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

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Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge *(Vice-Chairman)*, Angela Baker *(Chairwoman)*, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Margot McArthur, Stuart McGregor, Angela Read, Bob Todd

In attendance: In attendance: Open Spaces & Buildings Officer, There were three members of the public, and no press.

19:30 The meeting opened

1 To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted, from Cllrs Compton, Gemmell Smith, Parker, Streets, and Todd.

2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

None.

3 Public Questions and Statements

19:36 The Chair closed the meeting.

19:47 The Chair reopened the meeting

4 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 (pages 2023-145/1-12).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 06 July, and that they be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record, 145/1-12.

5 To receive County and District Councillors Reports

5.1 County Councillor

Cllr Mayall's apologies were received. An email report was received after the meeting.

5.2 District Councillors

Cllr Morgan's apologies were noted. Cllrs Baker, Layland and McArthur, had nothing to report, other than the Sevenoaks Local Plan Regulation 19 was taking place.

6 To adopt the following reports/minutes of committee meetings

6.1 To receive and adopt the minutes of the Planning and Transport Meetings held on 8 June 2026 (pages 2023-140/1-4); 29 June 2026 (pages 2023-143/1-4); 20 July 2026 (pages 2023-146/1-3) and 17 August 2026 (pages 2023-148/1-4).

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 8 June 2026 (pages 2023-140/1-4); 29 June 2026 (pages 2023-143/1-4); 20 July 2026 (pages 2023-146/1-3) and 17 August 2026 (pages 2023-148/1-4).

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

Resolved: to receive and adopt the minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 16 March 2026 (pages 2023-131/1-8) and 27 July 2026 (pages 2023-147/1-8).

7 To receive recommendations from Committees

7.1 Finance & Governance Committee - meeting 27 July

7.1.1 Investment (Strategy) Policy - review

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

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

Members,

Resolved: to confirm that the Investment Policy remains appropriate, with no amendments required.

7.1.2 To confirm Banking and Investment Arrangements

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

Resolved: to continue with the Council's existing banking arrangements with Barclays Bank and its investment arrangements through CCLA.

7.1.3 Standing Orders - amendment new section Delegated Powers

Finance & Governance Committee had considered a proposed new Section 27 to the Council's Standing Orders. Members,

Resolved: the addition of Section 27 – Delegated Powers to the Council's Standing Orders, to read:

27. Delegated Powers

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

7.1.4 Terms of Reference - Review and Amendments

Committee had considered proposed amendments to the Council's Terms of Reference to ensure that they continue to reflect the Council's current governance arrangements and the practical operation of its committees. Members,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the revised Terms of Reference, as recommended:

- **The introduction of Terms of Reference for the Complaints Committee, formalising its membership, delegated powers and responsibilities.**
- **Amendments to the Finance & Governance Committee Terms of Reference to reflect changes to the Council's governance arrangements and delegated authority during the summer recess period.**
- **The removal of former paragraph 2.8 from the Finance & Governance Committee Terms of Reference, as responsibility for these matters now rests with the Buildings & Leases Committee.**
- **Minor amendments throughout the document to improve consistency, clarity and cross-referencing with the Council's wider governance framework.**

7.1.5 Retention and Disposal Policy - amendments

Committee recommended proposed amendments to the Council's Retention and Disposal Policy and Appendix A - Retention Schedule, following the implementation of Microsoft 365 automated email retention arrangements across the Council.

The amendments do not change the Council's overall approach to records retention but update the Policy to reflect current working practices, strengthen guidance on the management of electronic

records and emails, and clarify responsibilities for the retention, retrieval and disposal of digital information. Members,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the updated Retention and Disposal Policy and Appendix A - Retention Schedule, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee.

7.1.6 Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and Staff Development Review Form

A new Staff Appraisal and Development Policy, together with a revised Staff Development Review Form recommended by Committee. It was noted that the Council already had an established annual staff appraisal process, which was reflected within the Staff Handbook and Training and Development Policy. The new standalone policy formalised this existing practice and provided a clear framework covering the purpose and frequency of appraisals, responsibilities, confidentiality, training and development, objective setting and, where applicable, contractual salary progression.

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

Resolved: to approve and adopt the Staff Appraisal and Development Policy and revised Staff Development Review Form; and the consequential amendment to the Training and Development Policy, with the addition of Section 11.

7.1.7 Strategic Risk Management Policy - Minor amendment

A minor amendment to the Strategic Risk Management Policy, which was adopted by Full Council in March 2026, was proposed to clarify the Policy forms part of the Council's wider governance and risk management framework and signposts the key supporting policies and documents that collectively contribute to effective risk management, financial resilience, information security and legal compliance.

Members,

Resolved: the minor amendment to the Strategic Risk Management Policy.

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

8.1 Clerk's report

The Clerk's apologies were received, not being able to attend the meeting. The report was received as reported in the meeting papers. Of note:

Annual report 2025-26: This was now available on the Council's website.

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

Leases update

Forge Musical Theatre Group: The Group was looking to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). A meeting to review the draft lease again was due to be scheduled.

Food Bank: A new draft lease had been issued to the Foodbank.

WI Hall Lease: Legal advice and clarification on the Lease and position of the Council, following Council resolution at its July meeting had been received.

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

8.1.1 Remembrance Sunday 8 November

Arrangements for this year's Remembrance Sunday parade and service on Sunday 8 November

2026, were noted. A meeting of the organising group, including representatives from the Royal British Legion, Church and Scouts, had taken place in July. This included a debrief following the 2025 event and agreement of the arrangements for this year's parade and service. A further meeting will be arranged for October.

Order of Event

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

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

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

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

10.58 am - Last Post.

11.00 am - Two-minute silence.

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

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

2.30 pm - Church Service.

Members were asked to note the arrangements and preparations for the Remembrance Sunday parade and service on 8 November 2026. Members are also asked to ensure attendance to both the parade and service, and the afternoon Church Service.

8.2 Community Warden Report

The Community Warden's report as reported in the meeting papers was received. It was noted she continues to support a range of community activities, partnership working and volunteer initiatives across the town.

- Since November 2025, 10 community litter-picking sessions have been organised, collecting more than 80 bags of rubbish.
- Community Speedwatch initiative had also continued, with five sessions undertaken between March and July, monitoring 986 vehicles, of which 78 were recorded exceeding the speed limit.
- 56 reports had been made to KCC, SDC, Kent Police via 101 and other relevant organisations regarding fly tipping, graffiti and other local issues.
- A grant application had been submitted to the Great Stone Bridge Trust, requesting ongoing support for this valued community role.

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

Members received an update on the preparation of the Town Council's representations to the Sevenoaks District Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, which closed on 17 September 2026.

It was reported that the Town Clerk, Cllrs Aldridge and Baker, and the Council's Planning Consultant, Alan Dyer, had been working on focused, evidence-based representations addressing the proposed Edenbridge site allocations, relevant policies and supporting evidence. Particular attention was being given to the soundness of the Plan, the disproportionate scale of development proposed for Edenbridge, highways capacity and the infrastructure required to support future growth.

Members noted that the Council's approach recognised the need for an adopted Local Plan and further growth, whilst seeking a more proportionate distribution of development, supported by appropriate infrastructure. The draft representation on Policy ST1 had been provided to Members as an example of this approach.

The Council's community engagement was also noted, including four public drop-in sessions, a household information leaflet and communications encouraging residents to submit their own representations.

Members were advised that draft representations would continue to be shared with councillors for comment ahead of submission. Members,

Resolved: to note the progress made and endorse the overall approach to preparing the Council's Regulation 19 representations. They also,

- **Noted that the draft Policy ST1 representation was a working document and did not constitute the Council's final response.**
- **Agreed that draft representations would continue to be made available to councillors for review and comment.**
- **To delegate authority to the Planning & Transport Committee, at its meeting on 14 September 2026, to review and endorse the representations, including any necessary amendments or additions consistent with the principles agreed by Council.**
- **To delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with Cllrs Aldridge and Baker and the Planning Consultant, to finalise and submit the Council's representations by 17 September 2026, taking account of Members' comments and the agreed strategic approach.**

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

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

Members were advised that maintenance works to the Rickards Hall timber floor had been completed during 26–29 August 2026, including sanding and staining previously repaired areas and applying a protective polyurethane coating.

Two quotations had been obtained, at £1,400 and £3,600. Given the limited availability of the Hall and the works being within the £2,500 maintenance budget, the appointment of Contractor A at £1,400 had been approved by the Planning Committee under the summer delegated authority.

Following completion, the contractor recommended a further protective coating during 2027/28 to prolong the life of the flooring. Provision for this would be included in the 2027/28 maintenance plan.

Ratified: the expenditure of £1,400 for the Rickards Hall flooring maintenance works; and noted that provision for a further protective coating would be included within the 2027/28 maintenance plan.

10.2 Chairman’s Reception and Gardens in Bloom Awards

Members received an update on the Chairman's Reception held on 3 September 2026, which incorporated the presentation of the Council's Gardens in Bloom awards.

The event provided an opportunity to thank the community partners and organisations the Council had worked with during the current Council term, and to celebrate the Gardens in Bloom participants and winners. Over 70 guests had accepted invitations, with the awards presented by Neil Miller, Head Gardener at Hever Castle.

Council thanked the Council officers for the well organised event.

10.3 Spatial Settlement Plan (SSP+) - update

Members noted that the Planning and Transport Committee, at its meeting on 17 August 2026, had approved the appointment of ONH Planning to prepare a Spatial Settlement Plan (SSP+) for Edenbridge, at a cost of £12,950 plus VAT and up to £200 expenses, with any additional funding required to be met from Council reserves.

The SSP+ would provide a long-term spatial planning framework for Edenbridge, supporting the Council's position through the emerging Local Plan process and providing an evidence base for future planning and infrastructure considerations.

The Town Clerk had confirmed the appointment, with a further update on the project programme and next steps to be reported to Council in October.

10.4 McMillian Coffee Morning Friday 25 September 2026 - update

Members noted the arrangements for the Macmillan Coffee Morning on 25 September 2026 at Rickards Hall, organised by Cllrs Baker, Compton, Jacques and Read. The event was being promoted through the Council's communication channels, with councillors organising and supporting the event, including providing cakes.

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

Members considered a request from Involve Kent to continue providing free use of Rickards Hall for its weekly Arts and Craft Group, established in January 2026 to support people aged 55 and over experiencing social isolation.

It was reported that the group had developed a regular attendance of approximately 5–6 participants, with potential for further growth. Members recognised the community benefits of the initiative and that groups of this nature can take time to become established.

Members,

Resolved: to approve the continued free use of Rickards Hall for Involve Kent's weekly two-hour Arts and Craft Group, with the arrangement and attendance levels to be reviewed in early 2027.

10.6 IT equipment replacement and additional Tablet

Members considered the replacement of two laptops as part of the Council's phased IT equipment replacement programme, following the review undertaken by PS Tech in 2025. It was noted that provision of £8,100 had been included within the 2026/27 budget for IT upgrades.

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

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

Ratified: the expenditure of £1,100 for the replacement Communications Officer's laptop.

10.6.2 Town Clerk Laptop - replacement expenditure £1,472

Members also considered the proposed replacement of the Town Clerk's laptop, at a cost of up to £1,472. Members,

Resolved: to approve expenditure of up to £1,472 for the replacement of the Town Clerk's laptop.

10.6.3 Tablet - additional IT equipment budget £575

Members considered the purchase of an additional tablet for officer use, to provide greater flexibility and access to electronic documents when attending Council and external meetings. Indicative costs ranged from £298 to £575, with the proposed expenditure to be funded from the Council's Contingency budget. Members,

Resolved: to approve expenditure of up to £550 for the purchase of a tablet for officer use, funded from the Contingency budget.

11 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

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

Members considered the proposed adoption of two new overarching environmental policies, following a review of the Council's existing policies and working practices.

It was reported that the Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy and Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy would provide a strategic framework for the Council's environmental commitments, supported by its existing operational policies covering waste, vegetation, bonfires and weed management.

Members noted that the existing Environmental Policy Statement would become redundant, as its principles had been incorporated and expanded upon within the new framework. Members,

Resolved: to approve and adopt the two new policies:

- **Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Policy.**
- **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy.**
- **And to reaffirm the Waste Management Policy, Vegetation Management and Bonfire Policy, and Weed Management Policy as supporting operational policies.**
- **To withdraw the existing Environmental Policy Statement, its principles having been incorporated into the new environmental policy framework.**

11.2 Kent Wildlife Trust - Rights of Rivers Initiative

Members considered correspondence from NEDRA regarding Kent Wildlife Trust's emerging Rights of Rivers initiative, which seeks to explore greater recognition and protection for local rivers, including the River Eden.

Members also noted NEDRA's Summer 2026 Water Quality Testing report, which provided an update on its ongoing volunteer monitoring activities across the River Eden catchment.

Members supported initial engagement with NEDRA and Kent Wildlife Trust to explore the initiative and opportunities for partnership working, recognising that any future commitments or resource implications would require separate consideration by Council.

Resolved: to support initial exploratory discussions with NEDRA and Kent Wildlife Trust regarding the Rights of Rivers initiative, and to nominate Cllrs Baker, Aldridge and McArthur as the Council's representatives.

11.3 Great Stone Bridge Trust - proposed change to nominative trustee arrangements

Members considered the proposed changes to the Great Stone Bridge Trust's governance arrangements as part of its transition to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

It was reported that the Trust proposed reducing the Town Council's entitlement from two Nominative Trustees to one, with the Trust retaining a right of veto over the Council's nomination.

Members expressed disappointment at the proposed reduction in Council representation, given the longstanding relationship between the two organisations. Members questioned whether provision could be made for a second representative or deputy to attend Trust meetings when the nominated trustee was unavailable.

Resolved: to consent to the proposed changes to the Great Stone Bridge Trust's governance arrangements, reducing the Council's entitlement from two Nominative Trustees to one, with the Council's nominee to be subject to a right of veto by the Trust, and to authorise the Town Clerk to sign the necessary documentation. However, to also request that the Trust considers retaining a second Council-appointed representative, or alternatively making provision for a deputy to attend meetings in the absence of the nominated trustee.

11.4 Internal Audit arrangements 2026/27

Members considered the Terms of Engagement for the Council's 2026/27 internal audit and the requirement to formally confirm the appointment and independence of April Skies Accounting.

Members were also advised that Mike Platten would be retiring following completion of the 2026/27 audits, and that arrangements for appointing a new Internal Auditor for 2027/28 would be considered later in the financial year, initially by the Finance & Governance Committee.

Resolved: to confirm the appointment of April Skies Accounting as the Council's Internal Auditor for 2026/27 and confirm its independence from Edenbridge Town Council, to authorise the Town Clerk to sign

the 2026/27 Internal Audit Terms of Engagement.

Members also noted, the forthcoming retirement of Mike Platten and that the appointment of a new Internal Auditor for 2027/28 would be considered later in the financial year.

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

Members considered a request from the Eden Valley Museum Trust to increase its annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) grant from £6,500 to £7,500 from the 2027/28 financial year.

Members noted the Museum's ongoing contribution to the local community, its financial position and the increasing challenges in securing external funding towards core running costs. The Council's longstanding support for the Museum, including the provision of Church House under lease, was also acknowledged.

Members supported the request, recognising the importance of maintaining the Museum as a local heritage and community facility.

Resolved: to approve an increase in the Eden Valley Museum Trust's annual SLA grant from £6,500 to £7,500 with effect from the 2027/28 financial year, with the additional £1,000 to be incorporated into the Council's 2027/28 budget.

12 Unpaid invoices over 6-months - outstanding Market Pitch Fees

Members received an update on the outstanding balance of £308.40 owed by KTreatz Ltd in respect of unpaid market pitch fees.

It was reported that, following Council's previous resolution, a final request for payment had been issued on 8 July 2026, with payment requested by 6 August. No payment or repayment proposal had been received by that deadline. Subsequent correspondence advised that payment would be made by 30 September 2026, pending the outcome of a separate matter referred to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Members **noted** that the outstanding debt remained unpaid and that its recovery was separate from any other ongoing matters.

13 Local Government Reorganisation - Update

Members received an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), including the Government's earlier announcement to proceed with four unitary authorities across Kent and Medway, with Edenbridge forming part of the proposed West Kent authority.

It was noted that, on the day of the meeting, the Government had announced a pause to the reorganisation programme. Members acknowledged the uncertainty this created for the affected authorities and noted that further updates would be provided as the position became clearer.

13.1 Community Asset Transfer Programme

Members noted that Sevenoaks District Council had paused its Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme in light of the proposed Local Government Reorganisation, with resources being redirected towards transition arrangements.

It was confirmed that previously approved asset transfers would continue to progress, while any future opportunities would be subject to further consideration.

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

Members formally noted the resignation of Cllr Stephen Sumner (Edenbridge North and East Ward) and that the statutory casual vacancy process had been completed, with no request for a by-election received.

Members considered the two current councillor vacancies, one in each Ward, and whether to

commence the co-option process. In view of the scheduled Town Council elections in May 2027, Members agreed not to proceed with co-option at this stage.

In view of the scheduled Town Council elections in May 2027, Cllr Todd proposed that the two vacancies remain unfilled until the elections. This was seconded by Cllr Layland, and agreed by Members.

Resolved: to leave the two councillor vacancies unfilled pending the scheduled Town Council elections in May 2027.

15 Consultations

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

Noted.

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

Noted.

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

Members considered Sevenoaks District Council's proposed revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule, which would remove residential developments of 10 or more dwellings from CIL, with infrastructure contributions instead secured through Section 106 agreements.

Members expressed significant concern regarding the potential loss of CIL income directly available to town and parish councils, particularly given the scale of development proposed for Edenbridge through the emerging Local Plan. It was noted that CIL had enabled the Town Council to support a wide range of local infrastructure and community projects, including improvements to existing facilities and assets which may not otherwise be funded through site-specific Section 106 agreements.

The Town Clerk had attended a meeting with representatives of the four towns within Sevenoaks District, who shared similar concerns. Swanley Town Council had subsequently prepared a draft joint letter for consideration and endorsement by the four councils.

Members supported a co-ordinated approach to ensure that the potential implications for local infrastructure funding and the ability of town and parish councils to respond to community needs were clearly represented. Members,

Resolved: to authorise the Town Clerk, in consultation with Cllrs Baker and Aldridge, to work collaboratively with the other three town councils within Sevenoaks District to prepare and submit a robust response to object to the Draft CIL Charging Schedule consultation, highlighting the importance of retaining locally controlled infrastructure funding and the potential implications of the proposed changes for Edenbridge and its communities.

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

None.

17 Press release

Promote the Edenbridge Gardens In Bloom winners.
McMillian Coffee morning.

18 Date of Next meeting - 02 November

Noted.

20:53 The meeting closed.