

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**, B **Todd**.

Notice is hereby given of a Council Meeting of Edenbridge Town Council to be held in Rickards Hall on 7 September 2026 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
2 September 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

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 6 July 2026 (pages 2023-145/1-12).

 Full Council | 06 July 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-145/1-12)

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 8 June 2026 (pages 2023-140/1-4); 29 June 2026 (pages 2023-143/1-4); 20 July 2026 (pages 2023-146/1-3) and 17 August 2026 (pages 2023-148/1-4).

 Planning and Transport | 08 June 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-140/1-4)

 Planning and Transport | 29 June 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-143/1-4)

 Planning and Transport | 20 July 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-146/1-3)

 Planning and Transport | 17 August 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-148/1-4)

To receive and adopt the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meetings held on 16 March 2026 (pages 2023-131/1-8) and 27 July 2026 (pages 2023-147/1-8).

 Finance and Governance | 16 March 2026 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-131/1-8)

 Finance and Governance | 27 July 2026 v.2 - Minutes (Pages 2023-147/1-8)

To receive recommendations from Committees

Finance & Governance Committee - meeting 27 July

Investment (Strategy) Policy - review

In accordance with the Council's Investment Policy, the Finance & Governance Committee undertook its annual review of the Council's investment arrangements and Investment Policy.

The review considered the Council's current investments and balances, investment performance and interest rates, associated risks and compliance with the Council's Investment Policy and statutory guidance.

The Committee was satisfied that the Council's investments continue to be managed prudently, with appropriate regard to the principles of security, liquidity and yield, and that the approved investment types remain appropriate.

The Finance & Governance Committee resolved to recommend to Full Council that the Investment Policy remains appropriate and that no amendments are required at this time.

The current Investment Policy can be viewed on the the Council's website, link below.

Recommendation

That Full Council approves the recommendation of the Finance & Governance Committee and confirms that the Investment Policy remains appropriate, with no amendments required.

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/investments-policy.pdf>

7.1.2

To confirm Banking and Investment Arrangements

Finance & Governance Committee considered the Council's current banking and investment arrangements, including a comparison between the Council's existing banking provider, Barclays Bank, and the services and charging structure offered by Unity Trust Bank.

The Committee considered the respective banking arrangements, costs and payment authorisation processes, together with the additional controls already in place under the Council's Financial Regulations.

The Committee also reviewed the Council's savings and investment arrangements, including the accessibility, security and returns available through the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

Having considered the information presented, the Finance & Governance Committee was satisfied that the Council's existing arrangements remain appropriate and resolved to recommend to Full Council that the Council continues with Barclays Bank for its banking arrangements and CCLA for its investments.

Recommendation

That Full Council approves the recommendation of the Finance & Governance Committee to continue with the Council's existing banking arrangements with Barclays Bank and its investment arrangements through CCLA.

7.1.3

Standing Orders - amendment new section Delegated Powers

Finance & Governance Committee considered a proposed new Section 27 to the Council's Standing Orders. The amendment is intended to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements by enabling Full Council, during the summer recess period (July and August), to delegate authority where decisions cannot reasonably await the next scheduled meeting of the Council.

Members supported the proposed amendment and recommended its adoption by Full Council.

The proposed new section reads:

27. Delegated Powers

a. During the summer recess period (July and August), Full Council may, by resolution, delegate its powers to the Planning and Transport Committee to determine matters that cannot reasonably await the next meeting of the Council.

Recommendation

That Full Council approves the addition of Section 27 – Delegated Powers to the Council's Standing Orders, as set out above.

7.1.4

Terms of Reference - Review and Amendments

The Finance & Governance Committee considered proposed amendments to the Council's Terms of Reference to ensure that they continue to reflect the Council's current governance arrangements and the practical operation of its committees.

The principal amendments include:

- The introduction of 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 changes to the Council's governance arrangements and delegated authority during the summer recess period.
- 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.
- Minor amendments throughout the document to improve consistency, clarity and cross-referencing with the Council's wider governance framework.

The Finance & Governance Committee supported the proposed changes and resolved to recommend the revised Terms of Reference to Full Council for approval and adoption.

A tracked copy showing the proposed amendments is available within the Finance & Governance Committee papers for 27 July 2026 on the councillors Council Papers portal.

Recommendation

That Full Council approves and adopts the revised Terms of Reference, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee.

7.1.5

Retention and Disposal Policy - amendments

Finance & Governance Committee considered proposed amendments to the Council's Retention and Disposal Policy and Appendix A – Retention Schedule, following the implementation of Microsoft 365 automated email retention arrangements across the Council.

The amendments do not change 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 Finance & Governance Committee supported the proposed amendments and resolved to recommend the updated Retention and Disposal Policy and Retention Schedule to Full Council for adoption.

A tracked copy showing the proposed amendments is available within the Finance & Governance Committee via the councillors Council papers app.

Recommendation

That Full Council approves and adopts the updated Retention and Disposal Policy and Appendix A - Retention Schedule, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee.

7.1.6

Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and Staff Development Review Form

Finance & Governance Committee considered a new Staff Appraisal and Development Policy, together with a revised Staff Development Review Form.

The Council has an established annual staff appraisal process, which is already reflected within the Staff Handbook and Training and Development Policy. The new standalone policy formalises this existing practice and provides a clear framework covering the purpose and frequency of appraisals, responsibilities, confidentiality, training and development, objective setting and, where applicable, contractual salary progression.

The accompanying Staff Development Review Form has also been updated to provide greater emphasis on constructive discussion, objective setting and employee development, with the previous numerical scoring system replaced by an overall performance assessment.

The Finance & Governance Committee supported the proposals and resolved to recommend the Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and revised Staff Development Review Form to Full Council for adoption. The Committee also supported the consequential amendment to the Training and Development Policy, with the addition of Section 11 referring to the new policy.

The draft policy and revised Staff Development Review Form are available within the Finance & Governance Committee papers via the councillors Council Papers app.

Recommendation

That Full Council:

- 1. Approves and adopts the Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and revised Staff Development Review Form, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee; and**
- 2. Approves the consequential amendment to the Training and Development Policy, with the addition of Section 11.**

7.1.7

Strategic Risk Management Policy - Minor amendment

Finance & Governance Committee also considered a minor amendment to the Strategic Risk Management Policy, which was adopted by Full Council in March 2026.

The amendment clarifies that the Policy forms part of the Council's wider governance and risk management framework and signposts the key supporting policies and documents that collectively contribute to effective risk management, financial resilience, information security and legal compliance.

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

The Finance & Governance Committee supported the amendment and resolved to recommend its adoption by Full Council.

The proposed amendment is shown within the Finance & Governance Committee papers via the councillor Council Papers app.

Recommendation

That Full Council approves the minor amendment to the Strategic Risk Management Policy, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee.

8

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

8.1

Clerk's report

Annual report 2025-26: This is now available on the Council's website https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/document_category/annual-reports/

Bandstand project: This project is being overseen through the Open Spaces Committee. Since the July Council meeting, when it was advised that the next stage is the planning application, we are now in receipt of the Design and Access Statement from the architecture, and the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). The application to planning authority will be completed later this month.

Building Bridges for Dementia Friendly Edenbridge: We are still awaiting confirmation of further training dates before actively being able to promote this further.

Buildings & Leases Committee: It has been decided to hold an additional meeting due to a number of maintenance projects. This has been confirmed for Friday 11 September, 3.00pm.

Budgets: The Town Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk will soon be looking at the new budgets preparation. Forward Planning Steering Group meeting is 28 September.

Byelaws update: Updated Bylaws in response to MHCLG further review were sent 15 July; we await their feedback.

Cyber Security, Data Management: 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. Interestingly, other councils are also considering its insurance and need for better systems.

Remote and hybrid meetings update: I have met with a company recommended by PS Technology to discuss the Council's equipment needs for its meeting room and Rickards Hall, and facilities for hybrid meetings; this includes microphones and sound system for Rickards Hall. One issue with Rickards Hall is before any equipment is installed the acoustics need to be addressed with sound panels placed in the ceiling area. We also discussed the hearing loops, but again this comes back to the acoustics being improved first. I am awaiting quotes and will add to a future agenda.

FOIA: Council has received one FOI request which was responded to within the 20 working days.

Gpeto AI Planning Tool: This is just a reminder to councillors, that the subscription now provides a view-only access for up to 12 Planning Committee Members. This is a useful planning tool to help with understanding and reviewing planning applications.

Highways Improvement Plan: An updated social media post was published on 7 July advising residents of the Highway Improvement Plan (HIP), and the progress Council has had with Highways arranging additional assessments for two potential pedestrian crossings. We continue to keep this on the agenda.

Kybo Solar Farm - Community Benefit Fund: The legal agreement has been received and signed by the Chairman of the Council and the Town Clerk in accordance with the Council's previous resolution. We await the funds, and will then start to investigate additional suitable EVC locations.

Quality Council Status: The Town Clerk and Communications Officer are continuing to

collate evidence required for the Quality Council submission.

Leases update

Forge Musical Theatre Group: We understand the Group is looking to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). A meeting to review the draft lease again will be scheduled over the next few weeks.

Food Bank: A new draft lease has been issued to the Foodbank, this has been referred to the Trussel Trust to review.

WI Hall Lease: We have recently sought legal clarification on the Lease and position of the Council, following Council resolution at its July meeting.

Station Approach - Reintroduction of Parking Charges: Council has written to GTR to campaign for the lifting of the new charges. We have received an encouraging response in that they are willing to discuss the charges and “want to keep working with the Town Council and understand whether there are any practical steps we can take within the current arrangements”

They said that the charges had been applied as part of “looking at ways to increase revenue and reduce reliance on public subsidy. As part of that, we have reviewed parking arrangements across our network and introduced a more consistent tariff structure across the Southern network. Edenbridge Town was one of a small number of locations where evening and weekend charges had not previously applied, and it has therefore been brought into line with the wider network.”

Having discussed with users of the WI Hall and other local groups, we are currently drafting a response and propose we discuss further maybe over a Teams meeting.

Old Memorial Hospital site: Efforts continue to arrange a meeting with the new landowner to discuss their plans for the site and war memorial.

8.1.1 Remembrance Sunday 8 November

Arrangements are progressing for the Council's annual Remembrance Sunday parade and service on Sunday 8 November 2026, following the established format of previous years. There will also be the annual afternoon Church Service at 2.30 pm.

An event application was submitted through SDC's EventApp system on 20 July 2026, together with the proposed road closure plan and event risk assessment. The Police are aware of the event and confirmation of the road closure is awaited. The landowner of the former War Memorial Hospital site has also been notified and has confirmed that access to the War Memorial will be made available for the event.

A meeting of the organising group, including representatives from the Royal British Legion, Church and Scouts, took place in July. This included a debrief following the 2025 event and agreement of the arrangements for this year's parade and service.

As Remembrance Sunday again falls immediately after the Edenbridge Bonfire Society event on Saturday 7 November, the Bonfire Society will be unable to assist with marshalling. The Community Warden has therefore contacted local groups seeking volunteers to assist with the event. Local organisations are also being contacted to confirm whether they wish to participate in the parade and/or lay a wreath, with wreath-laying information being coordinated with the Royal British Legion.

Additional event signage is planned for this year, alongside the usual posters, noticeboard information and social media communications. All Council staff have been requested to be available on 8 November to assist with the event.

A further meeting of the organising group will take place in October to confirm the final arrangements.

Order of Events

10.15 am - Participants meet at Leathermarket car park and assemble for the parade.

10.30 am - Parade leaves Leathermarket car park, under the direction of the Parade Marshal.

10.45 am - Parade arrives at the War Memorial at the former War Memorial Hospital site and participants assemble for the service.

10.50 am - Announcements and wreath layers invited to assemble, followed by the introduction and opening prayers.

10.58 am - Last Post.

11.00 am - Two-minute silence.

11.02 am - Reveille, followed by wreath laying, blessing, the first verse of God Save the King and the Epitaph.

11.15–11.20 am - Participants assemble for the return parade to Leathermarket car park, where the Parade Marshal will dismiss the parade.

2.30 pm - Church Service.

Recommendation

That Full Council notes the arrangements and preparations underway for the Remembrance Sunday parade and service on 8 November 2026. Members are also asked to ensure attendance to both the parade and service, and the afternoon Church Service.

8.2 Community Warden Report

The Community Warden continues to support a range of community activities, partnership working and volunteer initiatives across the town.

Since November 2025, 10 community litter-picking sessions have been organised, collecting more than 80 bags of rubbish together with tyres, furniture and other larger items, with fly-tipping reported where appropriate. The Community Speedwatch initiative has also continued, with five sessions undertaken between March and July, monitoring 986 vehicles, of which 78 were recorded exceeding the speed limit.

The Warden continues to develop links with local organisations and services, including Edenbridge Health Centre, Rotary Club, Involve Kent, the Forget-Me-Not Café and West Kent Housing. Support has included health and wellbeing coffee mornings, the Parkinson's Singing Group, activities for older residents and promotion of local community events. Work is also underway with the Health Centre to support forthcoming Digital Support, Menopause and Wellman events.

The Warden supported this year's Gardens in Bloom competition, helping to promote the event and secure prizes. The competition attracted 27 entries, with 12 prizes donated.

In addition, 56 reports have been made to KCC, SDC, Kent Police via 101 and other relevant organisations regarding fly tipping, graffiti and other local issues.

Ongoing activities also include maintaining the Council's community noticeboards, managing the Community Warden Facebook page and promoting opportunities and activities available to residents.

Great Stone Bridge Trust Grant (GSBT): In July, the Town Clerk submitted the Council's annual grant application seeking continued support towards the Community Warden service. The Council has requested a grant of £8,000, recognising the Trust's longstanding contribution towards maintaining the service. The application is due to be considered by the Trust in September.

The current Community Warden appointment runs until 31 March 2027, during which time the Personnel Committee and Council will review the role and its future delivery to ensure that it continues to meet local priorities and provide best value.

Members are asked to note the Community Warden update and the grant application submitted to the Great Stone Bridge Trust.

9

Sevenoaks District Emerging Local Plan - Regulation 19 publication and representation period

The Regulation 19 consultation on the Sevenoaks District Local Plan is currently underway and closes on 17 September 2026.

The Town Council has continued to review the proposed Local Plan, its Edenbridge site allocations, relevant policies and supporting evidence, with assistance from its Planning Consultant, Alan Dyer.

Members will recall that the Town Council submitted detailed representations at Regulation 18. The Regulation 19 stage is different in that representations will ultimately form part of the material considered when the Local Plan is submitted for independent Examination. Responses therefore need to focus not simply on whether the Town Council supports or objects to a proposal, but on whether the Plan is legally compliant and sound, including whether its policies and allocations are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

The Council's approach is therefore to prepare focused and evidence-based representations on those site allocations, policies and supporting documents which are of particular relevance to Edenbridge and where the Council considers its representations may influence the final Plan or matters considered at Examination. It is not proposed to submit representations on every Local Plan policy.

Work undertaken

A meeting with the Council's Planning Consultant was held on 14 July, to which councillors were invited, to discuss the emerging Regulation 19 Plan, proposed Edenbridge allocations and the broad direction of the Town Council's representations.

A further focused working meeting on 20 August has since been held between the Planning Consultant, Town Clerk, Planning & Administration Officer and Cllrs Aldridge and Baker to review the draft representations prepared to date and identify further areas requiring response.

Alan Dyer has agreed to prepare a number of additional policy representations on behalf of the Town Council. This is particularly helpful at Regulation 19, where the Council's representations need to move beyond expressing local concerns and demonstrate, where appropriate, how those concerns relate to the soundness of the Plan, the adequacy and proportionality of its evidence base, national planning policy and other relevant statutory and planning requirements.

The Town Clerk, Cllrs Aldridge and Baker and the Planning Consultant are now progressing the remaining representations. A schedule has been prepared identifying the policies and site allocations currently expected to receive a Town Council response and the lead person

preparing each representation. The current schedule shows Alan Dyer leading on a number of the strategic and site-specific representations, with ETC preparing others including Gypsy and Traveller provision, flood risk, water, education, sport and leisure, community uses, utilities and transport policies.

Community engagement

Alongside preparing its own representations, the Town Council has continued to support residents in understanding and engaging with the Regulation 19 consultation through social media and website posts, as well as information included in the Council's newsletter within the Edenbridge Magazine. In addition, the Council has held four public drop-in sessions, which were promoted through a Local Plan information leaflet delivered to every household in Edenbridge during the latter part of July.

Two sessions were held in early August, followed by further sessions on 27 August and 2 September. These provided residents with an opportunity to view information about the proposed Local Plan and Edenbridge allocations, speak informally with Town Councillors and officers, ask questions and obtain information to assist them in making their own representations to Sevenoaks District Council.

SDC Leader Cllr Maskell and Cllr Williams also attended the drop-in session on 27 August, providing an additional opportunity for residents to discuss the emerging Local Plan and raise questions directly with District representatives.

The purpose of the Council's communications and drop-in sessions has been to raise awareness of the proposals and consultation process and encourage residents to consider the Plan and make their own informed representations before the consultation closes on 17 September.

Emerging strategic approach

The Council has previously expressed strong concerns regarding the overall scale and distribution of development proposed for Edenbridge. However, the emerging representations are intended to take a pragmatic approach which recognises the need for an adopted Local Plan and that Edenbridge will accommodate further growth.

The draft response to Policy ST1 'A Balanced Strategy for Growth', prepared by the Planning Consultant and provided *confidentially* to Members as an example of the emerging approach, argues that the proposed distribution of development places disproportionate emphasis on Edenbridge when compared with the town's size, accessibility, available urban land and level of higher-tier services. It nevertheless makes clear that the Town Council is not opposed to growth, accepts that some Green Belt release will be necessary, and seeks instead a more proportionate distribution of development with sites capable of being properly integrated into the town and supported by the necessary infrastructure.

The draft ST1 representation illustrates the evidence-led approach now being taken. For example, the current Plan figures show proposed growth of 55.6% for Edenbridge, compared with 39.3% for Sevenoaks and 19.6% for Swanley. It also considers comparative road, rail and bus accessibility, availability of urban and brownfield land, services and facilities, employment provision and the implications of further Green Belt release.

The draft further seeks to demonstrate that the Town Council is not simply objecting to development, but is considering where growth could be more appropriately accommodated and integrated.

This remains a draft representation and is provided to Members only for information and comment only at this stage.

Highways and infrastructure

Particular concern remains regarding the highways evidence supporting the Local Plan and the implications of the cumulative scale of development proposed for Edenbridge.

The Planning Consultant has reviewed both the Local Plan Tests Report (June 2026) and the more recently available Local Junction Modelling and Mitigation Design work. He has identified significant differences between the two documents which require further explanation from SDC and its consultants. The Edenbridge junctions being examined include Hilders Lane/B2026, B2026/Stangrove Road and B2026/Lingfield Road.

This work is particularly important given the Town Council's longstanding concerns about the ability of Edenbridge's existing road network and junctions to accommodate the cumulative traffic generated by the scale of growth proposed.

Infrastructure delivery also remains a central consideration. Representations are being prepared on the Infrastructure Delivery policy and supporting evidence, including the relationship between development, education, highways, health, leisure and recreation, community provision, utilities and other infrastructure required to support a substantially increased population.

Next steps

Draft representations will continue to be developed and refined ahead of the 17 September deadline.

All draft responses will be made available within the councillors' shared folder as they are prepared, enabling Members to review and provide comments before final submission.

Given the number and complexity of the representations and the limited period between this meeting and the consultation deadline, it will not be practicable for each final representation to return individually to Full Council for approval. Delegated authority is therefore sought to enable the Town Clerk, working with Cllrs Aldridge and Baker and the Council's Planning Consultant, to finalise the representations taking account of Members' comments and the overall direction agreed by Council.

The final representations may therefore evolve as further evidence is reviewed and Members' comments are considered, but will remain consistent with the strategic direction endorsed by Council.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- 1. Note the progress made in preparing Edenbridge Town Council's representations to the Sevenoaks District Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation.**
- 2. Note and endorse the overall direction and approach being taken by the Town Clerk, Cllrs Aldridge and Baker and the Council's Planning Consultant in preparing focused, evidence-based representations on the Edenbridge site allocations, relevant Local Plan policies and supporting evidence.**
- 3. Note that the draft Policy ST1 representation provided to Members is a working document intended to illustrate the emerging strategic approach and does not constitute the Town Council's final representation.**
- 4. Agree that draft representations will continue to be made available to all councillors through the shared folder for review and comment prior to submission.**
- 5. Delegate authority to the Planning & Transport Committee, at its meeting on 14 September 2026, to review and endorse the Council's representations, including agreeing any necessary amendments or additions, provided these remain consistent**

with the overall positions and principles agreed by Full Council.

- 6. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with Cllrs Aldridge and Baker and the Council's Planning Consultant, to finalise and submit the Town Council's Regulation 19 representations by the consultation deadline of 17 September 2026, taking account of comments received from Members and the direction agreed by Council.**

Annex 1 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

Annex 2 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

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

10.1 **Rickards Hall - Timber floor maintenance and to ratify the expenditure of £1,400**

As part of the Council's planned maintenance programme for Rickards Hall, works were identified to maintain the timber flooring. This also included addressing the two areas of flooring which were repaired during the previous year's internal repair and redecoration works and required staining to match the existing floor.

Two quotations were obtained for the works:

- Contractor A - £1,400
- Contractor B - £3,600

The contractor who previously sanded and varnished the Hall floor inspected its condition and advised that a full re-sanding was not required at this stage. Instead, the repaired areas required sanding and staining to blend with the existing flooring, followed by rubbing down the entire floor and applying a polyurethane coating. The works were expected to take approximately three to four days.

The Council's maintenance plans had allowed a budget of up to £2,500 for the flooring works.

Due to the level of bookings at Rickards Hall, there was a very limited opportunity to undertake the works before Christmas, with 26-29 August being the only suitable available window. As the works had already been identified within the maintenance programme, were considered necessary and could be completed within the approved budget provision, a decision was taken to proceed with Contractor A at a cost of £1,400; this was approved under the summer delegated authority by the Planning Committee.

The works have now been completed.

Following completion, the contractor has advised that, to help maintain the floor in good condition and prolong the period before more substantial sanding is required, a further polyurethane coat should be applied during 2027-28. In view of the £1,100 saving against the amount allowed within the current maintenance plan, provision for this additional preventative maintenance will be included within the 2027-28 maintenance plan.

Members are asked to ratify the expenditure of £1,400 for the maintenance works to the Rickards Hall timber floor and note that provision for a further protective coating will be included within the 2027-28 maintenance plan.

10.2 **Chairman's Reception and Gardens in Bloom Awards**

Following Council's decision in July, the Chairman's Reception will take place on Thursday 3 September, combined with the presentation of the Council's Gardens in Bloom awards.

The event has been arranged as a celebration and thank you to the partners and organisations the Council has worked with over the current Council term, as well as an opportunity to celebrate this year's Gardens in Bloom participants and winners.

Over 70 guests have accepted invitations, including Gardens in Bloom participants, representatives from local community groups and organisations, Sevenoaks District Council and neighbouring parish councils.

Neil Miller, Head Gardener at Hever Castle, will present the Gardens in Bloom awards.

As the event takes place after publication of the meeting papers, a verbal update and feedback from the evening will be provided at the Council meeting.

Members are asked to note the update.

10.3

Spatial Settlement Plan (SSP+) - update

At its meeting on 17 August 2026, the Planning & Transport Committee, acting under delegated authority, considered the revised proposal from ONH Planning for preparation of a Spatial Settlement Plan (SSP+) for Edenbridge.

The SSP+ will provide a long-term spatial planning framework for the town, including evidence gathering, stakeholder and community engagement, scenario testing and the development of a preferred strategy. In the shorter term, it is intended to strengthen the Council's strategic position through the emerging Sevenoaks Local Plan process and subsequent Examination. Longer term, the work will provide an evidence base to support future planning and infrastructure discussions, including with the new West Kent Unitary Authority, and could form a useful foundation should the Council decide to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in the future.

The Committee approved the appointment of ONH Planning at a cost of £12,950 plus VAT and up to £200 expenses, with the additional funding above the existing budget provision to be met from the appropriate Council reserve(s).

The Town Clerk has subsequently contacted ONH Planning to confirm the appointment and commence the project. A further update, including the proposed programme and next steps, will be reported to Council at its October meeting.

Members are asked to note the decision of the Planning & Transport Committee and the progress made in commissioning the SSP+.

10.4

McMillan Coffee Morning Friday 25 September 2026 - update

Following Council's decision in July to support a Macmillan Coffee Morning on Friday 25 September 2026 at Rickards Hall, arrangements are being progressed by the councillor organising group - Cllrs Baker, Compton, Jacques, and Read.

Cllr Baker has provided a poster advertising the event, which the Council's Communications Officer has shared through the Council's social media channels and on its community noticeboards.

The event will be organised and run by councillors, with councillors also providing cakes for the Coffee Morning.

Members are asked to note the update and continue to support the arrangements for the event.

10.5

Involve Kent - request for continued support of free use of Rickards Hall for its Arts and Craft Group

At its meeting on 8 December 2025, Council considered a request from Involve Kent to support the establishment of a new weekly arts and craft group for people aged 55 and over.

Involve Kent is a charity commissioned by Kent County Council to support individuals aged

55 and over who may be experiencing social isolation as a result of a range of life circumstances. The proposed group was intended to provide a safe and welcoming environment where participants could meet others, learn new skills and develop friendships and wider support networks.

Council supported the aims of the initiative and agreed that this was an appropriate opportunity to work in partnership with Involve Kent to help provide services which benefit the local community. It therefore agreed to allow the group free weekly use of Rickards Hall, initially for three months, after which the arrangement would be reviewed.

The group commenced in January 2026 and has continued to use Rickards Hall free of charge. It took longer than initially anticipated to establish a regular base of participants and, consequently, the arrangement was not reviewed after the initial three-month period. The group has now been operating for approximately eight months and has developed a regular attendance of around 5–6 people out of eight people registered, and has interest to continue to grow.

Experience from the Council's own Monday Games Club, which was initially established in partnership with Involve Kent, demonstrates that community groups of this nature can take time to become established. The Games Club initially started with relatively small numbers but now has a participant base of around 30 people, with an average weekly attendance of approximately 18–20.

Involve Kent continues to fundraise to facilitate the arts and craft group and has asked whether the Council would consider extending its support by continuing to provide Rickards Hall free of charge for the weekly Friday session, which runs from 12 noon for two hours.

As part of its review of Rickards Hall hire charges in July 2026, Council introduced a reduced community rate of £12 per hour for local charities and community organisations. On this basis, the equivalent hire charge for the arts and craft group would be £24 per week. Continuing to provide the Hall free of charge therefore represents an ongoing contribution by the Council towards the group, in addition to the associated running costs of the building.

Members are asked to consider Involve Kent's request for continued support of the arts and craft group and whether to extend the free use of Rickards Hall for its weekly two-hour Friday session.

How do Members want respond, and do you wish to consider agreeing a further defined period of free use, after which the arrangement and attendance levels can again be reviewed.

10.6 **IT equipment replacement and additional Tablet Background**

At its meeting on 8 September 2025, Full Council received an update following a review of the Council's IT equipment by its IT provider, PS Tech, in preparation for the end of Windows 10 support.

At that time, the Council had seven office desktop computers and seven laptops. Three desktop computers were identified as incompatible with Windows 11 and required immediate replacement to maintain business continuity and security. Council approved expenditure of £2,258.25 plus VAT for their replacement, including Dell ProSupport and set-up.

The remaining eleven devices (four desktops and seven laptops) were capable of being upgraded to Windows 11; however, ten were no longer covered by Dell hardware support. PS Tech therefore recommended that the Council consider phasing the replacement of these older devices over approximately 18 months.

The Forward Planning Steering Group, at its meeting on 29 September 2025, subsequently considered the future replacement of the Council's IT equipment and recommended a budget provision of £8,100 for 2026–27. This was considered through the Council's budget-setting process and included within the approved 2026-27 budget under Code 1041 - Office IT Upgrade.

The following replacements and additional equipment are now presented for Members' consideration.

10.6.1 **Communications Officer Laptop - to ratify expenditure of £1,108**

The Communications Officer's laptop required replacement and, due to operational requirements, a replacement was purchased at a cost of £1,100.

The expenditure can be met from the approved Office IT Upgrade budget (Code 1041).

Recommendation

That Full Council ratifies the expenditure of £1,100 for the replacement Communications Officer laptop, funded from the 2026-27 Office IT Upgrade budget (Code 1041).

10.6.2 **Town Clerk Laptop - replacement expenditure £1,472**

The Town Clerk's laptop is one of the older devices identified for phased replacement following the Council's IT equipment review.

A budget of £1,472 is proposed for its replacement, including the necessary specification, support and set-up costs. The expenditure can be met from the approved Office IT Upgrade budget (Code 1041).

Recommendation

That Full Council approves expenditure of up to £1,472 for the replacement of the Town Clerk's laptop, funded from the 2026–27 Office IT Upgrade budget (Code 1041).

10.6.3 **Tablet - additional IT equipment budget £575**

Officers have identified that a tablet would provide greater flexibility when attending Council and external meetings, allowing electronic access to meeting papers, documents and other information without the need to take a laptop.

This would be an additional item of IT equipment rather than part of the planned replacement programme and is therefore not included within the Office IT Upgrade budget.

Indicative prices range from approximately £298 for a Samsung tablet to £575 for an Apple iPad. It is proposed that a budget of up to £575 is made available, with the expenditure funded from the Council's Contingency budget.

Recommendation

That Full Council considers the purchase of a tablet for officer use and, if supported, approves expenditure of up to £550, funded from the Contingency budget.

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

11.1 **Environmental Policies Review: To adopt two new policies 1) Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy; and, 2) Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy**

As part of the Council's ongoing review of its policies and working practices, the Town Clerk has reviewed the suite of policies relating to biodiversity, climate change and environmental

management. Finance & Governance Committee recently received the Biodiversity and Nature recovery Policy and recommended approval. However, this is being presented to Council together with the Climate change and environmental Sustainability Policy.

The Council already has a number of established environmental policies and practices. These include its Waste Management Policy, Vegetation Management and Bonfire Policy and Weed Management Policy, which provide operational guidance for the management of Council activities and land. The Vegetation Management and Bonfire and Weed Management policies were most recently adopted in September 2025 and already form part of the Council's environmental management framework.

Over recent years, the Council's approach to environmental sustainability has developed considerably. This includes investment in energy-efficient technologies and infrastructure, sustainable grounds management, recycling and waste reduction, tree and habitat management and other measures intended to reduce the environmental impact of Council operations. The Council's existing policies also demonstrate a longstanding commitment to recycling, tree planting and management, LED lighting and the reuse of materials.

Two new overarching policies have therefore been prepared:

- **Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy** - providing a strategic framework for protecting and enhancing biodiversity across Council-owned and managed land and embedding biodiversity considerations within Council activities and future decision making.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy** - providing a complementary framework for reducing the environmental impact of Council operations, improving energy and resource efficiency, considering climate resilience and supporting appropriate community engagement and partnership working.

Together, these two policies will form the Council's overarching environmental framework, supported by the more detailed operational policies covering waste, vegetation and bonfires, and weed management. This provides a clearer distinction between the Council's strategic environmental commitments and the operational policies through which these are delivered.

As part of this review, it is proposed that the existing Environmental Policy Statement (reconfirmed annually) is withdrawn. The Statement established broad environmental principles including reducing waste, improving energy and resource efficiency, sustainable purchasing and integrating environmental considerations into Council decisions. These principles have now been significantly developed and incorporated into the Council's wider environmental policy framework and the Statement would therefore largely duplicate the new policies.

The revised framework also reflects the Council's commitment to continual environmental improvement whilst recognising its responsibilities for service delivery, operational requirements and the prudent management of public finances.

The Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy will also support the Council's evidence for the NALC Local Council Award Scheme, which requires the Council to demonstrate its approach to biodiversity. The wider policy framework also provides a basis for demonstrating how the Council considers and engages with the community on environmental and climate change matters.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. **Adopt the new Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy.**
2. **Adopt the new Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy.**

3. **Reaffirm the Waste Management Policy, Vegetation Management and Bonfire Policy and Weed Management Policy as supporting operational policies forming part of the Council's environmental policy framework.**
4. **Agree to withdraw the existing Environmental Policy Statement, its principles having been incorporated and developed within the new environmental policy framework.**

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/vegetation-management-and-bonfire-policy.pdf>

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/waste-management-policy.pdf>

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/weed-management-policy.pdf>

Annex 3 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

Annex 4 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

11.2

Kent Wildlife Trust - Rights of Rivers Initiative

The Council has received correspondence from NEDRA regarding a recent approach from Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) concerning its emerging Rights of Rivers campaign. *Copy of the NEDRA email attached (confidential).*

Members will be aware that NEDRA has been undertaking water quality monitoring and community engagement activities relating to the River Eden for some time. The Town Council previously provided grant funding towards this work. A report with a summary of the results to date has recently been provided separately.

NEDRA advises that Kent Wildlife Trust is seeking to work with local authorities and community groups to explore how greater recognition and protection may be given to local rivers as part of wider nature recovery and river health objectives. Whilst the campaign initially focussed on chalk streams, KWT has indicated an interest in engaging with communities associated with other rivers, including the River Eden.

At this stage, NEDRA has advised that neither they nor KWT are seeking any formal commitment from the Town Council. Rather, they are seeking to establish whether there would be interest in participating in an initial discussion regarding the initiative.

NEDRA/Friends of the River Eden Ecosystem has also provided its Summer 2026 Water Quality Testing update, reporting on its volunteer monitoring across 22 sites within the River Eden catchment. The group undertakes monthly testing for phosphates, nitrates, ammonia and E. coli and continues to engage with Southern Water, SES Water, local farmers and the Eden Valley farm cluster.

A copy of the report is provided to Members as a confidential supporting paper. As it contains findings and observations arising from the group's own monitoring programme, rather than a formal assessment by the Environment Agency or another statutory body, it is provided for Members' information.

Considerations

The Council will recognise the importance of healthy rivers, biodiversity enhancement and environmental stewardship within the local community.

However, members may also wish to note that responsibilities for river management, water quality regulation and enforcement sit primarily with statutory bodies including the Environment Agency, water companies and other relevant agencies, rather than with local councils.

Should members wish to engage further, consideration may therefore be given to:

- Whether there is an appropriate and identifiable role for the Town Council.
- How any involvement would align with the Council's existing priorities and objectives.

- The potential benefits to the local community.
- Any implications for officer time and Council resources.
- Whether involvement would relate to practical local initiatives concerning the River Eden or wider policy and campaigning objectives.
- Opportunities to support partnership working and community engagement without creating ongoing commitments.

Members should also note that the Council's current focus remains the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation and associated work programme.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Any future proposals requiring funding or resource commitments would need to be considered separately by the Council.

Recommendation

Members are invited to consider the correspondence received and determine whether:

- 1. The Council wishes to engage in an initial exploratory discussion with Kent Wildlife Trust and NEDRA regarding the Rights of Rivers initiative; and**
- 2. If so, the extent and nature of any involvement the Council may wish to explore, having regard to its priorities, available resources and the responsibilities of relevant statutory bodies.**

 Annex 5 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

 Annex 6 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

11.3

Great Stone Bridge Trust - proposed change to nominative trustee arrangements

The Great Stone Bridge Trust of Edenbridge (the Trust) has contacted the Town Council regarding proposed changes to its governance arrangements.

The Trust's current governing document includes a Scheme dated 10 May 1978, made by the Charity Commission. Clause 3 of the Scheme provides for two Nominative Trustees, with Clause 4 providing that these trustees are appointed by the Parish Council of Edenbridge, now Edenbridge Town Council.

The Trust, with the assistance of specialist legal advice, is currently in the process of restructuring to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). As part of this process, the CIO will adopt a new governing document.

The trustees have advised that they wish to retain the longstanding association between the Trust and the Town Council, while updating the existing governance provisions. They are proposing that the new governing document provides for one Nominative Trustee to be appointed by Edenbridge Town Council, rather than the current two, with the Trust having a right of veto over the Council's nominee.

The Trust has asked the Town Council to formally consent to this proposed change and has advised that it will provide a letter for the Council to sign confirming its agreement.

The proposed change would therefore retain the Town Council's formal involvement in the governance of the Trust through the appointment of a Nominative Trustee, but would reduce the number of Council-appointed trustees from two to one and introduce a right of veto by the Trust.

Members are asked to consider and, if supported, resolve to:

1. **Consent to the proposed change to the Great Stone Bridge Trust's governance arrangements whereby Edenbridge Town Council's entitlement to appoint two Nominative Trustees will be replaced by an entitlement to appoint one Nominative Trustee, subject to a right of veto by the Trust.**
2. **Authorise the Town Clerk to sign, on behalf of Edenbridge Town Council, the letter or other documentation required to formally confirm the Council's consent to this change.**

11.4 **Internal Audit arrangements 2026/27**

In January 2026, Council approved the appointment of April Skies Accounting, through Mike Platten, as the Council's Internal Auditor, following the retirement of the Council's previous Internal Auditor.

The Town Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk met with the Internal Auditor for an interim review in February, followed by the year-end internal audit in April. The next interim review for the 2026/27 financial year is expected to take place during October/November, with the year-end audit taking place in spring 2027.

The Internal Auditor has now provided the Council with the Terms of Engagement for the 2026/27 internal audit and has asked the Council to formally confirm the appointment of April Skies Accounting and its independence from the Council. This will ensure that the Council's consideration of the independence of its Internal Auditor is clearly evidenced within the Council minutes.

Members are also asked to note that Mike Platten has advised that 2026/27 will be his final year as an Internal Auditor prior to his retirement, with his final audits being completed by June 2027. He has advised that a succession arrangement is in place and has recommended Karen Whiley FMAAT as a potential replacement for his existing audit clients.

However, Council will consider the appointment of a new Internal Auditor for 2027/28 later in the financial year. It is anticipated that this will initially be considered by the Finance & Governance Committee, which will review the options and make a recommendation to Full Council.

Members are asked to:

- **Confirm the appointment of April Skies Accounting to undertake the Council's internal audit for the 2026/27 financial year and confirm that it is independent of Edenbridge Town Council.**
- **Authorise the Town Clerk to sign the 2026/27 Internal Audit Terms of Engagement on behalf of the Council.**
- **Note the forthcoming retirement of Mike Platten and that arrangements for the appointment of the Council's Internal Auditor for 2027/28 will be considered later in the financial year.**

11.5 **Eden Valley Museum - Service Level Agreement Grant request to increase from £6,500 to £7,500**

The Town Council has a longstanding relationship with and provides significant support to the Eden Valley Museum Trust.

The Museum occupies the Council-owned Church House, under a new 25-year lease agreed in 2025. The initial annual rent under the lease was £4,580.42, payable quarterly and subject to annual review in accordance with RPI. Under the lease arrangements, the Council retains responsibility for the structure of the building, with the Museum responsible for its internal maintenance and decoration. The Council also currently recharges the Museum for gas usage and the maintenance of the fire and security alarm systems.

In addition to the property arrangements, the Council provides the Museum with an annual

Service Level Agreement (SLA) grant of £6,500. The grant was last increased from £6,120 to £6,500 in 2021.

The Museum Trustees have now written to the Council requesting that the annual SLA grant be increased by £1,000 to £7,500 from the 2027/28 financial year. The Trustees advise that the grant is important in supporting the Museum's ongoing running costs and that opportunities to secure external grant funding towards core running costs have become increasingly limited.

The Museum continues to provide a local heritage and visitor facility within Edenbridge, maintaining collections relating to the social history of Edenbridge and the wider Eden Valley and providing exhibitions, educational activities, school and group visits, outreach activities and visitor information.

The Museum has provided its latest annual accounts in support of the request. The accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026 show total income of £26,015, expenditure of £27,491, resulting in a deficit for the year of £1,476, with total funds carried forward of £12,338. The accounts also record the Council's £6,500 grant as part of the Museum's grant income.

A copy of the Museum's request is provided to Members as *confidential* supporting papers. The accounts document were unable to upload, but is available from the Town Clerk on request as a confidential document.

Financial Implications

If approved, the annual SLA provision would increase by £1,000 from £6,500 to £7,500 from 2027/28 and would need to be incorporated into the Council's budget for that financial year.

Members should note that the SLA grant is separate from the Council's landlord responsibilities and the rent and other property-related charges payable by the Museum under its lease.

Interests

Members are reminded that any councillor who has an interest in the Eden Valley Museum Trust, including through being a current trustee or other relevant connection, should consider their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct and declare any interest as appropriate before consideration of this item.

Members are asked to consider the Eden Valley Museum Trust's request to increase its annual SLA grant from £6,500 to £7,500 with effect from the 2027/28 financial year.

 Annex 7 Confidential annex is omitted from public papers

12

Unpaid invoices over 6-months - outstanding Market Pitch Fees

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

At its last meeting on 6 July, Council considered the outstanding balance of £308.40 relating to unpaid market pitch fees for the period October to December 2025.

Members resolved: to provide one final opportunity for the matter to be resolved before considering any further formal recovery action, and to issue a final letter advising that unless payment is received within 28 days, the Council will consider its options and may commence formal recovery proceedings.

In accordance with this resolution, the Town Clerk issued a final request for payment by email on 8 July 2026, enclosing an updated customer statement and requesting payment of the outstanding balance within 28 days and no later than 6 August 2026. The correspondence also

advised that, should there be genuine difficulty in making payment in one sum, the Council would be willing to consider a reasonable repayment arrangement, provided a proposal was made within the same 28-day period.

No payment or proposed repayment arrangement was received by the deadline.

On 10 August 2026, the Town Clerk received an email advising that the outstanding balance would be paid by 30 September 2026. The email stated that, following accountancy and legal advice, payment would be delayed pending the outcome of a matter with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The Town Clerk acknowledged receipt and advised that the matter would be reported to Council.

The outstanding balance of £308.40 remains unpaid at the time of writing.

Members are reminded that the Council's consideration of the outstanding debt is separate from any complaint or other matter which may have been referred to the ICO. The Council has previously determined that the market pitch fees are properly due.

Members are asked to consider the response received and determine whether to:

- 1. Accept the proposed payment date of 30 September 2026; or**
- 2. Proceed with formal recovery action in accordance with the Council's resolution of 7 July 2026; or**
- 3. Agree any other appropriate course of action.**

13 **Local Government Reorganisation - Update**

The Government has now announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across Kent and Medway and has confirmed that it intends to proceed with Option 4B, creating four new unitary authorities without changes to the existing district boundaries.

Under the proposed arrangements, the new authorities will comprise:

- East Kent: Canterbury, Thanet and Dover
- Mid Kent: Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe and Swale
- North Kent: Dartford, Gravesham and Medway
- **West Kent:** Maidstone, **Sevenoaks**, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells

Edenbridge will therefore form part of the new West Kent unitary authority.

The new unitary authorities will replace Kent County Council (KCC) and the existing district, borough and city councils and will be responsible for the services currently delivered across both tiers of local government. The Government intends the new councils to take full responsibility for services from 1 April 2028, subject to the necessary Parliamentary process.

The transition arrangements will involve a significant programme of work across Kent and Medway. Elections to the new shadow authorities are expected to take place in May 2027, after which the shadow authorities will operate alongside the existing councils in preparation for the transfer of responsibilities in April 2028.

For Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), this represents a substantial period of organisational change. Alongside continuing to provide its existing services to residents and communities, its officers and Members will be required to work with the other West Kent authorities and KCC to develop the new authority and ensure the safe and effective transition of services.

The scale of this change, and the uncertainty inevitably associated with it, will have a considerable impact upon SDC's staff, Chief Executive, Leader and councillors over the coming period. The Town Council has worked closely and constructively with SDC and its officers over many years and Members may wish to recognise the challenges facing colleagues across the

District Council as all authorities navigate this significant restructuring of local government.

For town and parish councils, there is no immediate structural change arising from LGR and Edenbridge Town Council will continue to operate as it does now. However, the reorganisation is likely to have implications for the local council sector as the new unitary authorities consider how services should be delivered in the future.

There may be opportunities, and potentially expectations, for town and parish councils to take a greater role in the delivery or management of some local services and assets. The extent of this is not yet known and will develop as the transition progresses. It will therefore be important for the Town Council to remain actively engaged with SDC, KCC, the emerging West Kent arrangements and the wider town and parish council sector to ensure that Edenbridge's interests are represented and that the Council is appropriately involved in discussions about any future transfer or devolution of local services.

Further updates will be brought to Council as the transition arrangements develop.

Members are asked to note the Government's decision and the update on Local Government Reorganisation; recognise the significant period of transition now facing SDC, its officers, and Members; and support the Town Council continuing to engage proactively in the development of the new West Kent authority and any discussions regarding the future delivery of local services.

13.1 **Community Asset Transfer Programme**

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) has advised town and parish councils that, following the Government's decision in July on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and confirmation of the agreed geographies across Kent, it has paused its Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme with immediate effect.

SDC has explained that, given the scale and pace of the forthcoming reorganisation, officer capacity and budgets previously supporting the CAT programme will now be redirected towards preparing for the transition and maintaining continuity of services.

Since the programme was launched, SDC received 23 applications from town and parish councils, of which 15 were approved for transfer and one progressed as a disposal.

Importantly, SDC has confirmed that asset transfers which have already been approved or are currently being progressed will continue through the necessary legal and practical stages.

Any further opportunities for the devolution of assets are now likely to be considered by the new unitary authority as part of its future service and governance arrangements, anticipated from April 2028.

14 **Councillor vacancies - to formally note the resignation of Cllr Stephen Sumner (North and East Ward) and to consider whether to co-opt to the two current vacancies**

Council currently has two councillor vacancies, one in each of the Council's wards.

The first vacancy arose in the Edenbridge South and West Ward following the resignation of Cllr Bill Cummings. The statutory casual vacancy process was completed and, as no request for a by-election was received, the vacancy became available to be filled by co-option.

At its July meeting, Council considered whether to commence the co-option process. However, Members noted that Cllr Stephen Sumner had recently resigned, creating a second casual vacancy, this time in the Edenbridge North and East Ward. Members agreed to await the outcome of the statutory process for this vacancy before considering whether to proceed with co-option.

Members are asked to formally note Cllr Sumner's resignation and the resulting casual vacancy.

The statutory Casual Vacancy Notice was published on 9 July 2026, with a deadline of 29 July 2026 for electors to request a by-election. No such request was received and this vacancy may therefore also be filled by co-option.

There are consequently now two vacancies which may be filled by co-option:

- Edenbridge South and West Ward - one vacancy
- Edenbridge North and East Ward - one vacancy

Whilst there is no statutory requirement to fill the vacancies by co-option, Members have previously recognised that it is good practice to seek to maintain the Council's full complement of Members where possible. Members may also wish to take into account the proximity of the scheduled Town Council elections in May 2027 when considering whether to commence a co-option process at this stage.

Members are asked to:

- **Formally note the resignation of Cllr Stephen Sumner and the completion of the statutory casual vacancy process, with no request for a by-election having been received; and**
- **Consider whether to commence a co-option process to fill the two councillor vacancies, one in each Ward, or leave the vacancies unfilled pending the scheduled elections in May 2027.**

15 **Consultations**

15.1 **Kent Mineral Sites Plan 2026 - Regulation 19 - closing date 5 October**

🔗 <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/draft-of-the-kent-mineral-sites-plan-2026>

15.2 **Sevenoaks Local Plan Regulation 198 Publication - closing date 17 September**

🔗 https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069128/emerging_local_plan/914/sevenoaks_district_local_plan_regulation_19_publication_summer_2026

15.3 **Sevenoaks District Council Draft Community Infrastructure Levy charges - closing date 17 September**

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) is consulting on a revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule, this opened on 6 August and closes 17 September 2026.

SDC is proposing a significant change to the way infrastructure contributions are secured from new development. Under the proposals, residential developments of 10 or more dwellings would be removed from the CIL Charging Schedule, with the impacts of these larger developments instead being addressed through site-specific Section 106 (s106) agreements. Non-residential development would also be dealt with through s106 arrangements.

SDC's stated intention is that this would provide greater flexibility to secure and co-ordinate infrastructure associated with major development, including schools, health facilities, transport improvements and community facilities, and enable infrastructure to be delivered at the appropriate time and scale. CIL would continue to apply to relevant smaller-scale residential development.

The proposed change does, however, have potential implications for town and parish councils. Under the existing CIL arrangements, a proportion of CIL receipts generated by development within a parish is passed directly to the relevant town or parish council, providing locally controlled funding which can be used towards infrastructure required within the community.

Edenbridge Town Council has been able to use CIL receipts to support a number of significant local infrastructure projects which may otherwise have been difficult to deliver.

Removing major residential developments from CIL could therefore substantially reduce the level of future CIL receipts available directly to the Town Council, particularly given the scale of development currently proposed for Edenbridge through the emerging Local Plan.

While s106 agreements may provide an effective mechanism for securing infrastructure directly associated with major development, the proposed change raises questions about how local infrastructure priorities will be identified and funded, and the extent to which town and parish councils and their communities will be able to influence the allocation of contributions arising from development within their areas.

The value of CIL to local communities extends beyond the delivery of new infrastructure. It has enabled the Town Council to invest in the improvement, maintenance and adaptation of existing community buildings, facilities and assets so that they remain suitable and sustainable as the town grows. This can also reduce pressure on other sources of funding; for example, major improvement works to community buildings can help avoid those costs being passed on through increased hire charges, while investment in Council-owned infrastructure can reduce the need for large projects to be funded directly through the Council Tax precept.

In Edenbridge, CIL funding has been used, or allocated, towards a wide range of local projects, including the new medical centre and equipment for the new doctors' surgery; improvements to the Recreation Ground Pavilion, including its new heating and hot water system; repairs to listed Council buildings; repairs and new stage lighting at the WI Hall; improvements to facilities at Hever Primary School; and new toilet and storage facilities at the allotments, amongst other projects. These investments have benefited not only Council services and assets but local schools, community organisations, facility users and the wider community.

The concern is therefore not simply the potential reduction in funding received by the Town Council, but the possible loss of a locally controlled and flexible source of infrastructure funding which has enabled investment in smaller-scale community priorities that may not necessarily form part of a site-specific s106 agreement, but which nevertheless help existing facilities and services accommodate and respond to growth.

The Town Clerks of the four towns within Sevenoaks District have raised concerns regarding the potential implications of the proposals and are currently considering a co-ordinated response. There is also a longer-term consideration as to how infrastructure contributions and engagement with town and parish councils will operate following Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of the new unitary authority.

The Town Clerk and Cllr Baker will attend further discussions on the proposals and provide a verbal update at the meeting.

Members are asked to provide their views on the proposed changes and authorise the Town Clerk, in consultation with Cllrs Baker and Aldridge, to prepare and submit a response to SDC's Draft CIL Charging Schedule consultation on behalf of the Town Council.

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

17 **Press release**

18 **Date of Next meeting - 02 November**