

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



## EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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### Chief Executive

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**NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.**

Contact: Democratic Services  
[committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk)

6 November 2023

To: MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY  
SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE  
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee to be held in the Council Chamber, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill on Tuesday, 14th November, 2023 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Members of the Committee are required to attend in person. Other Members may attend in person or participate online via MS Teams.

Information on how to observe the meeting will be published on the Council's website.

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

## A G E N D A

1. Guidance for the Conduct of Meetings

5 - 8

## **PART 1 - PUBLIC**

2. Apologies for Absence
3. Notification of Substitute Members 9 - 10
4. Declarations of interest 11 - 12

Members are reminded of their obligation under the Council's Code of Conduct to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests in any matter(s) to be considered or being considered at the meeting. These are explained in the Code of Conduct on the Council's website at [Code of conduct for members – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-for-members).

Members in any doubt about such declarations are advised to contact Legal or Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.

5. Minutes 13 - 16

To confirm as a correct record the Notes of the meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee held on 25 July 2023

### **Matters for recommendation to the Cabinet**

6. Future of the Angel Centre, Tonbridge 17 - 30

The aim of this report is to ascertain Members' in-principle views on the future of the existing Angel Centre building as part of the Council's work to review its land and property assets in Tonbridge town centre.

Annex 1 contains private/confidential information and is attached to the agenda under Part 2 - Private.

7. Review of Fees and Charges 2024/25 31 - 44

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 within the purview of the Scrutiny Select Committee for recommendation to Cabinet.

8. Economic Development Strategy 2023 - 2027 45 - 64

This report sets out the proposed changes to the draft strategy in light of the feedback received during the consultation exercise which was undertaken in September-October 2023, and recommends the adoption of the strategy as amended.

## **Matters submitted for Information**

9. Key Performance Indicators 65 - 72

Following on from the adoption of the Corporate Strategy 2023-2027, a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been adopted that enable the Council to measure progress on its priorities. In order to improve their effectiveness, trend analysis and targets have also been included. This covering report and appendix provide data on KPIs relating to the period up to the end of September 2023.

If there are any questions regarding the KPIs provided, these should be submitted to the relevant Director/Chief Executive at least 2 days in advance of the Scrutiny Select Committee meeting in order to ensure that a suitable response can be provided at the meeting. If additional queries are raised at the Scrutiny Select Committee meeting, these will be responded to within 5 working days.

10. Work Programme 2023/24 73 - 74

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2023/24 is attached for information. Members can suggest future items by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

11. Urgent items

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

## **Matters for consideration in Private**

12. Exclusion of Press and Public 75 - 76

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

## **PART 2 - PRIVATE**

### **Matters submitted for Information**

13. Future of the Angel Centre, Tonbridge - Annex 1 77 - 78

(Reason: LGA 1972 - Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

14. Urgent items 79 - 80

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Cllr D Harman (Chair)  
Cllr C Brown (Vice-Chair)

Cllr L Athwal  
Cllr T Bishop  
Cllr P Boxall  
Cllr R I B Cannon  
Cllr Mrs T Dean  
Cllr W J Mallard

Cllr A Mehmet  
Cllr W E Palmer  
Cllr B A Parry  
Cllr M R Rhodes  
Cllr C J Williams

## **GUIDANCE ON HOW MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED**

- (1) Most of the Borough Council meetings are livestreamed, unless there is exempt or confidential business being discussed, giving residents the opportunity to see decision making in action. These can be watched via our YouTube channel. When it is not possible to livestream meetings they are recorded and uploaded as soon as possible:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPp-IJISNgoF-ugSzxjAPfw/featured>

- (2) There are no fire drills planned during the time a meeting is being held. For the benefit of those in the meeting room, the fire alarm is a long continuous bell and the exits are via the doors used to enter the room. An officer on site will lead any evacuation.
- (3) Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on [committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk) in the first instance.

### **Attendance:**

- Members of the Committee are required to attend in person and be present in the meeting room. Only these Members are able to move/ second or amend motions, and vote.
- Other Members of the Council can join via MS Teams and can take part in any discussion and ask questions, when invited to do so by the Chair, but cannot move/ second or amend motions or vote on any matters. Members participating remotely are reminded that this does not count towards their formal committee attendance.
- Occasionally, Members of the Committee are unable to attend in person and may join via MS Teams in the same way as other Members. However, they are unable to move/ second or amend motions or vote on any matters if they are not present in the meeting room. As with other Members joining via MS Teams, this does not count towards their formal committee attendance.
- Officers can participate in person or online.

- Members of the public addressing an Area Planning Committee should attend in person. However, arrangements to participate online can be considered in certain circumstances. Please contact [committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk) for further information.

Before formal proceedings start there will be a sound check of Members/Officers in the room. This is done as a roll call and confirms attendance of voting Members.

### **Ground Rules:**

The meeting will operate under the following ground rules:

- Members in the Chamber should indicate to speak in the usual way and use the fixed microphones in front of them. These need to be switched on when speaking or comments will not be heard by those participating online. Please switch off microphones when not speaking.
- If there any technical issues the meeting will be adjourned to try and rectify them. If this is not possible there are a number of options that can be taken to enable the meeting to continue. These will be explained if it becomes necessary.

For those Members participating online:

- please request to speak using the 'chat or hand raised function';
- please turn off cameras and microphones when not speaking;
- please do not use the 'chat function' for other matters as comments can be seen by all;
- Members may wish to blur the background on their camera using the facility on Microsoft teams.
- Please avoid distractions and general chat if not addressing the meeting
- Please remember to turn off or silence mobile phones

### **Voting:**

Voting may be undertaken by way of a roll call and each Member should verbally respond For, Against, Abstain. The vote will be noted and announced by the Democratic Services Officer.

Alternatively, votes may be taken by general affirmation if it seems that there is agreement amongst Members. The Chairman will announce the outcome of the vote for those participating and viewing online.

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**Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee – Substitute Members (if required)**

	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democratic</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>Ind. Kent Alliance</b>	<b>Labour</b>
1	Roger Dalton	Garry Bridge	Kath Barton		Angus Bennison
2	Dave Davis	James Clokey	Steve Crisp		Wayne Mallard
3	Sarah Hudson	Frani Hoskins	Anna Cope		
4	James Lark	Roger Roud	George Hines		
5	Alex McDermott	David Thornwell	Mark Hood		

**Members of Cabinet cannot be appointed as a substitute to this Committee**

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Declarations of interest

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## TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES

Tuesday, 25th July, 2023

**Present:** Cllr D Harman (Chair), Cllr C Brown (Vice-Chair), Cllr L Athwal, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr P Boxall, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr J Clokey (substitute), Cllr M A J Hood (substitute), Cllr W J Mallard, Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr M R Rhodes and Cllr C J Williams

**Virtual:** Councillors Mrs S Bell, R P Betts, M A Coffin, D A S Davis, D Keers, Mrs A S Oakley and K B Tanner participated via MS Teams in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs T Dean and B A Parry.

#### PART 1 - PUBLIC

##### **FRP 23/18 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Councillor J Clokey substituted for Councillor T Dean
- Councillor M Hood substituted for Councillor B Parry

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these Councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

##### **FRP 23/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

##### **FRP 23/20 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee held on 13 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

**FRP 23/21 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2027 -  
CONSULTATION DRAFT**

Member approval was sought on the consultation draft of the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027, attached at Appendix 1, which was set within the context of the Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 recently approved by Council.

The draft Economic Development Strategy set out a vision that covered four key elements – resilience, dynamism, inclusivity and sustainability. Seven themes underpinning the vision were outlined in 1.2.2 of the report and detailed in Appendix 1, each with a number of actions identified with an aim to support the economy.

Subject to approval of the draft Strategy, a four-week public consultation was intended to be undertaken in September 2023 to seek views of the key economic partners, including members of the West Kent Partnership, local business support providers, business representative bodies, such as the Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, as well as individual local businesses in the borough. Outcome of the consultation was anticipated to be reported to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Select Committee to seek formal adoption of the Strategy.

Members had an in-depth discussion in respect of the linkage between the Action Plan and the Economic Dashboard and the proposed plan to review the performance of the Strategy on an annual basis.

During discussion, the focus on the climate change agenda and sustainable growth was highlighted, with particular reference made to reducing carbon footprint and supporting the local business community to move towards carbon net zero. Collaborative working with education providers was considered another key in delivering the plan with regard to ‘a greener more productive economy’.

**RECOMMENDED\*:** That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the consultation draft of the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.

**\*Referred to Cabinet**

**MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

**FRP 23/22 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2023/24 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**FRP 23/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

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## TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

**Joint Report of the Director of Central Services,  
the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services,  
the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration & Property and  
the Cabinet Member for Community Services**

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

#### **1 FUTURE OF THE ANGEL CENTRE, TONBRIDGE**

**The aim of this report is to ascertain Members' in-principle views on the future of the existing Angel Centre building as part of the Council's work to review its land and property assets in Tonbridge town centre.**

**Due to its age, design and the changing nature of leisure provision, the Angel Centre has reached the point of requiring substantial investment in both plant and equipment and building fabric to remain fit for purpose in the long term. In addition, significant further investment will be required to reduce the carbon footprint of the building to achieve the Council's carbon neutral aspirations for its leisure facilities.**

**Members are asked to provide their in-principle recommendations to Cabinet on whether they feel the existing building should be retained and refurbished or whether the Council should replace leisure provision at an alternative location in the town.**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 As Members are aware, the Council has been progressing a review of its land and property assets in Tonbridge town centre to determine how they can best be utilised.

1.1.2 The Council has been working with the company Mace to deliver this work with Phase 1 focused on establishing Members' aims and objectives of the review, the outcome of which was reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

- 1.1.3 Cabinet agreed to continue the work into phase 2, which is focussing on the overall governance and programme objectives across the range of work streams identified in Phase 1, as well as giving priority to explore options on the potential development area east of the High Street.
- 1.1.4 The Angel Centre is one of the Council's largest assets in the town centre and is included within the area of potential development being explored through Phase 2. Members recently approved the inclusion of the Angel Centre, as well as the surface car parks in the surrounding area, for potential development as part of the new Local Plan process.
- 1.1.5 While completing their work, Mace have made clear that a decision on whether to refurbish the Angel Centre or seek to move facilities elsewhere is essential to best advise the Council on the wider redevelopment options on land East of the High Street. Due to its size and location the future of this building forms a key part of this work.
- 1.1.6 At the next meeting of this Committee, the outcomes of the phase 2 report will be reported to Members on the potential development area east of the High Street. It is important in the context of the future report to be presented to Members to know Members' in-principle views on whether they would like to see the existing building retained and refurbished, or whether a replacement facility to serve the town would be the preference.

## **1.2 The Angel Centre**

- 1.2.1 The Angel Centre was originally constructed in 1981 as part of the development of the former Angel football ground which saw the construction of the existing Sainsbury's store and surface car parks. The Angel Centre replaced community facilities in Lyons Crescent together with a large sports hall and squash courts.
- 1.2.2 The Angel Centre is divided into two sides. The community side includes a suite of meeting rooms, a function suite and a community hall with stage. On the sports side there is a 6 badminton court sports hall, dance studio, pre-school and gym. There is a reception area serving both sides of the building.
- 1.2.3 Since the building was constructed, the Council has delivered a wide range of leisure services and activities from the facility and has continuously invested in both equipment and the building in an attempt to keep the building fit for purpose.
- 1.2.4 By way of some examples, the Council has spent approximately £687,000 over the last 10 years in maintaining the building and invested approximately £2.5m since the year 2000 on capital improvement schemes and equipment.

- 1.2.5 In 2013 the Council established the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust to operate its leisure facilities, the Angel Centre being one. The decision to outsource to a Trust resulted in significant financial benefit to the Council including both business rate exemption and the preferential exempt VAT status of the Trust. This advantage was enhanced by a decision that the Council would retain responsibility for the cost of plant and equipment for which it could reclaim VAT thus reducing the service fee demands of the Trust and further cost saving for the Council.
- 1.2.6 In recent times it has become clear that for the building to be considered fit for purpose in the long term, either substantial investment would be required in the existing building, or a replacement facility would be required. The main issues being decarbonising the building as well as maintaining and updating the building fabric, plant and equipment, more details of which are provided in section 1.4.
- 1.2.7 This is as a result of the changing face of leisure provision and how it is delivered. When the building opened in 1981 there would have been very limited public access to high quality leisure facilities. However now there are a range of facilities available for public use across a range of settings within the town particularly by local state and private schools. These include:

#### Sports Halls

- Hayesbrook Academy
- Huge Christie School
- Judd School
- Tonbridge Grammar School
- Weald of Kent School

#### Fitness

- Snap Fitness
- Anatomy 37
- Tonbridge School

#### Meeting/function Rooms

- Schools
- Churches
- Colleges

- Sports clubs
- Tonbridge Castle

1.2.8 In 2013/14 the Council were in advanced negotiations with Sainsbury's regarding the development of the area east of the High Street, which would have seen the construction of a new leisure centre on the site of the Bradford Street car park. Sainsbury's withdrew from the scheme and so the current Angel Centre building remained.

### **1.3 Tonbridge Town Centre Work**

1.3.1 As mentioned in the introduction, due to its size and location the existing Angel Centre building is a key issue in the work the Council are progressing in liaison with Mace to review its assets in the town, specifically in the area east of the High Street.

1.3.2 Due to the breadth and depth of the work associated with the option appraisals in this area, it would be incredibly helpful to get a sense from Members whether their preference, in principle, would be to refurbish the existing building or look to provide a replacement facility. This information will then be incorporated into the option appraisals developed by Mace which will be presented to Members at an appropriate meeting.

1.3.3 From a place shaping perspective, the current Angel Centre building does not easily fit into wider redevelopment options due to its size, location, design and range of facilities. If Members recommend, in principle, not to consider a refurbishment option then it will unlock additional opportunities in the area East of High Street, especially in relation to the area running alongside the Botany Stream where more could be made of the water frontage.

### **1.4 Current Situation**

1.4.1 The Angel Centre was included in the portfolio of buildings leased to the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust when it was created in 2013. The current lease of the Angel Centre is due to expire in October 2033, along with the other buildings leased to the Trust.

1.4.2 Outlined below is some information which may assist Members in reaching a recommendation to Cabinet.

### Operational Considerations

- 1.4.3 The Angel Centre has always been a difficult building to manage and operate and its design, layout and mix of facilities does not meet the current needs of the market. This is evidenced by the fact the Angel Centre operates at a net loss compared to the other facilities operated by the Leisure Trust, which contribute a net profit to the Leisure Trust's overall bottom line. In the Leisure Trust's Business Plan 2023-2025 the forecast for 2023/24 is that the Angel Centre would operate at a loss of £265,500.
- 1.4.4 The facilities on the community side are not well used and better quality alternative facilities are available in the town operated by others. The usage of the community facilities in particular has declined since the covid pandemic. The Leisure Trust report that usage statistics and income analysis show the Medway Hall is utilised to a far lesser degree than pre-covid and that this decline may be traced back further. Major events like the Dance Festival and Christmas Panto no longer take place, along with the regular cinema screenings. It further reports that casual large hires are fewer and the Medway Hall is now used far more for regular group exercise classes linked to fitness membership and that a suite of six meeting rooms is not required with one now being permanently used for storage and the smallest room rarely hired.
- 1.4.5 Whilst on the sports side the gym performs well with the Leisure Trust reporting membership significantly ahead of pre-covid levels. Compared to pre-covid, membership is up 44% and income for 2022/23 was 49% above pre-covid levels.
- 1.4.6 In terms of group exercise and dance studios, the existing facilities, which are a mix and match of a refurbished squash court, the Riverside function room, Medway Hall and Sports Hall are variously ill-equipped to deliver a quality service due to a lack of air-conditioning, sprung floor, mirrors, high quality sound and light and poor acoustics. The fact that exercise classes are having to be run from these facilities supports the position that there are inadequate, fit for purpose dance studios to meet demand. There are no catering facilities on the site.
- 1.4.7 The Angel Centre operates a successful GP Referral Programme and Phase IV Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme. This involves a combination of prescribed exercise and lifestyle and dietary advice. Medical professionals refer patients to the programme.
- 1.4.8 In the past the Council has attempted to improve the layout and accessibility of the building via numerous internal reconfigurations, including moving the entrance to the side of the building and converting underutilised areas, for example conversion of squash courts to fitness studios and the gym.
- 1.4.9 Although these previous works have been successful, it always presents challenges when delivering services in areas which have not been originally designed for that purpose.

- 1.4.10 The internal layout of the building includes numerous corridors and rooms which restricts movements around the facility and does not create a particularly positive customer experience. This also reflects in higher maintenance costs.

#### Building Fabric Considerations

- 1.4.11 The building is now over 40 years old and therefore costs to maintain both the building fabric, as well as plant and equipment, are increasing. In terms of plant and equipment, it has reached the stage where entire systems that have reached the end of their serviceable lives need to be completely replaced, for example mechanical ventilation systems and boilers.
- 1.4.12 In terms of building fabric, we are aware of issues with items such as the sports hall floor, which will need to be completely replaced in the short to medium term due to reaching the end of its serviceable life, and underground drainage pipes, which are deteriorating to the extent the site are experiencing regular blockages.
- 1.4.13 A specific area of concern is the roof, which is a combination of felt covered roof, with the felt reaching the end of its serviceable life, and asbestos containing roof tiles.

#### Climate Change Considerations

- 1.4.14 In addition to the above, a key consideration is the Council's aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2030 and Cabinet's pledge to have carbon neutral leisure centres by 2027.
- 1.4.15 Across the Council's owned estate, energy consumption at the Angel Centre is only outstripped by the two sites with swimming pools, Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool. For comparison, energy consumption and carbon emissions from the Angel Centre are close to double those from the Council's Gibson East and West office buildings combined. Reaching carbon neutral in operational terms for the Angel Centre would mean removing emissions of approximately 315 tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub> per year.
- 1.4.16 The building's Display Energy Certificate (DEC) and Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) provide information on current energy efficiency and potential additional measures. DEC's are required for buildings frequently visited by the public which have a total useful area greater than 250 sqm and have been produced for the Angel Centre since 2015. The DEC rates the actual or operational energy performance of a building against established benchmarks and takes into consideration the ways in which occupant use the building. A is the highest rating, and G the least energy efficient.
- 1.4.17 An EPC is similar in that it gives information about the energy efficiency of a building to owners, prospective buyers and tenants. The ratings run from A+ to G, with A+ being better than carbon neutral and G being the poorest energy rating.

- 1.4.18 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 all commercial properties must have an EPC rating of E or above to continue to be let. If they score an F or G then the building owner will need to carry out improvement works in order to achieve an E or higher rating. The government are expected to increase the minimum EPC threshold to a C rating by April 2027 and then a B rating by April 2030. Financial penalties can be levied on building owners who do not comply, up to a maximum of £150,000.
- 1.4.19 Taking into account the Council's aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2030, and Cabinet's pledge to have carbon neutral leisure centres by 2027, the aim should be to have DEC and EPC ratings of A.
- 1.4.20 The Angel Centre's current DEC rating is E and EPC rating is C. The EPC notes that a rating of D is typical for buildings of similar type to the Angel Centre, whereas a new build of similar type typically has an EPC A rating.
- 1.4.21 The EPC recommendation report sets out measures that could improve a building's energy efficiency. For the Angel Centre, these recommendations are limited to potential improvements to insulation and some operational efficiencies, all with a low or medium impact. As pointed out elsewhere in this report, the building fabric, previous re-designs and co-option of space for new purposes limits what else can be done within the property short of complete over-haul. Retrofit that would be extensive enough to make a more significant reduction in operational energy use and carbon emissions would come at high financial cost. Significant carbon emissions would also be expected from the scale of works needed to address the fabric of a building of this size.
- 1.4.22 If new provision were provided, the emissions from any new build element would need to be accounted for and minimised using up-to-date design, materials, manufacture and construction processes. Plans for provision in any alternative location would need to take account of both the Council's own carbon neutral 2030 aspiration, as well as looking ahead to the UK 2050 Net Zero target, given that the life of such a facility would likely exceed 20 years. A building with a minimum 'A' EPC rating would be consistent with these goals.
- 1.4.23 For any building, emissions are produced during the design, manufacture and build process; while the building is in operation; and at 'end of life' when the building is dismantled and materials disposed of. During the operational life of a building emissions will be produced by energy consumption, but also through emissions associated with further retrofit measures. New design methods and construction standards can ensure buildings, including leisure centres, can already operate at net zero, minimising the need for future retrofit. Whether the decision is to invest in deep retrofit, or to move to an alternative location, efforts should be made to minimise emissions at every point.

## 1.5 The Leisure Trust

- 1.5.1 The Leisure Trust were asked to provide its views on the current Angel Centre, which are:
- 1.5.2 *Despite investment over many years by the Council the fundamental failures in the original design of the Angel Centre have resulted in operational challenges for 40 years. Reconfiguration of the facilities have assisted in improvement of services but have never represented truly fit for purpose spaces and as public expectation of bespoke, clean, well-maintained and accessible facilities increases so does the challenge. Whilst investment has always been welcomed it has proved impossible to refurbish existing areas to the high standards of extensions/new build projects undertaken elsewhere, notably at Larkfield Leisure Centre where the gym, spa and studio facilities amongst others have largely been extensions rather than refurbishment of existing areas.*
- 1.5.3 *The customer journey at the Angel Centre militates against easy access and lack of dedicated changing spaces also deters customers from use of the gym in particular. The need to programme activities into areas not designed for purpose results in lower customer satisfaction and the continual need to move equipment around the site. This impacts on the ability of the Trust to provide services seen as competitive in the local market.*
- 1.5.4 *Day to day maintenance is challenging in an ageing building with many redundant spaces that contribute to a less attractive facility. Dry side facilities across the country generally attract higher operating costs to income ratios and the Angel Centre is no exception but this is worsened by the age of the building and time and money spent on cleaning and maintenance.*
- 1.5.5 *Notwithstanding the above the Trust has worked hard to develop gym membership and provides valuable health and wellbeing services to a very wide range of residents and visitors. It is the Trust's view that current growth in use since the pandemic needs to be capitalised upon by investment in new or refurbished facilities as outlined in this report and the Trust looks forward to a continued and progressive partnership with the Council for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of local people.*
- 1.5.6 Liaison has been taking place with the Leisure Trust so that they have been able to brief their staff on the content of this report. Being that it is a public document staff may have legitimate concerns over their future job security. The Council is keen to work with the Trust to ensure continuity for the workforce and the service it provides. Liaison will also take place with customers by the Trust so they are properly informed. This is being undertaken in liaison with the Council's Media and Communications team.



## **1.6 Financial Implications**

- 1.6.1 Being that Members are being asked to make an in-principle recommendation, officers have not incurred large costs associated with detailed financial appraisals of the options. However, we have looked at high level costs associated with an option to refurbish the current building and a replacement facility although at this stage no assumptions are being made about where any replacement facility would be located.
- 1.6.2 In terms of refurbishment, an estimated range of gross development costs (including building works, fees etc) is £8.6m - £14.58m.
- 1.6.3 The lower cost includes replacement of electrical and mechanical systems as well as internal alterations and reconfiguration, while the higher cost also includes replacements and upgrades to the building fabric with a view to providing a carbon neutral facility, hence the large range.
- 1.6.4 They also include a cost for lost revenue during the course of the works on the basis large areas of the building would be unavailable to customers. Whilst every effort would be made to retain core services this has been included as a one-off cost however it is not unreasonable to assume lost revenue may continue for some time as some customers will take out new membership elsewhere, for example. No allowance has been made for any loan repayment costs.
- 1.6.5 In terms of construction of a new building, costs are dependent on the size of the facility and the type of facilities being provided. Although a detailed assessment of the type of services which may be required has not yet been undertaken, an estimated range of gross development costs is £16.5m - £19.8m.
- 1.6.6 These high-level costs are based on a carbon neutral replacement facility which is approximately 15% smaller than the current Angel Centre, to take into account the inefficient layout of the current building. No allowance has been made for any loan repayment costs.
- 1.6.7 These costs do not include any increased revenue or operational savings which would result from the works as this will be dependent on the final scope. However initial estimates suggest this could range between £250,000 - £675,000 per annum.

## **1.7 Summary**

- 1.7.1 The two in-principle options we are asking Members to consider are whether the Council should look to refurbishment the existing facility, with the aim of making the facility fit for purpose for the long term (20-25 years) including the pledge to make it carbon neutral by 2027, or whether those aims would be more effectively achieved in a newly constructed facility.

Table 1 – Summary of pros and cons

	<b>Refurbishment Option</b>	<b>New Facility Option</b>
<b>Pros</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lower initial capital cost</li> <li>2) Generally speaking, less embodied carbon</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Existing Angel Centre could continue to operate while a new facility is constructed</li> <li>2) Design can ensure fit for purposes spaces are provided to meet customer needs</li> <li>3) Ensuring building is designed and constructed to carbon neutral standard</li> <li>4) Lower operating and maintenance costs</li> <li>5) Presents opportunities as part of the wider town centre work</li> </ol>
<b>Cons</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Significant disruption to facility during works meaning customers may move elsewhere</li> <li>2) Difficulty in ensuring the existing building can be made fit for purpose for the future if working within the existing footprint</li> <li>3) Likely to be ongoing high operational and energy costs, despite refurbishment</li> <li>4) Limits options for the wider development of the area east of the High Street</li> <li>5) Significant challenges to make the building carbon neutral</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Higher initial capital cost</li> </ol>

1.7.2 In either case an assessment of what facilities could be provided and, in the case of a new facility option, where those facilities could be located will be undertaken.

## **1.8 Next Steps**

- 1.8.1 Once a decision is made then officers can work with Mace to finalise the phase 2 Tonbridge Town Centre work with a view to providing Members with a report detailing the phase 2 work, including the implications of the in-principle decision made by Members.

## **1.9 Legal Implications**

- 1.9.1 This information can be found in a separate (Part 2) annex.

## **1.10 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.10.1 Some high-level financial information in relation to the two options is provided above at section 1.6. Once an in-principle option is chosen further work will be undertaken and presented to Members setting out facility options, as well as some more detail on likely costs.
- 1.10.2 This may involve the need to instruct design and cost services with an appropriate budget being identified.
- 1.10.3 Options for how the Council could look to fund either option would be explored as part of the next phase of work.

## **1.11 Risk Assessment**

- 1.11.1 If an in-principle decision is not forthcoming in relation to the Angel Centre it will add uncertainty to the Council's work to review its assets in the town centre.
- 1.11.2 Due to the condition of plant and equipment, as well as the Council's carbon neutral aspirations, this decision is needed to provide direction so we can plan for the future. If that does not happen the Council will be forced to spend significant sums of money on the building and equipment with no clear direction as to what the future of the facility may be, resulting in likely abortive costs.
- 1.11.3 If there is ongoing uncertainty over the future of the facility it may lead to both staff and customers leaving, impacting on the Trust's ability to generate revenue.

## **1.12 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 1.12.1 Being that an in principle recommendation is being sought from Members, it is felt the decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. At the point final decisions are taken in relation to the provision of services then an equality impact assessment will be undertaken.

### 1.13 Policy Considerations

1.13.1 Asset Management

1.13.2 Climate Change

1.13.3 Healthy Lifestyles

### 1.14 Recommendations

1.14.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that;

1.14.2 The preferred option chosen by Members of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee relating to the future of the Angel Centre set out in this report be taken into account, and;

1.14.3 Officers be instructed to proceed with further work on the preferred option, including what facilities could be provided and, in the case of a new facility option, where those facilities could be located, with a view to presenting a future report to Members with the details

The Director of Central Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Stuart Edwards  
Robert Styles

Adrian Stanfield  
Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive

Robert Styles  
Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Robin Betts  
Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration & Property

Des Keers  
Cabinet Member for Community Services

Annex 1 contains private/confidential information and is attached to the agenda under Part 2 - Private.

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## TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

#### Joint Report of the Director of Central Services and Director of Finance and Transformation

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

#### 1 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

**This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 within the purview of the Scrutiny Select Committee for recommendation to Cabinet.**

#### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2024/25 consideration has been given to a range of factors, including the Council's overall financial position, market position, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback.

1.1.2 The proposed charges for 2024/25 have also taken into account a set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges reproduced below for the benefit of this Committee:

- Fees and charges should reflect the Council's key priorities and other corporate aims and priorities recognising there may be trade-offs as these are not mutually exclusive;
- Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- If there is to be a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to the service user this should be a conscious choice;
- The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its key priorities and other corporate aims and priorities;

- Fees and charges should normally be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body);
- Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to commercial operators;
- There should be consistency between charges for similar services;
- Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern so as not to preclude, where appropriate, access to Council services on the grounds of ability to pay.

1.1.3 It is essential in light of the Council’s overall financial position that opportunities are taken to maximise income, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings & Transformation Strategy. Attention has been given to the fees and charges applied by neighbouring Councils.

## 1.2 Legal fees payable by third parties

1.2.1 From time to time the Council’s legal fees can be recovered from third parties, for example costs in connection with section 106 agreements or certain property transactions. Our level of fees have historically followed the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates, which are currently as follows:-

Solicitors and legal executives with over 8 years post qualification experience	£261
Solicitors and legal executives with over 4 years post qualification experience	£218
Other solicitors or legal executives and fee earners of equivalent experience	£178
Trainee solicitors, paralegals and fee earners	£126

1.2.2 For some Property transactions the amount to be charged in connection with the Council’s legal work is indicated in the Property document or Lease and in such cases the amount stated in such documents will apply on a case-by-case basis.

1.2.3 For certain leasehold and miscellaneous property transactions the Council does not charge the full fee for the legal and administrative work undertaken as the operators, who are often sole traders and small businesses, have to pay full market rate for the rental of the business premises in accordance with statutory provisions. This is for instance the case with regard to lease renewals where only a contribution



towards legal and administrative work is charged of £250. It is proposed to continue with this approach to assist the local economy.

- 1.2.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Council's charges follow the rates set out above and continue to reflect existing practises highlighted above. In respect of the fees set out at 1.3.1 above, the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates may change from time to time, so it is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that the level of legal fees charged by the Council is in accordance with the applicable rates set out in the Supreme Court guidelines. This will avoid the necessity of a further report should the guideline hourly rates change.

### 1.3 Photocopying Charges

- 1.3.1 A photocopying service is offered for members of the public calling at the council's main offices or requiring copies of Council documents sent by post. The current charges are 10p for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.
- 1.3.2 These charges are intended to cover the costs of the photocopy meter charge (including toner), paper and an allowance towards the staff time in looking out documents and postage where appropriate.
- 1.3.3 The level of charge was reduced in 2007/08 after remaining static for a number of years to comply with Freedom of Information requirements. The marginal cost per copy (including paper) is still approximately £0.10 per copy. Comparative charges in neighbouring authorities have been somewhat difficult to ascertain and many appear not to charge for photocopying. However, it is considered appropriate to retain a charge to avoid requests for multiple copies of pages and to cover cases where documents cannot be provided by email. It is therefore suggested that the current charge be maintained.
- 1.3.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to retain the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.

### 1.4 Street Naming and Numbering

- 1.4.1 The requirement to provide a Street Naming & Numbering (SNN) service is derived from the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 and the County of Kent Act 1981. The TMBC Street Naming & Numbering Policy sets out the framework under which the service is delivered in this authority.
- 1.4.2 The IT GIS Team are responsible for delivery of this service. The actual cost of service delivery has been calculated by recording staff processing time, software costs and postage costs. The service generates an income of circa £45,000 a year. Neighbouring boroughs have their costs calculated in a different way from

TMBC, where new developments can be more costly and single addresses can be less costly, but the overall income is balanced.

1.4.3 Members had previously agreed for prior years reviews the following priorities were relevant:

- There should be no overall reduction of income to the Council through the SNN function;
- The cost of SNN to the Council should, where possible, be recovered through fees and charges (noting that this is not always possible, and not always desirable);
- Ensure there are no 'perverse incentives' to apply for alternative naming schemes to minimise costs;
- Ensure there is clarity in the fee schedule to avoid confusion and the need for officer discretion in charging fees;
- Where workloads are sufficient to justify such, additional new fees should be considered.

1.4.4 CPI inflation for September 2023 is 6.7%. The proposals below are based on one increase of 7% effective from 1 April 2024.

### **Proposed Fee scale for Street Naming and Numbering**

1.4.5 A development is considered to be separate if they are received on separate applications and/or they do not share a common road which is also being named for the first time as part of the application.

1.4.6 Individual flats are considered as individual plots.

1.4.7 *New Properties*

Category	Up to three in-fill properties on an existing street	Current Fee 2023/24	Proposed Fee 2024/25
1	Addressing one new in-fill property	£212	£227
2	Addressing two to three in-fill properties	£110 per property	£119 per property
	Where four or more properties are to be named or numbered, the fee for new developments (below) will be levied.		

1.a.1

	Four or more in-fill properties on an existing street, or new properties on a new street
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3	Fee for naming of a street, other than in relation to new property addressing	£260	£278
4	Fee for addressing plots, including street naming if Required 1- 4 Units	£261 +£40	279+£44
5	5 – 10 Units	£260 +£35	£278+£39
6	11 or more units	£523 +£13	£575+£14

#### 1.4.8 Existing Properties

7	Renumbering an existing property	£95	£102
8	Renaming an existing property, not in a current numbering scheme	£95	£102
9	Registering the addition or change or an alias to a numbered property	£95	£102
10	Removing an existing alias from a numbered property	No charge	No charge
11	Rename an existing street	£1,943	£2,137
12	Rename a block of flats	£1,943	£2,137
13	Fee for addressing units (flats) when splitting an existing property	£128 per unit	£143
14	Fee for addressing a single property when merging separate units	£217	£232

1.4.9 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the above fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering be adopted from 1 April 2024.

## 1.5 Land Charges

- 1.5.1 Maintenance of the land charges register is a mandatory function of the Council. The Council is required to allow inspection of the register at no cost. This includes inspection by search agents (a “personal search”) which provide a commercial service to people seeking to buy a property (residential or commercial), and more generally those carrying out “due diligence” in relation to a property transaction.
- 1.5.2 The Council may, however, charge for an official search of the register, which is backed by the Council’s indemnity insurance in the event of there being an error in the search result. The Council is therefore in competition with personal search companies for this fee: if the fee is set too high, it is likely more people will engage a search agent to undertake a personal search rather than pay the Council’s fees.

- 1.5.3 There are two types of search, an “LLC1” search and a “Con 29” form. The LLC1 search looks at 12 separate parts of the register, whilst the Con 29 form is a complementary search setting out a standard set of enquiries agreed by central government, the Law Society and local authorities.
- 1.5.4 The Local Land Charges Act 1975 (“the Act”) and the Local Authorities (England) (Charges for Property Searches) Regulations 2008 (“the Regulations”) enable local authorities to charge for their property search services and set out rules for calculating the fees. The charges must be on a cost recovery basis and not on a “profit basis” and so the Council is legally restrained in its approach to such fee setting.
- 1.5.5 The regulations allow for the fact that the fee has to be set in advance and so is based on an estimate of the likely level of searches received and the likely expenditure of the local authority in connection with answering those enquiries for the forthcoming year. The Act provides that registering authorities must secure that taking one financial year with another, that fee income does not exceed the cost of providing the services. This applies to the Official Search of the Land Charges Register. The Regulations apply in respect of the Official Enquiries of Local Authorities (more commonly known as Con 29) and further provide that over any three year period the authority should not make a profit in relation to the fees it has charged.
- 1.5.6 The housing and commercial property market is known to be a volatile area of activity where income can fall, or alternatively increase, quickly.
- 1.5.7 The LLC1 search is due to migrate to HM Land Registry in 2024 and at this point the Council will lose LLC1 income, whilst retaining responsibility to maintain the register. It is envisaged that this loss of income should be accounted for (at least in part) in fee setting for 2024/25 financial year (FY). At present, migration is due to complete in May 2024. Once the migration is complete, officers will need to review the level of fees charged to ensure that they reflect the time spent on dealing with the relevant enquiries.
- 1.5.8 The table at **[Annex 1]** shows the fees for land charges searches and enquiries and the VAT element of those proposed to be effective from 1 April 2024.
- 1.5.9 It is not believed that it is appropriate to have any concessionary charges apply to these fees given that the search function supports the sale and purchase of private property. Members are reminded of the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have regard to the requirement to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) to advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups and (iii) to foster good relations between people from different groups, however it is not believed that these charges will have an adverse impact on any particular group protected by the 2010 legislation. The charges will be the

same for everyone who requires the Services and there does not appear to be any disproportionate effect on any of the protected groups.

- 1.5.10 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in **Annex 1** be adopted with effect from 1 April 2024.

## 1.6 Tonbridge Castle

- 1.6.1 There are three levels of fees at Tonbridge Castle:-

Type 1 “Fixed rate”	Type 2 “Discount / commission when criteria is met”	Type 3 “Events”
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attraction Tickets</b> (Castle Tours)</li> <li>• <b>Vast Majority of Weddings</b></li> </ul>	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attraction Tickets</b> (Castle Tours – e.g. discount for groups)</li> <li>• <b>School parties</b> (1 place free in 10)</li> <li>• <b>Castle event partners</b> (Partners who book Weddings / Events)</li> </ul>	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events where different levels of commission or fees are negotiated between TMBC and Event Organiser for events on:</li> <li>• <b>Castle Lawn and grounds</b> (where the Chamber is booked as part of a package)</li> <li>• <b>Gatehouse / Council Chamber</b> (Where Partners enter in to an agreement to hold functions and the income to TMBC will vary)</li> </ul>

### 1.6.2 Proposed pricing for Castle tours 2024/25 -

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Adult*	£9.00	£9.00	£9.00	£9.90	£9.90
Concessions* Jun/Senior/Student	£6.50	£6.50	£6.50	£7.15	£7.15
Family Ticket* 2 adults 2 children	£28.00	£28.00	£28.00	£30.00	£30.00
Season Ticket Adult*	£28.00	£30.00	£30.00	£30.00	£35.00

\*With other castles charging a lower entrance fee than Tonbridge (Rochester and Upnor) £7.70. We recommend fees being kept at current level for one year, especially with the Tonbridge Castle OSG future plans being formulated.

### 1.6.3 Additional tour fees 24/25

Item	Cost	Comment
Castle Tour Guide – Commercial	£35.00	One off - charge per tour guide

### 1.6.4 Proposed fees for schools 24/25

1.6.5 Costs for School Visits does not include VAT.

1.6.6 The key difference between the normal entrance fee which is charge inclusive of VAT, is that you have the audio tour guide included with the price of the ticket.

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Adult	£8.50	£8.60	£8.60	£9.46	£9.46
School Children	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00	£6.60	£6.60
Education Facilities includes toys, dressing up clothes, games, paper, pens and 2 tour guides (1 teacher free per 10 children. For special needs groups, carers admitted free as required)	£90.00	£95.00	£95.00	£104.50	£110

In line with general ticket prices, these have to be lower due to the VAT element.

### 1.6.7 Ceremonies – fee model – chamber

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Weddings -						
Monday - Thursday	£880	£880	£900	£990	£990	£990
Friday	£920	£920	£940	£1034	£1085	£1085
Saturday	£980	£980	£980	£1078	£1,125	£1,125
Sunday	£980	£980	£980	£1078	£1,125	£1,125
Events like Renewal of Vows/Baby Naming / Wakes						

Monday - Thursday	£330	£330	£330	£363	£380
Friday	£440	£440	£440	£484	£500
Saturday	£550	£550	£550	£605	£630
Sunday	£550	£550	£550	£605	£630

### 1.6.8 Chamber reception after ceremonies

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Receptions -</b>				
Monday - Thursday	£1100	£1210	£1,270	£1,270
Friday	£1350	£1485	£1,550	£1,550
Saturday	£1400	£1540	£1,600	£1,600
Sunday	£1400	£1540	£1,550	£1,550

### 1.6.9 Ceremonies – additional fees

Additional Ceremony fees	Current cost 23/24	Proposed cost 24/25	Comments
Castle Photo Opportunity – buy 30mins in the Castle 4-4.30pm	£55.00	£60	One off
Wedding Fair Table (single)	£28.00	£30	One Day
Wedding Fair Table (Double)	£55.00	£60	Weekend
Corkage Table	£55.00	£60	One off for a wedding who wish to have tea/coffee drinks/nibbles following the ceremony

### 1.6.10 Council Chamber

Venue	Current cost 23/24	Proposed cost 24/25	Comments
Chamber Half Day	£110.00	£115	Monday to Sunday
Chamber Full Day	£220.00	£230	Monday to Sunday
Chamber Evening*	£110.00	£225	Monday to Sunday
Castle Conference Room Half day	£83.00	£85	Monday to Sunday

<b>Castle Conference Room Full Day</b>	£165.00	£170	Monday to Sunday
<b>Castle Conference Evening*</b>	£83.00	£195	Monday to Friday *Plus Caretaker Charge

\*This fee for 2024/25 includes 5 hours of caretaking cost

## 1.7 Council Tax and Business Rate Court Costs

1.7.1 The Council is obliged by law to collect all unpaid amounts of council tax and business rates and therefore has to take recovery action through the Magistrates' Court to obtain the necessary order. The Council's costs in taking this recovery action is charged back to the taxpayer as follows:

Court Costs 2023/24			
Tonbridge & Malling	Summons	Liability Order	Total
Council Tax	£55	£45	£100
Business Rates	£120	£60	£180

1.7.2 These charges have not changed since 2009/10. However, Members will appreciate that, despite inflation in recent years, it has not been an appropriate time to uplift them given the impact of the pandemic and the recent economic crisis.

1.7.3 That said, more of our residents are struggling to pay their council tax which requires an increased resource to recover their unpaid debts. Therefore, having reviewed the costs charged by other Kent authorities (table below), I propose to seek the Court's approval to increase the level of council tax costs requested from taxpayers from the current amount shown above to £110 (£60 summons and £50 liability order).

	Council Tax - costs requested			Non Domestic Rates - costs requested		
	Summons	Liability Order	Total	Summons	Liability Order	Total
Ashford	£60.00	£65.00	£125.00	£0.00	£180.00	£180.00
Canterbury	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00
Dartford	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00
Dover	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00
Gravesham	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£110.00	£0.00	£110.00
Maidstone	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£145.00	£55.00	£200.00



Medway	£80.00	£0.00	£80.00	£80.00	£0.00	£80.00
Tonbridge & Malling	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£120.00	£60.00	£180.00
Sevenoaks	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00
Folkestone & Hythe	£46.00	£54.00	£100.00	£109.00	£65.00	£174.00
Swale	£60.00	£43.00	£103.00	£0.00	£103.00	£103.00
Thanet	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£145.00	£55.00	£200.00
Tunbridge Wells	£60.00	£50.00	£110.00	£145.00	£55.00	£200.00

1.7.4 This increase will bring us in line with the majority of Kent authorities. I do not propose to increase the level of costs for non-domestic rates as the current amount is appropriate for the recovery action required.

1.7.5 It is **RECOMMENDED**, therefore, that the amount of costs charged in 2024/25 to recover unpaid council tax debts be increased from £100 to £110 as shown in the table.

## 1.8 Legal Implications

1.8.1 Section 93 of the 2003 Local Government Act allows authorities to charge for services that they have a power [but not a duty] to provide.

## 1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.9.1 The fees and charges proposed have been considered in accordance with a set of guiding principles and the opportunity to maximise income has been taken where possible.

1.9.2 If Members are minded to approve proposals as set out, the additional income to be built into **Estimates for 2024/25** would be as follows:

Budget Heading	Original 2023/24 £	Proposed 2024/25 £
Street Naming and Numbering	40,450	45,000
Land Charges	250,000	230,000
Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse	40,600	33,500
Tonbridge Castle Chamber	27,000	35,000
Local Revenues Summons Costs	250,000	335,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>608,050</b>	<b>678,500</b>

The income above reflects the current levels of demand for the service and shows an increase between years of **£70,450**, which is **£38,500** above the level assumed in the updated MTFs due to be presented to Cabinet in December.

## 1.10 Risk Assessment

1.10.1 A decision is required now on the proposed fee structure for these activities to ensure that the Council has timely and up-to-date arrangements in place to administer service requests when received.

## 1.11 Equality Impact Assessment

1.11.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## 1.12 Recommendations

1.12.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:-

- 1) the proposed charges for legal costs as set out in paragraph 1.2.4 be approved;
- 2) the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate be retained as set out in paragraph 1.3.4;
- 3) the Fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering as set out in paragraph 1.4 be adopted from 1 April 2024;
- 4) the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in Annex 1 and paragraph 1.5 be adopted with effect from 1 April 2024;
- 5) the fees and charges 2024/25 related to Tonbridge Castle as set out in 1.6 of the report be approved; and
- 6) the amount of costs charged in 2024/25 to recover unpaid council tax debts be increased from £100 to £110 as set out in paragraph 1.7.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Glen Pritchard

Joy Ukadike

Stuart Edwards

Nizete Vasconcelos

Anthony Garnett

Adrian Stanfield  
Director of Central Services

Sharon Shelton  
Director of Finance & Transformation

			Current		Suggested		Suggested	
			2023/24 £		Upto Transfer 2024/25 £		After Transfer 2024/25 £	
Separate Fee	Residential / Commercial	LLC1	42.00		42.00		0.00	Deleted
Separate Fee	Residential	CON29R	AG	135.00		135.00		135.00
			VAT	27.00		27.00		27.00
		Total		<u>162.00</u>		<u>162.00</u>		<u>162.00</u>
Separate Fee	Commercial	CON29R	AG	293.00		293.00		293.00
			VAT	58.60		58.60		58.60
		Total		<u>351.60</u>		<u>351.60</u>		<u>351.60</u>
Combined Search	Residential	LLC1	YG	35.00		35.00		0.00
		CON29R	AG	113.00		113.00		0.00
			VAT	22.60		22.60		0.00
		Total		<u>170.60</u>	Discounted	<u>170.60</u>		<u>0.00</u>
Combined Search	Commercial	LLC1	YG	35.00		35.00		0.00
		CON29R	AG	264.00		264.00		0.00
			VAT	52.80		52.80		0.00
		Total		<u>351.80</u>	Discounted	<u>351.80</u>		<u>0.00</u>
Optional Questions		CON29O	AG	16.50		17.50		17.50
			VAT	3.30		3.50		3.50
		Total		<u>19.80</u>		<u>21.00</u>	Increased	<u>21.00</u>
Solicitor Questions			AG	18.00		20.00		20.00
			VAT	3.60		4.00		4.00
		Total		<u>21.60</u>		<u>24.00</u>	Increased	<u>24.00</u>
Additional Parcels			AG	11.00		12.00		12.00
			VAT	2.20		2.40		2.40
		Total		<u>13.20</u>		<u>14.40</u>	Increased	<u>14.40</u>
Expedited Fee			AG	49.00		49.00		49.00
			VAT	9.80		9.80		9.80
		Total		<u>58.80</u>		<u>58.80</u>		<u>58.80</u>

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## TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

#### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

#### 1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2027

This report sets out the proposed changes to the draft strategy in light of the feedback received during the consultation exercise which was undertaken in September-October 2023, and recommends the adoption of the strategy as amended.

#### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 A report setting out a draft Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027 was presented to the committee on 25 July 2023. The committee recommended approval of the document, and this was subsequently signed off by Cabinet on 05 September 2023.

1.1.2 The consultation commenced on 15 September and ran until 13 October 2023. Having now been the subject of consultation, the purpose of this report is to present a final draft for approval. The strategy has been amended to take account of the comments received and to reflect views of local businesses and key partner organisations on our economic priorities and actions for the borough.

#### 1.2 Results of Consultation

1.2.1 The following measures were undertaken in order to obtain consultation responses from local stakeholders:

- Dedicated webpage inviting people to comment through a short questionnaire.
- Direct email to database of key economic partner contacts.
- Programme of social media messaging – Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Inclusion of an article in two editions of the Tonbridge and Malling Business e-bulletin, which goes out to over 900 business contacts.

1.2.2 A total of 23 formal responses were received from local businesses and business representative organisations, partner organisations (such as the West Kent Partnership and adjoining Borough and District Councils), as well as from Officers

and Members within the council (22 responses via the questionnaire and one written email). Whilst the number of responses was lower than hoped for, the quality of the feedback from those that did respond was high and as such extremely helpful in shaping the final draft of the strategy. A summary of the responses is provided below:

- 91% of respondents agreed with the vision set out in the strategy, with 0% disagreeing with the vision.
- Of the priorities set out in the strategy, the highest ranked priorities are:
  - Supporting local business
  - A greener more productive economy
  - Vibrant town centres
  - A thriving rural economy
- 0% disagreed with the indicators on the dashboard – 62% agreed with them and 38% were unsure.
- When asked if there was anything missing in the strategy, the following were suggested:
  - Ensuring the Unique Selling Points (USPs) of the borough are covered.
  - A greater emphasis on tackling empty commercial premises and town centre eyesore sites/premises.
  - More on harnessing volunteers and their skills and experience.
  - More business networking opportunities.
  - Ensuring new developments support biodiversity/tree planting.
  - Issues of housing affordability for local people.

1.2.3 In addition, comments were also shared about the presentation of the strategy – making it more visually appealing and ensuring that the information is as easily digestible as possible.

### **1.3 Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027**

1.3.1 Following the feedback from the consultation, the draft Economic Development Strategy 2023/2027 has been amended. The revised document is set out in **Appendix 1**.

### 1.3.2 The amendments include:

- Inclusion of more imagery from across the borough that help to reference the strengths of the local economy.
- Further information on the shopfront and vacant unit improvement grant scheme in the action plan to emphasise the role of the council in helping to support our town centres.
- Reference to housing affordability for local people as a key challenge.
- Inclusion of more detail in the action plan – relating to funding and timescales.

## 1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 The matters raised in this report are considered to be routine, uncontroversial or not legally complex and a legal opinion has not been sought on these proposals.

## 1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The actions set out in the strategy can be delivered using existing Economic Regeneration budgets.

## 1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Not applicable.

## 1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote to low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## 1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Economic Development

1.8.2 Skills and Employability

1.8.3 Inward Investment

1.8.4 Tourism Development

1.8.5 Climate Change

## 1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 That the report **BE NOTED**.

1.9.2 That the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027 as set out in Appendix 1 **BE RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet for approval.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,  
Strategic Economic  
Regeneration Manager

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive



## Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027

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**Dynamic – Resilient – Inclusive - Sustainable**

**November 2023**

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# 01 Foreword

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council recognises the leading role it can play in helping to drive forward sustainable economic growth, and shape the borough into a place that offers a high quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

This is a responsibility that we take on with enthusiasm, but it is by no means a small undertaking in the current economic climate. The COVID-19 pandemic has left a considerable legacy, with the sizeable impact on economic and personal well-being resulting in changes in the way many people live their lives and how businesses continue to operate.

At the same time there is a growing imperative for action in mitigating the worst effects of climate change – making sure that the council leads by example, but also supporting the local business community to move towards carbon net zero.

These are challenging times, but it is vital that the council proactively uses the resources at its disposal to help steer our economy towards a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future. Our Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027 sets out how, with our partners, we aim to achieve this.



**Cllr Robin Betts**  
**Cabinet Member for Climate Change,**  
**Regeneration and Property**  
**November 2023**

## 02 Strategic Context

The council is in the process of adopting a new Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 which sets out a bold new vision for the borough:

***“To be an innovative and forward-thinking council, that leads the people and businesses of the borough towards a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable future.”***

One of the priorities that underpins the vision focusses specifically on the local economy and the role that the council and its partners can play in supporting it. The priority, which emphasises the need for sustainable growth, is:

***“Investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth.”***

These statements provide a strong starting point for the direction that this strategy needs to take.

When the council’s last economic strategy was produced in 2020/21 (Economic Recovery Strategy 2021-23), the emphasis was very much on navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a number of key considerations now need to be factored into our thinking when formulating our new strategy document and identifying our priorities. These include:

- The economic uncertainty arising from high inflation, tight labour markets and supply chain disruption, as well as the longer-term impact and opportunities arising from Brexit.
- Moving towards a net zero carbon economy in a way that incentivises the use of new technologies and green skills development as well as the enhancement of our natural environment.
- The need to align this economic strategy closely with the re-positioning of the West Kent Partnership and its new priorities, the Kent & Medway Economic Development Strategy and our UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan in order to support our local economy effectively.
- Gross Value Added (GVA) per head data has highlighted the strong role that West Kent plays in contributing towards the Kent economy – for example in Tonbridge and Malling the GVA per head is £36,690 compared to £27,907 across Kent as a whole. However, when compared to other locations equidistant to London, such as Guildford, it is clear that there is room for improvement.
- The challenge for our High Streets as they evolve from purely ‘shopping centres’ to provide a wider array of services.
- Supporting the rural economy as it undergoes a period of change, particularly with the switch away from the Direct Payment system in the farming sector and changes in the labour market.

## 03 Key Strengths & Challenges

Like any borough, Tonbridge and Malling has numerous strengths and challenges that have an impact on its potential for success. In addition to being well located with good transport links, the borough also has a strong business community, and an attractive environment.

However, many of these strengths also bring challenges. For example, for much of the borough development is constrained due to environmental and landscape designations (such as the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Green Belt), and whilst proximity to London and good accessibility to international gateways brings wealth into the area, it also contributes to higher housing prices, greater employment costs and congestion.

<b>Strengths:</b>	<b>Challenges:</b>
<p>Location – proximity to London and to international gateways</p> <p>Good strategic transport network – good road and rail links that enable high levels of accessibility.</p> <p>An attractive environment that creates a high quality of life.</p> <p>A strong business community with a diverse number of key sectors that ensure local resilience.</p> <p>Comparatively low level of unemployment amongst the local work force.</p> <p>A high level of household income in comparison to other areas of Kent.</p> <p>A proactive and well-run local authority, with a strong partnership network.</p>	<p>Identifying new employment sites to meet future need given constraints.</p> <p>Housing price affordability for local people.</p> <p>Decarbonising the economy whilst maintaining sustainable growth.</p> <p>Loss of existing commercial premises through Permitted Development Rights.</p> <p>Limited Higher Education provision in the borough.</p> <p>Carving out a positive future for our town centres.</p> <p>Recruitment challenges for local businesses.</p> <p>Transport infrastructure often congested at peak times.</p> <p>Rural isolation – especially with local public transport services reduced and some areas of variable broadband coverage.</p> <p>Ineligibility for many public funding opportunities due to perceived affluence.</p>

## 04 Vision & Strategic Priorities

*“Maximising the unique strengths of the local area to help create a resilient, dynamic and inclusive economy that fosters sustainable growth.”*

During the early 2020s, the local economy has been impacted by a series of national and global events. We have worked closely with local businesses to ensure that we have managed to avoid the very worst impacts of these events, and it has demonstrated that we are fortunate to have a **resilient** and **dynamic** business community. This is something that we need to build upon in order to provide greater protection against any future challenges.

We also need to ensure that everyone sees the benefit of improvements in our economy, and that no-one is left behind. By being **inclusive** in our approach, we can help to increase skills levels and reduce unemployment through helping to create local opportunities.

Reducing our own carbon footprint, and encouraging others to do the same, is a central part of our Climate Change Strategy. In line with the aims and objectives of this strategy, we need to ensure that this Economic Development Strategy has a strong focus on **sustainable growth** that can reap benefits for our businesses and positively impact future generations.

With these key elements to our vision in mind, 7 themes have been identified that make up our approach in this strategy:

### **Theme 1: Promoting the borough:**

Tonbridge and Malling borough has lots of great things to shout about, and a wide range of successful businesses across a number of sectors. By promoting the area, as part of a wider West Kent initiative, it will help to increase investment, attract visitors and help to foster a stronger identity that will help to support our business community.

### **Theme 2: Supporting local business:**

Starting or growing a business is no easy task with just under 40% of businesses failing to last three years and nearly 90% of businesses in the borough being classed as ‘micro’. The council and partner organisations can offer areas of support to business, such as establishing advice and mentoring programmes, providing grant support and running events that support networking opportunities or enable businesses to find new members of staff.

### **Theme 3: Land and premises (and supporting infrastructure):**

The adoption of a Local Plan that identifies new employment sites is key to ensuring that existing businesses and inward investors have the room to grow and are supported, where required, in that journey. There are also a number of strategic investment sites in the borough that are vital to the strengthening of the local economy, and it is therefore important that the council engages fully with these to ensure that they are delivered in a timely fashion and offer the maximum benefit locally.

### **Theme 4: A greener more productive economy:**

Whilst growth is clearly important, it is essential that the economy de-carbonises in order to reduce its impact on the environment and mitigates against the worst impacts of climate change. A growing economy can be a green economy: between 1990 and 2019 the UK reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 41% while the economy grew by 78%. Many businesses are well-advanced on their journey towards

Net Zero, reaping the benefits of greater efficiencies and shielding themselves from the volatility of the energy markets, but others still need support along the way. There are also new challenges such as making sure that there are sufficient skills locally to enable the decarbonisation of the economy and our homes, and the support infrastructure is available to enable growth in the use of electric vehicles.

**Theme 5: A thriving rural economy:**

The borough is mainly rural in nature, and as such our rural businesses play a strong part in the overall performance of our local economy. As well as fantastic land-based businesses, institutions such as East Malling Research Station (NIAB EMR) and Hadlow College (part of North Kent College), there are a diverse range of innovative rural businesses covering a range of sectors. With recruitment challenges and the loss of some funding sources, it is important that we offer support to contribute towards a flourishing rural economy.

**Theme 6: An inclusive economy**

Despite Tonbridge and Malling being perceived as affluent, not everyone enjoys equal access to opportunities. This is best illustrated by the variation in unemployment rates and deprivation indices across the borough. We will collaborate with local schools, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Kent County Council and community organisations to create opportunities that contribute towards a more inclusive society.

**Theme 7: Vibrant town centres**

High streets are the beating hearts of our towns, and in recent years they have had to deal not only with the impact of economic downturns and the covid-19 pandemic, but also the shift in spending behaviour as online retailing expands. We will support our town centres as they adapt to change, to ensure they are attractive places to socialise, shop and be entertained.

## 05 Working in Partnership

The Borough Council recognises the key role it has to play in helping the local economy to recover and grow, both in terms of setting a strategic framework for its approach as well as through the various initiatives it undertaken order to contribute towards the creation of a better economy.

However, our positive impact can only really be maximised by working with partners that also play an equally important role and can offer specialist skills, experience, knowledge and additional resources. As such, we are committed to working with partners organisations to achieve the actions set out in this strategy. Key individual partners are too numerous to include individually in this chapter, but the following partnerships will be essential in supporting the council to meet the needs of the local economy:

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund Partnership (UKSPF):** the council is working closely with Central Government and local organisations to deliver its Levelling Up Programme. An important part of the delivery of this programme is the role of a 'Local Group' comprising community and business representatives, which provides oversight, advice and support in advancing UKSPF funded initiatives.

**Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP):** KMEP is focussed on driving forward economic growth and prosperity in Kent and Medway and is governed by a Board with membership drawn from business, local government and education establishments. KMEP delivers the objectives set out in Kent and Medway's Growth Plan, and in recent year has supported the borough in securing investment through government initiatives such as the Local Growth Fund and Growing Places Fund.

**West Kent Partnership (WKP):** is the strategic economic partnership covering the local authority areas of Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. The three areas work closely together to leverage the resources available to them in order to deliver more for our local businesses, attract inward investment and promote the local economy.

Over recent years, the partnership has successfully delivered initiatives including:

- the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network, which had a focus on business-relevant careers advice for schools;
- the West Kent Kick Start Programme, giving young people 6-month work placement opportunities;
- the West Kent Jobs Fairs and West Kent SkillsFest.

There are plenty of exciting new initiatives starting, including the West Kent Business Support Programme, West Kent Rural Grants Scheme and the Invest West Kent initiative to promote the area as a great place to do business.

In addition, there are a number of key partners that the Borough Council works with directly to deliver initiatives or to support work in a specific area of the local economy. A list of these partners, along with some of the key funding streams, is provided in Appendix 1.



## 06 Action Plan

Theme	Action	Measure	Partners	Funding	Timescale
Promoting the Borough	Rebranding of the West Kent Partnership.  Launch and management of Invest West Kent website and campaigns.	Delivery of brand and launch of website by Autumn 2023.  Ongoing campaigns.	West Kent Partnership (Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC))	Existing West Kent Partnership Contribution and other West Kent authorities.	November 2023  From March 2024 onwards.
Promoting the Borough	Delivery of Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent to promote the area as a tourism destination.	100% of targets in the SLA met.	Visit Kent	Existing TMBC Economic Development Budgets.	Ongoing – annual SLA for duration of strategy (2027)
Supporting Local Business	Delivery of the West Kent Business Support Programme	20 T&M based businesses per annum given mentoring support and access to micro-grant support.  Delivery of minimum 6 workshops across West Kent per annum	West Kent Partnership (SDC and TWBC), Smarter Society Ltd	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Existing TMBC Economic Development Budgets.	Currently until March 2025.
Supporting Local Business	Promote the Kent and Medway Growth Hub and other business support organisations.	To promote the support available and appropriately refer businesses.	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, other business representative organisations.	TMBC Officer time.	Currently until March 2025.
Supporting Local Business	Local Business Networking	Minimum of 3 events per annum.	Federation of Small Business (FSB); Tonbridge Town Team; Town and Parish Councils; local businesses.	Existing TMBC Economic Development Budgets and partner funding.	Ongoing for the duration of the strategy (2027)
Supporting Local Business	Creation and Distribution of the monthly Business Bulletin.	Minimum 12 bulletins per annum  Minimum 900 recipients on the business database.	Input from all partner organisations and businesses.	TMBC Officer time.	Monthly for the duration of the strategy (2027)
Supporting Local Business	Annual West Kent Business Conference	Delivery of one summit per annum with minimum 40 businesses attending.	West Kent Partnership (SDC and TWBC)	Existing West Kent Partnership Contribution and other West Kent authorities.	Next event - March 2024.

Theme	Action	Measure	Partners	Funding	Timescale
Land and Premises	Delivery of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan by the Local Planning Authority	Work towards the adoption of the Local Plan and the allocation of strategic sites and new employment allocations by 2026.	Statutory Consultees, local residents and businesses.	Existing TMBC Budgets.	Adoption of Local Plan from April 2026.
Land and Premises	Work with Panattoni to help complete the Panattoni Park Aylesford development.	Full occupation of the site.	Panattoni, Kent County Council	TMBC Officer time.	2024.
Land and Premises	Work with NIAB EMR to bring forward further phases of the Green Tech Hub for Advanced Horticulture.	Implementation of Phase 2 during the course of this strategy.	NIAB EMR, East Malling Trust.	TMBC Officer time.	By end of 2027
Land and Premises	Support the Royal British Legion Industries in bringing forward the next phase of the Centenary Village and other on-site developments	Implementation of works during the course of this strategy.	RBLI	TMBC Officer time.	Centenary Village – 2024.
Land and Premises	Support the delivery of the Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough Embankment Scheme (LEHES)	Works fully completed.	Environment Agency, Kent County Council, SE Local Enterprise Partnership	TMBC Capital Allocation.	Completed by 2025
Land and Premises	Promote Locate in Kent to businesses looking for land or premises to grow.	To promote the support available and appropriately refer businesses.	Locate in Kent	TMBC Officer time.	Ongoing throughout duration of the strategy (2027)
A Greener More Productive Economy	Green Business Grant Scheme (UKSPF)	Deliver 2 more rounds of the GBGS (in 2023 and 2024) supporting a minimum 20 businesses.	Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council (LoCASE); Local Businesses.	UKSPF and Business Rates Pool funding.	All projects completed by March 2025.
A Greener More Productive Economy	Delivery of Green Retrofit Skills Pilot (UKSPF)	Support up to 50 people into gaining green retrofit skills in 2024/25.	Sevenoaks District Council, Local Colleges	UKSPF	Completed by March 2025.

Theme	Action	Measure	Partners	Funding	Timescale
A Greener More Productive Economy	Carbon Literacy Training (UKSPF)	Delivery of Carbon Literacy Training to up to 100 people in 2024/25	Town and Parish Councils, Charitable and Community Groups	UKSPF	Completed by March 2025.
A Greener More Productive Economy	Promote existing advice on energy efficiency and emissions reduction to local businesses	To promote the support available and appropriately refer businesses.	Low Carbon Kent, LoCASE, GSE Net Zero Hub.	TMBC Officer time.	Ongoing for duration of the strategy (2027)
A Greener More Productive Economy	Support provision of Electric Charging Points	50 Electric Charging Points delivered in Phase 2 of the Programme.	Kent County Council, Connected Kerb	TMBC existing budgets and KCC.	Installed April 2025.
A Thriving Rural Economy	West Kent Rural Grant Scheme Programme	A minimum of 25 grants provided to support rural businesses and communities during 2023-2025	West Kent Partnership	Rural England Prosperity Fund.	Completed by March 2025
A Thriving Rural Economy	Promote and refer local businesses to the Growing Kent and Medway initiative	To promote the support available and appropriately refer businesses.	NIAB EMR (at East Malling), Growing Kent and Medway partners.	TMBC Officer time.	Ongoing for duration of the strategy (2027)
An Inclusive Economy	Delivery of jobs fairs that support people into work or training.	2 per annum (Tonbridge and Aylesford (RBLI Village))	Department for Work and Pensions; Housing Associations, RBLI	Existing TMBC Economic Development budgets.	Ongoing for duration of the strategy (2027)
An Inclusive Economy	Support apprenticeship and internship opportunities for people with SEN.	Work with specialist college to support up to 8 young people into workplace opportunities.	Oaks Specialist College, Education People (KCC)	Business Rates Retention Pilot	Delivered by September 2024.
An Inclusive Economy	Support local schools with careers advice and work experience.	Attend up to 2 school careers fairs per annum.	T&M Schools, The Education People, Kent Education Business Partnership.	TMBC Officer time.	Ongoing for duration of the strategy (2027)
An Inclusive Economy	Help to reduce digital exclusion in our most deprived communities.	Establish an initiative to help tackle Digital Exclusion	Kent County Council	Business Rates Retention Pilot.	Delivery during 2024/25.
Vibrant Town Centres	Shopfront and Vacant Unit Improvement Scheme (BRRP/UKSPF)	Support up to 35 shopkeepers with grant support and advice during 2023-2025	Let's Do Business Group, local businesses.	UKSPF and Business Rates Retention Pilot.	Completed by March 2025.

Theme	Action	Measure	Partners	Funding	Timescale
Vibrant Town Centres	Programme of Town Centre Events and Markets	Deliver and support a minimum of 30 events per annum to support our town centres.	Events Companies and organisers, local businesses.	TMBC Officer time and existing TMBC budgets.	Ongoing for duration of the strategy (2027)
Vibrant Town Centres	Tonbridge Town Centre Review	Production and implementation of sustainable plans for the regeneration of Tonbridge Town Centre.	Key Landowners, MACE Consultants	TMBC Budgets, Business Rates Retention Pilot and UKSPF.	Ongoing for duration of the strategy (2027)
Vibrant Town Centres	Improve wayfinding and signage in Tonbridge Town Centre	Delivery of first phase to improve links between Tonbridge Station and the rest of the town centre.	Community Rail Partnership, Network Rail, Southeastern, local residents and businesses	UKSPF	During 2024.
Vibrant Town Centres	Explore potential of a BID in Tonbridge.	Carry out initial research to examine the viability of a BID in Tonbridge.	Tonbridge Town Team, local businesses	TMBC Officer time.	During 2024.

## 07 Economic Dashboard

This economic dashboard provides a very high-level illustration of the performance of the local economy. Whilst there is some delay in the data, it does display that many aspects of the economy have plateaued, with 'business failures', youth unemployment and skills attainment on a negative trajectory.

The aspiration for 2027 is set out in the end column. Obviously, this can be impacted by a number of factors that are outside the control of this authority, however through the initiatives set out in the action plan the strategy does have the potential to help move all of these indicators in a positive direction.

Along with the action plan, updates on this dashboard will be provided on an annual basis, with comparison data also being provided in order to benchmark the performance of the local economy.

	Economic Indicator	Latest Data	Date	Current Trend	Aspiration for 2027
Dynamic	VAT Registrations (Start-Ups)	750	2021		800 per annum
Dynamic	Job Density	0.98	2021		1
Resilient	VAT De-registrations	775	2021		650 per annum
Resilient	3 Year Business Survival Rates (%)	62.5	2021		65%
Resilient	Median Gross Weekly Full-time Earnings (£) by Residence	£703.60	2022		£750
Resilient	Median Gross Weekly Full-time Earnings (£) by Workplace	£608.80	2022		£650
Inclusive	Unemployment Rate (%)	2.2%	Aug 2023		Less than 2%
Inclusive	16–24-year-olds claiming out of work benefits (%)	3.9%	Aug 2023		Less than 3%
Inclusive	National Vocational Qualification Level 3+ (%)	48.3%	2021		60%
Inclusive	Happiness Score (out of 10)	7.6	2022		8 out of 10
Sustainable	Greenhouse Gas emissions from industry and commercial sectors in T&M (tCO2e)	188	2020		150
Sustainable	Percentage of T&M Greenhouse Gas emissions from industry and commercial sectors (%)	25	2020		20%
Sustainable	No. of renewable electricity installations	1,848	2021		2,750
Sustainable	% of all dwellings with EPC band C and above (%)	48.95	2022		55%
Sustainable	Proportion of employment in energy intensive sectors (%).	36	2022		30%

# Appendix 1:

<b>Partners</b>
Community Rail Partnerships
Clarion Housing
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
Department for International Trade (DIT)
Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
Deskrenters (Castle Lodge)
East Malling Trust
Education Business Partnership Kent
Environment Agency
Federation of Small Businesses
Golding Homes
Highways England
Homes England
JobCentre Plus
Kent Apprenticeships
Kent County Council
Kent Farmers Market Association
Kent International Business
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
Locate in Kent
Mid Kent College
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
Network Rail/Great British Railways
NIAB East Malling Research
North Kent College
Orbit Group
Produced in Kent
Royal British Legion Industries
Southeastern Railways
The Education People
The National Trust (Ightham Mote)
Tonbridge and Malling Businesses
Tonbridge and Malling Schools
Tonbridge Community Forum
Tonbridge Town Team
Town & Parish Councils
Visit Kent
West Kent Partnership – including Sevenoaks DC & Tunbridge Wells BC
<b>Key Funding Streams:</b>
Business Rates Pool
Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP)
Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

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## Serving our community

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## TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SELECT COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

#### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Information

### 1 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Following on from the adoption of the Corporate Strategy 2023-2027, a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been adopted that enable the Council to measure progress on its priorities. In order to improve their effectiveness, trend analysis and targets have also been included. This covering report and appendix provides data on KPIs relating to the period up to the end of September 2023.

#### 1.1 Overview of KPIs and Next Steps

- 1.1.1 As reported at the last meeting, now that the Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 has been adopted, a new suite of KPIs that are aligned to our priorities come into effect. These KPIs are designed to give a good strategic overview of performance rather than providing detailed service specific indicators.
- 1.1.2 Where applicable, for each KPI a trend analysis along with some explanatory information is provided. This is aimed at giving Members a quick illustration of performance as well as providing some narrative on any external factors that are worth being aware of when considering the trends.
- 1.1.3 For the majority of KPIs, targets for the end of the financial year have also been introduced in order to demonstrate where we want our performance to be by the end of March 2024.
- 1.1.4 The KPIs are provided in **Appendix 1**. A baseline covering the period 2022/23 has for the most part been used, with some KPIs having an earlier baseline solely due to lags in certain datasets. The data for July-September 2023 represents the most up-to-date available statistics in most instances, specifically where the data is captured on a quarterly basis. The majority of data that is captured annually is normally collated during the January-March period.
- 1.1.5 From the KPI data provided in the appendix, there are some trends that can be identified and highlighted in this report. These include:
- Salary monitoring data is £59,700 below profile, however this is dwarfed by the income monitoring data being £361,298 below profile as at the end of September 2023.

- Council Tax collection is running to a very similar profile to 2022/23 with 55.63% collected as of the end of September 2023, compared to 55.78% at the end of September 2022.
- NNDR collection rates are lower than the same time last year, however this has been skewed by the completion of a number of large commercial premises at Panattoni Park Aylesford this year. However, this should even itself out at the end of the financial year.
- Outstanding debt on the sales ledger has increased to £811,131 as of the end of September 2023.
- Borough-wide town centre vacancy rates in July 2023 (6.48%) are lower than in July 2022 (7.82%)
- Unemployment rates have increased very slightly since the last quarter – from 2.1% to 2.2% - but this is still quite low in comparison to Kent as a whole.
- The delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund projects is running to profile.

1.1.6 Unfortunately, there are some gaps in the data as things stand due to lags with certain datasets and with a number of the KPIs being collected on an annual rather than quarterly basis.

## **1.2 Targets and Benchmarking**

1.2.1 As referred to in 1.1.3, targets have been added as part of the changes to the aligned KPIs, which now set a clearer ambition for improvement and allow our performance to be measured. The use of targets and developing our use of benchmarking are both vital components of performance management.

1.2.2 In addition to the creation of targets, it is also important to benchmark these KPIs in order to address some of the weaknesses set out in the Auditor's Annual Report regarding performance management. Whilst there is a considerable amount of benchmarking being undertaken at a departmental level this isn't being captured as part of the new Corporate KPIs. This benchmarking is predominantly with national and countywide data.

1.2.3 It is proposed that for those KPIs that are already being benchmarked, that the inclusion of benchmarking data be added in the next cycle of reporting. As benchmarking is being introduced, further work will be undertaken to build up benchmarking for the remaining KPIs.

## **1.3 Questions at Scrutiny Select Committees**

1.3.1 Any questions regarding the KPIs should be submitted to the relevant Director at least 2 days in advance of the scrutiny select committee meeting in order to ensure that a suitable response can be provided at the meeting. However, this does not prevent questions being raised at the scrutiny select committee meeting. Any questions raised at the meeting will be responded to within 5 working days.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,  
Strategic Economic  
Regeneration Manager

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## Appendix 1: FRPSSC Key Performance Indicators

Priorities	Actions	Aligned KPI	BASELINE				2023/24		Target 2023/24	TREND	Data Assurance	Comments
			Value	Date	Frequency	Source	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept				
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">69 Page</p> <p>Priority 1: Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.</p>	<p>Further move the borough council forward so its services are delivered innovatively and in the most cost-effective and efficient way.</p>	Salary Monitoring data (£)	£106,150 below profile budget	Jan-Mar 2023	Quarterly	Financial Ledger System	£34,200 below profile	£59,700 below profile	To profile	→	Yes	
		Income Monitoring data (£)	£65,409 over profile budget	Jan-Mar 2023	Quarterly	Financial Ledger System	£128,739 below profile	£361,298 below profile	To profile	↓	Yes	Impacted, amongst other things, by a reduction in planning income and delays in garden waste invoicing
		Council Tax collection (%) - cumulative	98.40%	2022/23	Quarterly	Revenues System	27.63%	55.63%	98.50%	→		Was 55.78% in 2022/23 at this point in the year.
		NNDR collection (%) - cumulative	99.40%	2022/23	Quarterly	Revenues System	30.52%	57.95%	99.50%	↓		Was 62.3% in 2022/23 at this point in the year. Business Rates is quite volatile this year due to the large development at Panattoni Park Aylesford. When the new assessments are brought into the rating list, this will have a negative effect on collection but should even

												out by the end of the financial year when the rates bills have been paid out.
		Sales ledger - outstanding debt (£)	£786,627.80	Jan-Mar 2023	Quarterly	Financial Ledger System	£535,813.00	£811,131.00	Below £500,000	↓		
Investing in our Local Economy to foster sustainable growth	Deliver a range of measures to help our local economy bounce back.	Number of economic projects delivered through the UKSPF and REPF	0	Jan-Mar 2023	Quarterly	DLUHC	N/A	0	11 (cumulative by March 2024)	→	Yes	All 11 projects as part of the UKSPF/REPF programme are well underway but not completed, as such counted as 0 at present.
		Ratio of enterprise births to deaths	0.97	2021	Annually	Kent Analytics/KCC	N/A	N/A	Greater than 1		Yes	
		Town Centre Vacancy Levels (%)	7.82%	Jul-22	Annually	Economic Regeneration Town Centres Survey	N/A	6.48%	Less than 7%	↑	Yes	
		Unemployment rate (%)	2.10%	Jan-Mar 2023	Quarterly	NOMIS LA Profile	2.10%	2.20%	Under 2%	↓	Yes	Very slight rise which is reflected nationally - figure for Kent 3.3%, Sevenoaks 1.9% and Tunbridge Wells 2.4%.
	Identify ways we could use our land and other assets	% Occupation of rental properties	96%	Jan-Mar 2023	Quarterly	Property Database	100%	100%	100%	↑		Consists of retail and office units let on commercial terms - 27 properties in total

	<b>better, especially in Tonbridge Town Centre.</b>	Total income generated from property rentals (£)	£349,000	2021/22	<b>Annually</b>	Integra	N/A	N/A	£380,000		<b>Yes</b>	
		Progress made on Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration Plans.	Approval to proceed with Phase 2	Jul-22	<b>Quarterly</b>	Project Management	Options analysis work being undertaken	<b>Reports from Consultants being drafted.</b>	<b>Progress to detailed site proposals</b>	→	<b>Yes</b>	
	<b>Develop proposals to raise the profile of Tonbridge Castle and all council assets.</b>	Total income generated by Tonbridge Castle (£)	£79,100	2022/23	<b>Annually</b>	Integra	N/A	N/A	£85,000			
		Leisure Centres - overall income (% to profile)	117%	Jan-Mar 2023	<b>Quarterly</b>	TMLT Management System	N/A	N/A	<b>Over 100%</b>			
		Leisure Centres - overall expenditure (% to profile)	110%	Jan-Mar 2023	<b>Quarterly</b>	TMLT Management System	N/A	N/A	<b>Under 100%</b>			
		Total income from council run/supported events	£39,244	2022/23	<b>Annually</b>	Integra	N/A	N/A	£50,600			

	<b>Strengthen our links with strategic partners and funding bodies.</b>	External funding spent (UKSPF/RE PF) on economic initiatives (£)	£73,594	2022/23	<b>Annually</b>	Integra	N/A	<b>£149,841</b>	<b>£331,000</b>	→	<b>Yes</b>	
		No of economic projects jointly delivered with strategic partners.	13	2022/23	<b>Annually</b>	Annual Economic Strategy Action Plan	N/A	<b>N/A</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>Yes</b>	



**FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

**Standing items:**

- Record of Officer Decisions Taken (If any);

Meeting Date	Matter for Discussion	Requested by:	Director/Officer
14 November 2023	Fees and Charges		DFT/DCS
	Angel Centre Report		DCS/DSSLTS – Stuart Edwards
	Economic Development Strategy 2023/27		J Whittaker
	Key Performance Indicators Work Programme		
28 February 2024			
	Key Performance Indicators Work Programme		

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# Agenda Item 12

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

**ANY REPORTS APPEARING AFTER THIS PAGE CONTAIN EXEMPT  
INFORMATION**

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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# Agenda Item 14

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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