

Minutes of the Meeting of Open Spaces held in Doggetts Barn on 26 January 2026 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge, Angela Baker (*Chairwoman*), Sarah Compton, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Michael Stockdale (*Vice-Chairman*)

In attendance: Open Spaces Officer. 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 Gemmell Smith, Sumner, McGregor and Streets.

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, approve and sign the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 10 November 2025 (pages 2023-113/1-10).

Resolved: that the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee 10 November 2025 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting (113/1-10).

5 To Receive Analysis of Receipts and Payments to 21 January 2026

Members noted the income and expenditure from 1 April to 21 January 2025.

Members requested that the confirmation of the Pavilion postcode (required for income from the solar panels) and the Scottish Power claim were followed up and backpay investigated. An update would be provided at the April meeting.

6 To confirm movement of funds to earmarked reserves for carry over projects

Members noted the following recommendation to move funds to earmarked reserves for carry over projects:

Kent Brook: Budget £2,160 - this was part of a contingency in the event of significant repairs.

Skate Park sheet repairs: Budget £4,000 - Spent £1,950. Any surplus would be moved to EMR as contingency or for future upgrade to skatepark.

Equipment surplus of £3,187.92 move to EMR if not used.

Repointing section of courtyard concrete slabs: Budget £1,026 (propose to move to EMR). There was some works to be considered to the side of Doggetts Barn.

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

Resolved: to support the recommended reserve movements.

7 To Ratify Operational Decisions for Open Spaces Activity

At the November meeting Members were advised that 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. The total cost for replacing the damaged slats was £208.73. Members,

Ratified: the expenditure of £203.73 for the replacement of the damaged picnic bench slats in Stangrove

Park.

8 Correspondence

None.

9 Head Groundsman's Report

Members noted the Head Groundsman's report, including:

Routine seasonal works were carried out across all Council sites, including weed treatment, maintenance of planters and cemetery beds, topping up sunken graves, pruning, pitch marking, planned tree works, and leaf clearance.

Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund inspections at the Recreation Ground and Nomads were completed, with the FA satisfied with pitch conditions and providing recommendations to further improve playability, including potential opportunities to better utilise grant funding.

Repairs to the black railings at the front of Stangrove Park were completed prior to Christmas, following approval at the previous meeting.

Tree works were carried out across several sites, including the removal of a declining oak at Stangrove Park, deadwood removal at Blossoms Park, and crown reduction to the silver maple at the former police station site.

One approved pedestrian mower was delivered, with the second expected shortly. All small machinery was serviced in preparation for the growing season, with the Kubota fully serviced and the tractor scheduled for servicing.

Autumn pitch aeration was completed in November using FA funding, and arrangements were made for spring aeration. Pruning of shrubs and hedges was undertaken, larger hedge cutting was scheduled ahead of the nesting season, and churchyard lime trees were pollarded.

Repairs to the boundary fence at Forge Croft Allotments commenced, and woodland management works began in Millennium Wood to improve safety, habitat quality, and biodiversity.

9.1 To consider the hire or purchase of a pedestrian self propelled top dresser. Hire costs twice yearly total £1,300.00

As part of the FA PitchPower report, it was recommended that we increase the volume of top dressing applied during the playing season and as part of the annual summer pitch renovation programme. While sufficient funding was available within the grant to purchase additional top dressing material, it was increasingly difficult and inefficient for the team to apply larger quantities by hand, particularly across wider areas.

To support this recommendation, I had obtained indicative costs for the hire or purchase of a pedestrian, self-propelled top dresser. The cost to purchase a new machine was approximately £11,500 + VAT, while weekly hire was approximately £650 + VAT.

As the PitchPower grant funding could be used to cover hire costs but did not extend to the purchase of new machinery, hiring the equipment may represent the most practical and cost-effective option, as usage was likely to be twice a year.

Initially costs would be funded by the PitchPower grant, but as this decreased with the Council's commitment increasing (as per the agreement) this would form part of future budgets. Members,

Resolved: to approve the hire of a pedestrian, self-propelled top dresser at a cost of up to £650.00 + VAT per week (hire costs twice yearly total £1,300.00), to be funded through the FA PitchPower grant.

9.2 To consider the removal of water troughs at the Forge Croft Allotments and replace with mains fed taps at a cost of £250.00 per unit

Members noted that following a 2025 legionella report it was suggested that the water troughs at the Forge Croft Allotments should be removed and replaced with mains fed taps to avoid old and stagnant water, which could be a health hazard.

The cost to remove the old trough and replace with a mains fed tap was £250.00 per unit. Members,

Resolved: to approve the removal of four water troughs and replace with mains fed taps at a cost of £250.00 per unit, subject to support from the Edenbridge Allotment Garden Association (EAGA).

9.3 To consider the purchase of two new waste bins at Stangrove Park and the newly acquired land at the old Police Station site at a total cost of £1,149.98 plus VAT

Several litter bins across various Council sites were approaching the end of their service life and would require replacement. The most urgent replacement was a bin at Stangrove Park, which was no longer fit for purpose, together with the provision of a new bin for the Council's land at the former Police Station site. The total cost for both bins was £1,149.98 + VAT (cost based on previous bin order). Members,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £1,149.98 plus VAT for the purchase of two new waste bins.

10 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. 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 April meeting.

Market Archway: This was due to be installed on 29 December but due to unforeseen circumstances had to be postponed. A new installation date will be confirmed in due course.

Allotment Renewals: Renewals would be sent out to plot holders in February for the Swan Lane Allotments, whilst the Forge Croft renewals were being handled by EAGA.

Summer Fun Days: Awaiting details from Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) at the time of meeting and would report at the April meeting.

Members commented that they were unhappy with the delays and time taken to install the market archway, and were keen to see this resolved as a matter of urgency.

10.1 Cemetery Matters

10.1.1 To receive the Burial Report

Members noted the following burial report:

November: 1 burial, 0 ashes interments

December: 1 burial, 0 ashes interments

January to date: 0 burials, 1 ashes interment

10.1.2 To note the retirement of Edenbridge Cemetery grave digger and confirm the appointment of his replacement

Members were advised that in December, the Council was informed that after nearly 55 years of service, the local grave digger, Philip Edwards, would be retiring. During this period, Philip had undertaken his duties to a consistently high standard and had provided a long standing and valued service to the community.

Philip had recommended Stephen Lawrenz as a preferred grave digger. Stephen had assisted Philip at Edenbridge Cemetery for the past few years and had expressed an interest in continuing the role. He was currently carrying out these works as needed.

Stephen had a good working knowledge of Edenbridge Cemetery, and his public liability insurance had been received and checked. Members,

Resolved: to support the appointment of Stephen Lawrenz as the preferred grave digger for Edenbridge Cemetery.

10.2 Vandalism Report

Members noted that on the 13th or 14th of December 2025 the community plot polytunnel had been slashed, and a new cover was probably required. A polytunnel on an adjacent plot had also been damaged by trespassers at the Forge Croft Allotments. The costs would fall to the plot holder, but was an incident for noting.

Further damage to the community plot polytunnel occurred on the 17th or 18th of January 2026. The Community Warden (CW) had reported this to the police.

10.3 Allotment matters

10.3.1 To consider replacement of Forge Croft Allotment Gates at a cost of up to £2,498.12

The Edenbridge Allotment Garden Association (EAGA) Plot Officer had raised ongoing concerns regarding trespassing and vandalism at the Forge Croft Allotments.

Some anti social behaviour had been reported in the past, though more recently in December, two polytunnels had been severely damaged (as reported under item 9.2) and again in January.

Trespassers were gaining access either by climbing over the main entrance gates or by scaling the fence along the eastern boundary of the allotments. The grounds team have carrying out repairs and improvements to the fencing.

The EAGA Plot Officer had therefore requested that the existing entrance gates be replaced with a taller, more robust alternative.

Costs for a 1.8m high x 1.2m wide twin mesh single leaf pedestrian gate and a 1.8m high x 3.5m wide twin mesh single leaf vehicle gate were £1,398.12, excluding installation. Should installation be required, this was estimated to cost around £1,100.00.

Members discussed this issue at length and whilst they agreed that taller gates may deter some trespass, it was ultimately decided that it would not prevent it. As a result, Members,

Resolved: to not support replacing the access gates at the Forge Croft Allotments.

10.3.2 To consider continued support for the community plots at Forge Croft Allotments

Members were reminded that Committee and EAGA agreed to waive fees for the past two years for two community plots at the Forge Croft Allotments.

The community plots appear to be well used and the plan is to continue the initiative for another year. Members once again,

Resolved: to continue to waive the fees for two community plots at the Forge Croft Allotments.

10.4 End of year update on scheduled works

Members were advised that the annual tasks were mostly completed, including:

The pumps at the Mill Leat and Pavilion were serviced.

Amenity weed spray to the open spaces was completed.

Annual playground inspections

Annual gulley clearance.

The interceptor cleansing for the Market Yard Car Park was booked for early December, but due to an abandoned car blocking access this had to be postponed. Arrangements had been made for the removal of the vehicle, once this had taken place the interceptor cleansing would be rebooked.

Members had no questions.

10.5 To discuss Gardens in Bloom plans for 2026 and agree categories

At the September 2025 meeting, Members noted that there was a low number of entries for the 2025 competition and as a result, an awards evening would not be held. Members resolved that despite the low number of entries, the competition should continue for 2026 but with some updated categories.

The categories for 2025 were:

Front or Back Garden

Herb/Vegetable Garden

Window Box or Hanging Basket

Tallest Sunflower

Unique display celebrating 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council

Youth Category: Eggshell cress heads

People's Choice

The following categories for 2026 were proposed, with some slight changes to the above and the removal of low or no entry categories:

Front or Back Garden

Allotment or Herb/Vegetable Garden

Small display (Window Box or Hanging Basket)

Young Gardener (Any entry from under 16's)

Peoples choice

Members discussed various ways to promote the competition, including social media and support from the CW. Members,

Resolved: to support the amendments to the categories for the 2026 competition, along with the inclusion of a 'High Street Trader' category and,

Resolved: to reintroduce the awards evening for 2026.

10.6 Playground annual inspection: To receive reports

Members noted the annual inspection reports for the following sites, which were carried out in September 2025:

Stangrove Park playground: Some algae and moss on surfaces, some paint flaking off metalwork on roundabout and train, loose fixings on springers, damage to basket swing/worn chains. Risk Factor - Low risk with some very low risk and 1 moderate risk.

Stangrove Park gym and multi use games area (MUGA): Missing instruction labels for gym equipment, loose fence posts. Risk Factor - Very low risk with some low risk.

Marsh Green playground: Some rot present on fence posts, signage delaminated, gate closes too quickly, swing shackles and chains worn, slide fall height exceeds 1.5m, dents in slide surface, surfacing and paintwork on all equipment requires attention. Risk Factor - Low risk with some very low risk. The playground was due for replacement in 2026.

Blossoms Park skate park: Bench paintwork worn, bin door not secured, some damage to chain link fence, some parts of timber on skate ramp rough or splintered, some unsecured fixings. Risk Factor - Low risk with some very low risk.

Recreation Ground playground: Bin door not secured, grass mats underneath spinner and rope swing are silted up, spinner seat damaged, rope swing has some damage, 3 bay swing has some wear on chains and the chains have been twisted along with excessive wear on chain links, slight

damage to side of slide. Risk Factor - Low risk, with some very low risk and 1 moderate risk.

All very low and low risk issues identified would be monitored by the Head Groundsman and addressed if necessary along with the two moderate risks.

No inspection carried out on Spitals Cross playground as this was undertaken earlier in the year.

Members had no questions.

10.7 Hanging Baskets: To confirm the number of hanging baskets, the budget of up to £6,206.00 and contractor.

Amethyst had provided its annual quote to supply and maintain the summer High Street hanging baskets display for 58 baskets. The quote totalled £6,206.00, which was an increase of £176.90 from 2025.

The Open Spaces Officer had been in contact with an alternative provider, Windowflowers, who has provided a quote, which was presented to Members, totalling £5,292.50 for 58 baskets. A positive reference had been received from Lingfield Parish Council and their website shows a wide range of prestigious customers.

Budget allowed for hanging baskets and plants was £7,200.00. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the budgeted expenditure for the 2026 hanging baskets for the High Street and Doggetts Barn and,

Resolved: to proceed with the proposal from Windowflowers to supply the hanging baskets for 2026 at a cost of £5,292.50.

10.8 Market: To consider an external appraisal of the market providing a summary report of key issues and recommendations, carried out by a NABMA market specialist, and the expenditure of £300.00 plus travel and VAT.

Members were informed that the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) had offered a support package to market authorities which included:

An on site visit to the market by an experienced adviser to gain a detailed understanding of issues and opportunities.

In-depth discussions with officers (and the wider team) on how to improve the market.

Written report summarising key findings and recommendations.

The cost for this service was £300 plus travel and VAT. This support would have been helpful in addressing operational challenges, strategic considerations, as well as providing an independent view and fresh insights. Members,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £300.00 plus travel and VAT for a site visit from an external market sector specialist.

11 Capital projects update

11.1 Bandstand at Stangrove Park

At the November meeting, Members resolved to approve the proposed bandstand for Stangrove Park, including its style, size and location.

At the time of meeting, Officers were preparing the tender documentation for both the construction of the bandstand and the associated groundworks. Once submissions were received, they were assessed to confirm they met the required specification and delivered best value. A summary of the tenders and the recommended next steps would be presented to Committee in April for consideration.

Members had no questions.

11.2 **Marsh Green Playground**

At the November Open Spaces meeting, Members were advised that the Open Spaces Officer had met with two playground equipment suppliers to obtain an indicative budget for the replacement of the playground at Marsh Green. Based on these initial discussions, the estimated cost of the project was approximately £70,000, with the full amount to be funded through Edenbridge Town Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation.

The next stage was to progress the project to tender. Tender documentation would be prepared and issued in February or March, with submissions assessed against the agreed requirements, quality standards and value for money. A further update would be brought back to Members at the April meeting.

12 **Edenbridge Cricket Club: To consider a request to extend car park at Blossoms Park**

Edenbridge Cricket Club (ECC) had requested permission to resurface and extend the cricket pavilion car park at Blossoms Park.

The car park surface did not provide a stable, year-round all-weather solution. The proposed scheme would replace the current surface with a more robust specification and extend the parking area. It would also improve disabled access to the pavilion.

The proposals were being designed to meet the requirements of the conservation area and this would be demonstrated through a planning application.

Subject to available funding and overall costs, the extension would be delivered in phases. If approved, ECC hoped funding would be supported through the Town Council CIL funds alongside other external funding and grant opportunities. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the request from ECC to extend and resurface the car park at Blossoms Park, subject to the project being granted planning permission, and,

Resolved: to confirm that ETC submits the planning application as the work would be on Council land.

13 **Streetlights maintenance replacement programme**

13.1 **Streetlights maintenance replacement programme: 2025-26 Update.**

Members were reminded of the replacement programme for 2025/26. Members also noted that two Columns were repaired in Mill Hill 137 from the 23/24 programme and 139 which was damaged in a road traffic accident (covered by insurance). Repairs were carried out on 9th December 2025.

Column 50 in Four Elms Road was removed on 2nd December 2025.

Members had no questions.

13.2 **Streetlights maintenance replacement programme: 2026-27 Update**

At the November meeting, Members ratified an ETC CIL application for £40,000 to fund the vast majority of streetlight replacements on Cedar Drive and Park Avenue, the CIL application was approved. The CIL application for an additional streetlight in Church street was also approved, an update would be provided upon completion of the work.

14 **News Release**

The following had been highlighted for news release:

- The new streetlight for Church Street
- Edenbridge Gardens in Bloom
- Bandstand progress
- The retirement of the Edenbridge Cemetery grave digger

15 Date of Next Meeting - 13 April 2026

Members noted the date of the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 20:24

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