

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES

Monday, 30th June, 2025

Present: Cllr M D Boughton (Chair), Cllr R P Betts, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr D Keers and Cllr M Taylor

Virtual: Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr K B Tanner and Cllr K S Tunstall participated via MS Teams in accordance with Access to Information Rule No 23.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Mehmet.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 25/72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CB 25/73 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3 June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

CB 25/74 BUSINESS RATES POOL (SHARED GROWTH FUND) PROGRAMME

(Decision Notice D250073CAB)

Careful consideration was given to a proposed programme of activity to support the borough's local economy using funding through the Business Rate Pool (Shared Growth Fund).

Under the national business rates retention scheme, local authorities were able to come together, on a voluntary basis, to pool their business rates, given them scope to generate additional growth through collaborative effort and to smooth the impact of volatility in rates income across a wide economic area. The Council rejoined the Kent Business Rates Pool in April 2023, after improvements in local business rates income due to major commercial developments. Membership in the pool enabled the Council to access the Shared Growth Fund, collaboratively

managed with Kent County Council, which financed projects aligned with local and county strategic priorities. The selected projects were based on local and county wide strategies and had received approval from Kent County Council.

By the end of 2025/26, funding for the Shared Growth Fund was estimated at around £1.125m. However, upcoming business rate reforms may impact future income retention beyond 2026/27.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Business Rates Pool (Shared Growth Fund) Programme, as set out in Annex 1, be approved.

EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISIONS

CB 25/75 2024/25 FINANCIAL OUTTURN AND MAY 2025 BUDGETARY CONTROL

(Decision Notice D250074CAB)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation presented Members with the 2024/25 Financial Outturn and the current financial position to the end of May 2025 for the 2025/26 Financial Year, in accordance with the Borough Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

A detailed revenue and capital outturn position for the year 2024/25 was provided in the Revenue and Capital Outturn Booklet attached at Annex 1. Members were pleased with the positive revenue position for 2024/25, reported as a contribution to the Borough Council's General Revenue Reserve of £1,109,493 after taking into account the additional reserve movements as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report. Given the outturn variation, additional reserve movements had been made to assist with the delivery of corporate priorities and future needs of the authority and these movements to reserve to account for the variation between the outturn and revised estimate were provided at paragraph 4.13 of the report.

Details of the movements in reserve balances as at 31 March 2025 were set out in Annex 2 and a summary of decisions taken by Cabinet and Committees with budget implications since the revenue budget was approved by Council in February 2025 to the end of May 2025 was attached at Annex 3.

Budgetary Control Monitoring Statements for Salaries and Incomes to the end of May 2025 were attached for information at Annex 4 and Annex 5 respectively. The 2024/25 revenue budget position was summarised in paragraph 5.8 of the report, which reflected a favourable net variance of £291,052 as at the end of May 2025.

With regard to Business Rates monitoring, particular reference was made to the variation of £198,640 below the original estimate of an

overall net income of £4,011,309, due to an increased level of empty properties and the awaited valuations of business properties adjacent to Junction 5 of the M20.

Cllr Coffin proposed, seconded by Cllr Boughton and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the year end position for 2024/25 be noted and the reserve movements as shown in paragraph 4.13 be endorsed;
- (2) at the end of May 2025, a net favourable variance of circa £291k when compared to the proportion of the 2025/26 budget, as shown in paragraph 5.8 of the report, be noted; and
- (3) the current business rate pool position as at the end of May 2025, as set out in paragraph 6.2 of the report, be noted.

CB 25/76 WARM HOMES: LOCAL GRANT

(Decision Notice D250075CAB)

The Warm Homes: Local Grant, a government funded scheme in England aimed to improve the energy efficiency of homes and reduce fuel poverty for low-income households was part of the broader Warm Homes Plan, which aimed to upgrade 5 million homes within the next 5 years and support the transition to net zero by 2050.

The Borough Council had provisionally been awarded £1.5m of the Warm Homes: Local Grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of fuel poor homes in its district and help to deliver a wider net zero programme.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations and the assessment of risk detailed in the report. Members were advised of the scheme constraint that Administration and Ancillary (A&A) cost of delivery must not exceed 15% of the capital spend. This presented a high financial and reputational risk to the Council which could not be fully mitigated.

Consideration had been given options for delivery of the project, however the financial modelling schemes at Annex 1 and 2 to the reports showed that the scheme was not financially viable.

On the grounds of significant financial and reputational risk in delivering the scheme, Cllr Coffin proposed, seconded by Cllr Boughton and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Warm Homes: Local Grant funding be declined on the basis that the reputational and financial risk to the Council was too high; and
- (2) the Government be advised that although the Council wished to deliver these improvements in residents' homes across the borough, the scheme set up and constraints made it too high a risk to accept the funding.

CB 25/77 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME

(Decision Notice D250076CAB)

The report of the Chief Executive set out the Community Development Grant Scheme in detail and sought approval to launch the scheme in July 2025. The grant would support local voluntary, community and charitable groups to deliver targeted services that met residents' needs and enhance the quality of life in the community.

This would be the third round of the UKSPF Community Development Grant Scheme in addition to a recent TMBC 50th Anniversary Community Grant Scheme which had just been completed. All three previous schemes had been well received by the local voluntary, community and charity sector and many projects across the borough had been delivered, providing vital support to residents. As the schemes had been over-subscribed, and to help manage the process, guidance and scoring criteria was set out at Annex 1 to the report, to ensure applicants were aware of funding priorities and to maintain a fair and consistent approach to grant allocation.

In terms of the implementation, the scheme would be launched on 14 July 2025 and closed on 15 September 2025. The final approval of grant allocations would be at Cabinet on 14 October 2025, with funds distributed from the end of October 2025.

Careful consideration was given to the guidance and scoring criteria at Annex 1. In order to support local veterans and the Borough's armed forces community, Cllr Keers proposed, seconded by Cllr Boughton that additional points be included in the scoring criteria for any group proposing projects in support of the armed forces.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the priorities of the scheme, as set out in the report, be endorsed;

- (2) the Guidance and Scoring Criteria as set out in Annex 1, be endorsed subject to the inclusion of additional points for any group proposing projects in support of the armed forces; and
- (3) the launch of the scheme on 14 July 2025, be agreed;

**CB 25/78 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE - EAST OF HIGH STREET
MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK**

(Decision Notice D250077CAB)

Consideration was given to the Masterplan Framework and Viability reports that were the culmination of the East of High Street (EOHS) Masterplan exercise that had been carried out by consultants Mace, Architects Periscope and Commercial Property Specialist Vail Williams since December 2024. The consultants had presented a high-level illustrative masterplan and spatial development proposals including viability and delivery analysis, to address housing and employment growth needs.

It was proposed that a public engagement exercise be undertaken on the Masterplan Framework, informed by feedback from the Programme Board. The consultation would run digitally for six weeks from mid-July, supplemented by information at key town centre locations and via social media to ensure broad community access. Over the summer, further work would develop delivery routes and detail for Member consideration, including funding and procurement options. The viability report highlighted current market challenges but noted that conditions might change. Not undertaking public engagement or further delivery analysis over the summer were outlined as alternative options, but both were considered less effective for stakeholder involvement and strategic planning.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations, the assessment of risks detailed in the report.

To ensure that the work was shared with local stakeholders to allow them to understand the process and the potentially deliverable options, as well as being able to comment on these proposals and raise issues and questions, Cllr Keers proposed, seconded by Boughton and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the site development and delivery options in the Tonbridge Town Centre East of High Street Masterplan Framework Report at Annex 1, be noted and Members be invited to comment on these ahead of a more detailed report in October 2025;
- (2) the Tonbridge Town Centre East of High Street Masterplan Viability Report at Annex 2 (Part 2 – Private) and the Masterplan Viability

Report Appendix 2 Market Insight & Benchmarking at Annex 3 (Part 2 – Private) be noted; and

- (3) the recommendation of the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board in the meeting on 23 May 2025 at Annex 4 (Part 2 – Private) that a public engagement exercise be undertaken on the Masterplan Framework document, based on the views expressed by the Programme Board, be supported.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CB 25/79 MINUTES OF PANELS, BOARDS AND OTHER GROUPS

The Minutes of the meetings of the following Advisory Panels and other Groups were received, any recommendations contained therein being incorporated within the decisions of the Cabinet reproduced at the annex to these Minutes.

CB 25/80 DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS

Details of the Decisions taken in accordance with the rules for the making of decisions by executive members, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution, were presented for information.

CB 25/81 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

DECISIONS TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

CB 25/82 LEASE RENEWAL AT DERWENT ROAD, TONBRIDGE

(Decision Notice D250078CAB)

(Reasons: Part 2 – Private – LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

Consideration was given to the proposal to renew an existing lease for a shop unit the Council owned at Derwent Road in Tonbridge.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations, the assessed risk and legal implications.

Cllr Boughton proposed, seconded by Cllr Coffin and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the terms of the lease renewal at 1A Derwent Road in Tonbridge as detailed in the report, be approved.

CB 25/83 LEASE RENEWAL - MARTIN SQUARE, LARKFIELD

(Decision Notice D250079CAB)

(Reasons: Part 2 – Private – LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person).

Consideration was given to a proposal to renew an existing lease of 48 and 50 Martin Square, Larkfield as detailed in the report.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations, the assessed risk and legal implications.

Cllr Boughton proposed, seconded by Cllr Betts and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the terms of the lease renewal at 48 and 50 Martin Square in Larkfield as detailed in the report, be approved.

EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISIONS

CB 25/84 PROGRESS AND UPDATE - PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE (PAS) PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW

(Decision Notice 250080CAB)

(Reasons: Part 2 - Private: LGA 1972 - Sch 12A Paragraph 3 - Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

Cabinet received an update on the progress made to implement the requirements of the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2025/26 which sought an Independent Planning Advisory (PAS) Review to be completed by September 2025 and required an Action Plan for improvement to be considered by the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee by October 2025, with an Action Plan agreed by Cabinet by December 2025 and the Action Plan fully delivered by March 2026. The initial scoping letter, setting out a framework which would be used to guide the focus of the Peer Challenge was attached at Annex 1 to the report. The Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee were supportive of the Peer Challenge and were in agreement with the proposed make up of Members which gave proportional representation.

Cabinet had due regard to the views of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee, the financial considerations, in particular the

main variable factors, the value for money considerations and legal implications.

Cllr Boughton proposed, seconded by Cllr Taylor and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the funding for the Peer Challenge at a cost of between £18-22k (the main variable factors being the availability of consultants and expenses, especially hotel costs which were estimated as part of the guide cost) be approved, with the funding to be drawn from the Transformation Reserve;
- (2) the update on the fee quote, be noted; and
- (3) the on-going work to deliver the Peer Challenge within the target dates set out by the Annual Service Delivery Plan, be noted.

CB 25/85 COUNCIL BANKING AND MERCHANT ACQUIRER SERVICES CONTRACT

(Decision Notice D250081CAB)

(Reasons: Part 2 – Private – LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person).

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation set out details of the proposed review of the Council's Banking and Merchant Acquirer Services which were due to expire at the end of March 2026.

Cabinet had due regard to the financial and value for money considerations, the assessed risks and legal implications.

On the grounds of ensuring continuity of service, Cllr Boughton proposed, seconded by Cllr Coffin and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) 'Focus on Banking' be engaged to conduct a review of the current arrangements and provide recommendations for the renewal of the services from April 2026;
- (2) the cost of £4,000 for the review be funded from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve; and
- (3) the Head of Finance (designate) and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services be given delegated authority to proceed with the recommendations for the renewal of services from April 2026.

CB 25/86 URGENT ITEMS

The Chair agreed to take an urgent item of business by reason of special circumstances as the decision could not reasonably be deferred until the next meeting of Cabinet in September due to the need/wish to implement the service by 1 July 2025.

CB 25/87 ROUGH SLEEPER PREVENTION AND RECOVERY SERVICES - AWARD OF CONTRACT

(Decision Notice D250082CAB)

(Reasons: Part 2 – Private LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

Consideration was given to an award of contract for Rough Sleeper Prevention and Recovery Services following an award of £309,801 of Rough Sleeper Prevention and Resettlement Grant funding for rough sleeper services for the financial year. The proposed project would ensure that the Council have off the street accommodation for those rough sleeping across Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells which aligned with the Council's aim to end rough sleeping and where it did happen, ensure that it was brief and non-recurring.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations and legal implications.

Cllr Betts proposed, seconded by Cllr Coffin and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the award of contract to the successful tenderer to deliver the Rough Sleeper Prevention and Recovery Services for Tonbridge and Malling, be approved; and
- (2) an initial appointment until March 2026 and a further 3 x 1 years be approved, subject to further funding being awarded.

The meeting ended at 8.41 pm