

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 confirmed the EMR levels as presented or are then 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**