Edenbridge Town Council

Town Clerk: Caroline Leet

To Councillors: A **Baker**, S **Compton** *(Vice-Chairwoman)*, M **Gemmell Smith**, C **Jacques**, A **Layland**, S **McGregor**, A **Read**, M **Stockdale**, S **Sumner** *(Chairman)*, B **Todd**.

A Finance Committee Meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on 27 July 2026 in Rickards Hall.
Members of the public are welcome to observe this meeting

Lorraine Ganney RFO
22 July 2026

Agenda

Meeting Papers & Report

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

1.1 **Election of Chairman**

1.2 **Election of Vice Chairman**

2 **Apologies for Absence**

3 **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.

4 **To receive, approve and sign the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on 16 March 2026 (pages 2023-131/1-8).**

5 **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.

6 **Matters Arising from The Minutes for Report and Not Covered Elsewhere (for Information Only)**

7 **Financial Statement and Analysis of Receipts and Payments (financial Report Pack)**

To approve the Financial Income and Expenditure Statements as of 30 June 2026

7.1 **To ratify the expenditure report**

Do Members ratify the expenditure report?

Annex 1: .1 Accepted expenditure transactions 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.2 **To approve the list of expenditure for payment**

Nothing to report

7.3 **To review Expenditure over £500**

Do members accept the expenditure over £500 repost?

Annex 2: .3 Expenditure transactions over £500 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.4 **To receive the income**

Do Members accept the income report?

Annex 3: .4 Accepted income transactions 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.5 **To review the Financial I&E Budget Comparisons report**

Do members have any questions about the Budget Comparison report?
Do members receive the Budget Comparison report?

Annex 4: .5 Financial Comparison 30 06 26 c.pdf (click to download).

7.6 **To confirm the I&E Accounts summary**

Do members have any questions about the I&E accounts?
Do members confirm the I&E accounts?

Annex 5: .6 I&E account period 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.7 **To review the Consolidated Balance Sheet**

Do Members have any questions about the Consolidated Balance Sheet?
Do Members receive and confirm the Consolidated Balance Sheet?

Annex 6: .7 Consolidated Balance Sheet Period 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.8 **To receive the Financial Summary Cashbook**

Do members have any questions about the Financial Summary Cashbook?
Do members receive and confirm the Financial Summary Cashbook?

Annex 7: .8 Financial Summary Cashbook.pdf (click to download).

7.9 **To confirm the Bank Reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for February**

The bank statement reconciliations have been checked by Cllr Aldridge, and the procurement card reconciliations have been checked by Cllr Jacques.

Do members confirm and accept the bank reconciliation and procurement card reconciliation?

Annex 8: .9 Bank reconciliation 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

Annex 9: .9 Barclaycard Expenditure ledger -30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.10 **To approve and accept the transfers into, out of and between bank accounts**

Do members approve and accept the transfers out of and between bank accounts?

Annex 10: .10 Bank Transfers 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

7.11 **To note and advise on invoices outstanding over 3 months**

Historical Society £39.20: Due to extenuating personal circumstance there has been a delay in payment. They have confirmed payment will be made by the end of the month.

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

At its meeting on 7 July 2026, Full Council considered the matter and resolved to provide one final opportunity for the outstanding debt to be settled before considering any further formal recovery action.

In accordance with that resolution, the Town Clerk wrote to the trader on 8 July 2026, enclosing an updated customer statement and requesting payment of the outstanding balance by 6 August 2026. The correspondence also advised that, should the trader be experiencing genuine difficulty in paying the balance in one sum, the Council would be willing to consider a reasonable repayment arrangement, provided this was proposed within the same timescale.

At the time of writing this report, no response has been received and the deadline for payment has not yet expired.

Members are requested to note the current position.

Annex 11: .11 Credit control 30 06 26.pdf (click to download).

8 Other Financial Business

8.1 **Vehicles - to receive update on Council vehicles**

Council Vehicles Replacement Reserve

The Council's vehicles are ageing, and funds have been allocated to the Vehicle Earmarked Reserves (EMR) to support future repairs, purchases or lease agreements. The current balance of the EMR is £13,000, with a further £4,000 to be transferred from the current year's budget, if not used during the year for repairs. The New Holland tractor is running well currently, but may be the first for replacement.

The Council's current vehicle fleet comprises:

- Land Rover – 5 years old - 2021
- Volkswagen Caddy – 8 years old - 2018
- Renault Kangoo – 14 years old - 2012
- New Holland Tractor - 26 years old - 2000
- Kubota - 2 years - 2024

Do members have any questions?

8.2 **Asset Register Review**

The Council should review and be aware of the assets it holds and the insurance levels. Council's asset management is using EdgeIT. The RFO/Deputy Clerk will undertake a review of all Council assets over the coming weeks. This will include site visits, verification of assets, photographic records and the creation of a complete inventory within the EdgeIT Asset Manager system.

In June, we had the buildings revalued for insurance. The valuation was £7,923,060 an increase from £5,826,119 of ££2,096,941. The reinstatement value for Insurance is £7,756,325. Last year's insurance value was £16,217.26 this year the value is £17,125.73.

Do Members have any questions?

9 **To receive update for year-end 31 March 2026**

9.1 **To receive the end-of-year Comparison report confirming Council's net assets including the General and Earmarked Reserves**

At the Council's annual meeting on 11 May, the reports were received for the end-of-year 31 March 2026.

The Budget Comparison report records all I&E paid and unpaid for the financial year. Without CIL I&E, the budgeted net surplus of **£75,323.77**, compared to a budgeted surplus of **£23,752.50**. This represents, against budget, a surplus of **£51,571.27**, arising primarily from some underspends in expenditure, and some projects to complete.

The Consolidated Balance report includes actual income and expenditure (I&E) including creditors and debtors. This confirmed the total net assets of £1,386,574.37. The breakdown for this:

General Reserves	£364,820.02
Earmarked Reserves	£576,529.31
CIL unallocated and allocated	£445,225.04

9.2 **To receive the Internal Auditor's report April 2026, for year-end**

Presented to Council's May meeting, Members received the Internal Auditor's report, and noted the the end-of-year review took place on 29 April. He had carried out an extensive review of the 2025/26 accounts up to 31 March 2026, Council's financial procedures and other administrations procedures.

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. This has now been corrected by EdgeIT.

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/2026/02/2026-february-interim-audit-report.pdf

9.3 **To note: The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been submitted to the External Auditor and the Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Public Rights published**

Council confirmed the end of year accounts (as reported above) and the AGAR. The Consolidated balance sheets confirmed the total net assets (box 7 on AGAR): £1,386,574.37, Income & Expenditure (I&E) Account confirmed total actual Income £1,298,794.87 (boxes 2&3 on AGAR) and Expenditure £944,965.74.

AGAR – end of year return: The Notice of appointment of date for the exercise of public rights was published on the website and notice board, 3 June to 14 July (30 working days). The completed AGAR and supporting documents have been submitted to the external auditor (Mazars). These can be viewed on the website, link below.

🔗 https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/document_category/agar-2025-26/

10 Annual Investment Strategy Policy - review and investment rates

In accordance with the Council's Investment Policy, the Finance & Governance Committee undertakes an annual review of the Council's investment arrangements and approved investment types before making any recommendations to Full Council.

The purpose of the annual review is to provide Members with assurance that the Council's investments continue to be managed prudently and in accordance with the principles of security, liquidity and yield, as set out within the Policy. The review also provides an opportunity to consider current interest rates, investment performance, any emerging risks, and whether the approved investment types remain appropriate.

The accompanying report provides:

- A summary of the Council's current investments and balances
- Interest earned during the previous financial year and current interest rates
- An overview of the principal risks associated with each investment type and the measures in place to manage those risks
- Confirmation of compliance with the Council's Investment Policy and statutory guidance
- A review of the Investment Policy, including whether any amendments are recommended

Members are invited to consider the information provided and determine whether they remain satisfied that the Council's investment arrangements continue to meet its financial objectives and whether the Investment Policy should remain unchanged or be amended.

Policy Review

The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer/ Deputy Clerk has reviewed the Investment Policy and is satisfied that it remains compliant with current legislation and statutory guidance; the approved investment types remain appropriate; and that no amendments are currently recommended.

2025-26 saw the move to ensure increase in funds to the CLLA accounts to maximise the yield investment returns, and lower funds in the day-to-day management accounts.

Investment Risk Review

Since the previous review, interest rates have remained relatively stable, to returns on short-term deposits. The Council's investment priorities remain security, liquidity and yield, in that order; and is why CCLA are considered best matches these priorities. The Responsible Financial Officer confirms that the Council's investments during the year have been managed in accordance with the Council's Investment Policy, Financial Regulations and statutory guidance.

- Cash deposits remain diversified.
- FSCS protection is limited to £85,000 per authorised institution (although local authorities often manage larger balances through diversification and credit assessment).
- CCLA investments remain diversified across numerous counterparties and continue to provide low-risk liquidity.
- No concerns are identified regarding the Council's current investment providers.
- The Council continues to prioritise security of capital over investment return.

Recommendation

That the Finance & Governance Committee receives

1. **The Annual Investment Strategy Review**
2. **Notes the current investment performance and risk assessment**
3. **Considers whether the Investment Policy remains appropriate**
4. **Recommends any amendments (if required) to Full Council.**

11 **Current Bank and Investment Accounts**

The Town Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk attended the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Conference in June 2026 and met with representatives from Unity Trust Bank to explore whether alternative banking facilities and products were available that may be beneficial to the Council.

Unity Trust provides two or three person online authorisations, in addition to the RFO raising the payments. This provides improved security and is recommended by internal auditors. Barclays provides only one online person authorisation, in addition to the RFO raising the payments. The dual factor payment does meet guidance. Council has strengthened this process with invoices and payments checked by a second councillor ensuing two people approve the payment.

Unity Trust Bank

Unity Trust Bank charging structure:

- Monthly account fee: £7.00
- Transaction charge: £0.15 per item
- Turnover: £100,000–£2 million per annum
- No credit interest payable on current account balances
- Cash paid in 70p per £100
- Cheques paid in 40p each

Assuming the transaction fees from Barclays as a comparison

Month	Transactions	Transaction Charges	Monthly Fee	Cash & cheques	Total
April	**114**	**£17.10**	**£7.00**	**£5.99**	**£30.09**
May	**104**	**£15.60**	**£7.00**	**£5.03**	**£27.63**
June	**104**	**£15.60**	**£7.00**	**£6.73**	**£29.33**

Barclays Bank

Barclays Current charging structure

- Monthly account fee: £8.50
- No transactional charges
- No credit interest paid on the current account balances
- Cash paid in 60p per £100
- Cheques paid in £1.20 each

Month	Charges Including monthly fee
April	£13.64
May	£17.70
June	£13.67

Having considered the increase to transaction rates, the Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk, and the council's current payment procedures, it is not believed that there is currently a need to change its banking arrangements, and the council's Financial Regulations provide robust procedures.

Savings and Investment Accounts

Institution	Account Type	Interest Rate
Unity Trust Bank	Instant Access Savings	1.95% (as at 13 January 2026)
Barclays	Premium ME Account	1.05%
CCLA	Public Sector Deposit Fund	Approximately 3.76%–3.83%

At the July 2025 Finance meeting, the Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk reviewed investment opportunities available through Insignis and CCLA. Funds can normally be withdrawn from the CCLA account before 11.00 a.m. and received later the same day, providing relatively quick access to cash when required. Committee agreed CCLA offered the most suitable investments for council and in line with the Investments Policy

The Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk are satisfied that the Council's funds are invested appropriately and that the current arrangements provide a suitable balance between accessibility, security and return on investment.

Do Members note the Unity Bank cost, and support the proposal to continue with Barclays Bank?

Do Members support the proposal to continue with CCLA?

12 **Governance - polices & other matters**

12.1 **Standing Orders - Review and proposed amendment**

A new Section 27 has been added to the Council's Standing Orders to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements by providing delegated authority from Full Council to the Finance & Governance Committee during the summer recess period (July and August). This will enable the Committee to exercise the powers of Full Council where decisions cannot reasonably await the next scheduled meeting of the Council.

This amendment reflects the Council's existing practice and provides a clear governance framework for decision-making during the summer recess. A corresponding amendment has also been made to the Finance & Governance Committee Terms of Reference to ensure consistency between the Council's governance documents.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the proposed amendment and, if satisfied, recommend that Full Council approves and adopts the revised Standing Orders.

Annex 12 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12.2 **Financial Regulations - updated section 13**

At its meeting in May, Full Council approved amendments to Section 13 of the Financial Regulations to reflect the Council's current arrangements for the receipt and management of income, thereby ensuring the Regulations remain aligned with the Council's operational practices.

The revised Financial Regulations have now been published on the Council's website and may be accessed using the link below.

Members are asked to note the publication of the updated Financial Regulations.

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

12.3 **Terms of Reference - Review and proposed amendments**

The Council's Terms of Reference have become an essential governance document, setting out the functions and powers of the Council and its Scheme of Delegation to Committees. Since their initial adoption, the document has continued to evolve to reflect the Council's governance arrangements and the practical operation of its committees.

The proposed amendments attached are intended to improve consistency across the document, strengthen governance arrangements and ensure the Terms of Reference continue to accurately reflect the Council's current practices. The principal amendments include:

- The introduction of a Terms of Reference for the Complaints Committee, formalising its membership, delegated powers and responsibilities.
- Amendments to the Finance & Governance Committee Terms of Reference to reflect the recent changes to Standing Orders and strengthen governance by including delegated authority to exercise Full Council powers during the summer recess (July and August), where decisions cannot reasonably await the next meeting of the Council.
- The removal of former paragraph 2.8 from the Finance & Governance Committee Terms of Reference, as responsibility for these matters now rests with the Buildings & Leases Committee.
- A number of minor amendments throughout the document to improve consistency, clarity and cross-referencing with the Council's wider governance framework.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the proposed amendments and, if satisfied, recommend that Full Council approves and adopts the revised Terms of Reference.

Annex 13 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12.4 **Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy - to receive new policy**

The Council has, over many years, adopted a range of policies and working practices that support environmental management, biodiversity and sustainable operations. These include the Environmental Policy Statement, Waste Management Policy, Vegetation Management and Bonfire Policy, and Weed Management Policy, together with practical initiatives such as tree planting, habitat management, energy efficiency improvements and carbon reduction measures.

Whilst these existing policies collectively support the Council's approach to biodiversity, the Council has not previously adopted an overarching policy that brings together these commitments and demonstrates how biodiversity and nature recovery are considered across its operations.

The attached Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy provides this strategic framework. It does not introduce significant new commitments but brings together the Council's existing policies, practices and achievements into a single document, demonstrating the Council's ongoing commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity whilst identifying opportunities for continual improvement.

The policy also supports the requirements of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Local Council Award Scheme for councils holding, or seeking to maintain, Quality Council status.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Governance Committee recommends to Full Council the adoption of the Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy.

Annex 14 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12.5 **Retention and Disposal Policy - Proposed updates**

The Council adopted its revised Retention and Disposal Policy in March 2026 as part of its wider review of data protection and information governance policies. Since that time, Microsoft 365 automated email retention arrangements have been implemented across the Council, together with retention labels enabling staff to apply shorter retention periods to routine emails where appropriate.

The proposed amendments do not alter the Council's overall approach to records retention but update the Policy to reflect current working practices, strengthen guidance on the management of electronic records and emails, and clarify responsibilities for the retention, retrieval and disposal of digital information.

The amendments also reinforce the Council's commitment to retaining information only where necessary, whilst ensuring records can be efficiently located where required for operational, audit, legal and statutory purposes.

Recommendation

That the Finance & Governance Committee considers the proposed amendments to the Retention and Disposal Policy and Appendix A (Retention Schedule), and recommends the updated Policy to Full Council for adoption.

Annex 15 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

Annex 16 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12.6 **Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and Staff Development Review Form**

The Council has long undertaken annual staff appraisals as part of its commitment to supporting employee performance, development and training. The Staff Handbook already provides for annual appraisals, whilst the Training and Development Policy (adopted March 2026) recognises that appraisal meetings are an important mechanism for identifying training and development needs.

Although the appraisal process is well established, the Council has not previously adopted a standalone Staff Appraisal and Development Policy setting out the purpose, responsibilities and arrangements for undertaking annual reviews. The introduction of a dedicated policy strengthens the Council's governance framework and supports the standards expected of councils working towards, or maintaining, Local Council Award Scheme accreditation.

The draft policy formalises existing practice rather than introducing a new appraisal process. It sets out the frequency of appraisals, responsibilities, confidentiality arrangements, links to training and development, and the role of appraisals in supporting employee development and, where applicable, contractual salary progression.

At the same time, the existing appraisal form has been reviewed and modernised. The revised Staff Development Review Form retains the Council's established self-reflection approach whilst placing greater emphasis on constructive discussion, objective setting and employee development. The previous numerical scoring system has been replaced with an overall performance assessment, providing a more balanced and supportive appraisal process while continuing to provide an appropriate framework for considering contractual salary progression.

As a consequential amendment, the Training and Development Policy has also been updated to refer to the new Staff Appraisal and Development Policy.

Recommendation

That the Finance & Governance Committee receives the draft Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and accompanying Staff Development Review Form, recommends their adoption by Full Council, and notes the consequential amendment to the Training and Development Policy, addition of section 11.

Annex 17 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

Annex 18 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

Annex 19 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12.7 **Strategic Risk Management Policy - Minor amendment**

The Strategic Risk Management Policy was adopted by Full Council in March 2026. To further strengthening the Council's overall governance framework, it is proposed to make a minor amendment to the introductory page of the Policy to clarify that the Strategic Risk Management Policy forms part of the Council's wider governance and risk management framework. The amendment also signposts Members and readers to the key supporting policies and documents that collectively contribute to effective risk management, financial resilience, information security and legal compliance.

The proposed amendment is for clarification only and does not alter the Council's approach to risk management or the substantive content of the Policy.

Recommendation

To receive the proposed minor amendment to the Strategic Risk Management Policy and recommends its adoption by Full Council.

Annex 20 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12.8 **HR and Health & Safety Consultancy Services – Update**

Following Members previous consideration of the Council's HR and Health & Safety consultancy arrangements, and despite concerns regarding elements of the service delivery and the Council's in-principle decision to transition to an alternative provider, the Council will continue to receive services from WorkNest for the foreseeable future whilst the existing contractual arrangements remain in place.

At its July meeting, Full Council supported the recommendation to transition the Council's HR and Health & Safety consultancy services to Peninsula and authorised the Town Clerk to continue discussions with WorkNest regarding a reduced early termination arrangement at an appropriate time following the November 2026 renewal. Members also noted that a potential termination cost may need to be considered as part of the 2027/28 budget process.

Members are asked to note that the Council's annual Health & Safety audit has now been arranged for 28 September 2026. It is anticipated that the audit report, together with any recommendations arising, will be presented to the Committee at its October meeting.

13 **Date of next meeting - 19 October 2026**