent contract at the end the fixed-term contract (31 May 2026) in line with employment regulations**

Recognising and inline with employment law regulations members agreed to recommend to Finance Committee and full Council to continue with Market Officer position and offer a permanent contract at the end the fixed-term contract (31 May 2026), on the same terms (11 hours per week, LC1 levels) and a standard contract. It was noted that the

current pension auto-enrolment regulations would apply when the salary exceeded £10,000.

It was also noted to include a written agreement noting his personal outside trading interests which should not interfere or obstruct his role as Market Officer; and that he should meet the same trading standards that is expected of market traders including providing copies of relevant compliance and insurance certificates.

Do members confirm the recommendations?

7.1.5 **Open Spaces Officer - two-point pay scale increment in recognition of the additional duties in respect of new Buildings and Lease Committee**

Members supported a two-point pay scale increment for the Open Spaces Officer, in recognition of the additional duties undertaken in respect of buildings administration work and the new Buildings and Lease Committee, and with immediate effect.

Do members confirm the recommendation?

7.1.6 **Budget 2026-27: recommendations for staffing budgets**

Members supported to recommend to Finance Committee and full Council a staffing budget for 2026-27 of £572,559.47.

Do members confirm the staffing budget as recommended?

7.1.7 **Employers Assist Programme (EAP) - to maintain current arrangements**

Following an approach from SAGE, members were presented with details of its EAP. Members agreed not to change its EAP and to remain with Health Assured as per contract, and provided best value for Council. It was agreed not to pilot a free 3-month trial with SAGE.

Do members confirm?

7.2 **To receive recommendations from Finance and Governance Committee**

Budget proposals for 2026-27 will be considered under agenda item 10.

7.2.1 **To increase the fees and charges 2026: Based on the RPI rate 4.5% (as published September); and service services and staff costs as per the proposed Precept percentage (item 10.3)**

The fees and charges increase each year, usually in line with inflation measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The RPI for September RPI is 4.5%, October rates were not known at the time of the Finance Committee meeting, but has since been released, it is 4.3%.

Recommendation was:

- Cemeteries, market rents, allotments and rents increase by RPI 4.5% (or the October RPI if higher)
- To freeze Rickards Hall fees, and to carry out a hiring fees review and possible restructuring in 2026
- Services including where staff costs are charged, to increase by the Precept increase percentage rate

Do members support the recommendation?

7.2.2

To confirm the Service Level Agreements for HOUSE £9,000 (and note potential increase to £13,500); and Museum £6,500

SLA agreements have been budgeted for. However HOUSE has requested a higher contribution which will be considered separately by council under agenda item 10.2. Members are asked to confirm the principles.

Do Members confirm the ongoing SLAs as above for 2026 budget, noting HOUSE budget at £9,000 with council to confirm increase to £13,500 (agenda item 10.2)?

8

To receive reports and any recommendations from working groups; delegated reports; clerk's and officers' reports

8.1

Clerk's report

Byelaws update: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have provided some feedback, Open Spaces Committee has confirmed delegated authority to the Clerk to submit revised version noted feedback from MHCLG.

GDPR and Privacy Policy audit and compliance: Work has started on this, but will take a while aiming to completed January/March 2026. Due to work on responses to the Local Plan regulation 18 (3) consultation, this has been put back.

Internal Auditor: The Council's IA Keith Robertson has advised that he is retiring and will not be available for end-of-year audit. I have approached some auditors and will present to January council meeting.

Leases: Forge Musical Theatre (formally known as Forge Singers) lease – amendments have been submitted and confirmed by solicitor, Just awaiting updated Lease and will issue to FMT.

Local Council Award Scheme: Documents/evidence continues to be compiled ready to submit to NALCs council accreditation award scheme. This has been put back due to other commitments.

Pavilion update on works: This is now being reported to and overseen by the new Buildings and Lease Committee.

Market Archway at Market Yard car park access road: It hoped to be installed over coming few weeks, ideally before Christmas.

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

Remembrance Sunday feedback: 9 November event went well. There was approximately 150-200 people in the parade. The RBL led the service with the Church. Wreathes were laid by many local organisation and representatives from the services. Thank you to all the volunteers who help with road closures ensuring the safety and success of the event. There was also the annual afternoon church service. Wreaths can now be seen at the Medical Centre's Memorial Garden.

Walks Leaflet envelope: Has been received an in use.

Christmas office closure: The office last day will be Tuesday 23 December (closes 3.30 pm), reopening Monday 5 January. Groundstaff will have cover on non-bank holiday dates.

Draft Local Plan - update

The Town Council has been preparing its representations on the draft Local Plan in relation to:

- The 17 proposed site allocations; and
- The 64 wider planning policies, focusing on those most relevant to Edenbridge.

Throughout this work, the Council has taken a pragmatic approach. Where sites or policies are supported or objected to, the Council has also included caveats to ensure that any development is accompanied by the appropriate infrastructure.

During the consultation period, the Government announced proposed planning changes which may affect future decision-making, including:

- A potential 'default yes' for development within 800 metres (15 minutes' walk) of well-connected railway stations.
- Referral of refusals for developments of over 150 homes to central government for review.
- Strengthened powers to prevent call-ins and reduce delays.

The Town Council objects to the overall scale of development proposed for Edenbridge and to the loss of Green Belt, which it considers excessive. It recognises that some growth is necessary and does not oppose development east of Four Elms Road, provided it forms part of an integrated scheme with the permitted site and that all required infrastructure is secured, including extensive publicly accessible green space.

The Council opposes the following site allocations:

- EDEN10 – Land at Crouch House Road
- EDEN11 – Land at Lingfield Road
- EDEN13 – Land west of Lingfield Road Recreation Ground
- EDEN14 – Breezehurst Farm
- EDEN15 – Land east of Mead Road
- EDEN16 – Land at Swan Lane
- EDEN17 – Seven Acre Farm (unauthorised additional pitches)

The Council is supportive of several of smaller-scale developments within the town, including redevelopment of the Leathermarket. These need to be appropriately designed and located. For all such sites, the Council has set out specific assurances it requires, including matters such as parking provision, enhancements to Green Belt or Conservation Area boundaries where relevant, safe access arrangements, pedestrian and cycle connectivity, and the provision or improvement of community facilities.

The Council will publish its finalised responses once submitted to SDC.

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the update and confirm the above.

Budget 2026-27

Finance Committee has considered the draft budget proposals for 2026-27 at its meeting 17 November. This included recommendations from:

- Forward Planning Steering Group (FPSG) - *reported to Council and recommendations resolved at its October meeting*
- Personnel Committee
- Open Spaces Committees.

Committee considered the current reserves position and the forecasted year-end position. It

was not an easy budget to consider noting increasing costs to the Council and,

- Upcoming Local Plan Regulation 19 and Hearing planning consultant costs
- Planned project costs
- Planning for potential impact from local government reorganisation

Members were also very aware of the budget impact on the Precept and Band D to residents, which would affect them also. There much discussion throughout the meeting on several potential areas where savings could be considered, but this would impact service delivery which members felt residents deserved and to maintain the high standards of facilities provided.

The conclusion and recommendation from Committee was to continue to precept sufficiently to support a balancing budget, not to draw down on the reserves which had taken several years to strengthen and bring back to a stable level, and to precept for the full deficit on expenditure with the anticipated income. In addition, it supported the recommendations from committees and the FPSG to set up a new earmarked reserves and precept to allow funding to help towards enabling some of the projects in the Council's strategic plan and objectives. *Confidential report attached.*

Financial reports attached are as presented to the Finance Committee. The confidential report provides an appraisee of the budget, reserves, precept recommendations and Band D. At the time of preparing the reports the new tax base was not known, so calculations have assumed the current tax base of 3998.66 (and potential percentage increases).

The draft budget for 2026-27 will be published on the Council's website following Council's recommendation and resolution on the draft budget. This will be presented to the January Council to confirm the Precept and Band D payment.

 Confidential Annex 1 (omitted from public documents):

10.1 **To receive an update on the Council's income and expenditure 2025-26, Earmarked Reserves and General Reserves**

The attached spreadsheet has a three-year view of last year, current year, and budget 2026-27.

- 2025-26 forecasted year-end has assumed a net surplus of £26k (£50k less the budgeted surplus).

The Council's Earmarked Reserves (EMR) and General Reserves (GR) has had some movements this year with project expenditure and some further expenditure is planned. However, this does not include year-end movements into EMR for current uncomplete works/projects. The recommended guide for GR does depend on the size of council, it's assets, and its risk but should be in the region of approximately 50% of annual precept/expenditure, and a council should be able to explain its rational for its reserves (EMR and GR). The Town Clerk and RFO have looked into the reserve figures and can explain what the amounts set aside and for what purposes, and are currently satisfied with the current forecasted year-end positions; (page 2 of main report attached item 10).

- Opening: EMR £532,438; GR £329,102 (total council reserves £861,540)
- Opening: CIL allocated and unallocated reserves £171,205
- Opening overall assets £1,032,745

Looking at actual movements, forecasted movements and forecasted surplus, the end-of-year position:

- EOY: EMR £511,820; GR £352,877 (total council reserves £864,698)

- CIL EMR: CIL allocated and unallocated reserves £411,943
- EOY overall assets £1,276,641

This means a potential GR increase with budget savings of £23,775.

This confirms Council is on target with its budgets for 2025-26 and likely to make some additional budget savings.


Do members have any questions?

 Confidential Annex 2 (omitted from public documents):

10.2 **To receive a request from HOUSE to increase its SLA grant from £9,000 to £13,500**

Attached is a report from HOUSE outlining why they are looking for an increase in the SLA grant to help ensure securing the same ongoing service delivery. The draft budget has assumed an increase.

How do members want to proceed?

 Annex 3: Edenbridge Town Council - funding request 2026-7.pdf

10.3 **To consider the full draft budget for 2026-27**

Details have been provided in the report (item 10) and spreadsheet (item 10.1), to help inform members.

Do Members confirm the draft budget and recommendations for 2026-27 as presented for each cost centre, and the total budgeted I&E?

10.4 **To consider the Precept for 2026-27**

At the time of preparing the budget the tax base is not known, SDC do not issue this until early to mid December. Therefore, Council can only make its best estimated calculations when considering the Precept and Band D calculation. This is then presented to January Council following a period of publication of the budget and proposed Precept. See *attached confidential report for calculations and proposals*.

How do Members want to proceed? Do Members confirm the recommendations by Finance Committee (as per report item 10, page 5 for Precept and the Band D).

10.5 **To confirm the recommendation for the Earmarked Reserves for 2026-27**

Members are asked to confirm earmarked reserve levels for 2026-27 having considered the budget and received the EMR report within the report (item 10 and 10.1). A separate copy of the EMRs is also attached (confidential). These may change with projects not completed in 2026-27 and moved in to EMR to ensure completion of works.

Do Members confirm the EMR levels as presented or are there any proposed adjustments?

 Confidential Annex 4 (omitted from public documents):

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

11.1 **To appoint two further members to the new Buildings & Lease Committee.**

In October, the existing Lease Negotiating Group members were appointed to the new Buildings & Leases Committee, plus four others. There remains two vacancies. Current members: Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, McGregor, Read, Streets, Stockdale, Sumner and

Todd.

Are there two other members who are able to join this committee?

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

12.1 **Involve Kent - request for Rickards Hall to help with establish a new community arts and craft group aimed to encouraging**

Council has been approached by Involve Kent (Charity involved in Community Activities, and commissioned by KCC); its role focuses on supporting individuals aged 55 and over who are experiencing social isolation due to various life circumstances. Many of its clients face loneliness, vulnerability, and declining mental wellbeing, often leading to conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Involve Kent has been working with a local resident to establish a new community arts and craft group, specifically for these clients, providing a safe, welcoming space where they can connect with others, learn new skills, and rediscover a sense of purpose and belonging. These sessions are designed not only to be creative and engaging, but also to foster friendships and emotional support among participants.

Ideally, they would like to run a 2-hour session, with an additional 30 minutes allocated for setup and clear-up, totalling 2.5 hours. This would allow time to create a relaxed and welcoming environment for participants without feeling rushed.

While the group is primarily intended for Edenbridge residents currently supported by Involve Kent, they anticipate that there may be interest from individuals in the wider Sevenoaks area. Should that happen, they would be happy to refer them into its '*Actively Involved*' service, which would enable them to access the group.

Referral into its AI service offers a range of additional benefits, including access to Community Navigation, Social Prescribing, Carer Support and other partner services. They also host seasonal and informative events throughout the year, including an annual Christmas party, which help foster a sense of community and celebration among participants.

In terms of promotion and outreach, Involve Kent operate across several social media platforms and publish a quarterly newsletter, both of which can use to publicise the group and encourage engagement.

Involve Kent has a nominate coordinator for the group, and are an employee of Involve Kent, They would take full responsibility for the group's management. The sessions would be supported by carefully selected volunteers, all of whom will have completed safeguarding training prior to the start date. They will also undergo DBS checks to ensure a safe and secure environment for all participants.

They have a designated safeguarding lead based at our head office, who will be available to support and advise should any concerns arise. Costs to clients will be kept to an absolute minimum, primarily covering light refreshments such as tea, coffee, and biscuits. Involve Kent will provide the initial art supplies, and we will also make use of donated materials wherever possible.

Whilst Involve Kent is providing a coordinator for the group, art supplies and refreshment's, it does not have any funds to cover regular hall hire costs.

Members are asked to support this initiative allowing a regular weekly booking of Rickards Hall for free of charge. Current Hall hire fees are £22.78 per hour.

Options could included:

- Support the initiative for an initial period free of charge - this could be under partnership delivering services to the community
- To review the fees once council has reviewed its Hall hire fees next year
- To support the use of the Hall but to impose a charge from the onset

How do members want to proceed?

12.2 **Love Edenbridge Day 7th March 2026 - to consider free use of Rickards a Hall and Courtyard, and use of TN8 licence to EVCC**

The Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce are planning a repeat event after the great success of last year's Love Edenbridge event. ,They would like to book Rickards Hall again for the indoor craft market for the day and use the outside area under the same terms - no hire costs.

Do Members confirm:

1. Free use of Rickards hall for Saturday 7 March 2026, all day
2. Use of the Council's TN8 licence (this does not include sale of alcohol)

How do members want to proceed?

12.3 **UK-wide COVID-19 Day of Reflection on Sunday 8 March 2026**

See the attached letter from the Department for Culture, Media and Support.

This year, five years on from the outbreak of Covid-19, Council opened a memory book providing a opportunity for residents to honour a loved one, share a personal memory, or express gratitude to someone who provided support during the pandemic. We said the book will be preserved in the Council's archives, with plans to reopen it for public viewing on the 10th anniversary. No one made an entry.

How do Members want to proceed?

 Annex 5: 251113 DCMS letter - Publication of the UK government's response to the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration.pdf

12.4 **WI Hall: To receive notice the Chairman of the Management Committee is stepping down**

The above is for noting.

12.5 **To note: Resignation of the Community Warden**

Kevin McGovern has recently opted to tender his resignation confirming that he will not be returning. He is thankful to everyone for their support, and has enjoyed his time working for the Council and all the residents he has met and helped. For now we have Lin as temporary Community Warden on reduced hours. A review of the position will take place next year with proposals presented to Personnel Committee.

13 **Devolution and local government reorganisation**

Update provided by SDC:

Following consideration of the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) at the District Council's Scrutiny Committee, Council and Cabinet in the past weeks, **the proposal for three-unitary councils has been submitted to Government.**

The final business case, which now includes a foreword that was unavailable at the time the

report was considered by District Council Members earlier this month, will be available to view shortly at <https://kentcouncilleaders.org.uk/>.

Across Kent, the following models are being supported:

Option 1a – One unitary council - Kent County Council

Option 3a – Three unitary councils - Folkestone & Hythe; Maidstone; Sevenoaks; Tonbridge & Malling; Tunbridge Wells

Option 4b – Four unitary councils (existing boundaries) - Dover; Swale; Thanet

Option 4d – Four unitary councils (boundary changes) - Ashford; Canterbury; Medway

Option 5a – Five unitary councils (boundary changes) - Dartford; Gravesham;

A joint press release from all Kent Councils will be published to share this position.

The Government will now take a few months to consider the proposals before launching a public consultation, which we expect to commence late in February.

We will ensure the consultation is promoted widely to encourage responses from residents, Members, staff, Town & Parish Councils and other partners across the District.

Do members have any comments?

- 14 **To review the management arrangements and future of Edenbridge Thursday Market**
See the attached budget paper (item 10), page 6.

How do members want to proceed?

- 15 **Consultations**

- 15.1 **Sevenoaks Local Plan - Reg 19 (3) - closing date 11 December**

https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069128/emerging_local_plan/861/local_plan_consultation_october_to_december_2025

- 15.2 **Proposed Taxi Licensing Fees from April 2026 -Sevenoaks District Council - closing date 10 December**

https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069143/taxis/553/proposed_taxi_licensing_fees_from_april_2026

In view of the confidential nature of Agenda Item 16 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.

- 16 **[CONFIDENTIAL] Civic Medallions - to receive outcome of voting of nominations**
Confidential item omitted from public papers.

- 17 **Date of next meeting - 12 January 2026**



House Project at the Eden Centre: Funding request for 2026/27

Places to live. Space to grow.

Background

Edenbridge Town Council has contributed towards the costs of the HOUSE Project at the Eden Centre since it opened in 2013. Since April 2017 a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been in place between Edenbridge Town Council and West Kent. We are very grateful for generous contributions towards the project, including your current annual donation of £9,000. We are seeking a further annual grant of £13,500 towards the running costs of Edenbridge HOUSE for financial year 2026/7. This increased level of funding will enable us to offer an enhanced youth service, including weekly detached youth sessions.

Proposed project

Edenbridge HOUSE is a safe place for young people to socialise, have fun and get information, advice and support on a wide range of health issues. The project offers a free, fully inclusive and accessible service to all those aged 11-19 (or those aged up to 25 with learning disabilities). We will deliver:

- Open access youth sessions on three evenings a week for 48 weeks (a total of 144 sessions). Each session will last for three hours.
- Weekly detached evening youth sessions, in partnership with Eden Christian Trust. This work will involve engaging with young people in public spaces such as parks, streets or housing estates. We aim to reach young people who don't access traditional youth services and establish positive relationships with them.

Project budget

The project budget for the period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 is as follows:

Category	Cost
Direct project costs	
Staff costs – Youth Coordinator and three youth workers	£41,744
HOUSE premises costs (room hire, broadband etc.)	£14,233
Resources, session materials and refreshments	£2,920
Sub-total for direct project costs	£58,897
Indirect project costs	
Management overhead costs	£5,889
Other overhead costs	£8,834
Sub-total for indirect project costs	£14,723
Total	£73,620

We expect to secure external funding (from The Great Stone Bridge Trust, local funders and our suppliers) of £10,000. West Kent will contribute £50,120 (including all indirect costs). This leaves a funding gap of £13,500.

Why are we seeking an increased level of funding?

It is increasingly difficult to secure external funding for youth services. Kent County Council decommissioned all voluntary sector youth services in 2024, including funding for our detached youth service. Youth organisations throughout Kent have increased fundraising requests to charitable trusts and lottery funders to keep services going. This increased competition for funds has resulted in significantly reduced success rates for external bids. Last year our funding bids for youth projects were turned down by both National Lottery Communities Fund and BBC Children in Need.

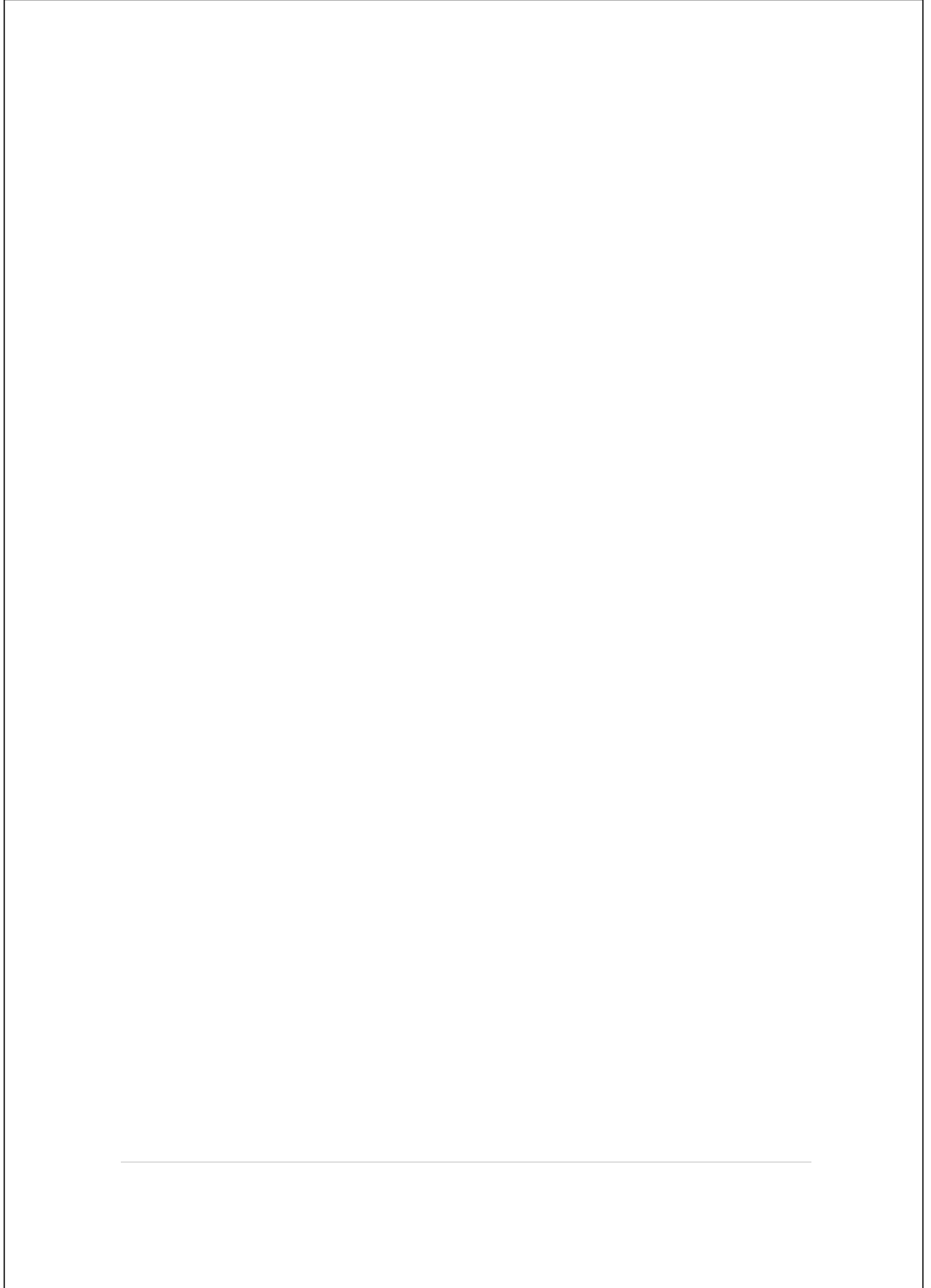
We believe that the funding landscape will improve in the next few years. For the time being, projects can only survive if they have reliable local funding sources. In Edenbridge we are fortunate that there are three local funders (West Kent, Great Stone Bridge Trust and Edenbridge Town Council) that have financial resources to support local youth services. Great Stone Bridge Trust continues to support us but has received more bids from local projects. The Trust has recently reduced their annual commitment to the Edenbridge HOUSE project to £6,000 (from £7,000).

We request an increase in funding from Edenbridge Town Council of £4,500 for the next financial year, taking our total request to £13,500. This funding will ensure that we can deliver a weekly detached youth service and also maintain an adequate staffing level in our three weekly clubs. With your support, one of our youth workers (working in partnership with the Eden Christian Trust) would deliver weekly evening street-based sessions in Edenbridge (for 48 weeks a year). We would work with your staff and other local organisations to identify hot spots for antisocial behaviour. We will work with young people to identify local issues and find solutions. This tried and tested preventative approach has helped us divert young people from antisocial behaviour and support safer communities. With your support, we will have the necessary resources to deliver regular street-based sessions. (Without additional funding of £4,500, we would be unable to commit to regular street-based sessions.)

Conclusion

With your support we will help young people to build their social networks and take part in free youth activities, reducing pressure on family budgets. We will contribute towards reduced antisocial behaviour, improved health and wellbeing, improved personal development, skills, and aspirations. Together, we will contribute to making Edenbridge a better place to live, work and visit. Thank you for your consideration.

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13 November 2025

INT2025/11085/DC

Dear Leader,

Publication of the UK government's response to the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

Five years ago the world as we knew it stopped. The COVID-19 pandemic affected everyone and in so many different ways.

As recommended by the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration, the government has announced a programme of commemorative activity to honour the lives lost and the sacrifices made by so many. My thoughts are with the many families who suffered the loss of a loved one during the pandemic in the most devastating circumstances, with many unable to be with the loved one or to say goodbye.

In contrast to the experiences of separation we felt during the pandemic, our commemorative programme will allow us to come together to remember those we lost and the acts of service from so many. We will continue to support the UK-wide COVID-19 Day of Reflection and on **Sunday 8 March 2026** we hope that local authorities across the country will join us in marking the day with activities in your communities.

The pandemic also saw our communities come together in extraordinary ways to help and support each other in the most difficult of times. We saw acts of courage and dedication from the key workers who kept vital services running, and the millions who volunteered to support others in their time of need. We thank all those who worked so hard to keep our country going and these acts of service will be remembered as part of this commemorative programme.

We have created dedicated webpages on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) to provide information on COVID-19 commemoration. These include a repository of oral histories to ensure that the experiences of the pandemic are not forgotten, as well as details on the many COVID-19 memorials. We will provide financial support to create new memorials that reflect the importance of green spaces throughout the pandemic and provide spaces for contemplative reflection.

In Parliament we look across the River Thames to the National Covid Memorial Wall as a reminder of the scale of loss we encountered. A wall of hearts, created by the bereaved for the bereaved with each heart hand painted by a team of volunteers to remember a life lost. It is an incredibly powerful and moving tribute and we know how much it means. The government, working with Friends of the Wall and local partners, will support the preservation of the National Covid Memorial Wall as a national memorial to the lives lost to COVID-19.

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This government is determined to learn the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and build our national resilience. DCMS has worked closely with the bereaved families in the development of this programme and we have heard movingly that they do not want others to experience their suffering. As recommended by the UK Commission, we will launch a new UK-wide fellowship scheme led by UK Research and Innovation on natural hazards to support future national resilience as part of the commemorative programme to honour the loss and sacrifice.

There are a number of ways that local authorities can take part in the COVID-19 commemoration programme:

- **Support Day of Reflection 2026** - We are grateful for the activities coordinated by local authorities to mark the Day of Reflection this year and the support given to communities to enable them to come together to remember the pandemic in a way that was meaningful to them. We saw a range of different activities: hosting commemorative events for the public to attend in civic spaces or local memorials, making use of cultural and civic amenities as spaces available for reflection, and sign-posting existing support services and networks to help those bereaved. We welcome your support for marking the 2026 Day of Reflection and more information will be available on the Day of Reflection website in due course. Many support groups are keen to work with local authorities more closely, and please do get in touch if you would like to discuss this further.
- **Memorials** - We are gathering information on existing COVID-19 memorials to present to the general public on GOV.UK. If you are aware of a memorial in your area that you would like to be included on the Covid Commemoration webpages, please share with us the official name of the memorial, its specific location (including postcode or what.three.words details), and an image of the memorial (if you have one) with permission from the image owner for us to use it on the GOV.UK webpages.
- **Oral Histories:** We are also collating a list of oral histories related to COVID-19 that are accessible to the public to create a comprehensive repository that reflects the diverse experiences of the pandemic. If you are aware of oral histories that reflect the experiences of your community, we would be grateful if you could share their details with us.

My officials are very happy to discuss any of the above or wider areas of the commemorative programme with your teams if this would be helpful. You can get in touch with us by emailing covid.commemoration@dcms.gov.uk.

Thank you for your support in helping to honour the loss and remember the sacrifice and public service of so many during this time.

With best wishes,

Baroness Twycross
Minister for Museums, Heritage and Gambling

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