Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Governance held in Rickards Hall on 16 February 2026 at 7:30 pm

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Present: Cllrs. Sarah Compton *(Vice-Chairwoman)*, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Angela Read, Stephen Sumner *(Chairman)*
In attendance: Deputy Clerk/RFO; no members of the public and no press.
19.38 Meeting Opened

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received, noted and accepted from Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, McGregor, Stockdale and Todd.

2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

Nothing declared.

3 To receive, approve and sign the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on 17 November 2025 (pages 2023-114/1-6).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on the 17 November 2025, and that they be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record 114/1-6.

4 Public Questions and Statements

No Public present, and no comments from councillors.

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

5.1 Waste sewage removal at Blossoms Park

Members noted Business Stream had previously confirmed the responsibility for the waste sewage account had transferred to the Cricket Club. However, the RFO subsequently received a call pursuing an outstanding balance. Correspondence had been forwarded for review, reiterating that liability rests with the Cricket Club.

5.2 Solar Panels

Members noted that the RFO had liaised with the Rugby Club and Scottish Power and had been advised that the next step was to contact the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) Accounts Team at Scottish Power. The RFO would continue to pursue this matter and report back with updates in due course.

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

6.1 To ratify the expenditure report

Ratified: the expenditure up to the 31 January 2026.

6.2 To approve the list of expenditure for payment

Members noted there was no outstanding payments currently.

6.3 To review Expenditure over £500

Members accepted the expenditure over £500 report to the 31 January 2026.

6.4 To receive the income

Members noted and received the income report to the 31 January 2026, there were no questions.

6.5 To review the Financial I&E Budget Comparisons report

Members received and noted, and had no questions with regards to the Financial I&E Budget Comparison report.

6.6 To confirm the I&E Accounts summary

Members received and confirmed the I&E Accounts report.

6.7 To review the Consolidated Balance Sheet

Members received and confirmed the Consolidated Balances.

6.8 To receive the Financial Summary Cashbook

Members received and confirmed the Financial Summary Cashbook.

6.9 To confirm the Bank Reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for October, November, December and January

Cllr Layland confirmed he had checked the bank accounts and procurement card reconciliations for October, November and December. There were no issues, and it was noted these were available for Members to view any time.

Resolved: to confirm the Bank Reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for October, November and December.

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

Members had no questions, and

Ratified: the transfers into, out of and between accounts as reported in the meeting papers.

6.11 To note and advise on invoices outstanding over 3 months

Members noted that there was one outstanding invoice for £39.20, but that this was expected to be paid.

7 Other Financial Business

7.1 Charities Accounts

Members noted that the annual Charities accounts had been submitted to the Charities Commission website. There where no questions.

7.2 To note: The Precept 2026/27 submitted to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) following full Council January resolution confirming and approving the budget

Members noted the Precept request for 2026-27 for £849,885. This was as approved by Council - presented to and supported at its December meeting, published on the website in December with the draft budget, formally resolved at its meeting 12 January 2026. The precept request was submitted to Sevenoaks District Council.

Calculation for Precept request 2026-27

For 2026/27 Precept request	Services	to balance Precept
Highways	50704.49	50704.49
Planning & Economic Development	33377.28	33377.28
Recreation & Tourism	483459.78	400158.41
Other	397514.82	365614.82
total budget	*965056.37*	

Precept total	**849855.00**	**849855.00**
Other income	*115201.37*	
Taxbase 2025/26	**3996.77**	
Band D	**212.64**	849855.00

Members had no question.

7.3 End-of-year 2025-26 forecast

The forecasted year-end view reflects decisions from Council December meeting including releasing £5,000 Elections to release in to General Reserves. The reserves summary reflects previous decisions from Forward Planning Steering Group and Council, as well as reserves movements during the year and expected.

7.3.1 To review the consolidated budget comparison report and predicted year-end (31 March 2026)

Members received the forecast for year-end, which indicated a surplus of £47,486. It was noted that the approved budgeted had allowed a surplus of £23,753 to be allocated to Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for Strategic Plan projects £10,000; and Building Maintenance £13,753. The remaining surplus of £23,733 does not allow for potential transfer of funds to EMR in respect of ongoing projects, which had been provided for within the budget but were not yet complete.

Members had no comments or questions.

7.3.2 To receive the full Council reserves: General, Earmarked and CIL funds

A summary spreadsheet of the expected year-end movement was presented to members. This did not include any uncompleted but budgeted projects that may be carried over. A full report would be presented with the year-end papers, presented to full Council May meeting.

Forecasted year-end position

- EMR £510,977 (down £21,461)
- GR £345,816 (up £16,714)
- Council total £856,793 (net difference -£4,747)
- CIL total £409,824 (+£237,619)
- Total net assets £1,266.617 (+£233,872)

Members had no questions.

8 Governance

8.1 Internal Auditor: to note the appointment of Mike Platten, April Skies Accounting.

Members noted (under the Terms of Reference referred matters, Internal Auditor),the Town Clerk had reported to the December Council meeting, the internal auditor, Keith Robertson had advised that he was retiring and would not be available for end-of-year audit. Council had received three quotes, and resolved the appointment of Mike Platten, April Skies Accounting. Members had no questions.

8.2 Investment Policy: To approve and recommend adopting the draft policy

The internal auditor had previously recommended that Councill should have a separate Investments Policy. A Town Council has a duty to manage public funds prudently, transparently, and in a way that safeguards taxpayers' money. An Investment Policy provides the framework that ensures any surplus funds are invested securely, with an appropriate balance of risk, liquidity, and return. It helps to provide public confidence and aligns with best-practice expectations from auditors and sector bodies. Members viewed the draft policy, confirming it supported effective financial planning by making clear how reserves and surplus cash would be handled to maximise value for the community while keeping funds accessible when needed.

Resolved: to recommend to Council to adopt the Investment Policy.

8.3 Information Governance and Data Protection Framework – Overview

Members noted the Town Clerk had undertaken a comprehensive review of the Council's data protection and information governance arrangements. This work had been carried out to ensure continued compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and in preparation for the introduction of Assertion 10 within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

The review has focused on ensuring that the Council's documentation was legally up to date and aligned with current legislation and ICO guidance, and that it reflected Council's current operational practices, including digital and cloud-based systems.

Resolved: to recommend to Council to adopt the Governance and Data Protection Framework Policy.

8.3.1 Privacy Notices – Review and Update

The Council's existing Privacy Statement was dated 2019, and whilst it covered the rights, purposes, sharing, retention, and complaints, it used pre UK GDPR language, did not fully align with what Council does now digitally, and was a long read.

The review was undertaken to ensure that the Council's privacy information:

- Remains compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Accurately reflects the Council's current operational practices, including digital systems and service delivery.
- Is clear, accessible, and transparent for different audiences.

As part of this review, the Privacy Statement had been refreshed and restructured into a set of separate but related Privacy Notices, covering:

- General Privacy Notice (members of the public and service users)
- Website and Digital Privacy Notice
- Staff Privacy Notice
- Councillor Privacy Notice

Separating the notices allows the Council to provide clearer and more relevant information to each audience, particularly where different types of personal data and lawful bases apply (for example, staff employment data or councillor casework). For governance and approval purposes, the notices are presented together as one policy document, forming a coherent suite that can be adopted by Council.

Resolved: to recommend to Council to adopt the updated Privacy Notices.

8.3.2 Retention and Disposal Policy – Review and Update

The Council's Retention and Disposal Policy and Appendix A (Retention Schedule) had been reviewed. Essentially, it was fine, but the new draft modernises legislative references, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and strengthens governance around the secure retention and disposal of records, while retaining the overall structure and intent of the existing policy.

Resolved: to recommend to Council to adopt the updated Retention and Disposal Policy.

8.3.3 Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme – Review and Update

The Council's Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy and Publication Scheme, including the accompanying list of information published, had been reviewed, and whilst overall it was sound, compliant, and recognisably based on the ICO model scheme, which is a good thing, it needed some modernisation and alignment to other documents being reviewed and updated.

Resolved: to recommend to Council to adopt the Information and Publication Scheme Policy and the revised Publication Scheme.

8.3.4 Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure – Introduction and Adoption

A Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure to support compliance and as part of the Council's wider review of its information governance arrangements in preparation for Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) had been prepared. Individuals have a statutory right to request access to their personal data. The purpose of the SAR Procedure was to provide clear, practical guidance on how such requests are recognised, managed, and responded to in a consistent and lawful manner.

Resolved: to recommend to Council to adopt the Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure.

9 Date of next meeting - 16 March 2026

Noted.

20.00 Meeting Closed