Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held in Rickards Hall on 11 May 2026 at 7:30 pm

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

In attendance: Town Clerk. There were no members of the public or press.

19:00 The meeting opened.

1 Election of Chairman for the ensuing year

Cllr Aldridge proposed Cllr Baker to continue as Chairman; Cllr Compton seconded. Members unanimously,

Resolved: Cllr Angela Baker as Chair of the Town Council.

1.1 To receive the Chairman's declaration of office

Received: Cllr Baker signed the Declaration of Office book.

2 Election of the Vice-Chairman

Cllr Baker proposed Cllr Aldridge to continue as Vice Chairman; Cllr Compton seconded. Members unanimously,

Resolved: Cllr Jon Aldridge to continue as Vice Chairman of the Town Council.

2.1 To receive the Vice-Chairman's declaration of office

Received: Cllr Aldridge signed the Declaration of Office book.

3 To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted, from Cllrs Gemmell Smith, Parker, and Read.

4 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

Cllr Aldridge declared a pecuniary interest in item 12.2 council papers.

The Clerk asked if there were any other interests, there were none noted at the time.

5 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 March 2026 (pages 2023-130/1-).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 09 March, and that they be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record, 130/1-17.

6 To adopt the following reports/minutes of committee meetings

6.1 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of of the Finance and Governance Meeting held on 16 February, (pages 125/1-5)

Committee meeting 16 March, should have been approved, but had not been included with the meeting attachments, and so would be presented for adoption at the next Council meeting (July).

6.2 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning and Transport meetings held on 02 March 128/1-3, 23 March and 20 April 135/1-4.

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 02 March (pages 128/1-3), 23 March (pages 2023-126/1-4) and 20 April Planning & Transport (pages 135/1-4).

6.3 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Meeting held on 13 April 2026 (pages 2023-134/1-14).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of Open Spaces Committee meeting held 13 April 134/1-14.

6.4 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Buildings & Leases Committee Meeting held on 27 April 2026 (pages 2023-136/1-8).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of Buildings and Leases Committee meeting held 27 April 136/1-8.

7 To receive recommendations from Committees

7.1 Finance and Governance Committee

7.1.1 To approve revaluations of Council owned buildings, and expenditure of £1,875

The Internal Auditor's report, as reported to Council March meeting, noted buildings valuations should be considered annually, and revalued as a minimum with the insurance agreement renewals i.e. 3-yearly to ensure that insurance valuations. Finance and Governance committee supported this recommendation. Members,

Resolved: to approve revaluations of Council owned buildings, and the expenditure of £1,875.

7.1.2 To confirm the recommendations to move budget funds into earmarked reserves 2026-27

Members noted March Finance Committee was satisfied with the recommendations for reserve movements:

- £23,753 budgeted surplus (buildings and new strategic projects EMR)
- £10,650 budgeted planned increase for EMR for equipment, staffing and playgrounds
- £23,898 budget projects either in progress or to be completed (open spaces and buildings)
- Plus other budgeted planned movemnets

However, the actual year-end movements included an additional £27,647. These were included in the budget for movement, or other resolutions: £8,505 for Pavilion 30-year plan; £5,000 for the Pavilion professional services for the new water boilers and mains water projects; Buildings movement to increase reserve £2,963; Land & Assets £2.500; staffing EMR increase £7,668. Meeting papers included a report on financial performance and reserve movements.

Total movements include budgeted, planned and carryover was £85,947. Members,

Resolved: to confirm the recommended movements of £58,301 plus the other planned movement £27,647, total £85,947.30.

8 To confirm and adopt the following constitution documents:

8.1 Standing Orders

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the amendments section 5, v.to xxii; and to reconfirm the Standing Orders.

8.2 Financial Regulations

Members received the Financial Regulations as reviewed, updated and adopted 28 October 2024, amended section 5 procurement May 2025. Members noted proposed additional amendments to section 13 - Income. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the amendments section 13 - income; and to reconfirm the Financial Regulations.

8.3 Terms of Reference

Resolved: to continue with and adopt the Terms of Reference.

8.4 Code of Conduct Policy

Resolved: to confirm and continue with the Councillors Code of Conduct Policy (renewed July 2025).

9 To review the delegated arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff (as detailed in the Terms of Reference) and appointment of any new committees

The Terms of Reference (TOR) set out the committee membership and delegated responsibilities. This is a working document and may be amended from time to time to reflect operational changes and procedures. It is usually reviewed by the Governance Committee, with any recommended changes referred to Full Council.

Members were asked to review and confirm the current committees, sub-committees, and working groups (items 9.1–9.12) and unanimously,

Resolved: to continue with the existing committees and working groups structure:

- **Committees and CIL Board (items 9.1–9.6)**
- **Sub-Committees and Steering Group (items 9.7–9.9)**
- **Delegated arrangements and procurement procedures (items 9.10–9.11)**
- **Working Groups (item 9.12)**

Members agreed not to propose any additional Committee or Sub-Committee (item 9.13).

9.1 Finance and Governance Committee (10)

Confirmed.

9.2 Planning and Transportation Committee (12)

Confirmed.

9.3 Open Spaces Committee (10)

Confirmed.

9.4 Buildings and Leases Committee (10)

Confirmed.

9.5 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Board (15)

Confirmed.

9.6 Emergency Planning Committee (8)

Confirmed.

9.7 Personnel Committee (7)

Confirmed.

9.8 Charities and Grants (15)

Confirmed.

9.9 Forward Planning Steering Group (15)

Confirmed.

9.10 Delegated powers to the Town Clerk and Officers

Confirmed.

9.11 Delegation for procurement procedures

Confirmed.

9.12 Working Groups

Confirmed:

- Parking and MYCP
- Skate Park / Open Spaces Play and Activities
- Aviation Consultations
- Local Plan
- Events (however, there was only the Remembrance Sunday parade currently planned for 2026)

It was noted the Internal Audit/Governance Risk Assessment Working Group did not routinely meet, with Governance Risk Assessments carried out by nominated Finance and Governance Committee members, and reported to committee and Council. Internal Audit was also overseen by committee and reported to Council. It was noted and **agreed** this Group now sat with Governance Committee responsibilities. This was already covered in the TORs: 3.11 Council's Internal Audit review 3.12 Monitor compliance with Health and Safety and Risk Assessment and make recommendations to full Council for improvements.

9.13 To consider any additional committees/sub-committees

No additional committees or sub-committees were proposed.

10 To appoint/confirm members for each committee

Members were appointed to Committees at the start of the current Council term (2023). Membership may change during the term, for example where a councillor resigns or new councillors are appointed.

10.1 Finance and Governance Committee (10)

Resolved: continuation of current membership: Cllrs Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, Layland, McGregor, Read, Stockdale, Sumner, and Todd.

10.2 Planning and Transportation Committee (12)

Resolved: continuation of current membership: Cllrs Aldridge (SW), Baker (NE), Gemmell Smith (SW), Layland (NE), McArthur (SW), McGregor (NE), Parker (NE), Read (NE), Stockdale (SW), Streets (SW), Todd (NE). One vacancy remained.

10.3 Open Spaces Committee (10)

Resolved: continuation of current membership: Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, Layland, McGregor, Stockdale, Streets, and Sumner.

10.4 Buildings and Leases Committee (10)

Resolved: continuation of current membership: Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McGregor, Read, Streets, Stockdale, Sumner, Todd. Cllr Jacques was appointed.

10.5 Emergency Planning Committee (8)

Resolved: continuation of current membership: Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Jacques, McArthur, McGregor, Streets.

10.6 Personnel Committee (7)

Resolved: continuation of current membership: Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McArthur, McGregor, Stockdale, Todd.

10.7 If there are any new committees to appoint members (item 8.13)

No new committees had been proposed.

11 To appoint/confirm the members of the working groups

Resolved: continuation of current membership for the following Working Groups:

- Parking and MYCP - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Layland, McGregor, Read.
- Skate Park / Open Spaces Play and Activities - Aldridge, baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McArthur, Sumner.
- Aviation Consultations - Aldridge, Baker, Jacques, McArthur.
- Local Plan - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McGregor, Parker, Read, Streets, Stockdale, Todd.
- Annual Events - Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, Streets, Todd.

12 To review the arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies, and businesses

12.1 Arrangements carried out by Edenbridge Town Council on behalf of:

Resolved: to confirm the chargeable arrangements and services carried out by the Town Council on behalf of organisations in 12.1.1 to 12.1.4?

12.1.1 Citizens Advice Bureau: Payroll (£438 to cover software costs)

Confirmed.

12.1.2 Great Stone Bridge Trust: Grass cutting and Water Meadow management services (various works includes cutting, vegetation clearance etc)

Confirmed.

12.1.3 Sevenoaks District Council: Ground maintenance services, Town Field, playground inspection, weed spraying on residential estate (£2,044)

Confirmed.

12.1.4 War Graves Commission: Maintenance of War Graves (£300)

Confirmed.

12.2 Professional services engaged

Resolved: to confirm the continuation with the current professional service providers engaged by the Council 12.2.1 to 12.2.16.

- The Agreement with EDGE IT, item 12.2.5 was reconsidered.
- Others included under: 12.3 includes AI apps. 12.4 HR and H&S service provider. Item 17 covered Insurance provider.

12.2.1 Business Stream - water (£1,000*)

Confirmed.

12.2.2 **Canon UK (photocopier £424, plus copying costs est. £320)**

Confirmed.

12.2.3 **Canva (£129.90)**

Confirmed.

12.2.4 **Council Meeting Papers (£1,000 est. plus Cloud storage fees)**

Confirmed.

12.2.5 **EDGE IT software packages: Finance (£1,330), Assets register (£320), Epitaph (£54.60), Rickards Hall hire (£296), additional costs (£19.40). To also amend the new Agreement from 5-years to 3-years.**

The Council resolved in March 2026 to enter into a five-year agreement with EDGE. Since then, concerns have been identified regarding data compliance arrangements, the requirement for an updated Data Controller Agreement, and operational issues experienced during the financial year-end process. Officers would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further with EDGE and assess whether the issues can be satisfactorily resolved.

Contract options available are:

- Five-year agreement: £2,519.46 per annum
- Three-year agreement: £2,795.28 per annum
- One-year agreement: £4,194.18 per annum

Members noted that concerns included both the contractual arrangements and the software platform, which was based on Access 2019 and considered dated compared with alternative systems. To provide greater flexibility while these matters are reviewed, Members agreed,

Resolved: to amend the agreement term from five years to three years, noting that the annual cost will increase from £2,519.46 to £2,795.28, an increase of £275.82 per annum.

12.2.6 **Fusion4/Besure/Continental (facilities security management, key holding and fire alarms - £3,594; with approx. £1,176 recharged to EVM; plus call out costs)**

Confirmed.

12.2.7 **Mazars (external auditor) (£1,680*)**

Confirmed.

12.2.8 **Mike Platten (internal auditor) (£975* plus travel)**

Confirmed.

12.2.9 **NPower – Street Lighting Energy (£18,046*)**

Confirmed.

12.2.10 **PS Technology - AdyenNV (IT support and Licences) (£13,037* variable)**

Confirmed.

Members noted it will be reviewing the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) with PS Technology, including consideration of moving to an enhanced managed service package.

12.2.11 **SAGE payroll (£876) & P11 (£384*) software services (Payroll costs are shared, and recharged to CAB)**

Confirmed.

12.2.12 Streetlights (Maintenance contract) £7,684*)

Confirmed.

12.2.13 Summer Fun Days – Play Place (£2,538*)

Confirmed.

12.2.14 Total Gas (utilities energy all buildings - current contract up to 2027 - £9,289.55*)

Confirmed.

12.2.15 Vatix – Lone Working Alarms (£684*)

Confirmed.

12.2.16 Wilkin Chapman Solicitors (legal advice of FOIs, contracts and agreements and other matters) (varies on use)

Confirmed.

12.3 AI applications

12.3.1 ChatGPT Business licence 3-users ($720 per year)

Confirmed.

Members noted the report in the meeting papers: Using a ChatGPT Business licence helped to ensure legal compliance and secure data management, as information is retained within the organisation's own secure workspace and is not shared across the wider public platform. It can also support improved efficiency, productivity, and creativity across Council operations.

In addition, the Council was beginning to make use of Microsoft Copilot, included within the existing Microsoft licensing arrangements. Copilot offers benefits such as integration with Microsoft Office applications, assisting with drafting documents, summarising meetings and emails, and improving day-to-day productivity. However, retaining ChatGPT continues to provide additional benefits, including broader functionality, enhanced creativity, more flexible drafting support, and access to specialist tools and features. It should also be noted that Microsoft Copilot itself utilises OpenAI technology, including ChatGPT, as part of its underlying AI capability.

12.3.2 Otter - 3 user licence ($299.97)

Confirmed.

Otter.ai Business licence provides secure storage and management of meeting recordings and transcripts within the organisation's designated workspace, supporting good governance and data handling practices.

12.3.3 Gpeto AI software - Planning Tool: To confirm continuation following Trial Period

Members considered a report on the Council's nine-month pilot of Gpeto Planning AI software. It was noted that the platform had assisted officers and councillors in reviewing planning applications, improving efficiency, consistency, and understanding of planning matters. The discounted pilot subscription had now ended, and the annual cost to continue the service would be £1,200.

Members supported the proposal and recognised the software's value as both a planning assessment and training tool for officers and councillors.

Resolved: to continue the Council's subscription to Gpeto Planning AI software at a cost of £1,200 per annum, including access for up to 12 view-only users, and to include the subscription within the Council's approved annual software and service subscriptions.

12.4 HR and H&S consultancy services provision and agreement - to confirm the proposed transition from WorkNest to Peninsula

Members considered a report regarding the Council's HR and Health & Safety consultancy arrangements. It was noted that, due to meeting timings, the matter had not been considered by the Personnel Committee prior to Council. The Town Clerk advised that, having reviewed the current arrangements, she strongly believed that a change of provider would be in the Council's operational best interests, citing improved software functionality, integrated systems, and enhanced support provision.

Members noted that the current WorkNest agreement had initially been understood to be nearing expiry but had since been confirmed as a longer-term contract. Details regarding any early termination provisions or release arrangements were still being established and would need to be finalised before any transition could take place.

Following discussion, Members supported the proposed move to Peninsula, subject to satisfactory confirmation of the contractual position with WorkNest.

Resolved: to approve, in principle, the transition of the Council's HR and Health & Safety consultancy services from WorkNest to Peninsula at a cost of £432 per month (£5,184 per annum) based on 11 FTE employees and a five-year agreement, subject to confirmation of the contractual arrangements with WorkNest and any associated termination provisions.

12.4.1 Health Assured (employee assistance/wellbeing mental health programmes £800)

Confirmed.

13 To review and confirm the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies

Resolved: to confirm the annual subscriptions as listed 13.1-13.14 and 13.14.1.

13.1 Campaign to Protect Rural England £36*

Confirmed.

13.2 Edenbridge Allotment Gardens – Affiliation fees from Swan Lane Members £108

Confirmed.

13.3 Edenbridge Magazine (6 editions - £956.22*)

Confirmed.

13.4 Grounds Management Association £176.40*

Confirmed.

13.5 Information Commissioner Office £73*

Confirmed.

13.6 Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management £110*

Confirmed.

13.7 Kent Association of Local Council (KALC) £2,000 (2026/27 subscription)

Confirmed.

13.8 Kent Farmers Market Association (£60)

Confirmed.

13.9 **Listed Property Owners' Club £58***

Confirmed.

13.10 **National Association for British Markets Authorities (NABMA) £434**

Confirmed.

13.11 **Open Spaces Society £45***

Confirmed.

13.12 **Rural Market Town Group Membership £130***

Confirmed.

13.13 **Sevenoaks District Council – Premises Licence (TN8) £1,070***

Confirmed.

13.14 **Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Town Clerk's membership £442 (2026/27)**

Confirmed.

13.14.1 **Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) - to consider the Open Spaces Officer membership £316**

Members considered a report regarding Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) membership for the Open Spaces Officer. It was noted that the Open Spaces Officer is currently undertaking the CiLCA qualification and that SLCC membership would support his professional development, whilst also enhancing organisational resilience, continuity, and compliance through shared professional knowledge across the officer team.

Members supported the proposal.

Resolved: to approve SLCC membership for the Open Spaces Officer, Dan Strugnell, at the annual subscription cost of £316.

14 **To confirm the direct debits and standing orders arrangements**

Resolved: to confirm continuation of the direct debits; and noted there were currently no standing orders.

15 **To confirm the Council's bank signatories**

Members noted the recent IA report said that Council should establish a panel of at least four signatories on each account. Previous annual meetings had appointed sufficient councillors as signatories, but it was noted that not all had received the bank paperwork to become signatories. The Town Clerk said she would enquire with the RFO.

Resolved: to confirm the Council's bank account signatories, and members were satisfied that there was at lease four named councillors for each account.

16 **Fixed Assets Register - To review the inventory of land and other fixed assets including buildings**

Resolved: to confirm the Council's Assets, and the closing balance for year-end 2026/26 of £4,319,344.

17 **Council Insurance - current provider Gallaghers with Hiscox policy**

17.1 **Council insurance - to confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks with Hiscox (via Gallaghers) and the annual expenditure of £16,217.27 plus annual inflationary increase and asset adjustments**

Members considered a report regarding the Council's insurance arrangements. It was noted that the Council is currently within a three-year Long Term Agreement with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited, administered through Gallaghers, at an annual premium of £16,217.27. Members further noted that the premium may be subject to adjustment in accordance with policy terms, including inflationary increases, asset valuation changes, and Insurance Premium Tax.

Members confirmed the current insurance arrangements.

Resolved: to confirm Hiscox Insurance Company Limited (via Gallaghers) as the Council's insurer for all insurable risks and to approve the annual premium of £16,217.27, together with any annual inflationary increases and adjustments arising from asset valuations or policy changes.

17.2 Vehicle Insurance Renewal - to ratify the change of provider to Countrywide Insurance (via Gallaghers) and expenditure of £2,403.55

Members considered a report regarding the renewal of the Council's vehicle insurance. It was noted that, due to the renewal date falling immediately after the Council meeting, approval had been sought from Members by email to enable a change of insurer. A comparison exercise had identified a more competitive policy through Gallaghers, providing a saving of £660 together with any-driver cover and a lower excess.

Members noted that all councillors who responded had supported the change and that, in consultation with the Chair of the Council, the Town Clerk had instructed Gallaghers to proceed with the new policy.

Ratified: the appointment of Countrywide Insurance (MSI Group Europe), via Gallaghers, as the Council's vehicle insurer and to approve the associated expenditure of £2,403.55.

18 To appoint representatives to work with external bodies and arrangements for report back

Resolved: to confirmed the existing Councillor reps to local organisations.

The Clerk was asked to enquire if Edenbridge CARES still exists.

19 To review the Council's complaints procedures (reviewed and amended December 2021)

Resolved: to confirm and re-adopt the Complaints Procedure.

20 Freedom of Information and Data Protection Legislation - To review the Council's policies, procedures and practices (noting new policies adopted March 2026): the FOI & publication Scheme Policy; Retention and Disposal Policy; Data Protection Policy; Privacy Notices and the Privacy Policy; and Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy

Members noted that it had recently completed a review had been undertaken to ensure compliance with data protection legislation and associated statutory requirements, including updates to policies, procedures, privacy notices, retention arrangements, and information governance controls. Members had supported the review and confirmed the Council's policies and procedures.

Resolved: to approve and adopt the updated Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme Policy, Retention and Disposal Policy, Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notices and Privacy Policy, and Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy.

21 Communications and Engagement policies: Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media

Council had reviewed its communications strategy and policies in March 2025; this also outlined how the press and media channels are managed.

Resolved: to confirm its Digital Communications, Engagement and Social Media Policies; and noting also its,

- Communications and Community Engagement Strategy
- Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy

22 General Power of Competence: to note the Town Council continues to meet the conditions as resolved at its meeting 15 May 2023

Resolved: that the Town Council continues to meet the General Power of Competence conditions as resolved at its meeting 15 May 2023.

23 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 31 March 2026

23.1 To receive the internal auditor's report

Members received the Internal Audit Report for 2025/26. It was noted that no issues had been identified during the audit and that the Internal Auditor had provided positive comments regarding the Council's management of reserves and overall financial controls. A recommendation was made to undertake a more detailed review of the asset register during 2026/27 to address discrepancies in asset values recorded within the accounting system. The Internal Auditor also confirmed compliance with current best practice guidance and signed off Assertion 10.

Members had no questions on the report and noted the findings.

Resolved: to receive and note the Internal Audit Report for 2025/26 and the recommendations contained therein.

23.2 To receive the end-of-year financial statements

A copy of the year-end EDGE financial reports were received, together with the Bank Reconciliation, Budget Comparison reports, and summaries of both earmarked and general reserves.

Members noted the following:

- Consolidated Balance Sheet (1) confirms the total net assets position (matching Box 7 on the AGAR): £1,386,574.37
- Income & Expenditure Account (2) confirms total actual income of £1,298,795 (Boxes 2 and 3 on the AGAR) and total expenditure of £944,966 (Boxes 4 and 6 on the AGAR).
- Budget Comparison Reports (3) confirm the budgeted and actual income and expenditure positions, including creditors, debtors, and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income and expenditure. AGAR figures are derived from the Income & Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet.
- Bank Reconciliation (4) confirms cash and investment balances (matching Box 8 on the AGAR): £1,453,488
- Reserve Movement Spreadsheet (5) details reserve movements throughout the year, including funds released back to General Reserves and budgeted transfers to Earmarked Reserves to ensure continuation of ongoing projects. General Reserves increased by £35,718 to £364,820.02, remaining below 50% of the annual precept.

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the year-end financial position, with total net assets of £1,386,574.37, comprising:

- **General Reserve: £364,820.02**
- **Earmarked Reserves: £576,529.31**
- **CIL Funds (allocated and unallocated): £445,225.04**

23.3 To approve the annual governance statement for 2025-26 (section 1)

The Chair read out each statement under the Annual Governance Statement in turn, Section 1, page 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Members unanimously voted and agreed each statement as read individually, and,

Resolved: to confirm and approve the Annual Governance Statement 2025-26 AGAR, Section 1, each statement 1-10.

23.4 To resolve the accounting statement for 2025-26 (section 2)

Members received the end-of-year accounting figures for 2025-26 AGAR. The balances carried forwarded (box 7) concurred with item 23.2, £1,386,574; and the cash and investments balances of £1,453,488 matching the bank cashbook summary reconciliation report. The Chair read out each figure on the Annual Accounting Statement in turn. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and approve the end-of-year figures as recorded on the Accounting Statement 2025-26 in the AGAR, Section 2 boxes 1-10; and box 11 (excludes trust funds).

24 Public Questions and Statements

20:02 The Chair closed the meeting.

None.

20:02 The meeting re-opened.

25 To receive County and District Councillors Reports

25.1 County Councillor

Cllr Mayall had sent his apologies.

25.2 District Councillors

Noted Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) Annual Meeting of the Council was on 14 May.

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

26.1 Clerk's Report

Members received the Town Clerk's report, of note:

Bandstand project: Following the tender process, Open Spaces Committee had confirmed the two contractors. A meeting has been made to discuss timescales, and firm-up the costs.

Building Bridges for Dementia Friendly Edenbridge: In 2023, the Council commenced a partnership initiative with the Kent Dementia Action Alliance (KDAA) to help make Edenbridge a more supportive and dementia-friendly community for residents living with dementia. The Council is now preparing to relaunch the initiative following confirmation from KDAA of updated branding and a dedicated “Building Bridges for Dementia Friendly Edenbridge” logo. Additional promotional information was currently being prepared to support the relaunch, including guidance for businesses and organisations on signing up to the Dementia Friendly Pledge and accessing training opportunities.

Cyber Security, Data Management, and Remote Meeting Technology: The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer/Deputy Clerk recently met with PS Technology to discuss the Council’s current data management systems, cyber security arrangements, and office equipment requirements. Discussions also included the potential equipment and infrastructure required to support remote and hybrid meetings from the Council's meeting area in Doggetts Barn, and for meetings in Rickards Hall, together with the capability for live streaming of meetings where appropriate.

Highways Improvement Plan: This was presented to Planning and Transportation Committee following a meeting with Kent Highways officer. An update version is now on our website under What we do / Road Safety.

Leases - Forge Theatre Group: Amendments to the draft Lease have been viewed by the solicitor and an updated clean draft has been issued. A date to meet to go through the new revised draft Lease was hoped for end of April, but the Clerk was unable to attend. Currently awaiting new date.

Marsh Green replacement playground: The tender for the new playground closed 29 May. Tenders will be shortlisted with Open Space Committee confirming the successful design and contractor.

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.

27 Draft Local Plan - update

Members received an update on the emerging Sevenoaks District Local Plan. It was noted that officers and councillors had continued to monitor progress, liaise with the Council's planning consultant, review consultation responses, and raise a number of matters with SDC, including highways capacity, secondary school provision, public transport, cycling infrastructure, land access arrangements, and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Members noted that the draft Regulation 19 Local Plan was due to be considered by SDC's Development & Infrastructure Advisory Committee on 30 June 2026, with public consultation anticipated during July/August 2026. Members also noted recent changes to national planning procedures affecting major residential applications.

The update was received and noted.

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

28.1 Annual Town Meeting - 30 March 2026 - feedback

Members received a report on the 2026 Annual Town Meeting. It was noted that the event had been well attended and provided residents with updates from the Town Council, partner authorities, the police, and local organisations. Members discussed the format of future meetings and were receptive to changes that would allow greater opportunity for residents to engage informally with councillors, guest speakers, and community organisations.

Members noted that the 2027 Annual Town Meeting would need to be held earlier in March to avoid the pre-election period ahead of the May elections.

Members recorded their thanks to the Town Clerk, Communications Officer, and office staff for their work in organising and supporting the event.

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

Members noted that SDC had confirmed that the proposed £40,000 Community Benefit Fund contribution from Kybo Solar Farm Limited may be accepted by the Town Council as a private agreement outside the planning process. The formal agreement is awaited and potential locations for EV charging infrastructure will be considered in due course.

29 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

29.1 Hearing Loop for Rickards Hall and to approve the expenditure of £1,559

Members considered a report regarding the replacement of the hearing loop system at Rickards Hall. Members agreed that the existing system was beyond repair and that a replacement hearing loop would be required to support accessibility and inclusivity within the venue.

However, Members noted that investigations were currently underway into potential upgrades to the hall's audio-visual equipment, including facilities to support hybrid meetings and improvements to the sound system. Members considered it prudent to ensure compatibility between any replacement hearing loop system and future equipment before committing expenditure.

Resolved: that the principle of replacing the hearing loop system at Rickards Hall be supported; however, consideration of the quotation from Hi Kent for £1,559 plus VAT be deferred pending further investigation of hybrid meeting and audio-visual equipment requirements, to ensure compatibility

with any future installations.

29.2 To consider two financial requests from Eden Valley Museum

Prior to consideration of Agenda Item 29.2, the Town Clerk reminded Members of their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct regarding declarations of interest and participation in meetings where an interest exists. Reference was made to Appendix B of the Code of Conduct and the importance of openness, transparency, and protecting the integrity of the Council's decision-making process. Members were invited to consider whether any interests declared may require withdrawal from the meeting for the relevant item.

Cllr Stockdale declared an interest as a Trustee of Eden Valley Museum Trust and withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the item.

Cllr McGregor declared an interest as the Council's appointed representative to the Museum.

Cllr Layland declared an interest as a non-executive trustee of the Museum and abstained from voting.

Cllr Baker declared a non-pecuniary interest.

29.2.1 Reimbursement of its legal fees towards the new Lease of Church House, £1,100

20:15 Cllr Stockdale left the meeting.

Members considered a request from Eden Valley Museum Trust CIO for financial assistance towards legal costs associated with the Deed of Variation and registration of the new Church House lease. Members noted the significant financial support already provided by the Council through the lease renewal process and the ongoing annual Service Level Agreement grant.

Whilst recognising the valuable contribution made by the Museum and its volunteers to the community, Members considered that reimbursement of the legal costs had not formed part of the lease negotiations and that approval could set an undesirable precedent.

Resolved: not to reimburse the Museum's legal costs associated with the Deed of Variation and related registration work.

29.2.2 Eden Valley Museum – Service Level Agreement Request

Members considered the EVM Trust Annual Report and request for an increase in the annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) grant. Members welcomed the positive work undertaken by the Museum, including its educational activities, community engagement, increasing visitor numbers, and continued Arts Council England accreditation.

Members agreed that any request for an increase in funding should be considered as part of the Council's normal budget-setting process.

Resolved: that consideration of any increase to the Museum's SLA grant be referred to the 2027/28 budget-setting process through the Finance & Governance Committee. The Museum be invited to provide further information regarding the level of funding requested, the benefits delivered through the current SLA, what any additional funding would support, and a financial report to assist Members' consideration.

Members also requested that the EVM be reminded of the Council's annual grants programme.

29.3 Casual Vacancy – Edenbridge South and West Ward

20:21 Cllr Stockdale re-joined the meeting.

Members received an update regarding the casual vacancy in the Edenbridge South and West Ward arising from the resignation of Councillor Bill Cummings. The statutory Notice of Casual Vacancy was published on the Council's noticeboard on 15 April 2026. It was noted that SDC had confirmed that no request for a by-election had been received within the statutory period and that the vacancy may therefore be filled by co-option.

Members discussed the co-option process and noted that, given the timing of the vacancy, the summer period, and the scheduled local elections in 2027, any co-option would likely be for a relatively short period.

Resolved: To defer consideration of the co-option process until the July 2026 Council meeting.

29.4 Formal Complaint – KTreatz

Members received an update regarding a complaint received from a former market trader. It was noted that the complaint had been investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure and that the complainant had requested progression to the next stage of the process.

Members further noted that a meeting of the Complaints Committee was being arranged to consider the matter.

30 Devolution and local government reorganisation

No update.

31 Consultations

31.1 Kent Family Hub - Have your say - closes 14 May

Noted.

32 Press release

None.

33 Date of Next meeting - 06 July

Noted.

20:28 The meeting closed.