

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 6 July 2026 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
1 July 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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To Receive Apologies for Absence

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.

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.

To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 11 May 2026 (pages 2023-137/1-15).

 Full Council | 11 May 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-137/1-15)

To receive County and District Councillors Reports

County Councillor

District Councillors

To adopt the following reports/minutes of committee meetings

To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning and Transport Meetings held on 1 September 2025 (pages 2023-104/1-3) and 18 May 2026 (pages 2023-138/1-3).

Minutes for the planning meeting 8 June are yet to be finalised and will be presented at the September Council meeting for adoption. Minutes from the meeting 1 September 2025, appear to have missed an agenda and are being asked to be adopted procedurally.

 Planning and Transport | 01 September 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-104/1-3)

 Planning and Transport | 18 May 2026 v.2 - Minutes (Pages 2023-138/1-3)

To receive and adopt the minutes of the Emergency Planning Meeting held on 21 May 2026 (pages 2023-139/1-3).

 Emergency Planning | 21 May 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-139/1-3)

To receive and adopt the minutes of the Complaints Committee Meeting held on 9 June 2026 (pages 2023-141/1-3).

 Complaints Committee | 09 June 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-141/1-3)

To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 15 June 2026 (pages 2023-142/1-8).

 Open Spaces | 15 June 2026 v.2 - Minutes (Pages 2023-142/1-8)

6.5 **To receive and adopt the minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on 30 June 2026 (pages 2023-144/1-6).**

Personnel | 30 June 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-144/1-6)

7 **To receive recommendations from Committees**

7.1 **Personnel Committee**

7.1.1 **Medical Insurance Scheme – to confirm eligibility review noting Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 and that eligibility should continue to apply consistently to all qualifying employees**

7.1.2 **Medical insurance - to note and confirm the additional premiums for qualifying employees**

7.1.3 **Community Warden - to approve a further six-month extension to the Community Warden's fixed-term contract at 11 hours per week, to 31 March 2027, to provide continuity of service while the review is completed**

7.1.4 **HR and H&S consultancy services provision and agreement: To authorise the Town Clerk to continue discussions with WorkNest regarding a reduced early termination arrangement at an appropriate time following the November 2026 renewal; and to note that a potential termination cost may need to be considered as part of the 2027/28 budget process.**

7.1.5 **Personnel Committee vacancy**

Members have received notification from Councillor Gemmell Smith that he wishes to step down from the Personnel Committee. A vacancy therefore exists on the Committee.

Members are asked to nominate and appoint a replacement Member to serve on the Personnel Committee.

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

8.1 **Clerk's report**

Bandstand project: Following the tender process, Open Spaces committee (April) confirmed the two contractors. Since the appointment of the contractors, preparatory work has commenced to support a planning application for the bandstand. The architecture is preparing the necessary planning documentation, including site plans, scaled drawings and supporting planning and design statements. We also need a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Habitat Condition Assessment (HCA) remain necessary and will be commissioned to support the planning application. SDC has confirmed these fees meet the criteria for professional fees and can be funded via the CIL allocation.

Subject to completion of the supporting documentation, it is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted in early August 2026, with a decision expected approximately eight weeks thereafter, anticipated by the end of September 2026.

Building Bridges for Dementia Friendly Edenbridge: An update was provided in the May Clerk's report. We are still awaiting confirmation of further training dates before actively promoting further.

Byelaws update: The Council has submitted revised byelaws based upon the Government's Model Byelaws for Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks and Open Spaces. Following review, MHCLG issued an outcome letter dated 16 April 2025 identifying a number of concerns regarding specific clauses. A revised draft was subsequently prepared and presented to Committee June 2025, and then resubmitted to MHCLG. After further feedback and Open

Spaces Committee review November 2025, updated byelaws were submitted again to MHCLG.

MHCLG has now completed a further review and, whilst acknowledging a number of amendments made, has identified several remaining matters requiring clarification before the application can proceed. These were presented to the June Committee meeting. Committee approved the amendments to the draft byelaws and delegated authority to the Town Clerk to make any minor amendments required by MHCLG prior to final approval.

Cyber Security, Data Management, and Remote Meeting Technology: Following the update in the May Clerk's Report, there has been little further development as we are still waiting on PS Technology's report and quote.

Remote and hybrid meetings update: It had been expected the Kings Speech was to reference legislation to for councils would have discretion regarding whether, and to what extent, they adopt remote or hybrid meeting arrangements for town and parish councils and local authorities. NALC are disappointed by the omission saying it represents a missed opportunity to modernise local democracy and remove unnecessary barriers to public service.

There was the introduction of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, commonly known as the Hillsborough Law, and its proposed statutory duty of candour for public officials. NALC are keen to engage with the government on the details of these proposals and, in particular, to understand any implications for parish and town council councillors and staff. Therefore, we will be pushing for the bill to deliver reform of the local government standards regime, alongside its wider focus on accountability.

Equipment for Rickards Hall and Doggetts meeting room to enable remote meetings and sound improvements: PS Tech has recommended a company to help quote for the necessary equipment. It is hoped to present quotes at the September (or October) Council meetings. It is noted to include the hearing loop for Rickards.

Eden Valley Museum: Following the May meeting, at which the Council considered two financial requests from the Museum, a letter was sent confirming the Council's decisions. The Museum was advised that any future request for an increase in funding should be considered as part of the Council's normal budget-setting process and that supporting information should be submitted by the end of October to inform the 2027–28 budget.

First Aid Training: All office and grounds staff successfully completed the First Aid at Work training in May.

Gpeto AI Planning Tool: At its May meeting, the Council noted the benefits that Gpeto had provided officers during the 10-month trial period and agreed to continue the Council's subscription to the Gpeto AI Planning Tool. The subscription was also upgraded to provide view-only access for up to 12 Planning Committee Members.

Feedback from those using the software has, to date, been positive, with the tool proving to be a valuable aid in reviewing planning applications.

Highways Improvement Plan: I have had a positive discussion with Kent Highways regarding the progression of feasibility assessments for two of the pedestrian crossing improvements identified in the Highway Improvement Plan (HIP). These assessments will include updated traffic and pedestrian surveys.

Members are reminded that the HIP process generally progresses one scheme at a time. The initial stage is to gather the necessary evidence to assess the feasibility of a proposal. If supported, the scheme is then referred to Kent Highways' Planning and Advice Team to undertake the next stage of work, including consideration of the engineering requirements.

Subject to a positive outcome, potential funding options can then be explored.

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. Open Spaces Committee confirmed the successful tender at its June meeting. It is hoped works will commence in August.

NALC Annual Conference: Cllr Aldridge, the Town Clerk, the RFO/Deputy Clerk and the Open Spaces Officer attended this year's NALC Annual Conference in June. It was a valuable event, with presentations focusing on the national reforms arising from devolution and local government reorganisation, and how these are reshaping the local government landscape. Case studies from town councils that had experienced local government reorganisation highlighted both positive outcomes and the challenges associated with asset transfers and service delivery.

The conference also included a presentation on climate action, demonstrating how parish and town councils can make a meaningful contribution to local environmental ambitions. Afternoon sessions covered planning reform, finance, audit and transparency, together with further discussion on asset transfers and the increasing role of parish and town councils within local government.

Kybo Solar Farm – Community Benefit Fund: The legal agreement is expected shortly and, once received, will be signed by the Chairman of the Council and the Town Clerk in accordance with the Council's previous resolution.

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

8.1.1

Leases update

Forge Musical Theatre Group: A recent meeting with the Forge Musical Theatre Group (FMTG) confirmed that they intend to proceed with registering as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Whilst we had understood this to be their preferred approach, it became apparent that they had been exploring an alternative option. Following discussion, we all agreed that becoming a CIO would be the most appropriate route and would provide a number of benefits for both the organisation and its trustees.

It is unlikely that the Charity Commission will complete the registration before September. We have therefore agreed to meet again once the registration has been confirmed, with the aim of progressing and completing the lease. Overall, the meeting was positive and encouraging, and it is hoped that the lease can now move forward.

WI Hall Lease: The Land Registry title and lease arrangements for the WI Hall have long been somewhat confusing. The Town Council is the registered owner, Edenbridge Women's Institute is the leaseholder, and the Village Hall Charity acts as the management committee. Over a number of years, however, there has been conflicting information regarding the responsibilities of each party.

Following a recent discussion with a representative of Wellers Solicitors, they have offered to review the documentation held by the Council and provide an overview of the current legal position, together with advice on the issues that need to be resolved. The quoted fee for this work is £500. The matter has been discussed with the Chair, who agreed that the review should proceed. A comparable quotation has also been requested from the Council's solicitors, Wilkin Chapman. Members are asked to ratify expenditure – agenda item xx

Members are asked to ratify the expenditure of £500 to commission a review of the WI Hall documentation, to clarify the current legal position, identify any outstanding issues and provide recommendations for the way forward.

9

Emerging Local Plan - update

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) considered the revised Local Plan for the forthcoming Regulation 19 consultation at its Development and Infrastructure Advisory Committee (DIAC) meeting on 30 June 2026. The revised Plan reflects changes to a number of proposed development sites following the Regulation 18 consultation and subsequent updates to national planning policy.

DIAC recommended that Cabinet approve publication of the Regulation 19 Local Plan for consultation. The recommendation was closely contested and, following a tied vote, the Chairman exercised his casting vote, resulting in the recommendation being carried by seven votes to six.

Cabinet will consider the recommendation on 7 July 2026. Subject to approval, the **Regulation 19 consultation will take place between 23 July and 17 September 2026**. The consultation period has been extended from the statutory minimum of six weeks to eight weeks to accommodate the summer holiday period. Following the consultation, the Local Plan is expected to be submitted for independent examination by a government-appointed Planning Inspector later this year.

The emerging Local Plan is required to meet the Government's revised housing requirement of 17,460 dwellings over the next 15 years, representing an increase of approximately 63% compared with the previous target. In preparing the Plan, the Council has also had to take account of changes to national planning policy affecting Green Belt land.

The Regulation 18 consultation generated over 28,000 representations from more than 5,000 residents, businesses and organisations. Following consideration of these representations, SDC has amended a number of proposed site allocations. Some sites have been removed because they are no longer considered suitable for development, while others have been withdrawn by the landowners.

For Edenbridge, the proposed changes include the removal of the following sites:

- EDEN2 – Land rear of Stanholm, Mill Hill (5 dwellings)
- EDEN6 – 78–80 and 82–84 High Street, Leathermarket (14 dwellings)
- EDEN7 – Gabriels Farm House, Mill Hill (10 dwellings)
- EDEN15 – Land east of Mead Road (Philippines' Close) (120 dwellings)
- EDEN16 – Land at Swan Lane (600 dwellings)

Members should note:

- EDEN6 (Leathermarket) remains identified within the emerging Local Plan; however, it no longer includes a housing allocation or supporting site policy.
- EDEN15 (Mead Road/Philippines' Close) has since received outline planning permission from SDC's Development Management Committee (23 June 2026) for residential development of up to 135 dwellings (Use Class C3), with all matters reserved except access.

The revised Local Plan proposes a total of 1,539 dwellings for Edenbridge, including 77 C2 (residential institution) units. Whilst a number of sites have been removed, the housing numbers on several remaining allocations have increased. The cumulative level of development has continued to increase since the Regulation 18 consultation. Homes already built, under construction or with planning permission have increased from 670 to at least 805 dwellings. This figure excludes more recent windfall developments and sits alongside the further housing proposed through the emerging Local Plan.

In its Regulation 18 consultation response, the Town Council stated: "The emerging Local Plan allocates 2,131 new homes to Edenbridge. This is an increase of 789 dwellings compared with the 1,534 proposed in Regulation 18 (2). The Town Council considered both figures unsuitable for a town of Edenbridge's scale, character and infrastructure capacity."

The Town Council's detailed Regulation 19 consultation response will be prepared following publication of the consultation documents and presented to Members for consideration prior to submission. Once the consultation has commenced, Members can also consider holding public drop-in sessions, similar to those held during the Regulation 18 consultation, together with promoting awareness of the consultation through the Council's website, social media, noticeboards and information leaflets.

Members are meeting with the Council's planning consultant on 06 July, and an update will be provided at the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Regulation 19 consultation differs from the previous consultation stage. Representations should address the statutory planning tests that will be considered by the Planning Inspector. Further information regarding the consultation process and the proposed public engagement arrangements is provided in the following report.

9.1 **Regulation 19 consultation - resident engagement**

Last year, the Town Council approved funding for the production and door-to-door distribution of information leaflets to raise awareness of the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, the public drop-in sessions, and how residents could submit representations. A budget of up to £1,200 was approved for this purpose.

The forthcoming Regulation 19 consultation is the final statutory consultation stage before the Local Plan is submitted for independent examination. It will run for a minimum period of six weeks. Unlike earlier consultations, representations submitted at this stage are forwarded directly to the Planning Inspector.

Members should note that this consultation differs from the earlier Regulation 18 consultation. Repeating previous comments or objections without explaining how they relate to the statutory planning tests is unlikely to assist the Planning Inspector. Residents wishing to raise concerns about individual site allocations or policies should explain why they consider the Plan is not legally compliant, is unsound, or has otherwise failed to meet the statutory requirements for plan-making.

Representations should relate to whether the Local Plan is legally compliant, sound and has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate. In simple terms, this means considering whether the Plan has been prepared in line with legal requirements, is supported by appropriate evidence, is justified and deliverable, and whether the District Council has worked appropriately with neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies. These are the statutory planning tests that the Planning Inspector must consider when deciding whether the Local Plan can be adopted. Whilst representations may refer to individual site allocations, they should explain how those matters affect the Plan's compliance with these tests.

Members are asked to consider promoting the Regulation 19 consultation in a similar manner to the previous consultation by providing information to residents on the consultation process, how they can participate and where further information can be obtained. To support this, Members are asked to approve a budget of up to £1,500 for the printing and distribution of information leaflets (budget in legal & Professional fees (1151)).

Once the consultation timetable has been confirmed by Sevenoaks District Council, public drop-in session dates and venues will be coordinated by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and officers. Councillors are asked to make every effort to attend and support these sessions where possible.

10 **Service Level Agreements (SLA) payments for 2027-28: to confirm release of funds**

The Council currently has two ongoing Service Level Agreements (SLAs), both of which have been provided for within the approved budget. The Council reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to these agreements at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May. Members are now asked to approve the release of the budgeted funds to each organisation.

A review of the Service Level Agreements, including the agreement terms and reporting arrangements, remains outstanding and will be presented to the Finance and Governance Committee later this year. In the meantime, both organisations continue to provide updates on their activities and how the Council's funding supports the delivery of their services.

10.1 **Eden Valley Museum £6,500**
Members are asked to confirm the annual SLA payment of £6,500.

10.2 **HOUSE £13,500**
Members are asked to confirm the annual SLA payment of £13,500.

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

11.1 **Spatial Settlement Plan - to approve the expenditure of £6,000**

At its July 2025 meeting, the Council considered the potential benefits of preparing a Spatial Settlement Plan (SSP). An SSP is a strategic land-use planning document that helps guide how an area should develop over time. It provides an evidence-based framework to support planning decisions, infrastructure planning and future growth.

An SSP can assist the Council in responding to planning applications and strategic planning matters, including the emerging Local Plan. It also provides a strong evidence base should the Council decide to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in the future.

The document would consider matters such as:

- Land use and future development opportunities.
- Infrastructure requirements, including transport, utilities, education and healthcare.
- Walking, cycling and transport connections.
- Environmental considerations, including landscape, biodiversity, flood risk and heritage assets.

The scope of the work can be tailored to include varying levels of stakeholder and public engagement, with additional consultation increasing the overall cost by approximately £1,000–£1,500.

The approved 2026–27 budget already includes £5,000 (Budget Code 1152) towards the preparation of a Spatial Settlement Plan.

Now that the Regulation 18 consultation has concluded, representations have been published and the District Council has identified its preferred site allocations within the forthcoming Regulation 19 consultation, Members are asked to consider whether the time is now right to commission a Spatial Settlement Plan.

The document would:

- Provide an independent evidence base to support the Town Council's participation in the Local Plan Examination hearings;
- Provide a robust evidence base for any future Neighbourhood Plan;
- Assist the Council in responding to planning applications; and
- Help identify and support future infrastructure requirements for the town.

Members are asked to approve expenditure of up to £6,000 for the preparation of an

independent Spatial Settlement Plan, allowing for updated quotations and flexibility in the level of stakeholder engagement to be undertaken.

11.2

Pavilion update on project for new hot water boilers and heating

Last week, the Town Clerk and the Open Spaces & Buildings Officer attended the project handover meeting with Intrinsic (the independent project engineers) and MPM (the contractor) for the new heating and hot water systems at the Pavilion.

The project has been completed to a high standard. The works included the installation of new boilers, upgraded heating and hot water systems, replacement pipework, new shower feed pipework, an upgraded control management system, improvements to the gas installation to ensure full regulatory compliance, and replacement pipework within the loft space. Overall, the project has delivered a modern, efficient and fully compliant heating and hot water system, representing a significant improvement on the previous installation.

In addition, improvements have been made to the water supply infrastructure, which will facilitate the next phase for future conversion to a fully mains-fed water supply and are expected to deliver operational efficiencies and future cost savings.

The total project cost was:

- Professional fees: £11,000
- Heating and hot water installation: £141,176.88

Members are invited to note the successful completion of the project and raise any questions they may have.

11.3

Council Insurance - to receive the annual renewal, confirm the insurance level, and expenditure of £16,848.94 plus adjustment for buildings reinstatement values

Last year's insurance premium was £16,217.27. For 2026–27 (from 20 July 2026), the annual premium will increase by £631.67 to £16,848.94. Details of the policy and insurance cover levels are attached.

The Council has now received the updated building reinstatement valuation report. A summary is provided below. The current insurance policy provides total building reinstatement cover of £7,756,325. The updated valuation has increased this to £7,923,060, an increase of £166,735. The revised insurance premium to reflect the increased reinstatement values is awaited.

At its May meeting, the Council noted that it is in the second year of a three-year long-term agreement with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited (via Gallagher) and confirmed the renewal, together with the annual premium increase and any adjustments arising during the policy year.

ETC Buildings valuations summary

Valuation year	2026	was 2022-23	2026 increase	2026-27 current reinstatement allowed
Church House	3,417,012.00	2,531,120.00	885,892.00	3,432,885.00
Rickards Hall	423,720.00	379,962.00	43,758.00	400,000.00
Doggetts Barn	1,246,950.00	967,625.00	279,325.00	1,302,358.00
Public Toilets	294,720.00	192,454.00	102,266.00	259,029.00
Depot	269,556.00	234,100.00	35,456.00	

				315,082.00
Sports Pavilion	2,271,102.00	1,520,858.00	750,244.00	2,046,971.00
	7,923,060.00	5,826,119.00	2,096,941.00	7,756,325.00

Members are asked to:

- **Reconfirm the Council's insurance cover levels; and**
- **Approve the annual insurance premium of £16,848.94, together with any additional premium required to reflect the updated building reinstatement valuations.**

 Annex 1 Confidential annex omitted from public papers

11.4 **Ratify expenditure for a new door fire shutter at the Museum, and the expenditure of £818.77**

One of the fire door shutters at the Museum developed a fault and required repair to ensure it continued to operate correctly as part of the building's fire safety measures.

Two quotations were obtained, totalling £1,272 and £818.77 respectively. Having discussed the matter with the Facilities Manager and the Chairman, and noting that the work was necessary, it was agreed to proceed with the lower quotation. The works included the installation of an Integrated Electromagnetic Slide Arm Closer.

Members are asked to ratify the expenditure of £818.77 plus VAT, payable to E-Tech Group.

11.5 **To consider a McMillian coffee morning**

At its September 2025 meeting, the Council considered hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning, to be organised and run by Members. Macmillan Coffee Mornings encourage people to come together over a cup of coffee, with guests making a voluntary donation in support of Macmillan Cancer Support.

Members resolved to provisionally reserve Rickards Hall for September 2026 and agreed that the matter should be brought back to the Council in July 2026 to confirm whether it wished to proceed and, if so, the arrangements for the event.

Rickards Hall is currently available on Wednesday 23, Thursday 24 or Friday 25 September 2026 (the official Macmillan Coffee Morning date).

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to proceed with hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning and, if so, confirm the preferred date and any arrangements for the event.

11.6 **Councillor vacancy - to consider whether to co-opt**

At its May meeting, the Council noted the vacancy in the Edenbridge South and West Ward following the resignation of Councillor Bill Cummings. As no request for a by-election was received within the statutory period, the vacancy may now be filled by co-option.

A copy of the Council's Co-option Procedure is attached for Members' reference (see Section 3). Whilst there is no statutory requirement to fill the vacancy by co-option, it is considered good practice to seek to restore the Council to its full complement of elected Members where possible.

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to commence the co-option process and, if so, agree the timetable for inviting applications.

 Annex 2: 210215 Cooption procedure - new logo.pdf

12.1 **SDC requests to provided the Council with food waste bags to sell**

Sevenoaks District Council has asked whether the Town Council would be willing to sell food waste bags from the Council Office on its behalf. The proposed arrangements are the same as those previously operated for refuse sacks. SDC will supply the bags free of charge to the Town Council in return for continued use of the Mess Room by the District Council's street cleaner ad equipment storage.

Income generated from the sale of the bags will contribute towards the Council's office administration costs.

Members are asked to approve the sale of food waste bags from the Council Office and note the additional income stream.

12.2 **Chairman's Reception 2026**

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to hold a Chairman's Reception during the current financial year. At the time the budget was set, it was decided not to make provision for a reception.

Since then, a number of residents have commented that they found previous receptions valuable, particularly as an opportunity to network with local organisations and community groups. Officers have also identified the potential to combine the reception with the presentation of the Gardens in Bloom awards, providing a single community event.

Should Members wish to proceed, a further report detailing the proposed arrangements and any budget implications will be presented for consideration.

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to proceed with a Chairman's Reception during 2026–27.

12.3 **Rickards Hall fees review**

A review of local hall hire charges has been undertaken, with comparisons made against neighbouring venues. A summary of the findings, together with the Council's current hire charges, is attached. No increase to Rickards Hall hire charges was made at the beginning of 2026 pending the outcome of this review.

Comparable hourly hire charges range from £15.00 to £30.00 per hour. Rickards Hall was the only venue identified as operating separate youth and commercial hourly hire rates. This approach has enabled the Council to support access for local young people while ensuring commercial users contribute at a higher rate.

It is recommended that the reduced Youth Rate be retained and extended to include local charitable organisations. As no comparable venues were identified as operating a separate commercial hire rate, Members may also wish to simplify the charging structure by removing the commercial hire category and adopting a single standard hourly rate.

Members may also wish to consider introducing revised weekend hire options, together with a dedicated wedding package. The proposed wedding package would provide exclusive use of Rickards Hall from 3.00 pm on Friday until 12.00 noon on Sunday, allowing sufficient time for set-up and clear-down. Whilst comparable venues charge between £360.00 and £750.00, many offer larger facilities and outdoor space. To reflect the facilities available at Rickards Hall, whilst remaining competitive and encouraging bookings, a package price of £250.00 is proposed.

Members may choose to implement any revised charges immediately or defer their introduction until the annual review of fees and charges on 1 January 2027. It is also recommended that future annual reviews round all charges to the nearest 50 pence to

simplify administration.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the following Hall fees:

1. **Retaining the reduced Youth Rate and extending it to local charitable organisations.**
2. **Introducing a Standard Hire Rate of £23.00 per hour.**
3. **Removing the separate Commercial Hire category.**
4. **Introducing a Wedding Weekend Package at £250.00.**
5. **Introducing the following weekend hire charges:**
 - **Community Weekend Hire (8.00 am–5.00 pm): £50.00**
 - **Standard Weekend Hire (8.00 am–5.00 pm): £75.00**
 - **Weekend Evening Hire (6.00 pm–midnight): £150.00**

Members are also asked to consider:

1. **Rounding all future charges to the nearest 50 pence.**
2. **Determining whether the revised charges should take effect immediately or from 1 January 2027.**
3. **Delegating authority to the Town Clerk to negotiate appropriate hire charges for bookings that fall outside the standard pricing structure or involve exceptional circumstances.**

 Annex 3 Confidential annex omitted from public papers

12.4

Independent Advisory Group (IAG) - To receive a request for Edenbridge to host one of its meetings and free use of Rickards Hall

The Independent Advisory Group (IAG) is made up of community volunteers who work with Kent Police as critical friends to help improve policing services across the county. The Group provides an independent community perspective on policing issues and works in partnership with Kent Police to help inform service improvements. The Town Council's Community Warden has attended IAG meetings in the past.

The IAG has approached the Town Council to request the use of Rickards Hall for one of its meetings. The Group seeks to hold its meetings at different venues across the district and has requested a Thursday, ideally towards the end of November or the beginning of December. Alternatively, it would be happy to hold its spring meeting in Edenbridge.

Rickards Hall is normally booked on Thursday evenings; however, it may be available during the school holiday period or on another mutually agreed date.

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to offer the IAG complimentary use of Rickards Hall for one of its meetings, subject to availability and the Town Clerk agreeing a suitable date.

 <https://www.kent.police.uk/police-forces/kent-police/areas/kent-police/about-us/iag/who-we-are-iag/>

12.5

Unpaid invoices over 6-months

Members are advised that a former market trader has an outstanding balance of £308.40, relating to unpaid market pitch fees for the period October to December 2025.

The Council's Responsible Financial Officer has made a number of attempts to recover the outstanding debt, including issuing invoices, reminder correspondence and further follow-up communications. The most recent response from the trader, dated 20 April 2026, indicated that payment would be made during their next payment run in May. A further email was sent by the RFO on 13 May 2026 requesting confirmation of a payment date; however, no response has been received.

Members may recall that a similar situation arose in 2024 when the trader accrued an outstanding balance for market fees. At its meeting on 18 November 2024, the Finance & Governance Committee recommended that, should the debt not be settled by the agreed date, the Council would consider recovery through the Small Claims Court and the trader would no longer be permitted to trade. Whilst the outstanding balance was subsequently paid, this was not as a result of formal recovery proceedings.

In accordance with the Council's previous decision, the trader is not permitted to trade at the Council's market unless all outstanding monies have first been settled.

Members are requested to consider how they wish the Council to proceed with recovery of the outstanding debt. Options include:

- **Issue a final Letter Before Claim, advising that unless payment is received within 14 days, the Council will commence recovery proceedings through the Small Claims Court without further notice.**
- **Commence recovery proceedings through the Small Claims Court. Or,**
- **Write off the outstanding debt, recognising that the costs and officer time associated with pursuing the matter may outweigh the value of the debt.**

Members' views are sought.

13 **Formal Complaint – KTreatz - update**

Members are advised that the Complaints Committee met on 9 June 2026 to consider the formal complaint relating to the alleged disclosure of personal data.

Following consideration of the complaint, supporting correspondence, investigation findings, the complainant's additional submission and a confidential personnel and governance report, the Committee concluded that no personal data breach had occurred and upheld the Council's original decision. The Committee was satisfied that the Council had followed its Complaints Procedure appropriately and that no further action was required. The outcome has been communicated to the complainant.

 Annex 4 Confidential annex omitted from public papers

14 **To note: Status Access Request**

Members are advised that, following the conclusion of the Complaints Committee process, the complainant submitted a Subject Access Request (SAR) under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

To ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations, the Town Clerk has requested that the Council's IT provider undertake a search of Council email accounts, including inboxes, sent items and deleted items, for correspondence relating to the complainant and their business. In addition, searches have been undertaken of relevant electronic records held within the Council's finance, market and complaints files, together with other relevant folders held within SharePoint.

The information identified is currently being reviewed and collated into a disclosure pack. As part of this process, each document is being considered to determine whether it falls within the scope of the request and whether any information requires redaction or withholding in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the rights of third parties.

A response will be issued within the statutory timeframe, which is expected to be issued by 2 July.

15 **Devolution and local government reorganisation**

No announcement has yet been made by Government regarding its preferred option for local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway. Members will recall that Sevenoaks District Council supports a three-unitary model, whilst Kent County Council has submitted a proposal

for a single county-wide unitary authority. Government is currently considering the proposals submitted by councils across Kent and Medway. Although an announcement had been anticipated during the summer, no timetable has yet been confirmed. Any delay may have implications for the current implementation programme, which anticipates the new authorities being established in 2028.

The recent NALC Annual Conference also considered local government reorganisation and devolution. The overall message was that town and parish councils should continue to engage positively with the process, whilst recognising that the detail of Government's proposals and implementation arrangements remains uncertain.

In relation to asset transfer, delegates heard a number of examples where principal councils had worked proactively with town and parish councils to transfer community assets, often through long leases or freehold transfers at nominal value, in order to secure their long-term community use. By contrast, SDC has previously advised that, based on professional advice received from its auditors, transfers should generally be made at best consideration (market value) unless there is a lawful basis for an alternative approach.

The Town Council will continue to monitor developments and update Members as further information becomes available.

- 16 **To resolve delegated powers to Planning and Transportation Committee for July and August**
Members are asked to resolve to delegate the Council's powers to the Planning and Transportation Committee during the summer recess (July and August), where decisions cannot reasonably await the next meeting of the Council.

17 **Consultations**

- 17.1 **National Highways and Transport Surveys 2026-27 - closes 28 February 2027**
Kent County Council is taking part in the 2026-27 National Highways and Transport Surveys, run by measure2improve on behalf of the National Highway & Transport (NHT) Network.
- Councils across the UK are inviting residents to share their views on highway and transport services in their area, and Kent is one of them.
- <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/nht-survey-2026-27>

- 18 **To receive reports from councillors who have attended meetings of outside bodies**

19 **Press release**

- 20 **Date of Next meeting - 07 September**



Town Clerk: Caroline Leet

EDENBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

CO-OPTION PROCEDURE

Reviewed & Adopted: Governance Committee 15 February 2021

1. Introduction

There are six causes of a casual vacancy

- 1.1. Failure to complete a declaration of acceptance of office within the proper time - This must be done before or at the first meeting of the Council, unless the council permits otherwise. The effective date of the vacancy is the closing date for making declarations of acceptance of office.
- 1.2. When a notice of Resignation has been received - A councillor may at any time resign their office by written notice delivered to the Chairman of the town or parish council. There is no special form for the notice. There is no procedure for withdrawing a notice of resignation once it is made. There is no need to report the resignation to the council for it to take effect. The resignation takes effect upon receipt, and this is the effective date of the vacancy.
- 1.3. Death - The vacancy is deemed to have occurred on the date of the death. It is common practice for publishing of vacancy notices to be delayed in respect of the deceased.
- 1.4. Ceasing to be Qualified - This would normally only occur where registration as an elector was the sole qualification of a councillor for nomination and election and where that qualification was subsequently lost because they had ceased to be on the register of electors. As noted above, all other qualifications continue for the full term of office irrespective of whether they cease to exist during the term of office. The council must declare the vacancy forthwith, and the vacancy is deemed to have occurred on the date of this declaration.
- 1.5. Becoming Disqualified - Through bankruptcy, office holding, surcharge, conviction, court order or being found guilty of corrupt or illegal practices in election law.
- 1.6. Failure to Attend Meetings - If a councillor fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of the council (including committees, sub-committees or as a representative of the council), they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the council before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the council. The effective date of the vacancy is the date declared by the council.

2. Giving notice of the casual vacancy

- 2.1 The Clerk of the Parish Council must give notice of the casual vacancy
- 2.2 Copies of the notice are supplied by the Elections Team at Sevenoaks District Council and they should be put up as soon as possible by the clerk. The law requires the notice to be posted "in some conspicuous place or places within the parish area" or in any other manner that will ensure its publicity. The notice allows ten electors of the parish or ward to request that an election be held to fill the vacancy.
- 2.3 If an election is called The Returning Officer of Sevenoaks District Council will set a date for polling day.
- 2.4 The election process will begin with the publication of a notice of election, copies of which will be supplied to the clerk.

3. Co-option

- 3.1. If no request for an election is received after the expiry of the fourteen day casual vacancy notice period, the council must co-opt a person to fill the vacancy as soon as is practicable. The person must be qualified to be a councillor (*see point 5*).
- 3.2. Some councils advertise for expressions of interest in being co-opted. Although there is no legal requirement to do this, it is generally regarded as good practice to make the vacancy known as widely as possible.
- 3.3. A vacancy for co-option will be acknowledged by the full Council. If there are already candidate(s) known to members, it may not be necessary to advertise.
- 3.4. If the Council considered advertising for candidates a Notice would be displayed in the Council's notice Board and on its website. Candidates would need to respond to the advertisement to the Town Clerk.
- 3.5. The applicant(s) would be invited to attend a full Council meeting and to give a short presentation, up to three minutes, *on why you would like to be a Town Councillor and what you feel you can offer the community*. Of course, applicants do not have to attend the meeting to be considered, and in which case they may submit a short statement answering the above brief. This statement should be submitted whether or not they attending the meeting.
- 3.6. Representations will be received under the public questions on the agenda (item 4).

4. Procedure for co-option and voting

- 4.1. **The person to be co-opted must receive an absolute majority vote of the councillors present and voting (Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12, para 39). It follows that if there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of**

votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again; this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

- 4.2. **This will mostly be a satisfactory procedure, but if several candidates have obtained the same number of least votes and the aggregate of the others is less than a normal quorum (e.g. 3:2:2:2:2) it may be thought wise not to strike off all those with the least votes together but, if negotiations for withdrawals fail, to strike them off one by one, in order determined by vote.**
- 4.3. If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes.
- 4.4. The Council is not obliged to consider the claims of candidates who were unsuccessful at a previous election.
- 4.5. Where there are more than two candidates for the vacancy, it may be necessary to run a series of votes, each time removing the candidate who has the least number of votes until one candidate secures an absolute majority (of at least more than 50% of the votes of the councillors voting).
- 4.6. **If a majority of the councillors vote against the sole candidates, then the vacancy fails to be filled.**
- 4.7. The usual rules on voting apply. The Council's Standing Orders state: Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting.
- 4.8. Management of the vote: The Chairman will call for the vote. Members will vote using ballot papers. Applicants will be listed in alphabetical order. Ballot papers will be issued to councillors at each round of voting. Ballot papers will be collected and the total counted for each applicant. Results will be read out alphabetically. A black marker pen will be used to eliminate on the next round of ballot papers.
- 4.9. Candidates, as members of the public, are entitled to be present during the proceedings.
- 4.10. However, the Council may consider, under the (Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1(2)), by resolution, to exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies.

- 4.11. Newly co-opted councillors must sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of a member of the Council or the Town Clerk before engaging in council meetings. This may be done at the meeting of co-option.
- 4.12. A co-opted councillor stands down with all other councillors at the next ordinary election.
- 4.13. The Town Council Clerk is requested to notify the Elections Team when a councillor is co-opted to ensure records are up to date.

5. Qualifications to be a Councillor

- 5.1. A person is qualified to be elected and to be a councillor if they are a British, Commonwealth, Irish or Union citizen and on the day of nomination and election (the relevant day) they are 18 or over. In addition, the person must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - 1) On the relevant day and thereafter they continue to be on the electoral register for the area of the authority (town); or
 - 2) During the whole of the twelve months before the relevant day they have owned or tenanted land or premises in the town; or
 - 3) During the whole of the twelve months before the relevant day their principal or only place of work has been in the town; or
 - 4) During the whole of the twelve months before the relevant day they have lived in the town or within three miles of it.
- 5.2. Except for qualification 1, these qualifications then continue for the full term of office, until the next ordinary elections.
- 5.3. Certain people are disqualified from standing. These include paid officers of the council (including the Clerk), people that are bankrupt and those subject to recent sentences of imprisonment.
- 5.4. This procedure is as set out by the guidance notes issued by Sevenoaks District Council; prescribed in the Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration; and the Communities, Parish and Local Councils (CPALC) best practice
- 5.5. [Local Government Act 1972 S70.Part V](#) sets out qualifications and disqualifications.