

To Councillors: J Aldridge (*Vice-Chairman*), A Baker (*Chairwoman*), S Compton, 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 11 May 2026 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
6 May 2026

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

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Meeting Papers & Report

1 **Election of Chairman for the ensuing year**

1.1 **To receive the Chairman's declaration of office**

2 **Election of the Vice-Chairman**

2.1 **To receive the Vice-Chairman's declaration of office**


3 **To Receive Apologies for Absence**

4 **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.


Members are reminded to the Code of Conduct, and Appendix B - Registering interests and non-participation.

5 **To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 March 2026 (pages 2023-130/1-).**


 Full Council | 09 March 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-130/1-34)

6 **To adopt the following reports/minutes of committee meetings**


6.1 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on**

 Finance and Governance | 16 February 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-125/1-5)


6.2 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning and Transport meetings held on 02 March 128/1-3, 23 March and 20 April 135/1-4.**

 Planning and Transport | 02 March 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-128/1-3)


 Planning and Transport | 23 March 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-132/1-8)

 Planning and Transport | 20 April 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-135/1-8)

6.3 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 13 April 2026 (pages 2023-134/1-14).**

 Open Spaces | 13 April 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-134/1-14)

6.4 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Buildings & Leases Committee Meeting held on 27 April 2026 (pages 2023-136/1-8).**

 Buildings & Leases Committee | 27 April 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-136/1-8)

To receive recommendations from Committees

7.1 **Finance and Governance Committee**

7.1.1 **To approve revaluations of Council owned buildings, and expenditure of £1,875**

The Internal Auditor's report, as reported to Council March meeting, noted buildings valuations should be considered annually, and revalued as a minimum with the insurance agreement renewals i.e. 3-yearly to ensure that insurance valuations. Finance and Governance committee supported this recommendation.

Members are ask to approve revaluations of Council owned buildings, and expenditure of £1,875?

7.1.2 **To confirm the recommendations to move budget funds into earmarked reserves 2026-27**


Noting the report in the finance meeting papers under 7.3, members were satisfied with the recommendations for reserve movements and, Resolved: to move unspent projects budgeted for to EMR, as well as other planned movements. Including,

- £23,753 budgeted surplus (buildings and new strategic projects EMR)
- £10,650 budgeted planned increase for EMR for equipment, staffing and playgrounds
- £23,898 budget projects either in progress or to be completed (open spaces and buildings)

However, the actual year-end movements includes an additional £27,647. These are monies that were included in the budget for movement, or other resolutions, and include: £8,505 for Pavilion 30-year plan, £5,000 for the Pavilion professional services for the new water boilers and mains water projects, Buildings movement to increase reserve £2,963, Land & Assets £2.500, staffing EMR increase £7,668. See the attached report performance and reserve movements report.


Total movements include budgeted, planned and carryover was £85,947.

Members are asked to confirm the recommended movements of £58,301 plus the other planned movement £27,647, total £85,947.30.

 Annex 1: 2025-26 Year End Financial Performance and Reserve Movements.pdf

8 **To confirm and adopt the following constitution documents:**

Council policies and procedures are published on the website, under policies. Below link is to the main constitution polices.

 https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/document_category/constitution-documents/

8.1 **Standing Orders**

Below is a link to the full Standing Orders as reviewed, updated and adopted 09 March 2020, last amended October 2024 (18).


Attached is an amended section 5 - Council meetings v. to xxii.

Members are asked to:

- **Confirm the amendments section 5, v.to xxii;**

- **and to reconfirm the Standing Orders.**

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/standing-orders.pdf>

 Confidential Annex 2 (omitted from public documents):

8.2

Financial Regulations

Below is a link to the full Financial Regulations as reviewed, updated and adopted 28 October 2024, amended section 5 procurement May 2025.

Attached is an amended section 13 - Income.

Members are asked to:

- **Confirm the amendments section 13 - income;**
- **and to reconfirm the Financial Regulations**

https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/financial_regulations.pdf

 Confidential Annex 3 (omitted from public documents):

8.3

Terms of Reference

Members are asked to confirm the Terms of Reference as adopted 27 January 2020, last updated 27 October 2025.

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/terms-of-reference.pdf>

8.4

Code of Conduct Policy

Members are asked to confirm the Councillors Code of Conduct Policy. This was renewed 07 July 2025.

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/code-of-conduct-policy.pdf>

9

To review the delegated arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff (as detailed in the Terms of Reference) and appointment of any new committees

The Terms of Reference (TOR) set out the committee membership and delegated responsibilities. This is a working document and may be amended from time to time to reflect operational changes and procedures. It is usually reviewed by the Governance Committee, with any recommended changes referred to Full Council.

Members are asked to review and confirm the current committees, sub-committees, and working groups (items 9.1–9.12) as follows:

- **To confirm the existing Committees and CIL Board (items 9.1–9.6)**
- **To confirm the existing Sub-Committees and Steering Group (items 9.7–9.9)**
- **To confirm the delegated arrangements and procurement procedures (items 9.10–9.11)**
- **To confirm the Work Groups (item 9.12)**
- **To consider and propose any additional Committee or Sub-Committee (item 9.13)**

9.1

Finance and Governance Committee (10)

9.2

Planning and Transportation Committee (12)

9.3

Open Spaces Committee (10)

9.4 **Buildings and Leases Committee (10)**

9.5 **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Board (15)**

9.6 **Emergency Planning Committee (8)**

9.7 **Personnel Committee (7)**

9.8 **Charities and Grants (15)**

9.9 **Forward Planning Steering Group (15)**

9.10 **Delegated powers to the Town Clerk and Officers**

Delegated powers to the Town Clerk and Officers are set out in the TORs (pages 24 to 26).

9.11 **Delegation for procurement procedures**

As per Financial Regulations and set out in section 5.

9.12 **Working Groups**

The current Working Groups are:

- Internal Audit / Governance Risk Assessment
- Parking and MYCP
- Skate Park / Open Spaces Play and Activities
- Aviation Consultations
- Local Plan

The Internal Audit/Governance Risk Assessment Working Group does not routinely meet, as relevant matters are referred to the Governance Committee, which nominates members to review the Council's annual governance risk assessment. **Members are therefore asked to consider whether this Working Group should be discontinued.**

Members are also asked to confirm the remaining Working Groups and their membership.

9.13 **To consider any additional committees/sub-committees**

10 **To appoint/confirm members for each committee**

Members were appointed to Committees at the start of the current Council term (2023). Membership may change during the term, for example where a councillor resigns or new councillors are appointed.

Members are asked to review and confirm the membership of each Committee. This may include members choosing to step down and/or the appointment of new Members, up to the agreed capacity of each Committee.

All councillors may attend any Committee or Sub-Committee meeting; however, only appointed members are expected to attend as a matter of course and are entitled to vote. Non-members

may speak and make representations but do not have voting rights.

The Chairperson of each Committee will be appointed at its next meeting.

📎 Annex 4: 26 05 Membership of Committees.pdf

- 10.1 **Finance and Governance Committee (10)**
Members are asked confirm continuation of current membership: Cllrs Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, Layland, McGregor, Read, Stockdale, Sumner, and Todd.
- 10.2 **Planning and Transportation Committee (12)**
Members are asked confirm continuation of current membership: There should a minimum of five councillors from each ward: Cllrs Aldridge (SW), Baker (NE), Gemmell Smith (SW), Layland (NE), McArthur (SW), McGregor (NE), Parker (NE), Read (NE), Stockdale (SW), Streets (SW), Todd (NE). **There is one vacancy to fill SW or NE.**
- 10.3 **Open Spaces Committee (10)**
Members are asked confirm continuation of current membership: Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, Layland, McGregor, Stockdale, Streets, and Sumner.
- 10.4 **Buildings and Leases Committee (10)**
Members are asked confirm continuation of current membership: Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, McGregor, Read, Streets, Stockdale, Sumner, Todd. **There are two vacancies to fill.**
- 10.5 **Emergency Planning Committee (8)**
Members are asked confirm continuation of current membership: Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, McArthur, McGregor, Streets.
- 10.6 **Personnel Committee (7)**
Members are asked confirm continuation of current membership: Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McArthur, McGregor, Stockdale, Todd.
- 10.7 **If there are any new committees to appoint members (item 8.13)**
Subject to if a new committee or sub-committee was appointed, to confirm members.
- 11 **To appoint/confirm the members of the working groups**
Do Members confirm continuation of current membership for the following Working Groups (see attachment item 9):
- **Parking and MYCP**
 - **Skate Park / Open Spaces Play and Activities**
 - **Aviation Consultations**
 - **Local Plan**
- If any additional groups are proposed, to appoint membership.
- 12 **To review the arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies, and businesses**

Fees quoted with an asterisk are based on 2025-26.

- 12.1 **Arrangements carried out by Edenbridge Town Council on behalf of:**
Members are asked to confirm the chargeable arrangements and services carried out by the Town Council on behalf of organisations in 12.1.1 to 12.1.4?
- 12.1.1 **Citizens Advice Bureau: Payroll (£438 to cover software costs)**
Council processes the payroll on behalf of CAB, charging only the SAGE software costs.
- 12.1.2 **Great Stone Bridge Trust: Grass cutting and Water Meadow management services (various works includes cutting, vegetation clearance etc)**
- 12.1.3 **Sevenoaks District Council: Ground maintenance services, Town Field, playground inspection, weed spraying on residential estate (£2,044)**
- 12.1.4 **War Graves Commission: Maintenance of War Graves (£300)**
- 12.2 **Professional services engaged**
The asterisk (*) denotes previous 2026-27 charges where 2026-27 charges are tbc. Referring to the list below, **Members to confirm the continuation with the current professional service providers engaged by the Council 12.2.1 to 12.2.16?**
- Members are also asked to reconsider the Agreement term with EDGE IT, item 12.2.5.**
- Others are included under: 12.3 includes AI apps. 12.4 HR and H&S service provider. Item 17 covers Insurance provider.
- 12.2.1 **Business Stream - water (£1,000*)**
We had planned to transfer services over to SES; this is outstanding and will be looked at during the current year.
- 12.2.2 **Canon UK (photocopier £424, plus copying costs est. £320)**
- 12.2.3 **Canva (£129.90)**
Canva Pro/Business licence supports the creation of professional-quality Council communications, presentations, signage, and promotional materials within a secure organisational workspace. It helps improve efficiency and consistency by enabling shared branding, collaborative working, and access to a wide range of design templates and resources, supporting effective communication and community engagement.
- 12.2.4 **Council Meeting Papers (£1,000 est. plus Cloud storage fees)**
October 2025, Council resolved to formalise the Agreement for the Council Papers software, having been working with Councillor Aldridge to develop a bespoke software application to manage Council and Committee agendas, papers, and minutes. Members confirmed a 5-year agreement with an initial annual licence fee estimated at £1,000 plus reimbursing for cloud storage. No fee has yet been claimed, the above is based October meeting papers.

12.2.5 **EDGE IT software packages: Finance (£1,330), Assets register (£320), Epitaph (£54.60), Rickards Hall hire (£296), additional costs (£19.40). To also amend the new Agreement from 5-years to 3-years.**

The Council meeting held in March 2026 resolved to enter into a new 5-year agreement with EDGE. However, having since received the agreement documentation, a number of concerns have been identified regarding longer-term data compliance arrangements and the requirement for an updated Data Controller Agreement. In addition, several operational issues arose during the financial year-end process.

The RFO/Deputy Clerk and Town Clerk would therefore welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further with EDGE and allow a period of time to assess whether the identified issues can be satisfactorily addressed.

The available contract options are as follows:

- 5-year agreement: £2,519.46 per annum
- 3-year agreement: £2,795.28 per annum
- 1-year agreement: £4,194.18 per annum

Cancellation Terms

No penalty applies on a monthly rolling contract.

Otherwise, cancellation penalties apply as a percentage of the total contract value:

- 3-year agreement: 25%
- 5-year agreement: 20%

Members are asked to note that, although the Council previously resolved to re-enter into an agreement with EDGE, concerns remain regarding the adequacy of the contractual arrangements and the software platform itself, which currently operates using Access 2019 and is considered dated in comparison with alternative database systems.

To provide greater flexibility whilst options are explored, whether through improvements to the EDGE system or consideration of an alternative provider. **Members are asked to consider the following proposal:**

Proposal:

To amend the agreement term from 5 years to 3 years, noting that the annual fee would increase from the previously approved £2,519.46 per annum to £2,795.28 per annum, representing an increase of £275.82 per annum.

12.2.6 **Fusion4/Besure/Continental (facilities security management, key holding and fire alarms - £3,594; with approx. £1,176 recharged to EVM; plus call out costs)**

12.2.7 **Mazars (external auditor) (£1,680*)**

NB: The external auditor is appointed to councils.

12.2.8 **Mike Platten (internal auditor) (£975* plus travel)**

12.2.9 **NPower – Street Lighting Energy (£18,046*)**

12.2.10 **PS Technology - AdyenNV (IT support and Licences) (£13,037* variable)**

Members will be asked to review the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) with PS

Technology at the July Council meeting, including consideration of moving to an enhanced managed service package.

The Council is currently operating under a legacy SLA, which continues to provide a good level of service and support. However, the enhanced managed service agreement would provide significantly improved cyber security measures and system protections, building on the Council's existing commitment to strengthening its cyber security arrangements.

Should Members wish to move to the enhanced package, costs are estimated to increase by approximately £2,800 per annum. The enhanced service would support the Council's ongoing commitment to data protection compliance, resilience, and cyber security within an increasingly fast-moving technological environment.

12.2.11 **SAGE payroll (£876) & P11 (£384*) software services (Payroll costs are shared, and recharged to CAB)**

NB: We are considering outsourcing payroll, but currently remains inhouse using Sage.

12.2.12 **Streetlights (Maintenance contract) £7,684***

12.2.13 **Summer Fun Days – Play Place (£2,538*)**

12.2.14 **Total Gas (utilities energy all buildings - current contract up to 2027 - £9,289.55*)**

12.2.15 **Vatix – Lone Working Alarms (£684*)**

The Vatix personal alarms need to be renewed, but apparently we ended up on a rolling renewal, so would need to give notice. We would like to change provider at some point, and this will come back to Council.

12.2.16 **Wilkin Chapman Solicitors (legal advice of FOIs, contracts and agreements and other matters) (varies on use)**

12.3 **AI applications**

12.3.1 **ChatGPT Business licence 3-users (\$720 per year)**

Using a ChatGPT Business licence helps ensure legal compliance and secure data management, as information is retained within the organisation's own secure workspace and is not shared across the wider public platform. It can also support improved efficiency, productivity, and creativity across Council operations.

In addition, the Council is beginning to make use of Microsoft Copilot, which is included within the existing Microsoft licensing arrangements. Copilot offers benefits such as integration with Microsoft Office applications, assisting with drafting documents, summarising meetings and emails, and improving day-to-day productivity.

However, retaining ChatGPT continues to provide additional benefits, including broader functionality, enhanced creativity, more flexible drafting support, and access to specialist tools and features. It should also be noted that Microsoft Copilot itself utilises OpenAI technology, including ChatGPT, as part of its underlying AI capability.

12.3.2 **Otter - 3 user licence (\$299.97)**

Otter.ai Business licence helps ensure secure storage and management of meeting recordings and transcripts within the organisation's designated workspace, supporting good governance and data handling practices. The platform can also improve efficiency by providing automated transcription, meeting summaries, searchable notes, and action tracking, helping officers and members save time and maintain accurate records.

12.3.3 **Gpeto AI software - Planning Tool: To confirm continuation following Trial Period**

In July 2025, the Council agreed to pilot the use of Gpeto, an AI-assisted planning analysis tool, at a discounted subscription cost of £25 per month. Access was initially provided to the Planning Officer, with shared access available to the Town Clerk, Chairman, and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee. Members agreed that the pilot should be reviewed after three to six months.

Following discussions with Gpeto, the Council was able to secure an extended trial period of nine months at the discounted rate.

During the pilot period, the software has proved beneficial in assisting with both small and larger planning applications. Linked directly to the Planning Portal, the platform is able to analyse planning application documents and provide:

- Exact location mapping of applications within the parish.
- Overlay mapping of key planning constraints and designations, including conservation areas, flood risk, listed buildings, and Green Belt (over 60 data layers).
- AI validation checks against planning submission requirements.
- AI assessment of applications against national and local planning policy, including the Local Development Plan, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- Clear identification and labelling of drawings and supporting reports.
- Generation of concise planning-based PDF summaries and outputs.

The system has helped improve efficiency when reviewing multiple planning applications each week and has provided greater clarity and consistency when assessing applications and formulating planning responses. It also supports councillors in better understanding applications, material planning considerations, and the reasons for supporting or objecting to proposals.

Gpeto has advised that it is no longer able to continue the heavily discounted pilot subscription of £25 per month. Should Members wish to continue with the platform, the subscription would increase to the standard package cost of £100 per month (£1,200 per annum), which includes up to 12 view-only users to support wider member access and adoption. Additional users would cost £5 per month each.

Key benefits of the system include:

- Automated planning assessment against local and national planning policy.
- Identification of planning risks, impacts, and material considerations.
- Structured planning reasoning to support objections or support comments.
- Time savings and improved consistency in preparing planning responses.
- Improved accessibility for councillors without specialist planning knowledge.
- Centralised access to planning application information and analysis.

Importantly, officers consider the software to be a valuable training and development tool for both officers and existing and future councillors, particularly mindful of new councillors following the 2027 elections. The platform helps strengthen planning knowledge, understanding, and confidence when considering planning matters.

Having discussed the platform with other local council officers, feedback suggests that the annual cost represents good value for money, particularly given its training and governance benefits alongside operational efficiencies.

Proposal

Members are asked to consider continuing the Council's subscription to Gpeto Planning AI software at a cost of £100 per month (£1,200 per annum), with access for up to 12 view-only users, and to include Gpeto within the Council's approved annual software and service subscriptions.

12.4

HR and H&S consultancy services provision and agreement - to confirm the proposed transition from WorkNest to Peninsula

The Council currently subscribes to HR and Health & Safety consultancy services through WorkNest, at an annual cost of £3,691, together with a separate subscription to the Health Assured employee assistance programme at an annual cost of approximately £800. Total annual cost £4,491.

WorkNest has provided valuable support to the Council over several years, particularly in relation to personnel matters, and the HR advisory service has been responsive and helpful. The Council has also utilised the Safetynest and Youmanage software systems for Health & Safety and HR administration.

However, a review of the current arrangements has identified several operational concerns with the software platforms. Whilst Safetynest has generally functioned adequately, it has at times proved difficult to use, is clunky, and following the annual Health & Safety visit in January 2025, a number of monitoring records were mistakenly deleted by the H&S auditor. This has impacted the Council's ability to maintain its previous high standards of record keeping and reporting.

Similarly, the Youmanage HR system has not proved effective for ongoing HR monitoring and record management. Following the deletion of records over a year ago, the system has not been fully reinstated.

It had initially been understood that the current agreement was based on a three-year term; however, it has since been confirmed that the agreement is for five years. The current billing period renews in November and enquiries are being made regarding any potential costs or penalties associated with early termination.

The Town Clerk recently met with Peninsula to explore alternative HR and Health & Safety consultancy arrangements. Peninsula is recognised as one of the leading providers within the sector and offers a more comprehensive and integrated software solution through the BrightHR and BrightSafe platforms. Members may also note that Peninsula owns Health Assured, meaning the employee assistance programme would be incorporated within the overall subscription package.

The proposed package includes:

- Integrated HR and Health & Safety management systems
- Mobile app access for officers and employees
- Holiday, absence, and attendance management
- Secure document management and audit trails
- E-learning and compliance training
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- Risk assessment and incident reporting tools
- Annual compliance auditing and reporting
- Annual Health & Safety visit

- Two implementation/support days to assist with transition and software setup
- 24/7 HR and Health & Safety advice lines

Depending on the agreement term selected, the proposed Peninsula package for a 60-month period would cost £432 per month (£5,184 per annum). Whilst this represents an increase compared to the Council's current combined annual expenditure of approximately £4,761, the annual difference would be approximately £693 per annum. Officers consider that the enhanced level of service, additional support provision, integrated systems, and significantly more user-friendly software platform provide improved value, resilience, and operational benefit to the Council.

Peninsula has also advised that it may be able to offer a competitor transition arrangement, allowing access to its services prior to the expiry of the existing agreement, helping to ensure continuity and implementation without any gap in support.

As part of the Annual Council review of service providers and external support arrangements, **Members are asked to confirm the Council's HR and Health & Safety consultancy provision and to approve, in principle, the transition from WorkNest to Peninsula, subject to satisfactory confirmation of contractual arrangements and any early termination implications.**

- 12.4.1 **Health Assured (employee assistance/wellbeing mental health programmes £800)**
Subject to the Council's decision regarding the potential transition from WorkNest to Peninsula, the Health Assured subscription may be incorporated within the Peninsula package. At present, however, it remains a separate cost to the Council.

13 **To review and confirm the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies**
Members are asked to confirm the annual subscriptions as listed 13.1-13.14 and 13.14.1.

- 13.1 **Campaign to Protect Rural England £36***
- 13.2 **Edenbridge Allotment Gardens – Affiliation fees from Swan Lane Members £108**
- 13.3 **Edenbridge Magazine (6 editions - £956.22*)**
- 13.4 **Grounds Management Association £176.40***
- 13.5 **Information Commissioner Office £73***
- 13.6 **Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management £110***
- 13.7 **Kent Association of Local Council (KALC) £2,000 (2026/27 subscription)**
- 13.8 **Kent Farmers Market Association (£60)**
- 13.9 **Listed Property Owners' Club £58***

13.10 **National Association for British Markets Authorities (NABMA) £434**

Resolved (130/09/10.4) Council March meeting, to renew for 2026-27 at the discounted rate for advance payment.

13.11 **Open Spaces Society £45***

13.12 **Rural Market Town Group Membership £130***

Members have been asked previously if there is considered to be any value maintaining this membership and concluded to continue membership noting that the organisation was now working with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and did carry out a lot of research focusing on rural areas. RMTG continue to campaign to parliamentarians to be picking up and arguing the case for rural services and concerns.

They also:

- Provide a Weekly Rural Bulletin setting out key rural news stories.
- Monthly Funding Digest highlighting potential sources of funding and grants.
- Sharing news and best practice with the RMTG group and the wider RSN and learning from others.
- Dedicated Market Town newsletter six times a year.
- Free access to our seminar programme of 8 events a year, online focusing on key topics for rural areas including affordable housing, rural connectivity, rural health and care and rural transport.
- A bespoke annual meeting for Councillors and Clerks of the group to share best practice and contribute to RSN campaigning work.
- Dedicated meetings (on zoom) for your Councillors and Clerks.

RMTG do send lots of emails with useful information about their campaigns and work, although not always forward to members. Link to their website is below. They are funded through memberships and grants. **Members are asked if they would like Council to support this group?**

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/>

13.13 **Sevenoaks District Council – Premises Licence (TN8) £1,070***

13.14 **Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Town Clerk's membership £442 (2026/27)**

13.14.1 **Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) - to consider the Open Spaces Officer membership £316**

The Open Spaces Officer is currently undertaking the CiLCA qualification. As Members may be aware, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) is the professional body for local council clerks and senior council employees, ensuring its members are equipped with the knowledge and training required to carry out their roles effectively and to support their council and community.

Individual membership supports good governance and compliance. In addition, there are wider benefits:

- Resilience and continuity: With both officers holding membership, knowledge and expertise are shared, helping to ensure continuity during periods of absence or transition.
- Enhanced reputation: Demonstrates the Council's commitment to professional

standards and to supporting competence, integrity, and continuous professional development.

Members are asked to approve a second SLCC membership to enable Dan Strugnell to continue his professional development and to support Council compliance, at a cost of £316.

- 14 **To confirm the direct debits and standing orders arrangements**
Members are asked to review the attached list (noting amounts shown do vary), and to confirm the continued direct debits? There are no standing orders.

 Annex 5: DD 2026-27.pdf

- 15 **To confirm the Council's bank signatories**
Council Standing Orders and Financial Regulations does not currently specify that signatories need to be Finance Committee members. Attached (confidential) is a list of the Council's signatories. Council accounts: Barclays; CCLA. Norman Foundation: Natwest; Scottish Widows investment account.


A recent IA report said that Council should establish a panel of at least four signatories on each account.

Members are asked to confirm and appoint members as signatories.

 Confidential Annex 6 (omitted from public documents):

- 16 **Fixed Assets Register - To review the inventory of land and other fixed assets including buildings**
The assets registers as of 31 March 2026 is published on the website, link below. The internal auditor has also checked and confirmed the register for year-end.

Members are asked to confirm the Council's Assets, and the closing balance for year-end 2026/26 of £4,319,344.

 <https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/2026-asset-register.pdf>

- 17 **Council Insurance - current provider Gallaghers with Hiscox policy**
A new Council insurance three-year agreement was confirmed June 2026 (resolution 100/05/11.1.1). Gallaghers are the current broker, with Hiscox insurance.

- 17.1 **Council insurance - to confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks with Hiscox (via Gallaghers) and the annual expenditure of £16,217.27 plus annual inflationary increase and asset adjustments**

Last year Council renewed its long term agreement (LTA) for three-years with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited, at an LTA premium of £16,217.27. An LTA means that the policy increases for the following reasons:

- When there are changes to the material facts concerning your policy.
- Policy changes where the sums insured for assets covered against loss or damage are increased or decreased.
- The annual inflationary increase (index linking) applied to the sums insured for the assets covered against loss or damage. *The above fee will increase each year accordingly.
- The imposition by the Government of a higher rate of Insurance Premium Tax (IPT).

Current insurance policy is published on the website, link below.

The internal auditor recommended that the buildings valuations should be revalued with each new insurance, this will be/was considered under agenda item 7.1.1.

Members are asked to confirm the insurance provider Hiscox (via Gallaghers), and the annual premium, noting changes may occur due to the above.

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2025-26-council-insurance-schedule.pdf>

17.2 **Vehicle Insurance Renewal - to ratify the change of provider to Countrywide Insurance (via Gallaghers) and expenditure of £2,403.55**

The Council's vehicle insurance was due for renewal on 12 May (the day after the Council meeting). For several years, the Council has insured its vehicles through NFU.

This year, a comparison quote was obtained from Gallaghers, which was £660 lower than the NFU renewal quote. The policy also provides cover for any driver and includes a lower excess. The proposed insurer is Countrywide Insurance (MSI Group Europe).

Members were contacted by email to seek approval for the change of insurer, as notice was required to be given to NFU ahead of the renewal date. Of those councillors who responded, all supported the change. In consultation with the Chair of the Council, the Town Clerk therefore instructed Gallaghers to proceed.

Members are asked to ratify the appointment of Countrywide Insurance (MSI Group Europe), via Gallaghers, and the associated expenditure of £2,403.55.

18 **To appoint representatives to work with external bodies and arrangements for report back**
Members are asked to confirm the Councillor reps to local organisations, or make relevant amendments or additions?

[Annex 7: 2605 tbc Representatives to external bodies.pdf](#)

19 **To review the Council's complaints procedures (reviewed and amended December 2021)**
Members are asked to confirm the Complaints Procedure.

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/complaints-procedure.pdf>

20 **Freedom of Information and Data Protection Legislation - To review the Council's policies, procedures and practices (noting new policies adopted March 2026): the FOI & publication Scheme Policy; Retention and Disposal Policy; Data Protection Policy; Privacy Notices and the Privacy Policy; and Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy**

Council has recently undertaken a review of its obligations, produces and policies confirming its compliance requirements of data protection legislation. This included:

- Adopted updated Privacy Notices, ensuring transparency and clarity of lawful bases for processing;
- Reviewed and refreshed its Retention and Disposal Policy, including a detailed Retention Schedule;
- Adopted a Data Protection Policy providing overarching governance and accountability;
- Implemented a Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure to ensure individual rights are upheld within statutory timescales;
- Updated its Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme arrangements;
- Reviewed arrangements for meeting recordings and their disposal in accordance with Standing Orders;
- Confirmed appropriate technical and organisational security measures are in place, including secure systems and controlled access;
- Begun reviewing and updating written agreements with service providers where data processing occurs on the Council's behalf.

Members confirm the its policies and procedures for FOI & publication Scheme Policy; Retention and Disposal Policy; Data Protection Policy; Privacy Notices and the Privacy Policy; and Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy.

https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/document_category/data-protection/

21 **Communications and Engagement policies: Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media**

Council reviewed its communications strategy and policies in March 2025; it has the following which outlines how the press and media channels are managed:

- Digital Communications and Social Media Policy
- Communications and Community Engagement Strategy
- Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy

Members are asked to confirm it is satisfied with its policies managing press and media.

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/communications-and-community-engagement-strategy.pdf>

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/digital-communications-social-media-strategy.pdf>

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/digital-communications-social-media-strategy.pdf>

22 **General Power of Competence: to note the Town Council continues to meet the conditions as resolved at its meeting 15 May 2023**

As resolved at its meeting on 15 May 2023, it is considered good practice for the Council to confirm annually that it continues to meet the eligibility conditions for the General Power of Competence (GPC), as set out in the Localism Act 2011, Chapter 1, Sections 1-8.

The General Power of Competence allows eligible councils greater flexibility and discretion to act in the interests of their community, provided actions remain within the law. The GPC enables councils to undertake a wider range of activities beyond those specifically authorised under other legislation, including powers otherwise exercised through Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

To exercise the General Power of Competence, a council must meet the following eligibility criteria at the first annual meeting of a new Council following ordinary elections:

- At least two-thirds of the total number of councillors must have been elected at the last ordinary election. *ETC meets this requirement, with 11 councillors elected to 15 vacancies at the uncontested May elections.*
- The Clerk must hold an appropriate sector-specific qualification. *ETC meets this requirement, as the Town Clerk holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA).*

Members are asked to note that the Council continues to meet the eligibility conditions for the General Power of Competence, as previously resolved on 15 May 2023.

23 **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 31 March 2026**

Attached is the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26.

The AGAR forms part of the Council's statutory financial reporting and governance obligations and must be approved in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Members are required to formally receive and approve each section of the AGAR. The Governance Statement and Accounting Statements must also be read aloud at the meeting, with Members confirming each statement in turn.

Relevant sections:

- **Page 3** – Internal Audit Report (Item 22.1)
- **Page 4** – Governance Statement (Item 22.3)
- **Page 5** – Accounting Statements (Item 22.4)

📎 Annex 8: AGAR 2026 Council May meeting_redacted.pdf

23.1 **To receive the internal auditor's report**

The Internal Auditor carried out an extensive review of the year-end accounts, together with testing of a number of the Council's procedures, on 29 April.

No issues were identified during the audit process. The Internal Auditor commented positively on the Council's understanding, management, and recording of reserves, and confirmed that the current reserve levels were satisfactory.

One notable observation related to the asset register, where the accounting system is not correctly reflecting values for certain assets. A more detailed review of the asset register during 2026/27 was therefore recommended.

The Internal Auditor also noted that the Council had recently reviewed its procedures against current best practice guidance set out within the SAPPP Practitioners' Guide, as resolved at the March Council meeting, and was satisfied to sign off Assertion 10.

A copy of the Internal Audit Report has been published on the Council's website (link below). The completed AGAR Internal Audit Report page is also attached as part of the AGAR documentation (Page 3).

Do Members have any questions?

🔗 <https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/2026-may-end-of-year-audit-report.pdf>

23.2 **To receive the end-of-year financial statements**

A copy of the year-end EDGE financial reports is attached, together with the Bank Reconciliation, Budget Comparison reports, and summaries of both earmarked and general reserves.

This year, an additional report has also been provided detailing the Council's 2025/26 financial performance and reserve movements - see agenda item 7.1.2.


Members are asked to note the following:


- **Consolidated Balance Sheet** (1) confirms the total net assets position (matching Box 7 on the AGAR): £1,386,574.37
- **Income & Expenditure Account** (2) confirms total actual income of £1,298,795 (Boxes 2 and 3 on the AGAR) and total expenditure of £944,966 (Boxes 4 and 6 on the AGAR).
- **Budget Comparison Reports** (3) confirm the budgeted and actual income and expenditure positions, including creditors, debtors, and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income and expenditure. AGAR figures are derived from the Income & Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet.
- **Bank Reconciliation** (4) confirms cash and investment balances (matching Box 8 on the AGAR): £1,453,488
- **Reserve Movement Spreadsheet** (5) details reserve movements throughout the year, including funds released back to General Reserves and budgeted transfers to Earmarked Reserves to ensure continuation of ongoing projects. General Reserves increased by £35,718 to £364,820.02, remaining below 50% of the annual precept.


Do Members have any questions?


Members are also asked to confirm the year-end financial position, with total net assets of £1,386,574.37, comprising:


- **General Reserve: £364,820.02**
- **Earmarked Reserves: £576,529.31**
- **CIL Funds (allocated and unallocated): £445,225.04**

 Annex 9: 2025-2026 Consolidated Balance Sheet.pdf

 Annex 10: 2025-2026 Income and Expenditure Report.pdf

 Annex 11: 310326 Comparison Reports for YY 25-26 - council.pdf

 Annex 12: 2025-2026 Cash Book-reconciliations-Finance Summary.pdf

 Annex 13: EOY 31.03.26 summary reserves for Council.pdf

23.3 **To approve the annual governance statement for 2025-26 (section 1)**

Section 1, page 4 of the AGAR – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.

The Chairperson is required to read each statement of the Annual Governance Statement aloud, with **Members asked to consider and confirm each assertion in turn.**

23.4 **To resolve the accounting statement for 2025-26 (section 2)**

Section 2, page 5 of the AGAR – Annual Accounting Statements 2025/26

The Chairperson is required to read aloud each item within the Accounting Statements (Boxes 1–10), with **Members asked to consider and confirm each figure in turn.**

24 **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.

25 **To receive County and District Councillors Reports**

25.1 **County Councillor**

25.2 **District Councillors**

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

26.1 **Clerk's Report**

Bandstand project: Following the tender process, Open Spaces committee 9April) confirm the two contractors. A meeting has been made to discuss timescales.

Building Bridges for Dementia Friendly Edenbridge: In 2023, the Council commenced a partnership initiative with the Kent Dementia Action Alliance (KDAA) to help make Edenbridge a more supportive and dementia-friendly community for residents living with dementia.

Working together with local businesses and community organisations, the project aimed to raise awareness, share information, and promote best practice in supporting those affected by dementia. The initiative has also been supported by the Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce and Edenbridge Manor Care Home.

The Council is now preparing to relaunch the initiative following confirmation from KDAA of updated branding and a dedicated “Building Bridges for Dementia Friendly Edenbridge” logo.

Additional promotional information is currently being prepared to support the relaunch, including guidance for businesses and organisations on signing up to the Dementia Friendly Pledge and accessing training opportunities.

The Council is currently awaiting confirmation of further training dates from Elaine Murphy. Once confirmed, officers will re-engage with the Chamber of Commerce and Edenbridge Manor Care Home to progress the next phase of the initiative.

Cyber Security, Data Management, and Remote Meeting Technology: The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer/Deputy Clerk recently met with PS Technology to discuss the Council’s current data management systems, cyber security arrangements, and office equipment requirements.

Discussions also included the potential equipment and infrastructure required to support remote and hybrid meetings from the Council's meeting area in Doggetts Barn, and for meetings in Rickards Hall, together with the capability for live streaming of meetings where appropriate.

Members are asked to note that the Government has confirmed its intention to introduce legislation enabling local councils to hold remote and hybrid meetings as part of wider proposals to modernise local government and improve accessibility and public participation. Whilst implementation timescales are not yet confirmed, it is anticipated that the proposals may be referenced within the forthcoming King’s Speech in May.

Should the legislation proceed, councils would have discretion regarding whether, and to what extent, they adopt remote or hybrid meeting arrangements.

Further reports will be brought to Members regarding potential operational changes, data management and cyber security improvements, and proposals for equipment to support remote, hybrid, and streamed meetings.

First Aid Training: Following resolution at Council September meeting, training for all office and groundstaff is booked as 6-hours e-learning and 2 full days 11 and 14 May.

Highways Improvement Plan: This was presented to Planning and Transportation Committee following a meeting with Kent Highways officer. An update version is now on our website under What we do / Road Safety.

Leases - Forge Theatre Group: Amendments to the draft Lease have been viewed by the solicitor and an updated clean draft has been issued. A date to meet to go through the new revised draft Lease was hoped for end of April, but the Clerk was unable to attend. Currently awaiting new date.

Market yard car park access road - new signage: New signage to notify times of access closure to enable the market to utilise this area for traders has been approved. Once

displayed, the temporary bollards will start to be used for Wednesday and Thursdays.

Marsh Green replacement playground: The tender for the new playground closed 29 May. Tenders will be shortlisted with Open Space Committee confirming the successful design and contractor.

NABMA Market Assessment: January Open Spaces Committee confirmed expenditure for a market professional to visit to the market and provide a detailed understanding of issues and opportunities. This took place in March with the report being presented to Committee.

NALC annual conference: Cllr Aldridge, Town Clerk, RFO/Deputy Clerk, and Open Spaces Officer are booked to attend this year's event on 24 June.

Quality Council Status: The Town Clerk and Communications Officer are currently collating evidence required for the Quality Council submission.

27

Draft Local Plan - update

The Local Plan remains a standing agenda item in order to keep Members and the public informed of progress on the emerging Plan, and to provide reassurance that the Council continues to monitor planning matters, local issues, and preparations ahead of the anticipated Regulation 19 consultation (July/August 2026).

Since the last update, officers and councillors have been:

- Liaising with the Council's planning consultant and discussing implications of the emerging Plan.
- Reviewing published consultation responses, including developer representations.
- Reviewing Regulation 18 responses to help ensure future responses remain balanced and well-informed.

At the Annual Town Meeting:

- The Town Council provided an update on the emerging Local Plan.
- The Leader of Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) provided an update on SDC's position regarding the emerging Plan and proposed development sites.

The Council has raised concerns with SDC regarding the limited number of Development Briefs available as part of the Regulation 18 consultation and requested whether additional information could be provided. SDC has advised that the majority of the high-level Development Briefs are being prepared in-house and that, given the scale of the Local Plan and the number of sites involved (over 100), they do not currently have capacity to review these individually with parish councils ahead of Regulation 19.

The draft Regulation 19 Local Plan will be considered by the Development & Infrastructure Advisory Committee (DIAC) on 30 June 2026, with papers expected to be published approximately one week in advance.

The Council has also raised a number of additional matters with SDC, including:

- Concerns regarding Jacobs' highway modelling work, particularly where junctions already identified as operating at or above capacity, including Crouch House Road/Lingfield Road and Stangrove Road/Mont St Aignan Way; and have not currently been identified for mitigation measures.
- Clarification regarding secondary school provision, including delivery timescales and the scale of development required to support provision.
- Public transport and cycling infrastructure improvements, particularly opportunities to improve bus frequency and dedicated cycle links between development sites and the

- town centre.
- Concerns regarding potential land locking and whether future access arrangements will be safeguarded within the Plan.
- Whether the Town Council would have an opportunity to review and provide informal comments on the evolving Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) prior to Regulation 19 consultation.

SDC has acknowledged the above matters and provided the following responses:

- Highways modelling work remains ongoing and will be published alongside Regulation 19 documentation, including any proposed mitigation measures.
- The Edenbridge Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has now been completed and identifies a network of walking and cycling routes across Edenbridge. This will be published as part of the Regulation 19 consultation and referenced within the IDP and Development Briefs.
- Secondary school provision is identified as a priority within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- SDC has met with Kent County Council's Public Transport Team, who have advised that the cumulative level of development justifies Section 106 contributions towards enhanced or new bus services. Further detail is awaited and will inform the IDP.
- In relation to land locking, SDC advised that all proposed sites must demonstrate that they are available, suitable, and deliverable, including suitable access arrangements, although no specific reassurances were provided, SDC confirmed that the IDP continues to evolve following Regulation 18 consultation responses, including those submitted by the Town Council, and that there will be further opportunity to comment during the Regulation 19 consultation stage.

A further meeting with the Council's planning consultant is scheduled during May.

Members are also asked to note recent changes to national planning procedures. From 11 May 2026, any planning application for 150 residential units or more, where the Local Planning Authority is minded to refuse permission, must be referred to the Secretary of State (SoS). This applies whether refusal is proposed under delegated authority or following a decision of the Development Management Committee contrary to officer recommendation.

Under the revised arrangements, the Local Planning Authority may formulate proposed reasons for refusal but cannot issue the refusal decision until the matter has been considered by the Secretary of State. Within 21 days of notification, the Secretary of State will determine whether the application may continue to be determined locally or whether it should be "called in" for determination at national level. Where applications are called in, a Public Inquiry would normally be undertaken by a Planning Inspector, who would make recommendations to the Secretary of State before a final decision is issued.

Reminder of SDC Local Plan Timetable

- Regulation 19 draft to Development & Infrastructure Advisory Committee – 30 June 2026
- Consideration by Full Council thereafter
- Regulation 19 consultation – July/August 2026
- Submission to the Planning Inspectorate – December 2026
- Examination hearings – anticipated during 2027

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

28.1 Annual Town Meeting - 30 March 2026 - feedback

This year's Annual Town Meeting (ATM), held at the WI Hall, was attended by approximately

65 residents. Presentations were provided on Council activities and the annual financial report. Updates were also received from the Kent County Councillor, the Leader of Sevenoaks District Council - notably regarding Local Government Reorganisation and the emerging Local Plan - and our Beat Officer PC Fergus Maunsell on local policing matters.

Presentations from local organisations were provided by:

- Edenbridge Volunteer Drivers
- West Kent Housing Older Persons Services
- Edenbridge Bonfire Society, which gave an interesting overview of its history, effigies, and opportunities for local involvement

Questions raised by residents included:

- Concerns regarding the zebra crossing near the Leisure Centre, particularly the lighting of the Belisha beacons
- Streetlight removal on Four Elms Road
- The need for a pedestrian crossing on Four Elms Road
- Variation in school holiday dates between counties

Overall, the meeting was considered positive and well attended.

Members are asked to note that the 2027 Annual Town Meeting will need to be held earlier in March, in order to avoid the pre-election purdah period. Officers are already considering potential changes to the meeting format for future years. This may include: Opening with the Council's presentations and reports, followed by updates from partner authorities and the police. Then provide greater opportunity afterwards for residents to engage informally with councillors and representatives from local groups through displays and networking opportunities

A further report on the proposed format for future Annual Town Meetings will be brought to the January Council meeting for discussion.

28.2

Update re Solar Farm (Land North West Of Little Browns Railway Bridge Hilders Lane) - Community Benefit Fund

At the March meeting, Members were advised Kybo Solar Farm Limited, the developer of the Solar Farm (Planning Ref: 23/00505/FUL approved January 2024), had offered Edenbridge Town Council a one-off Community Benefit Fund contribution of £40,000 to support the installation of electric vehicle (EV) chargers within the Town Council's administrative area. The contribution would be made within 30 days of the solar farm commencing commercial electricity generation and would be governed by a formal agreement between the developer and the Council. Members resolved:

- to accept the the offer of a £40,000 Community Benefit Fund contribution from Kybo Solar Farm Limited to enable additional EV charging infrastructure for Edenbridge, subject to SDC (or KALC) confirming this was not part of s106 agreement, Council is free to accept a non-planning voluntary contribution.
- Subject to SDC confirmation, to place the funds into an Earmarked Reserve for EV Infrastructure upon receipt.

Update

SDC has confirmed that Council may accept the community benefit funding, and it is entirely a private agreement between Council and the applicant, which is outside the planning process.

SDC also confirmed for clarity:

- There is no reference to this voluntary contribution to the Town Council, within the Section 106 Legal Agreement and any planning conditions. This contribution is not part of the CIL charging framework.
- Section 106 contributions can be made to other bodies other than the Local Planning Authority. However, they must be listed within a Section 106 legal Agreement.
- Where a voluntary payment is not secured via Section or CIL, it is then entirely a private agreement between recipient and the applicant. The Planning Authority has no planning powers to enforce such a private agreement.

The Town Clerk has advised Kybo that it can accept the offer, and is currently awaiting for the Agreement to sign.

The potential EV charging locations to be investigated and brought back to Council or Open Spaces Committee for further consideration.

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

29.1 **Hearing Loop for Rickards Hall and to approve the expenditure of £1,559**

Following a recent complaint regarding the lack of a functioning hearing loop at Rickards Hall, Hi Kent was asked to assess and service the existing equipment. Following inspection, they advised that the current system is no longer repairable.

Hi Kent has therefore provided a quotation for a replacement hearing loop system, comprising:

- L6 Introduction Loop amplifier with 19" rack shelf
- 100m loop cable
- Handheld wireless radio microphone system
- Handheld wired microphone for the loop system, including 10m cable
- Leads to connect the wireless microphone to the loop system and TV loop
- Installation and setup

Total cost: £1,559 plus VAT.

The provision of an operational hearing loop system supports accessibility and inclusivity within Rickards Hall, particularly for residents and visitors with hearing impairments.

Members are asked to approve the expenditure of £1,559 plus VAT for the installation of a replacement hearing loop system at Rickards Hall.

29.2 **To consider two financial requests from Eden Valley Museum**

29.2.1 **Reimbursement of its legal fees towards the new Lease of Church House, £1,100**

Members will be aware that the Council recently completed renewal of the lease arrangements with Eden Valley Museum Trust CIO, providing a further 25-year lease agreement.

During this process, the Council incurred its own legal and associated costs in relation to drafting and completing the lease arrangements, including:

- Initial lease drafting £2,615
- Lease-related legal costs for several amendments to Lease and final

draft £1,800

- Deed of Variation costs of £397
- New plans drawn - architect fees £585
- Agreement to reimburse the Museum's Land Registry fees, estimated at approximately £100

The Council also continues to support the Museum through an annual Service Level Agreement grant of £6,500.


The Museum has now written to the Council requesting financial assistance towards its own legal costs associated with the Deed of Variation. The request relates to legal costs of approximately £1,110 plus VAT associated with preparation of the Deed of Variation and related registration work. In its correspondence, the Museum notes that the Deed of Variation became necessary following omission of wording relating to Charity Act provisions within the original lease documentation. (*Attached confidential.*)


However, Members are asked to note that throughout the lease renewal process, the Town Council's solicitor advised that the Museum should seek its own independent legal advice. The Museum elected to rely upon advice from within its own organisation at the initial stages, rather than formally instructing a solicitor.

The Council recognises and values the important contribution Eden Valley Museum makes to the community, including its volunteer-led educational and heritage activities. Members are, however, asked to consider the request in the context of the financial assistance and ongoing support already provided by the Council. Members are also asked to note that a request for the Council to meet the Museum's legal costs was not raised or agreed as part of the original lease negotiations undertaken during 2024/25.

Proposal

Members are asked to consider the request from Eden Valley Museum Trust CIO for financial assistance towards legal costs associated with the Deed of Variation and determine whether they wish to provide any additional financial support.

 Confidential Annex 14 (omitted from public documents):

 Confidential Annex 15 (omitted from public documents):

29.2.2

Eden Valley Museum – Service Level Agreement Request

Attached is the annual report from Eden Valley Museum Trust CIO outlining the Museum's activities, visitor numbers, exhibitions, educational outreach, volunteer involvement, and community engagement during 2025/26. The report also notes the Museum's continued full accreditation status through Arts Council England and highlights increasing visitor numbers and expanded community activity programmes.

The Museum currently receives an annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) grant of £6,500 from the Town Council. The annual rent under the lease agreement is currently £4,777.38 (RPI linked).


Within the report, the Museum has requested that the Council consider increasing the SLA grant to reflect the increase in rent following renewal of the lease arrangements during 2025.

Members are asked to note that the Council's annual budget-setting process commences in October, with draft budgets considered through the Finance & Governance Committee before recommendation to Full Council.

Proposal

Members are asked to:

- **Note the Eden Valley Museum annual report and request for an increase to the Service Level Agreement grant; and**
- **Consider whether the request should be referred to the Finance & Governance Committee for consideration as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process, or whether Council wishes to provide any direction to the Committee regarding the draft budget provision for the Museum SLA.**

 Confidential Annex 16 (omitted from public documents):

 Confidential Annex 17 (omitted from public documents):

29.3 **Casual Vacancy – Edenbridge South and West Ward**

A casual vacancy has recently arisen following the resignation of Councillor Bill Cummings. Sevenoaks District Council was notified in April 2026.

The statutory Notice of Casual Vacancy was published on the Council's noticeboard on 15 April 2026. In accordance with the relevant legislation, if by 6 May 2026 (14 working days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, from the date of the notice) ten electors for the Edenbridge South and West Ward submit a written request to the Proper Officer for an election to be held, a by-election will be called to fill the vacancy.

If no request for an election is received, the Council may fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as practicable thereafter.

At the time of publishing the agenda, it is not yet known whether a by-election will be called or whether the Council will be able to proceed by co-option. A verbal update will therefore be provided at the meeting.

Should a by-election be called, it must take place no later than 9 July 2026. If no election is called, Members are asked to consider how they wish to proceed with the co-option process.

29.4 **Formal Complaint – KTreatz**

A formal complaint was received from a former market trader and investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure. An initial response has been issued to the complainant following review of the matters raised. (Attached confidential papers email correspondence.)


As part of the investigation, associated internal personnel processes were undertaken and have now concluded.

The complainant has subsequently advised that they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the initial review and have requested that the matter be referred to the Complaints Committee in accordance with the next stage of the Council's Complaints Procedure.

A meeting of the Complaints Committee is currently in the process of being arranged. In this instance, the Committee will comprise the Chair, Vice-Chair, Chair of Finance & Governance, and Chair of the Personnel Committee.

This item is for noting.

 Confidential Annex 18 (omitted from public documents):

 Confidential Annex 19 (omitted from public documents):

30 **Devolution and local government reorganisation**

No update.

31 **Consultations**

31.1 **Kent Family Hub - Have your say - closes 14 May**

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/lets-talk-about-sevenoaks-family-hubs>

32 **Press release**

33 **Date of Next meeting - 06 July**