Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held in Rickards Hall on 9 March 2026 at 7:30 pm

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Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge *(Vice-Chairman)*, Angela Baker *(Chairwoman)*, Sarah Compton, Michael Gemmell Smith, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Margot McArthur, Stuart McGregor, Stephen Sumner

In attendance: Town Clerk; and four members of the public. There were no representatives from the press.

19:30 Meeting opened.

1 To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted, from Cllrs Cummings, Parker, Read, Stockdale, Streets, and Todd.

2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

None.

3 Public Questions and Statements

19:31 The Chair closed the meeting.

Representation was received from Eden Twinning, re agenda item 11.9. They were preparing to welcome French friends from the Mont Saint Aignan, the French town twinned with Edenbridge. This would include social and cultural activities from 22nd to 25th May 2026. The first evening reception was planned on Friday 22nd May, for about 50 people (Edenbridge residents and French guests). Representatives from Mont Saint Aignan's Mayor's office (including Stephanie Tourillon, 6th Adjointe responsible for children's education), will attend the event and be present during this weekend of cultural and social exchange along with many other families.

Every year when Eden Twinning visit Mont Saint Aignan and enjoy the hospitality and generosity of the Mayor as they welcome the Twinning Association. To mirror this hospitality, Eden Twinning invites Edenbridge Town Councillors to join them in welcoming the French delegation on that first evening of Friday 22nd May. The reception and dinner should start at 19.00hrs with brief welcoming speeches.

19:36 The Chair reopened the meeting.

The Chair proposed to bring forward agenda item 11.9 Eden Twinning following the procedural items, after item 6, as there was a representative in attendance. Members agreed unanimously and ***resolved*** *to bring forwards agenda item 11.9 Eden Twinning - to receive a request for free hire of Rickards Hall. Details are minuted sequentially (item 11.9).*

4 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 12 January 2026 (pages 2023-121/1-6).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 January 2026 and that they be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record, 121/1-6.

5 To receive County and District Councillors reports

5.1 County Councillor

Cllr Mayall reported Kent Councty Council (KCC) had approved its budget at its meeting on 12 January, and that this was a Reform budget and not a carry over from the previous administration. He reference a main concern for residents was the condition of the roads. He had visited Main Road and Lingfield Road, and reported issues to Highways. He also referenced a complaint about the Zebra crossing near the Leisure Centre which both he and Cllr Baker had taken up the issue. He announced that KCC had changed the roads contractor, Ringway would be taking over the maintenance contract form 1 April. Finally, he mentioned he had received correspondence complaining about the number of nail bars, coffee shops, and barbers in the High Street.

19:43 Cllr Mayall left the meeting.

5.2 District Councillors

Cllr Morgan's apologies were received.

Cllr Baker said Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) continued with its preparations for the Reg 19. Cllr Layland mentioned he had provided a talk at the library on the Volunteer Drivers.

19:44 The Chair closed the meeting.
Two residents said that they had attended the meeting following an invitation from the Town Clerk.

Philip Edwards had retired in December having worked as a grave digger in surrounding areas and as the Council's approved grave digger, for over the past 55 years. Throughout his time, he carried out this important and sensitive work with great care, professionalism, and diligence. His reliability and the respectful manner in which he undertook the duties have been greatly appreciated by the Council, groundstaff team, funeral directors, and, most importantly, by the families he supported at some of the most difficult moments in their lives. The Open Spaces Committee had received his notice and had wanted to acknowledge his long-standing service and significant contribution to the community.

Unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding and communication, the Town Clerk was not aware he would be attending the meeting. Sincere apologies were offered for the confusion. The Chair asked for Council's acknowledgement and appreciation for Phil's long commitment, care, and professionalism to be recorded in the minutes.

19:47 Two Members of the public left the meeting; the Chair reopened the meeting.

6 To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings

6.1 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning and Transport Meetings held on 19 January (pages 2023-122/1-5), 9 February 2026 (pages 2023-124/1-2) and 23 February 2026 (pages 2023-126/1-4).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 19 January (pages 2023-122/1-5), 9 February 2026 (pages 2023-124/1-2) and 23 February 2026 (pages 2023-126/1-4).

6.2 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 26 January 2026 (pages 2023-123/1-8).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting on 26 January 2026 (pages 2023-123/1-8).

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

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on 17 November 2025 (pages 2023-114/1-6).

6.4 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Community Infrastructure Board Meeting held on 23 February 2026 (pages 2023-127/1-5).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Community Infrastructure (CIL) Board meeting held on 23 February 2026 (pages 2023-127/1-5).

6.5 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on 3 March 2026 (pages 2023-129/1-6).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 3 March 2026 (pages 2023-129/1-6).

7 To receive recommendations from Committees

19:51 Member of the public left the meting (following item 11.9 discussion which had been brought forward).

7.1 Finance and Governance Committee 16 February

Members noted the report in the agenda meeting papers. The Town Clerk had undertaken a comprehensive review of the Council's data protection and information governance arrangements. This work was 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 focused on ensuring that the Council's documentation is legally up to date and aligned with current legislation and ICO guidance, and that it reflects Council's current operational practices, including digital and cloud-based systems. As a result, the the Privacy Notices, some policies and procedures have been refreshed and strengthened so that Council provides a clear framework for the personal data the Council holds, why, what it publishes, and how individual rights requests are handled in practice. The Council's core practices remain sound; however, the documentation now more clearly evidences compliance, transparency, and accountability.

In addition, Committee received and confirmed a new Investments Policy. This is different to the Capital and General Reserve Policy, though it does cover Governance and Managing Risk. A Town Council has a duty to manage public funds prudently, transparently, and in a way that safeguards taxpayers' money.

One question was raised regarding recording of meetings. This is already covered under the Recording and Filming at Meetings Policy (sections 2.4 and 2.5). Meeting recordings are also covered legally in the policies by the UK GDPR (they contain personal data: voices, images, opinions). However, the following additions have been added:

- **Retention Schedule (Appendix A) new entry** - Council Meeting Recordings (audio/video) Audio or visual recordings of Council meetings will be retained and disposed of in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders (currently SO 12(f)). Recordings are destroyed once the minutes have been approved, unless Council resolves otherwise for a specific lawful purpose. (This also aligns with 2.4 above)
- **Data Protection Policy** - under records management, added - Audio or visual recordings of Council meetings will be retained and disposed of in accordance with the Council's Retention and Disposal Policy and Standing Orders.

Finance and Governance Committee confirmed recommendation to Council to adopt the below policies.

7.1.1 Investment Policy - To receive and adopt the draft policy

Resolved: to receive the recommendations and to adopt the Investments Policy.

7.1.2 Privacy Notices - To receive and adopt the draft Privacy Notices - General Privacy Notice; Website and Digital; Staff; and Councillors

Resolved: to receive the recommendations and to adopt the Privacy Notices for:

- **General Privacy Notice**
- **Website and Digital Privacy Notice**
- **Staff Privacy Notice**
- **Councillor Privacy Notice**

7.1.3 Retention and Disposal Policy - To receive and adopt the draft updated policy

Resolved: to receive the recommendations and to adopt the updated Retention and Disposal Policy including Appendix A Retention Documents.

7.1.4 Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme - To receive and adopt the draft updated policy

Resolved: to receive the recommendations and to adopt the updated Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme Policy and the revised Publication Scheme list.

7.1.5 Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure - To receive and adopt the draft procedure

Resolved: to receive the recommendations and to adopt the Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure.

7.2 Personnel Committee 3 March

Members noted Personnel Committee had received and considered a number of personnel matters and made the following resolutions and recommendations to Council as set out below.

In relation to policies, the Staff Handbook sets out the Council's key employment procedures, rules and policies, supporting an efficient, safe and professional working environment. It is not intended to be an exhaustive statement of all policies, and the Council may adopt additional policies as required to ensure compliance and operational clarity. A copy of the Staff Handbook is available on the Council's website.

7.2.1 Budget 2025-26 - Staffing earmarked reserve

Council considered the recommendation to maintain previous resolutions to increase the Staffing Earmarked Reserve from £37,000 to £45,000. Committee had reviewed the updated staffing budget forecast for 2025–26. The revised forecast reflected adjustments since the November forecast which included the medical insurance premium increase for 2025–26 which had not been included within the original budget, and other staffing cost updates. As the staffing costs surplus was lower than predicted to achieve this, an estimated £1,193 was required from I&E overall year-end surplus to make-up the difference with staffing surplus. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the recommendation to maintain the resolution to increase to Staffing Earmarked Reserve to bring it to £45,000, utilising the surplus funds to complete the transfer.

7.2.2 Medical Insurance Renewal 2026–27

Committee had received the 2026–27 medical insurance renewal, and supported renewal of the scheme, noting the financial implications and the continued inclusion of the benefit within employee contractual terms. Members also suggested Committee should review the eligibility criteria for the scheme at a future meeting. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the Council's commitment to the private medical insurance scheme; and approved the 2026–27 annual premium of £31,036.32.

7.2.3 Annual Leave - year-end postion

Members noted Committee had reviewed the year-end annual leave position for staff and considered the treatment of any leave remaining at the end of the financial year, and recommended that, where annual leave cannot reasonably be taken before 31 March, payment in lieu may be made. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to make a payment for remaining annual leave as of 31 March 2026, and for the Town Clerk, payment may be made for up to three weeks' untaken annual leave, if it is not possible for the leave to be taken before the end of the financial year.

7.2.4 Paternity Leave Policy

Committee had reviewed the Council's current paternity leave provision and recommended to Council that the policy be amended from two weeks, to provide four weeks' paternity leave at 100% of normal pay. The Committee also agreed that officers undertake a broader review of family leave provisions, including compassionate leave, to ensure they remain appropriate and competitive. A report would be brought forward in due course.

Members,

Resolved: the amendment to the Staff Handbook Paternity Leave policy to provide four weeks' paternity leave at full pay.

7.2.5 Sexual Harassment policy

While the Council's Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policy already addressed harassment generally, recent legislative developments have strengthened employers' proactive duty to prevent sexual harassment. Members unanimously,

Resolved: the recommendations to approve and adopt the Sexual Harassment Policy, for incorporation into the Council's Personnel Policies.

7.2.6 Menopause Policy - reconfirm policy

Members noted it already had a Menopause Policy, as set out in Section 6.2 of the Staff Handbook, and that Committee recommended as good practice and governance to periodically review policies. Council confirmed its commitment to supporting employee wellbeing, and unanimously,

Resolved: to receive the recommendation reconfirming its Menopause Policy (section 6.2 of Staff Handbook).

7.2.7 Training and Development Policy

Section 7 of the Staff Handbook already included training, the proposed policy expands upon this to reflect the Council's current practices, including induction training, annual appraisals, use of an E-Learning platform, sector training through KALC, NALC and SLCC, and support for work-related qualifications. It also clarifies approval arrangements and time off in lieu for training undertaken outside normal working hours. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the Training and Development Policy.

7.2.8 Community Warden - extend fixed term contract

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the offer the Community Warden a further six months extension to the fixed term contract for 11–15 hours per week.

7.2.9 Community Warden Role – review of hours and future provision

Committee recommended that a review be undertaken of the Community Warden role and the previously established 22-hour provision. The review would consider the structure of the role, the allocation of hours, and the wider delivery of Community Warden functions, including potential office support arrangements.

Members received and noted the recommendation.

7.2.10 Head Groundsman & Buildings Manager – proposed title change

Committee had reviewed the current job title of Head Groundsman & Buildings Manager and recommended that the post be retitled Facilities Manager, to reflect the breadth of operational and buildings management responsibilities. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to change the Head Groundsman & Buildings Manger job title to Facilities Manager.

7.2.11 Confirmation of annual pay increments

Following the staff appraisals, and as per the contracts, staff are all eligible for their annual pay increment: "Subject to satisfactory performance which will be linked to the staff appraisal, you will progress through the range by annual increments until you reach the maximum salary in the range. NB: 'Satisfactory performance' will include continuous development by means of

gaining additional/improved abilities and skills through training, experience, achieving target or other means". These have been allowed for in the budget 2026-27. Committee recommends Council to confirm the staff annual pay increments in line with contracts and NJS pay scales. Members unanimously,

Resolved: the staff annual pay increments inline with policy and contracts, for 1 April.

7.2.12 Town Clerk – LC Level Progression

Committee and Council noted the scope, responsibility and complexity of the role and agreed that the post aligns with the LC4 range under the NJC/SLCC framework. Members unanimously,

Resolved: progression of the Town Clerk's post from LC3 (Scale 42–45) to the LC4 range (Scale 46–49), following completion of the PIALC qualification (point 45); then annual increment starting at scale point 46.

8 To receive reports and any recommendations from working groups; delegated reports; clerk's and officers' reports

8.1 Clerk's report

The Town Clerk's report was received. Of note,

Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) meeting: Council officers and councillors were to to meet with KCC Highways Officer to discuss the current HIP and changes for the coming year. The updated HIP would be presented to the Planning and Transportation Committee for approval.

Market Archway: This was installed in February and had received a number of positive comments. Once the signage was up to advise the access area will be used for the Markets on Thursday and letters sent to both neighbours, we will look to utilise the bollards on Wednesdays to prevent parking ready for the Thursday market.

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

Principles of Internal Auditing Local Councils (PIALC): The Town Clerk started this is February, and had completed early March.

8.1.1 Communications Officer's report

Members received and noted the extensive Communications Officer's report . Of note,

New Website: Launched the Council's new website in September, integrating the Council Papers software. Reviewed and updated the Council's Privacy Statement and created an Accessibility Statement, strengthening transparency and compliance.

Local Plan: Helped to promote SDC's Regulation 18 consultation in the autumn and encouraged residents to participate. Website, social media, newsletter spread, posters, banner on railings. Produced a 4pp A4 leaflet to promote the consultation, which was delivered direct to households. This also gave details of the Town Council's drop-in sessions.

Press releases: Sent press releases to various media such as The County Chronicle, and industry publications from KALC, SLCC, NABMA and Clerks & Councils magazine.

Edenbridge magazine Newsletter (bi-monthly): Produced double-page spreads to communicate the Council's activities, news and events.

Social media: Generated regular content such as posts, reels, stories, events and cover photos to communicate Council activity and matters of interest. Shared partner content and information relevant to Edenbridge residents.

Annual Town Meeting: Promoting the upcoming ATM and helping to put together the presentation for the evening.

Budget/Council Tax communications: Communicated the Council's budget and precept via various channels. This included an infographic to highlight key information and make it easier for

readers to digest.

9 Draft Local Plan - Update Since Last Council Meeting

Members noted the update as per the meeting papers: Following submission of the Town Council's detailed response to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) on the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18, Phase 3) consultation in December 2025, SDC had confirmed that 5,103 representations were received across the District.

Of these, 721 responses related to Edenbridge, representing the highest level of response from any settlement in the District. By comparison, Kemsing recorded 507 responses and Sevenoaks Town 503. This reflected the significant engagement of Edenbridge residents, alongside the awareness-raising undertaken by the Town Council, NEDRA and community groups.

Meeting with SDC Planning Policy Officers: In February, representatives of the Town Council met with officers from SDC's Planning Policy Team. The meeting was attended by the Town Council's Planning Consultant, Cllrs Aldridge, Baker and Layland, and the Town Clerk. The purpose of the meeting was to raise Edenbridge-specific concerns prior to preparation of the Regulation 19 (Publication) version of the Local Plan.

The Town Council emphasised:

- That proportionately, Edenbridge's proposed allocation is high relative to other settlements in the District.
- That Edenbridge is less suitable for strategic growth than Sevenoaks and Swanley.
- The importance of infrastructure provision aligning with any development scale.

The discussion was described as constructive and informative. Officers acknowledged the concerns raised in relation to the scale of development proposed for Edenbridge and confirmed that all representations were being reviewed as part of the preparation of the Regulation 19 Plan. It was also noted that it was not uncommon, following a Regulation 18 consultation, for some sites not to progress to the Regulation 19 stage. However, no assurances were given regarding potential changes to site allocations or overall housing numbers at this stage.

Housing Numbers and Options: Under Regulation 18, two growth options were presented:

- Option 1: 16,321 dwellings (shortfall of 854 dwellings against requirement)
- Option 2: (including Pedham Place): 18,900 dwellings

If Option 2 were to proceed into Regulation 19, this would result in a surplus above the identified housing requirement. As the Local Plan was not required to provide a surplus, in theory this could allow scope to reduce or remove less suitable allocations elsewhere in the District, potentially including sites in Edenbridge.

However, uncertainties remain, including:

- The acceptability of development at Pedham Place (within the National Landscape).
- Whether it can be delivered in full within the plan period.
- SDC will need to resolve these matters before finalising the Regulation 19 Plan.

The Town Council suggested that, should a surplus remain in the overall housing supply, consideration should be given to reducing allocations in settlements where constraints are more significant, including Edenbridge.

Site Densities – Policy H7: Discussion also included density assumptions within allocation sites. Policy H7 sets out minimum density expectations. Some proposed allocations across the District (not limited to Edenbridge) appear to fall below the policy's stated density approach.

SDC confirmed it was reviewing all allocation figures to ensure internal consistency with Policy H7. If density assumptions increased on certain sites, this may create flexibility to reduce or remove other less suitable allocations elsewhere in the District.

Infrastructure and Transport: SDC advised that:

- Further transport modelling was being undertaken in conjunction with Kent County Council Highways.

- Mitigation measures at identified junction hotspots will accompany sites progressing into Regulation 19.
- The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) had been further developed.

In relation to education provision, KCC had indicated that development at the scale proposed in Edenbridge would likely require primary school expansion or provision of a new primary school; and new secondary school. Indicative costs are in excess of £50m–£60m depending on form entry. No confirmation was provided at this stage regarding how or when such infrastructure would be secured or delivered.

SDC Timetable: SDC confirmed it intended to maintain its delivery timetable:

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

SDC was mindful of local government reorganisation and the move toward unitary structures and indicated its intention to progress the Plan under the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but noting upcoming NPPF policy changes.

SDC Development & Infrastructure Advisory Committee – 5 March: The agenda includes a Local Plan Consultation Update, with the following reports published:

- Response Analysis (Policies)
- Response Analysis (Sites)
- Response Analysis (Evidence Base)

The summary analysis indicates that, across the 17 sites consulted upon under Regulation 18, the majority of public responses objected to development, with limited exceptions, and overall support for the Leatermarket site.

Next Steps for the Town Council

- Review published consultation responses, including developer representations.
- Meet with the Planning Consultant to assess implications.
- Prepare for formal representations at Regulation 19 stage.
- Consider engagement of Planning Consultation for the at Hearing/Examination in Public (2027), where site allocations and overall housing numbers will be scrutinised.

At Examination, there will be competing representations from community groups, land promoters and developers. The Inspector’s primary focus will be on whether the Plan meets the District’s housing requirement and is legally compliant and sound.

Members noted that its consultant, Alan Dyer, had indicated at the last meeting that he would be willing to continue assisting the Council with its Regulations 19 responses, and preparations for the Hearing. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to continue with the planning consultant Alan Dyer for assisting with the Regulation 19 responses, and preparations for the Hearing.

Members noted the invoice for Alan Dyer's services for 2025-26, and unanimously,

Resolved: the payment for his services and advice, and the invoice for £1,443.63.

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

10.1 Internal Auditor - to receive interim report (February)

Following Council's resolution in January to appoint Mike Platten as the Council's new Internal Auditor, the Town Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk had met with him last month. He carried out a comprehensive review of the finances and procedures. Overall it was a good audit with no issues. Members noted the full report, as published on the website and recommendations which

included:

- Council should establish a panel of at least 4 signatories on each bank account (currently only 2) - The annual meeting of the Town Council does confirm signatories (approved 4 for main accounts with 3 for the CCLA). New signatories paperwork requires completion.
- Buildings valuations should be checked annually (currently 3-yearly valuations inline with insurance 3-yearly term agreement).
- For 25-26, an additional assertion has been added to the Annual Governance Statement, this covers digital and data compliance. The Council is largely compliant with the requirements of the Practitioners' Guide in this area. For clarity, it is recommended that the Council considers compliance with paragraphs 1.47 to 1.54 on page 14 of the Practitioners' Guide at a meeting before the end of the financial year. See agenda item 11.4.
- Petty cash count should be countersigned by the Clerk at least annually, although I understand the Council is considering closing the petty cash account. This has since been bank and there is no longer any petty cash.
- 6-years of AGARs to be published on the website. This is now complete.

Members were satisfied, and noted the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk/RFO were following the advise.

10.2 Annual Town Meeting - 30 March 2026

Members noted the agenda for the Annual Town Meeting, 30 March, and would follow a similar format to previous years. Members made some suggested changes to the agenda, and noted it would be published mid March, providing a longer period than the required seven days notice.

10.3 EDGE IT Systems -software contract renewal and the annual expenditure of £2,099.55

Members received the report in the meeting papers. The Council currently used the AdvantEDGE software suite provided by EDGE IT Systems for a number of operational functions including: Finance, Epitaph (cemetery records), Asset Manager, and Facilities (hall bookings). The 5-year agreement was up for review. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to continue with EDGE IT Systems for its Finance, Epitaph (cemetery records), Asset Manager, and Facilities (hall bookings), and the annual cost under the proposed 5-year contract of £2,099.55 per annum (net), noting this provided the greatest discount. The Town Clerk was authorised to sign the new agreement.

10.4 NABMA Subscription 2026/27 - expenditure of £434

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to continue with membership of NABMA, and to take advantage of the offer to renew by 31 March, with the expenditure of £434.

11 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

11.1 Forge Musical Theatre - complaint received

Members received paperwork relating to a formal complaint from a representative of the Forge Musical Theatre. The complaint letter, dated 21January, related to the handling of three items of post addressed to the Forge Musical Theatre and received at the Council office.

In accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure, the Town Clerk had investigated the matter and provided a written response (2 February) to the complainant setting out the dates on which the correspondence was received and the steps taken by the Council to notify Forge Musical Theatre. No further response or request to progress the complaint to the next stage of the procedure had been received.

Members were satisfied with the investigation.

11.2 Policies – Review and Adoption

As part of the Council's commitment to maintaining strong governance, internal controls and regulatory compliance, Council policies are reviewed periodically and, where necessary, updated or newly introduced to reflect updates to strengthen existing procedures and ensure alignment with current legislation, guidance and best practice. The below policies had not been been considered by the Governance Committee, as the revisions were primarily updates and enhancements to existing frameworks rather than substantive changes to policy direction.

11.2.1 Data Protection Policy

As part of a recent comprehensive review of the Council's existing Information and Data Protection Policy (2018) had been reviewed. That document was outdated and did not fully reflect current legislation, operational practice, or the strengthened governance framework recently developed. A new Data Protection Policy was therefore drafted to:

- Set out the Council's overall approach to compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for councillors and officers.
- Outline how the Council ensures lawful processing, data security, breach management, and respect for individual rights.
- Provide an overarching governance statement linking together the Council's Privacy Notices, Retention and Disposal Policy, SAR Procedure, and Freedom of Information arrangements.

This Policy does not duplicate the detail contained within other individual documents but instead provides the high-level framework demonstrating accountability and compliance, and completes the Council's refreshed data protection and information governance suite and ensures that documentation accurately reflects current legal requirements and Council practice. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the Data Protection Policy (replacing the previous Information and Data Protection Policy).

11.2.2 Strategic Risk Management Policy

Members received the Strategic Risk Management Policy. While the Council currently undertakes annual Governance Risk Assessments across its key areas of responsibility, the Practitioners' Guide (SAPPP) and recognised good governance principles recommend that councils also adopt a clear overarching policy setting out their approach to strategic risk management. The proposed policy formalises existing practice, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and strengthens the Council's governance framework by embedding risk consideration within decision-making processes. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the Strategic Risk Management Policy.

11.2.3 Gifts and Hospitality Protocol

Members noted the existing protocol was adopted in 2011. Since that time there have been developments in governance expectations, transparency requirements and best practice guidance for local councils, particularly in relation to:

- The Bribery Act 2010
- The Localism Act 2011
- Enhanced transparency and public accountability standards
- Alignment with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The revised policy provides clearer definitions, introduces a formal register process, clarifies reporting thresholds, and strengthens links to procurement integrity and conflict of interest requirements. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

This policy, with declaration will be published on the website, and the Town Clerk will maintain and publish the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

11.2.4 Grants Policy including validation and evaluation criteria

The Town Council allocates a grants budget annually to support local organisations and projects that benefit residents of the parish. The existing Grants Policy had not been formally reviewed for several years. Whilst it has remained operationally sound, it was considered timely to undertake a review to ensure the document reflects current governance practice, legislation and Council procedures.

The review has included:

- The Grants Policy
- The Grants Application Form (Appendix A)
- Introduction of an internal Validation Checklist (for officer use)
- Updated Evaluation Form for grant recipients

The purpose of the review has been to strengthen clarity, consistency and transparency without materially altering the Council's established approach to awarding grants. The revised documentation, improves structure, clarity and presentation, updates references to current legislation, including UK GDPR and the Equality Act 2010, clarifies eligibility criteria and permitted expenditure.

The fundamental principles of the Council's grants scheme remain unchanged, an annual grants budget is set by Full Council; there remains a published application window, consideration by the Grants Committee, awards made for the benefit of Edenbridge residents, and post-award monitoring and evaluation. No scoring system has been introduced; the Committee retains discretion to determine awards within the approved grants budget. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt revised Grants Policy.

11.3 Governance Annual Risk Assessment Review - to receive and confirm

Each year, two members from the Finance and Governance Committee are asked to review the Council's Governance Risk Assessment. Cllrs Baker and Compton together with the Town Clerk, had reviewed the risk assessments (RA) on 2 March for:

- Council Governance
- Financial
- Open Spaces
- Buildings
- Personnel

There were no issues, and some areas had had improvements in controls which were noted on the RAs. Copies are published on the Council's website, link below.

Resolved: members received and confirmed the annual Governance Risk Assessments for Council, Finance, Open Spaces, Buildings, and Personnel.

11.4 Assertion 10 - Review of Compliance with Data Protection Legislation

Members noted the new Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), which requires the Council to confirm that it has "complied with the requirements of data protection legislation."

During the current year, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of its information governance framework. As a result, the Council has:

- Adopted updated Privacy Notices, ensuring transparency and clarity of lawful bases for processing;
- Reviewed and refreshed its Retention and Disposal Policy, including a detailed Retention Schedule;
- Adopted a Data Protection Policy providing overarching governance and accountability;

- Implemented a Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure to ensure individual rights are upheld within statutory timescales;
- Updated its Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme arrangements;
- Reviewed arrangements for meeting recordings and their disposal in accordance with Standing Orders;
- Confirmed appropriate technical and organisational security measures are in place, including secure systems and controlled access;
- Begun reviewing and updating written agreements with service providers where data processing occurs on the Council's behalf.

The Council recognises and upholds the eight individual rights under UK GDPR and has procedures in place to manage data breaches, including reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office where required.

The Council has also adopted updated Digital IT and Cyber Security and Digital Communications and Social Media policies (March 2025), and compliance with Practitioners' Guide (SAPPP 1.47–1.54).

In accordance with the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioners' Guide, the members confirmed Council has the appropriate policies and procedures in place, and,

Resolved: they are satisfied that appropriate policies, procedures, and operational controls are in place and that the Council can give a positive response to Assertion 10 for the purposes of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

- **It operates a generic email account hosted on an authority-owned domain (.gov.uk).**
- **Its website complies with applicable legal requirements and accessibility standards, including Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.**
- **It processes personal data in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.**
- **It recognises its role as a data controller and, where applicable, engages data processors under appropriate written agreements.**
- **It maintains an IT and Cyber Security Policy governing the secure use of authority-owned and personal equipment for Council business.**

11.5 Open Spaces: Path Installation – Mowshurst car park to Millennium Wood and the expenditure of up to £3,000

The next Open Spaces Committee was not until April, and the grounds team were keen to proceed with the project to create a new path using funds from the current budget.

Background: Millennium Wood was recently awarded a Silver Gilt award in the South & South East in Bloom Scheme and won the category "Small Conservation Area of the Year." Judges commended the site but recommended improvements to pathways within the wood and better access from Mowshurst car park to further enhance the site and support future award submissions.

The site experiences significant wet conditions during the winter months, which impacts accessibility. The Facilities Manager (Head Groundsman) had identified that the most feasible solution was the installation of a new path from the car park to the entrance of Millennium Wood. Proposal was to create a 70m x 2m path from Mowhurst car park to the entrance of Millennium Wood, comprising of timber edging, beadon grit surface (similar to that used at The Recreation Ground), associated plant hire and materials. The total cost was estimated at up to £3,000, inclusive of materials and plant hire. The costing also included surplus materials to allow for improvements to internal pathways within Millennium Wood, and enhance the existing play park access path at The Recreation Ground.

The Grounds Team, supported by the Open Spaces Officer, have undertaken significant work in recent months to enhance Millennium Wood as a community asset. These accessibility improvements would further support its development as a destination for residents of all ages.

Financial Implications: The Open Spaces budget was forecast to underspend by approximately

£9,000–£10,000. In addition there was an earmarked reserve movement for the Football Grant which will have funded some of the pitch maintenance and improvements.

Members unanimously,

Resolved: the proposed pathway works to create a 70m x 2m path from Mowshurst car park to Millennium Wood at a cost of up to £3,000; and the additional path repairs. This would be funded from the forecast underspend within the Open Spaces and/or External Services budgets in the current financial year.

11.6 Review of Speedwatch

Members received the report in the meeting papers to consider following correspondence with Kent Police and the Council's role facilitating Speedwatch:

Background: Edenbridge Town Council has supported the Community Speedwatch initiative for a number of years. The scheme aligns with the Council's community safety objectives and complements the Community Warden role.

Approximately five to six years ago, following difficulties relating to volunteer conduct and the impact on other volunteers and the Community Warden, Members reviewed the operational arrangements. At that time, Council resolved that Speedwatch sessions facilitated by the Town Council should require the presence of three people, including either the Community Warden or a councillor, in order to:

- Ensure appropriate oversight and support for volunteers and staff
- Maintain a safe and non-contentious operating environment
- Provide resilience should any incidents arise during sessions
- Support accurate recording of vehicle data

Current Position: Kent Police have requested that the Council review the requirement for the Community Warden or a councillor to be present at each session. Their position is that:

- Speedwatch is a Kent Police scheme operating under Kent Police risk assessments and insurance.
- No other scheme in the county operates with a requirement for councillor or staff attendance.
- Incidents of members of the public stopping or challenging volunteers can occur regardless of who is present (including when a police officer attends).
- If sessions are described as Town Council sessions or subject to additional Council conditions, this may affect the application of Kent Police insurance cover.
- SID/UDD devices are commonly recorded on insurance asset registers nationally without necessarily requiring councillor presence at sessions (Kent Police have not specified whether this refers to council or police asset registers).

Kent Police have asked that the Council formally confirm whether it wishes to maintain or remove its current requirement.

Insurance and Governance Considerations:

- The Unipar Dual Display device is currently recorded on the Council's asset register for insurance purposes.
- Where the Council is organising or facilitating an activity, the Council's insurance requires a nominated responsible person to be identified. (A query has been submitted to the Council's insurer to clarify, if the Council recruits Speedwatch volunteers, to whom those volunteers are deemed responsible and whose insurance would be expected to provide cover.)
- The Council has a duty of care toward its employees, councillors and volunteers where activities are facilitated under its auspices.

Members were asked to therefore consider whether retaining the current requirement reinforces the Council's role as facilitator/organiser, and whether removing the requirement would clarify that the scheme operates solely under Kent Police governance and insurance. In determining the Council's position, Members considered:

- Does the Council wish to continue to require the presence of the Community Warden or a councillor at each session?
- If so, does this indicate that the Council is co-organising or overseeing sessions, and are Members satisfied with the associated governance and insurance implications?
- Alternatively, does the Council wish to confirm that Speedwatch sessions operate solely as a Kent Police scheme, with the Town Council providing support only (e.g. asset provision and promotion), and no requirement for staff or councillor attendance?
- If the requirement is removed, are Members satisfied that appropriate safeguards remain in place for volunteers and Council staff?

Members discussed at length. Conversations included the value of Speedwatch to Edenbridge, noting sessions do result in drivers being reported on the portal for speeding, how Council feels it does have a duty of care towards it volunteers; and that where the Council is involved in a scheme, it is only right that it ensures the activities are carried out correctly and safely. They also discussed, if the Council was the right body to facilitate Speedwatch, and perhaps it should consider reutilising Council staff resources. After much debate, members concluded that they remain keen to support the Community Speedwatch initiative and to work positively with Kent Police to help ensure the scheme operates successfully in Edenbridge. Members,

Resolved: it did have a duty of care towards volunteers they work with, and the following operational approach for Edenbridge:

- **To maintain the requirement for three people to attend each Speedwatch session.**
- **Initially, sessions will continue to include either the Community Warden or a councillor, until the volunteer group has expanded and volunteers are willing to take on the role of session lead and responsible person, including responsibility for organising sessions and the collection and return of the device.**
- **To undertake a further recruitment campaign, emphasising that volunteers are being sought on behalf of the Kent Police Community Speedwatch scheme.**
- **To request a copy of the Kent Police Speedwatch risk assessment, so that the Council can ensure it has met its duty of care to volunteers and to its Community Warden. As the Council will be advertising for and liaising with volunteers, it is important that we are satisfied volunteers are operating in accordance with the scheme's risk assessment and guidance.**
- **To pilot these arrangements for a period of three months, after which the Council will review the operation of the scheme locally.**

It was also noted that the current speed board (UDD) was gifted to the Town Council by KCC as the previous SDC owned UDD needed recalibrating and was to be returned to SDC.

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

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

This would be a private agreement between Council and the applicant (Kybo) and is not part of s106. The agreement required that the funding is used to support EV charging infrastructure for community use. It does not set a timeframe for expenditure and does not preclude feasibility or investigative work relating to potential installation sites. It was proposed that, upon receipt, the funds are transferred to an Earmarked Reserve for EV Infrastructure until suitable locations and delivery options are identified.

Council had previously considered potential sites for EVCs as part of the consideration for Market Yard car park EVCs. These potential locations would require further investigation, including discussion with the Open Spaces Committee and liaison with Kent Highways, who had undertaken some previous initial investigations. Sites included:

- Recreation Ground Pavilion car park
- Mowshurst
- Blossoms Park

Members discussed and noted that the initial larger application, had considered EVCs to be sited close to the solar farm, but recognised this would have little value for residents had at the time said that they could consider a community benefit agreement. Members were generally pleased to see that this offer, and

Resolved: to accept the the offer of a £40,000 Community Benefit Fund contribution from Kybo Solar Farm Limited to enable additional EV charging infrastructure for Edenbridge, subject to SDC (or KALC) confirming this was not part of s106 agreement, Council is free to accept a non-planning voluntary contribution.

Resolved: Subject to SDC confirmation, to place the funds into an Earmarked Reserve for EV Infrastructure upon receipt.

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

11.8 Edenbridge Town Guide 2026

Background: The Edenbridge Town Guide had been produced for at least 20 years and was a popular and extremely useful local directory for residents. It included contact details for local clubs, groups and organisations, as well as local authorities, housing associations and other key services. Historically, it was produced every two to three years and distributed to residents and businesses across Edenbridge. Production costs were met through advertising sales arranged by the publisher, meaning there was no direct cost to the Council beyond staff costs for editorial input.

Current Position: The publishers of the previous guides have ceased trading. As they were responsible for securing advertising revenue and managing production, the Council now needed to consider alternative arrangements for producing an updated guide.

Members were asked to consider if they want to continue with the Town Guide, if there was community value, and if it was to continue in what format.

The Communications Officer and Tourism Officer haddiscussed alternative approaches, including:

- Producing a simplified booklet with fewer pages, containing essential local information only and no advertising; or
- Including limited advertising (e.g. inside front cover and inside/outside back cover) to help offset printing costs.

For context, the 2022 Town Guide comprised 44 pages plus covers. The text content included:

- 5 pages – Clubs and Groups
- 8½ pages – Local Information
- 5 pages – Council information and town history
- This equates to approximately 18½ pages of core content (including 2½ pages of photographs). A revised version could potentially be reduced to approximately 16–18 pages plus cover.

Members discussed, concluding that the Guide was well received by new residents to the town as well as existing, and it also provided a central resource for all local groups, local information, and wider support organisations. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to continue with support the production of the Town Guide for 2026, which would be fully managed inhouse by the communications Officer and Tourism Officer. This included:

- Booklet format - to include advertising sold to contribute towards the cost.
- To include more information on Council facilities, playgrounds and park, and the walks leaflets.
- Distribution - Town-wide to households and businesses.

Resolved: a budget of £5,000 to allow for printing and distribution costs. It was noted this was unbudgeted, thus an overspend in Council (1000s). Officers should also consider grant applications, and contacting the Chamber of Commerce to ask if they would promote advertising to its members.

11.9 Eden Twinning - to receive a request for free hire of Rickards Hall,

19:49 Considered after agenda item 6.

Members were asked to consider wavering the the hiring fees for Rickards hall on Friday 22 May, costs would normally be £113.90 for 5 hours. Noting the letter from Eden Twining and the representation under public questions, Members unanimously,

Resolved: to waver the the hiring fees for Rickards hall on Friday 22 May for the Eden Twinning welcome event for guests from Mont Saint Aignan. Members noted the invitation and would confirm direct if able to attend.

it was noted the event was over the Bank Holiday weekend.

19:51 Member of the public left the meeting.

11.10 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - refund request

Members noted SDC had advised that it is reclaiming £9,648.03 in CIL funding which was previously paid to the Town Council in April 2024. This related to the development at Bella Vita, 25 High Street (20/00335/FUL) and was reported in CIL reporting period 18 (October 2023 – March 2024). Since the CIL payment was received by SDC, the applicant had confirmed that they will not be progressing with the development. As a result, the applicant requested a refund of the CIL payment.

SDC has acknowledged that this situation is not ideal and may cause disruption, particularly where CIL funding has already been allocated to planned projects. They have advised that the amount could be deducted from the Town Council's future CIL payments, either from the April 2026 payment run, or split across the April 2026 and October 2026 payments.

Members,

Resolved: for the amount deducted from future CIL payments (April 2026 or across April and October 2026).

12 Devolution and local government reorganisation

Members noted the update as in the meeting papers:

At the end of November last year Councils across Kent & Medway submitted five different options for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to the Government. The next stage in the process was for Government to consult on the options presented to them before they reach a final decision on which option will be taken forward. That decision was due towards the end of July this year. This consultation closed 26 March where is asked for views on each of the options for Kent & Medway. Alongside Folkestone & Hythe, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells. SDC supported option 3a for three unitary Councils.

CIL payments and impacts of reorganisation: This was reported to the February CIL Board. To summarise, national law continues to protect parish and town councils' entitlement to a neighbourhood share of CIL under the CIL Regulations 2010. The Localism Act 2011 provides the policy foundation for this community benefit. Any risk to CIL income in Sevenoaks arises solely from potential changes to local discretionary policy once a new unitary authority has established its policies and practices across the county. At this stage, it was not yet known the approach the new unitary authority will adopt.

13 Consultations

13.1 **Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - closing date 26 March**

Noted.

14 **Press release**

Speedwatch volunteers.

15 **Date of Next meeting - 11 May - Annual Meeting of the Town Council**

Noted.

21:06 Meeting closed.