



TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive
Damian Roberts

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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

14 July 2025

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, 22nd July, 2025 commencing at 7.30 pm or on the rising of the extraordinary meeting of Cabinet, whichever is the later.

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

DAMIAN ROBERTS

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 27 May 2025.

6. Outside Bodies Update - West Kent Partnership 17 - 22

A brief update in respect of the Outside Body to be provided by the Borough Council's appointee (Cllr R Betts).

Matters for Recommendation to the Cabinet

7. Digital & IT Strategy Progress Update 23 - 38

The report provides an update on progress to date with regard to the Council's Digital and IT Strategy for the period 2023-2027.

Matters submitted for Information

8. Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board Proposed Merger 39 - 46

The report advises Members that notice was formally given on 10 June 2025 of a formal merger between the Lower Medway Board and North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board. The consultation period closed on 10 July 2025.

9. 2024/25 Financial Outturn and May 2025 Budgetary Report 47 - 64

In accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules this report informs Members of the 2024/25 Financial Outturn and current financial position to the end of May 2025 for the 2025/26 Financial Year.

The Revenue and Capital Outturn Booklet (Annex 1) is published as a supplement.

10. Consultation - 'The Fair Funding Review 2.0' 65 - 68

The report advises Members of the release of the 'Fair Funding Review' consultation which was launched on 20 June 2025 and closes on 15 August 2025.

11. Consultation - Modernising and Improving the Administration of Council Tax 69 - 72

The report advises of the release of a consultation 'Modernising and improving the administration of council tax' which was launched on 20 June 2025 and closes on 12 September 2025.

12. Work Programme 2025/26 73 - 74

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2025/26 is attached for information. Members can suggest future items by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

13. 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

14. 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 for Recommendation to the Cabinet

15. Annual Senior Information Risk Owner Report 2025-26 77 - 90

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

The new Annual Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) Report provides a comprehensive overview of the key activities, achievements and challenges faced by the Council over the past year.

Matters submitted for Information

16. Urgent items 91 - 92

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 M R Rhodes (Vice-Chair)

Cllr A G Bennison
Cllr T Bishop
Cllr P Boxall
Cllr R I B Cannon
Cllr L Chapman
Cllr J Clokey

Cllr W E Palmer
Cllr B A Parry
Cllr S Pilgrim
Cllr K B Tanner
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-ugSzxiAPfw/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 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@tmhc.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)					
	Conservative	Liberal Democratic	Green	Ind. Kent Alliance	Labour
1	Chris Brown	Garry Bridge	Lee Athwal		Paul Hickmott
2	Roger Dalton	Trudy Dean	Kath Barton		
3	Dave Davis	Frani Hoskins	Steve Crisp		
4	Sarah Hudson	Roger Roud	Anna Cope		
5	James Lark	David Thornewell	Mark Hood		
Members of Cabinet cannot be appointed as a substitute to this Committee					

May 2025

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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, 27th May, 2025

Present: Cllr D Harman (Chair), Cllr M R Rhodes (Vice-Chair), Cllr A G Bennison, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr P Boxall, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr L Chapman, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr S A Hudson, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr S Pilgrim and Cllr C J Williams

Councillors R P Betts, P M Hickmott, M A J Hood, Mrs S Bell*, M D Boughton* and Mrs A S Oakley* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

An apology for absence were received from Councillors K B Tanner

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FRP 25/8 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr S Hudson substitute for Cllr K Tanner

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 25/9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

FRP 25/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee held on 25 February 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FRP 25/11 RIVERSIDE ROUTE LIGHTING PROJECT, TONBRIDGE

The report brought forward a List C Capital Plan Evaluation for riverside lighting between Town Lock and Vale Road in Tonbridge and sought

approval to move the project forward for construction later in the calendar year.

Members considered the feasibility study report (Annex 2) and the Capital Plan Evaluation (Annex 1) and welcomed the provision of high-quality lighting for pedestrians and the opportunity to create a safe and secure environment and reduce crime. The lack of lighting, combined with a narrow path lined with trees and shrubbery and unprotected river edge, made this an uninviting area and there had been a long-term aspiration from successive Ward Members to improve safety along this section of the riverside route.

Discussions had taken place with Kent County Council Public Rights of Way and it was confirmed that lighting may be installed on the route using powers under s161 of the Public Health Act 1875.

The Committee was assured that lighting levels would be consistent but would be low to protect and maintain the environment for wildlife, such as bats. The feasibility study provided a guide that developers should follow. In addition, comments from Kent Police would be reflected in the scheme.

On the grounds of understanding whether the introduction of a lighting scheme would impact local residents, Cllr Rhodes proposed that Members should have physical sight of the likely intended lighting columns by means of a demonstration in a low light at a future meeting of the Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Cannon and supported by the majority of Members.

Subsequent to the vote and for reasons of practicality it was agreed that a future meeting of the Committee could mean a visit to the project site.

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) Phase 1 of the project be taken forward through the design stages up to and including the preparation of tender documents;
- (2) the scheme be transferred to List A of the Capital Plan;
- (3) the use of the Borough Council's powers under s161 of the Public Health Act 175 for the delivery of the project, with agreement from Kent County Councils Public Rights of Way Team, be authorised; and
- (4) Members had physical sight of the likely intended lighting columns by means of a demonstration in a low light at a future meeting or a site visit.

***Recommended to Cabinet – Council Decision**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FRP 25/12 WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

The Work Programme setting out items to be scrutinised during 2025/26 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters by liaising with the Chair of the Committee and the Scrutiny Officer.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FRP 25/13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, it was seconded by Cllr Rhodes and

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

PART 2 - PRIVATE

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FRP 25/14 GIBSON BUILDING WEST FUTURE

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

The report of the Director of Central Services set out potential options for the Gibson West building at Kings Hill as part of the Borough Council's office accommodation consolidation project.

Careful consideration was given to the options presented and due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations and the assessed risk, especially in respect of Local Government reorganisation. There was also detailed discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of leasehold and freehold, the value of applying for planning consent before disposal, the significant annual costs related to the maintenance of the listed building and a general recognition that the layout of the building was an inefficient use of space and freehold disposal removed the ongoing financial concerns.

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the freehold option to dispose of Gibson West building be progressed; and

- (2) any offers received presented to the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Committee for ratification and recommendation to Cabinet for a final decision.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

The meeting ended at 8.14 pm

West Kent Partnership 2024/25 Update

The West Kent Partnership (WKP) is an economic partnership of over 20 years, which is funded by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and involves collaborative working amongst the Economic Development teams in the three authorities. The partnership promotes West Kent, champions key economic issues, engages with industry and business, delivers business support initiatives and pursues investment and funding to underpin innovation and growth.

The Council's Peer Challenge Review in 2022 highlighted the need for the partnership to be "focussed on delivering outcomes, not sharing information" and as such in recent years the partnership has become more focussed on collaborative project delivery and moved away from having a board that it reports to on a quarterly basis. This focus on delivery has been bolstered by the availability of external funding for projects that support growth in the local economy.

As such, a large amount of the work of the West Kent Partnership over the past 2-3 years has been on the delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund initiatives. This includes the West Kent Business Support Programme and the West Kent Rural Grants Scheme

West Kent Business Support Programme

During 2024/25, the West Kent Partnership continued the delivery of the UKSPF-funded business support programme. By the end of March 2025, the key outputs from the programme were:

- Provided support and advice to **708** small, start-up and pre-start-up businesses in West Kent (234 in the borough). This covered a range of different topics, but covered issues such as sales and marketing, recruitment and managing cashflow.
- Provided up to 8 hours of 1-2-1 mentoring to **100** small and start-up businesses (33 in the borough).
- Awarded **60** micro-grants (£500) to help support small-business growth (20 in the borough).
- Delivered **14** business workshop events across West Kent (5 in the borough – in Tonbridge and Kings Hill).
- Co-ordinated and delivered the West Kent Business Expo in March 2025 at the River Centre in Tonbridge (see pictures below). This was delivered in collaboration with the Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce (who cover West Kent), the Federation of Small Businesses and four local business sponsors (Carbon3, Baxall Construction, Thackray Williams and Biggin Hill Airport). In total there were 57 exhibitors at the event, and just under 500 attendees. In addition to the exhibitors, there were also 5 workshops, including sessions from Google on digital marketing; and Barclays on funding for growth.

Following the agreement of one additional year of UK Shared Prosperity Funding, the West Kent Business Support Programme is running again in 2025/26 and providing a similar level of offer to small businesses in West Kent.



West Kent Rural Grants Scheme

During 2024/25, the partnership also ran the West Kent Rural Grants Scheme, which was funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund. The Scheme offers capital grants of up to £24,999 (covering 50% of total project cost) to support rural businesses and community organisations. The total pot of funding to distribute in 2024/25 was just over £370,000.

The scheme opened 7 rounds of calls for applications, with applications being initially appraised by officers before going to a West Kent public/private panel including elected representatives from the three West Kent local authorities (for TMBC, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy was the representative).

In total, the scheme supported 30 projects in Tonbridge and Malling during 2024/25. These projects covered most corners of the borough.

The table below includes projects receiving just over £400,000 of grant funding in total because 3 projects (Aylesford Priory, Bourne Valley and Borough Green Parish Council) part-completed in 2023/24 and as such around £30,000 of the grant funding included below was distributed to these in the preceding year:

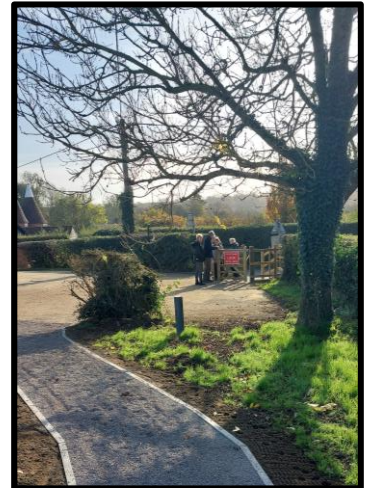
Organisation	Project	Location	Grant
Rock UK/Carrotty Wood	Equipment for outdoor adventure centre.	Nr Tonbridge	£5,761.49
ReCoir	Equipment for coir recycling.	Mereworth	£8,905.43
Phoenix Fireworks	Purchase of specialist spark and flame machines to grow business.	Wrotham	£10,960.54
Aylesford Priory Ltd	Hospitality refurbishment to heritage asset to grow visitor numbers.	Aylesford	£24,945.86
Borough Green PC	Improvements to Potters Mede Hall – including CCTV and toilets.	Borough Green	£14,283.73
Bourne Valley Ltd	All year round off-grid rural holiday accommodation.	Borough Green	£7,500.00
Addington Recreation Ground	Solar microgeneration with battery storage.	Addington	£7,850.00
Nut Farms	Specialist Pruning Equipment.	Plaxtol	£1,624.62
Friends of Offham School	Renovating existing playground.	Offham	£7,815.50
St Clere Estate	Woodland Management equipment - timber for sale to local community.	Nr Wrotham	£24,999.00
Reuthes	Installation of commercial parasols for visitor cover.	Nr Ightham	£11,139.50
The Swan Community Project	Purchase of The Swan on the Green to operate as a community hub.	West Peckham	£24,999.00
Mereworth Parish Council	New path through the recreation ground, with gates, notice board and badging sign.	Mereworth	£11,559.00
Kings Hill Parish Council	Installation of solar panels.	Kings Hill	£24,999.00
Ightham Mote (National Trust)	Recreation of a walled garden.	Ivy Hatch	£24,999.00
Communigrow	Purchase of polytunnel for community planting.	East Malling	£1,905.86
East Peckham Village Hall	Installation of solar panels.	East Peckham	£10,091.80
Hadlow Village Hall	New insulated metal roof for the village hall, plus installation of solar panels.	Hadlow	£17,656.00
Wateringbury Parish Council	Refurbishment of sports pavilion.	Wateringbury	£21,569.46
Retroelectrics	Funding a prototype to convert the Land Rover Defender into a recycled Zero Emissions Electric Vehicle.	Mereworth	£24,999.00
Hadlow Place Farms	Installation of a hunter game larder for processing and storing deer.	Nr Tonbridge	£11,337.00
The Finest Cake Company	Acquisition of specialist caramel making machines to facilitate the sale of innovative cakes and puddings.	Hadlow	£17,413.25
Wateringbury Post Office	Supply and install of Post Office equipment in new premises.	Wateringbury	£600.00

Rock UK/Carroty Wood	Development of a tented village to provide outdoor learning residential experiences for young people.	Nr Tonbridge	£7,500.00
Stansted Parish Council	Solar panels for village school building.	Stansted	£14,254.00
Wrotham Parish Council	PV solar installation with battery back-up.	Wrotham	£9,578.98
Fairseat Village Hall	Replacement roof with Insulation.	Fairseat	£6,750.00
Indian Dish	Purchase of larger, energy efficient van.	Kings Hill	£16,494.60
Spadework	New life skills kitchen for adults with learning difficulties.	Offham	£24,999.00
Stansted Parish Council	Purchase of screens and projectors for events and meetings.	Stansted	£2,279.17
Heart of Kent Hospice	Shopfront improvement.	West Malling	£5,000.00
TOTAL			£404,769.79

As part of an evaluation, feedback was sought from applicants to ascertain if there was anything that could be amended to the scheme. Overall, the feedback was very positive:



The photos below show some of the projects completed (or near completion). From left to right (and top to bottom), these projects are – solar panels at Kings Hill Community Centre, new polytunnel at Communigrow (East Malling), new pathway and gates at Queen Elizabeth Recreation Ground in Mereworth, new walled garden at Ightham Mote (Ivy Hatch).



Plans for 2025/26

Both the West Kent Business Support Programme and the West Kent Rural Grant Scheme are continuing in 2025/26 following announcements by Government that both the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund would be extended for a one-year period.

The West Kent Rural Grant Scheme launched again on 16 June 2025, with the scheme offering to provide capital funding support of between £5,000 and £20,000 from a total pot of around £130,000.

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Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee

22 July 2025



Part 1 - Public

Matters for Cabinet – Non-key Decision

Cabinet Member	Cllr Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services
Responsible Officer	Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance & Transformation
Report Author	Ganesh Thangarajah, Head of IT

Digital & IT Strategy Progress Update

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress to date with regard to the Council's Digital and IT Strategy for the period 2023 – 2027.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Placing our residents and the businesses we serve at the heart; the adopted strategy focuses on transforming the authority to provide seamless and responsive services at the convenience of our customers enabled by cognitive technologies.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are requested to **NOTE** the progress made to date on the Council's Digital & IT strategy since its adoption in May 2023, and the direction of travel.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Over the past two years, the Council has made significant progress in delivering its Digital & IT Strategy 2023-27. The focus has been on improving service delivery, strengthening cyber security, and enhancing the digital experience for both residents and staff. The roadmap for the strategy is attached at **[Annex 1]** for Members' information. The green ticks indicate projects that have been completed, and amber ticks indicate work is in progress.

4.2 A detailed list of projects is contained at **[Annex 2]**. However, the key achievements and benefits are as follows:

- **Improved Cyber Security**

The Council has strengthened its defences against cyber threats by deploying advanced security tools, achieving Cyber Essentials certification, and delivering cyber awareness training to staff and members.

- **Smarter Use of Technology**

Microsoft 365 and Power BI have been rolled out to improve data analysis and decision-making across services, helping teams work more efficiently and spot trends early.

- **Better Customer Experience**

AI-powered chatbots and automated updates are now helping residents get faster answers and stay informed about services like waste collection and Council-tax.

- **Mobile and Remote Working**

Staff can now carry out inspections and fieldwork more effectively using mobile devices, reducing paperwork and speeding up service delivery.

- **Digital Inclusion and Self-Service**

New online portals and booking systems are being introduced to make it easier for residents and businesses to access services 24/7, reducing pressure on frontline teams.

- **Data Protection and Compliance**

Tools have been implemented to better manage sensitive data and ensure compliance with GDPR and other regulations.

- **Environmental and Cost Benefits**

The Council has reduced its printer fleet and digitised over 3 million records, cutting costs and supporting sustainability goals.

4.3 The Council is switching from the Agile (SaaS) system to the IDOX Uniform (internally hosted) system following a decision of Cabinet on 4 March 2025. This change offers more control and stability but burdens internal IT teams with hosting, data migration, and support tasks. Consequently, other IT projects may experience delays due to resource reallocation and increased operational overhead.

5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 5.1 The Digital & IT strategy should have a number of positive impacts on the Council's resources, including:
- 1) Increased efficiency through automated processes, streamlining workflows, and reducing the need for manual administration.
 - 2) Improved customer experience through providing customers with more convenient and personalised services. This can lead to increased customer confidence and satisfaction, which can in turn lead to increased digital engagement. Thus, sustain the resource growth demand.
 - 3) Reduces and sustains the IT hosting overheads and helps avoid the soaring energy costs
- 5.2 The Strategy is underpinned by individual projects. Each project is assessed on its own merits from both a financial perspective and its contribution to the overall aims and objectives

6 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Like all organisations, the Council is reliant on IT systems to deliver its services. The progress made through these strategies has reduced the risks to the authority significantly.
- 6.2 Digital solutions can help to manage demand pressures and make limited resources/capacity go further. However, reliance on digital services can also bring risks. If services are down for prolonged periods, productivity of staff is compromised as are services to the public. Disaster Recovery measures are therefore imperative.
- 6.3 Corporate strategies, goals and priorities need to align and support each other. This Digital & IT Strategy supports the activities and goals set by the Council. Without a clearly defined strategy we may not be able to prioritise our resources correctly, leading to missed opportunities to improve service delivery and reduce costs.
- 6.4 As the reliance on IT systems becomes even greater, opportunities are continuously explored to mitigate risks further.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 **Accessibility Standards:** Starting from October 2024, services across the UK government will be monitored for WCAG 2.2 AA compliance to ensure they are usable by individuals with disabilities. Websites and digital platforms must comply with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility law, which will be the new minimum accessibility standard for all UK Government public sector websites and mobile apps.

7.2 **Procurement Act:** All procurements related to strategy will be done in adherence to the government procurement legislation and guidance.

7.3 **Regulatory Changes:** Digital strategies should be adaptable to future legal changes, as governments worldwide are continually updating regulations related to technology and data use

8 Cross Cutting Issues

8.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

8.1.1 Some impact on reducing emissions in support of carbon neutral by 2030 or enhancing the natural environment. It should be noted that digital transformation achieved over the last four-year Digital strategy has already reduced the IT services' carbon footprint by 73% (over 35 kilo tonnes). This latest four-year digital strategy will enable the authority to further reduce it by digitising its document management and workflows.

8.2 Equalities and Diversity

8.2.1 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. Delivery of the Digital & IT strategy will enable the authority to serve its vulnerable and elderly residents better through efficiency gained by enabling majority of our residents to self-serve via digital channels.

8.3 Business Continuity / Resilience

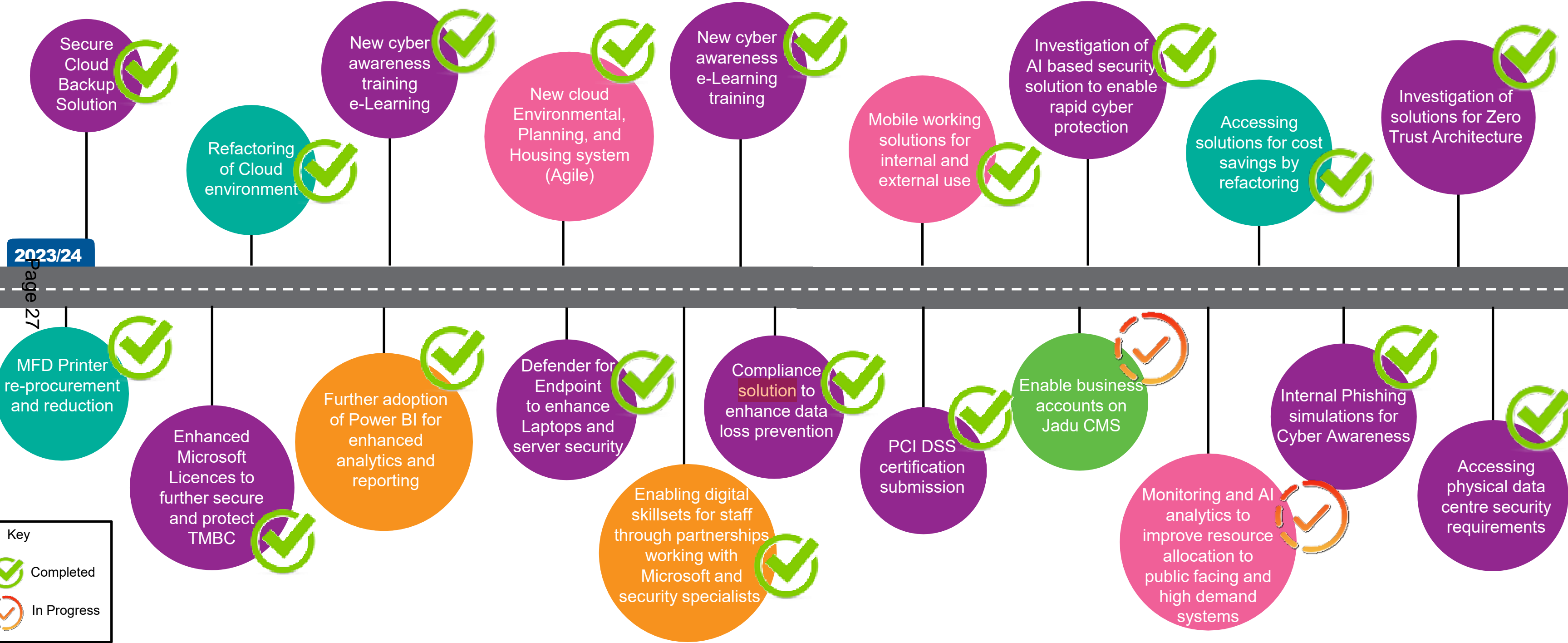
8.3.1 Through the Digital & IT strategy the Council adopts a 'Secure by Design & Culture' as a primary objective. Underpinning business continuity and resilience into the Council's strategy is essential for navigating uncertainties and ensuring that critical operations continue during disruptions. By focusing on both immediate recovery and long-term adaptability, the Council can safeguard the future and enhance its overall performance. Regular assessments, training, and updates to plans and processes are crucial for maintaining effectiveness in both areas.

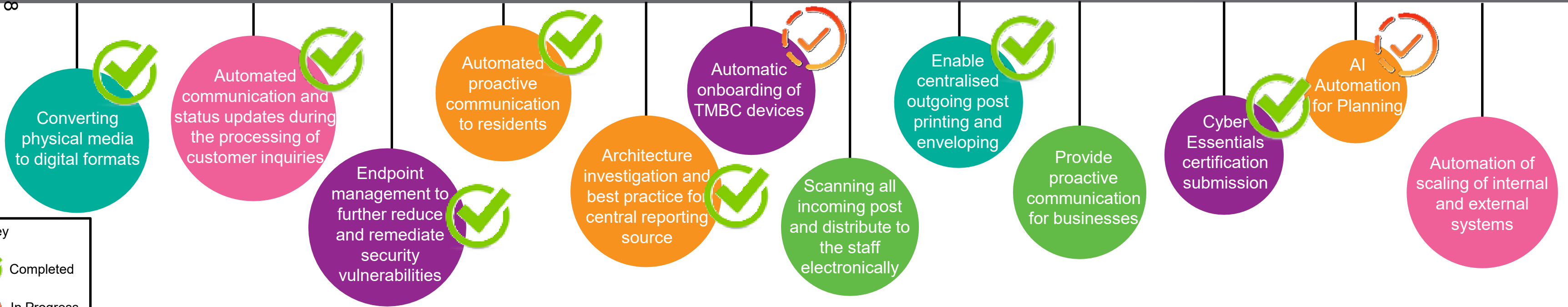
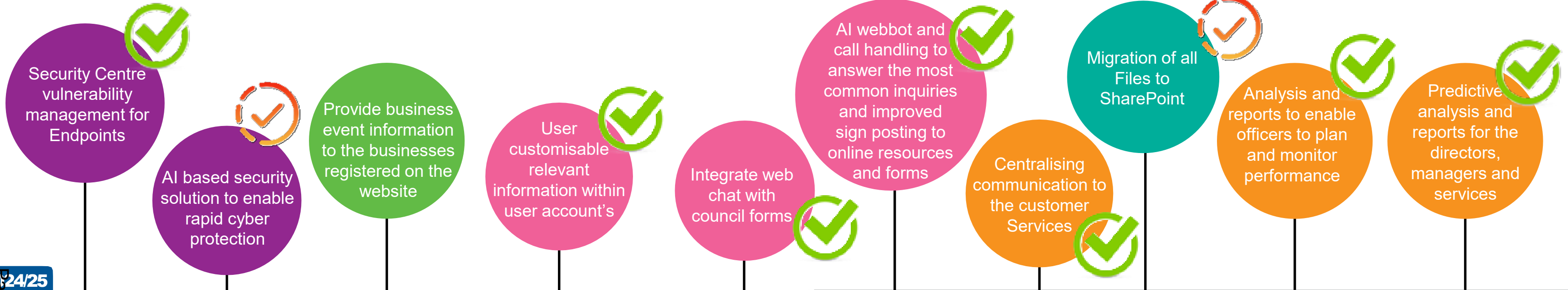
Background Papers	None
Annexes	Roadmap Digital and IT Strategy Summary - Digital & IT Strategy Progress June 2025

TMBC Road Map 2023 - 2027

ANNEX 1

Secure by Design & Culture Transformation Demand Management Efficient Workforce Economic Growth

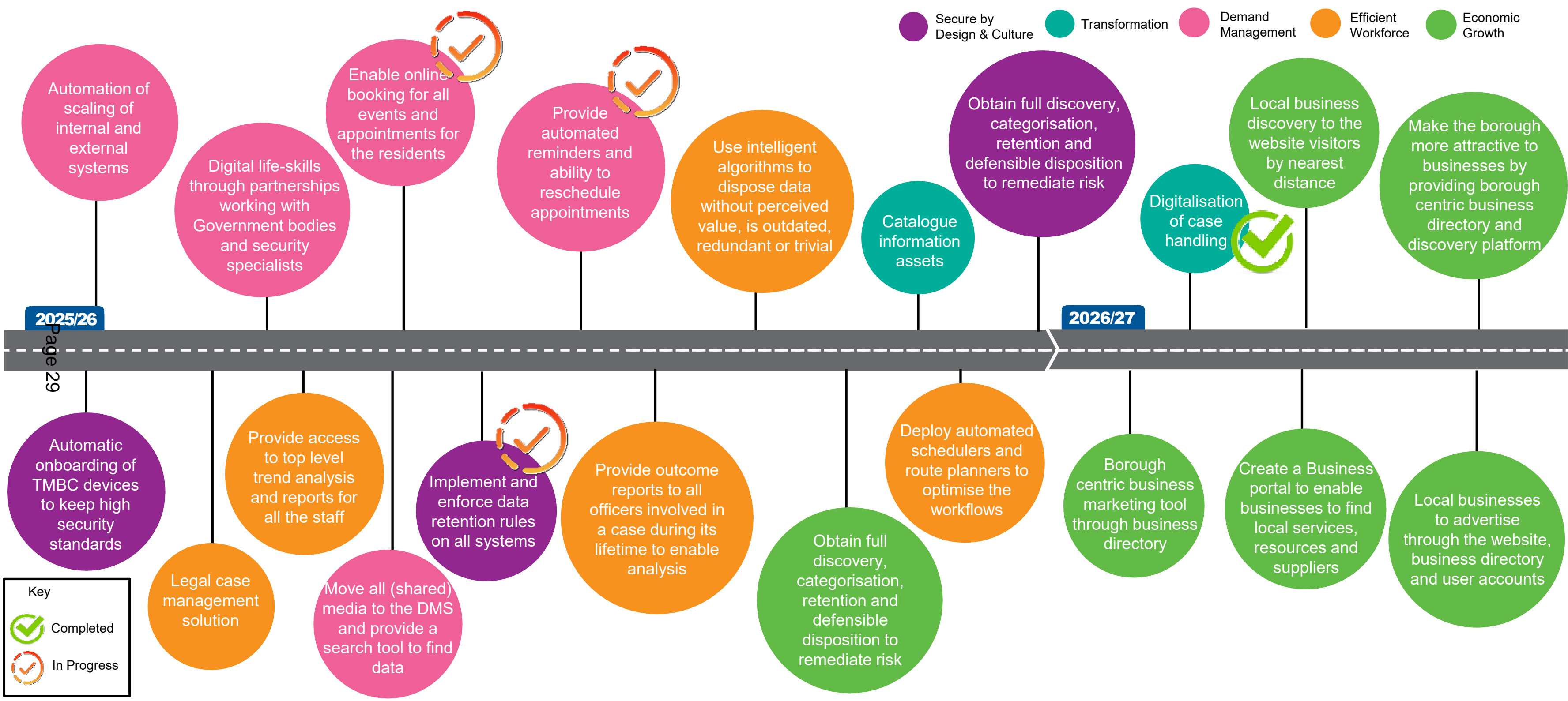




Key

Completed

In Progress



2025/26

2026/27

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Digital & IT Strategy Progress June 2025

Summary

This document presents a progress report on the Digital & IT Strategy 2023-27, outlining both completed initiatives and ongoing projects aimed at improving technology support and security measures as of June 2025.

- **Secure Cloud Backup Solution:** An immutable backup solution has been procured to minimise business impact during major outages, ensuring timely restoration of critical systems.
- **MFD Printer Reduction:** The number of MFD printers has been reduced from 13 to 6, leading to cost savings and reduced environmental impact.
- **Cloud Environment Optimisation:** A refactoring of the TMBC cloud environment has been completed to ensure efficiency and value for money.
- **Enhanced Microsoft Licences:** E5 Licences were acquired to improve security and reduce costs for Power BI licenses, enabling advanced analytics reporting. ⁴
- **Cyber Awareness Training:** Matobo Cyber Ninja training has been deployed to equip staff with knowledge to protect against cyber threats. ⁵
- **Deployment of Defender for Endpoint:** Advanced security software has been implemented to prevent malicious software and secure data. ⁶
- **AI-Based Security Investigation:** A gap analysis against the Cyber Assessment Framework is underway to assess AI-based security solutions. ⁷
- **Data Loss Prevention Compliance:** Microsoft Purview has been enabled to enhance data protection and identify personal identifiable information effectively. ⁸
- **Monitoring and AI Analytics:** Automated alerts have been created for the Anywhere 365 Contact Centre to improve public services during high demand.
- **Customer Services Migration:** Council services are being streamlined to have Customer Services as the first point of contact, improving resident experience

2023/2024

Tech Support

Secure Cloud Backup Solution – Complete

- Immutable backup solution procured to minimise business impact by restoring critical systems in a timely manner to enable continuation of services for staff and residents after major outages including cyber incidents

MFD Printer re-procurement and reduction – Complete

- Reduction from 13 to 6 MFD's resulting in a cost saving and lower environmental impact

Refactoring of Cloud environment – Complete

- Assessment and optimisation of the TMBC cloud environment to ensure value for money, whilst sustaining system efficiency and optimisation

Enhanced Microsoft Licences to further secure and protect TMBC – Complete

- E5 Licences procured to enable access to advanced security integrations for enhanced security protection and a reduced cost for Power BI licences giving TMBC access to proactive analytics reporting

New cyber awareness training e-Learning – Complete

- Procurement and deployment of Matobo Cyber Ninja training to equip staff and members with the cyber awareness knowledge and tools to better protect TMBC from Cyber threats

Defender for Endpoint to enhance Laptops and server security – Complete

- Deployment of advanced security software to help prevent malicious software being installed or downloaded securing Council and residents' data. This is part of the E5 licence and has produced a cost saving

Enabling digital skillsets for staff through partnerships working with Microsoft and security specialists – Complete

- Access to Online Microsoft 365 training resources has been made available to staff to improve their digital skills enhancing their knowledge and productivity

Investigation of AI based security solution to enable rapid cyber protection – Complete

- AI based solutions investigated and a gap analysis of the TMBC environment is being conducted against the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) to focus requirements to give value for money and meet the specific needs of TMBC

Assessing solutions for cost savings by refactoring – Complete

- Assessing solutions against current environment have provided little cost saving insights over what is currently being achieved. A proof of concept is

being undertaken to see if there is any value in refactoring solutions for the cloud environment

Compliance solution to enhance data loss prevention – Complete

- Microsoft Purview enabled and used to enhance and protect the cloud data files used by staff and residents. This is part of the E5 licence and has produced a cost saving enabling IT services to identify Personal Identifiable information (PII) and GDPR data within documents effectively

Monitoring and AI analytics to improve resource allocation to public facing and high demand systems – Complete

- Creation of automated alerts and responses for Anywhere 365 Contact Centre management system to improve public services enabling proactive remediation when services are under pressure

Internal Phishing simulations for Cyber Awareness – Complete

- Simulations are part of the E5 licence and has produced a cost saving as well as giving real world scenarios to train staff and members to keep their cyber awareness and vigilance to minimise cyber risk to the organisation

Investigation of solutions for Zero Trust Architecture – Complete

- Solutions for Zero Trust Architecture are cost prohibitive involving exhaustive administration overheads. To start to achieve the same outcome, we are moving to Wi-Fi first infrastructure using our current remote access solution, Global Protect

Assessing physical data centre security requirements - Complete

- The Gibson building data centre security has been assessed in line with the annual IT health check to enable a secure and monitored environment

Development & Application Support

Further adoption of Power BI for enhanced analytics and reporting - Ongoing

- Dashboards/reports created for Built Environment, Waste Services, Complaints management and IT Services to improve decision making. Visualisations make it easier to identify trends, patterns and anomalies. Further development is in the pipeline.
- Planning Enforcement dashboards now available for Council Members *
- Further development required as part of the 'Revert to IDOX' project (June to Dec 25) *

New cloud Environmental, Planning, and Housing system (Agile) – Cancelled

- Browser based APAS SaaS solution now implemented for Built Environment, GIS, SNN with Client Portals available to provide self-serve options thereby reducing demand on back-office staff and removing need for installation and hardware costs.

- Public protection and Licencing in progress – Cancelled *
- The Agile contract concluded on March 25 following the Council's decision to revert to IDOX. A 5-year contract with IDOX was negotiated, along with a 6-month extension with Agile to maintain business as usual during the transition period. *

Mobile working solutions for internal and external use – on going

- Mobile solution implemented for Housing Temporary Accommodation property inspections, generating inspection visits.
- Mobile solution for Licensing Taxi Drivers started. The first process review session scheduled for 03/06/25 to plan the integration of technology solutions and mobile working solutions to streamline operations and reduce manual tasks. *
- Due to other competing priorities, further development will be rescheduled for coming year.

Enable business accounts on Jadu CMS – in progress

- The SinglePoint extension, a pre-requirement for MyBusiness Accounts, is now in place - which integrates data from the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG), previously restricted to LLPG (Local Gazetteer). This integration allows for customers outside the borough to register improving self-service and reduces manual intervention. *

2024/2025

Tech Support

Security Centre vulnerability management for Endpoints – Ongoing

- This has been enabled as part of the E5 licence and has produced a cost saving
- Investigating a further continuous vulnerability management solution to assess, alert and help with mitigating new threats
- Sem-automation of tickets logged from SureCloud to enable faster mitigation of threats,

AI based security solution to enable rapid cyber protection – In progress

- Currently a gap analysis of the TMBC environment is being conducted against the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) to focus requirements to give value for money and meet the specific needs of TMBC.
- Analysis complete and business case submitted to Head of IT for Incident response and Security Operations Centre to meet this requirement.

Endpoint management to further reduce and remediate security vulnerabilities – Complete

- All laptops are being managed within Microsoft Intune part of the E5 licence to improve efficiency for staff, enhance security and enable remote and automatic remediation and isolation of laptops if a threat occurs.

Migration of all Files to SharePoint – Ongoing

- Plan to be created to transfer all department files stored on the H: and I: drives to SharePoint or Azure Files and retention policies for data need to be agreed. Each department will need to take ownership and identify the relevant data that is required by the business before migration

Cyber Essentials certification submission – Complete

- Cyber Essentials certification completed in May 2024

PCI DSS submission – Completed

- Submission taking place in September 2024 – Submission completed

Automatic onboarding of TMBC devices – Deferred

- Automatic onboarding with Microsoft Autopilot has been investigated due to some dependencies within the user management administration system it is not possible until major infrastructure changes are made.

Automation of scaling of internal and external systems – Deferred

- Automation of scaling has been investigated but due to the cost saving measures put in place within the Cloud environment scaling is not possible until further infrastructure changes are made.

Centralising communication to the customer Services – In progress

- Council services are being migrated to have Customer Services as the first point of contact streamlining resident experience. The services migrated include Council Tax, Benefits, Elections, Licensing, and Planning, with other services to follow

AI webbot and call handling to answer the most common inquiries and improved sign posting to online resources and forms – Complete

- AI Chatbots is live and can deal with customer inquiries where possible helping to improve efficiency and reducing resolution time for residents.

Development & Application Support

Architecture investigation and best practice for central reporting source - complete

- Investigation completed and decision made to adopt Power BI as the primary central reporting tool

Converting physical media to digital formats (Transformation) – in progress

- Backlog scanning phase 1 is expected to be completed on 16 Sept 24 with over 3 million records digitised for building control, finance, property services and planning

- Backlog scanning is now complete for all services and available online. Documents not able to be scanned have been returned to TMBC – completed May 2025 *
- Next step is to load documents to our Corporate DMS with its improved searching capabilities and data retention and disposal tools – in progress *
- Further paper records to be digitised as part of the Gibson Building Refurbishment project

Automated communication and status updates during the processing of customer inquiries – in progress

- Eforms for waste services and customer complaints implemented using Jadu Connect case management system with integration to 3rd party back-office systems, automating case status updates to improve customer experience and case management – complete*
- Continued incremental enhancements for Waste Services, Customer complaints plus other services – in progress *

Provide business event information to the businesses registered on the website – in progress

- Dependent on the provision of a Business MyAccount using a national address dataset
- National address dataset now in place *

Automated proactive communication to residents - complete

- Notification of Events, change of service collections, interruptions by Mobile app, SMS, email, website and user accounts.
- For any significant news or service issues Media & Comms team send a push notification via One Signal.
- Email and SMS generated communications are in place for Housing, Electoral Services and Garden Waste services via Gov.UK notifications services. *

User customisable relevant information within user account's – in progress

- Single Sign on enabled for Revenues and Benefits and Agile portals giving customers access to services using their MyAccount user credentials.
- Adding widgets for example Waste services will be added to further extend the customer experience
- Additional portals poised to be added end November once address search extended to include NLPG – delayed. New development required following the decision to revert to IDOX in March 25 *

Integrate web chat with council forms – on going

- Chat bots are currently undergoing testing by Customer Services. Once completed integration with eforms will take place. *
- In April 25, an AI bot was integrated into the waste services web chat, significantly reducing the necessity for an advisor to support web chat for

waste services. The integration has been successful due to the effective automation of Waste online forms on the website. *

Scanning all incoming post and distribute to the staff electronically – in progress

- Print room staff are scheduled to be trained on corporate document management system (Information@Work) by Revenue and Benefit Services to pilot the Digital post room concept.
- Live upgrade of NEC DM scheduled 6-9 June 25 - in progress *
- Configuration and training sessions expected from June/July 25 – in progress *

Enable centralised outgoing post printing and enveloping – on going

- Barcodes added to Revenues and Benefits print to automate folding and enveloping.
- All outgoing printed media will be reviewed and streamlined accordingly – on-going*

Provide proactive communication for businesses

- Pending Business MyAccount and national address dataset – (communication)

Analysis and reports to enable officers to plan and monitor performance – on going

- Various Power BI reports developed for Planning Services and IT services to monitor case load
- To be extended to other services and directorates in due course including Waste services (expected July 25) *
- IDOX Enterprise for Uniform will be implemented June-Sept 25 for Built Environment and Public Protection, providing tools to monitor performance of individuals and the wider authority, with workflow aids and real-time visuals of tasks. *

AI Automation for Planning – in progress

- AI Validator installation is pending configuration to fully automate the planning validation process, aiming to improve accuracy and efficiency. This task is on hold pending the re-installation and data migration to IDOX Uniform (June-Sept 25). *

Predictive analysis and reports for the directors, managers and services – in progress

- Power BI dashboards are being utilised by Customer Services to analyse trends and predict demands. *
- To be extended to other services and directorates in due course.

2025/2026

Development & Application Support

Enable online booking for all events and appointments for the residents – in progress

- Online booking for Mayor events with MS Outlook/Office365 integration with business for UAT testing before deployment – expected July 25. *
- Open events booking and Castle booking forms with MS Outlook in progress - expected July 25 *
- ~~Migration started ahead of Road Map, as current solution uses Ebase.~~

Provide automated reminders and ability to reschedule appointments

- Self-build and Garden Waste renewals processes in place which generate automated reminders to customers to renew subscriptions.
- Extension to Bulky Waste to allow for amendment of appointments – in progress
- To be extended to all event booking forms – on going.

Implement data retention rules

- Data retention rules already in place for Revenues and Benefits. *
- Data retention rules added to all Waste online Jadu forms with scripts to automatically delete sensitive data that exceeds the retention time. *
- This is an ongoing task for all future development – on going *
- Training to be provided to new Corporate DMS users from mid-2025 *

2026/2027

Development & Application Support

Case Management – Digitisation of Case Handling – on going

- Move all customer inquiries and processes to the Case Management system – ongoing *
- Convert all internal forms from PDF to Internal forms hub. Development focused on Converting all HR forms with Power Automate and SharePoint – on going *

Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee

22 July 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Information



Cabinet Member Cllr Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services

Responsible Officer Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and Transformation

Report Author Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and Transformation

Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board proposed merger

1 **Summary and Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The report advises Members that notice was formally given on 10 June 2025 of a formal merger between the Lower Medway Board and the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board. The consultation period closed on 10 July 2025.

2 **Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

- 2.1 Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment.
- 2.2 Internal Drainage Boards levy special payment requests (similar to a precept) on relevant Local Authorities to manage water levels and ditch maintenance within areas of special drainage need.

3 **Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 At the meeting of this Committee on 25 February 2025, Members received an update from Cllr Dennis King who spoke on behalf on Borough Council representatives on both the Upper and Lower Medway Drainage Boards. Members were also provided with a report from the clerks of the Board.
- 3.2 Within the report, Members were advised of a potential merger between the Lower Medway Board and the North Kent Marshes Water Internal Drainage Board. The report said:

“As part of ongoing improvements and efficiency measures, the Lower Medway IDB and North Kent Marshes IDB will be amalgamating in 2024 to form the North

Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board. This change will bring several benefits, including:

- *Greater efficiency: Streamlining governance and operations to reduce administrative burdens and duplication of effort.*
- *Enhanced resilience: Strengthening our ability to respond to climate change, extreme weather events, and evolving flood risk challenges.*
- *Improved service delivery: Providing more cohesive and strategic management of water levels across a broader geographic area.*
- *Increased transparency and accountability: Ensuring a clearer and more accessible structure for stakeholders, including funding authorities and landowners “*

3.3 As Members know, TMBC receives an annual levy (similar to a precept) from the Lower Medway IDB. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the proposed merger.

4 Consultation – Proposed Merger

4.1 A formal consultation on the proposed merger was launched on 10 June 2025 and closed on 10 July. If no objections are received, DEFRA will then make an Order in the form of a Statutory Instrument. The notice is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

4.2 The Council’s representative on the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board is Cllr Dave Davis. He is supportive of the merger and has confirmed with the Clerk to the Board that the amalgamation may help deliver financial efficiencies. This would be through reduced duplication of governance processes and back-office; more agile use of staff and equipment, enabling smarter deployment and project planning; and the potential to attract external funding by aligning efforts under a single delivery body.

4.3 Following discussion with the Cabinet Member and Cllr Dave Davis, an email was sent to all Members of this Committee on 30 June to advise of the position as the consultation will have closed by the time the Committee meets.

5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this consultation.

5.2 Members are however advised that the levy from the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board is £245,564 in 2025/26.

5.3 In theory, the merger of the two bodies should have the effect of achieving efficiencies as set out above.

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 No specific risks identified.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 Section 36 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 determines that expenses of an IDB shall be met by:

- Drainage rates collected from agricultural land and buildings within the Internal Drainage District;
- Special Levies issued on District and Unitary Authorities within the Internal Drainage District;
- Contributions from the Environment Agency (see Higher Land Water Contributions (HLWC) from EA to IDB).

Background Papers	None
Annex	Notice – Land Drainage Act 1991 s. 3(4)(a)

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Notice – Land Drainage Act 1991 s. 3(4)(a)

Consultation 10 June 2025 to 10 July 2025 one month period

Amalgamation of Lower Medway and North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Districts

The Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board and North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board both wish to amalgamate their two districts, abolish their existing Boards and constitute a new North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board. The existing Boards have therefore made an application to the Environment Agency to produce a Scheme which will be advertised for a period of one month before the Environment Agency submits the Scheme to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for confirmation under section 3(5) of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

The consultation period is from 10 June to 10 July 2025.

If no objections are received, DEFRA will then make an Order in the form of a Statutory Instrument.

In accordance with Section 3(4)(a) of the Land Drainage Act 1991, please find attached a copy of our Notice and Scheme.

If you wish to make any representations to the scheme these can be sent by email to flood.reports@defra.gov.uk, for the attention of Carol Tidmarsh.

LAND DRAINAGE ACT 1991

AMALGAMATION OF THE LOWER MEDWAY AND NORTH KENT MARSHES INTERNAL DRAINAGE DISTRICTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTH KENT MARSHES WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Environment Agency, pursuant to section 3(1) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 ("the 1991 Act")¹, has prepared the following Scheme making provision for the following matters:

- (i) the amalgamation of the Lower Medway Internal Drainage District and the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage District into a single Drainage District under section 3(2)(b) of the 1991 Act,
- (ii) the abolition of the Internal Drainage Boards for those Districts under section 3(2)(d) of the 1991 Act,
- (iii) the constitution of a new Internal Drainage Board with the name North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board under section 3(2)(f) of the 1991 Act, and
- (iv) matters supplemental to or consequential on the above under section 3(2)(i) of the 1991 Act².

And the Environment Agency submits the Scheme to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for confirmation under section 3(5) of the 1991 Act.

¹ 1991 c. 59. Section 3(1) was amended by S.I. 2013/755 (W.90). The definitions of "the relevant Minister" and "the appropriate supervisory body" are contained in section 72(1).

² Section 3(2) was amended by S.I. 2013/755 (W.90).

SCHEME SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

1. This Scheme comes into force on the day after the day on which the Order confirming this Scheme is made.

2. In this Scheme—

“abolished Boards” means the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board and the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board;

“commencement date” means the date on which this Scheme comes into force;

“elected members” means those members of the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board who are appointed by the Secretary of State pursuant to this Scheme or elected in accordance with the provisions made by or under Schedule 1 to the Land Drainage Act 1991;

“Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board” means the internal drainage board constituted by the scheme confirmed by the River Medway Catchment Board (Upper and Lower Medway Internal Drainage Districts) Order 1934 (SR&O 1934 No. 725) (“the 1934 Order”) and reconstituted by the Reconstitution of the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board Order 1993 (SI 1993 No. 825);

“Lower Medway Internal Drainage District” means the internal drainage district constituted by the scheme confirmed by the 1934 Order;

“new Board” means the internal drainage board constituted by virtue of article 3(3) of this Scheme;

“North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board” means the internal drainage board constituted by the scheme confirmed by the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage District Order 2016 (SI 2016 No. 859) (“the 2016 Order”);

“North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage District” means the internal drainage district constituted by the scheme confirmed by the 2016 Order;

“property” means, in relation to any of the abolished Boards, any property which is vested in that board immediately before the commencement date and includes books of account, other books, deeds, maps, papers and other documents, in whatever medium held, and computer and other electronic records;

“rights and obligations” means, in relation to any of the abolished Boards, all rights, powers, duties, obligations and liabilities which are vested in or which fall to be discharged by that board immediately before the commencement date.

3.— (1) The Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board and the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board are abolished.

(2) The Lower Medway Internal Drainage District and the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage District are amalgamated into, and are constituted as, one internal drainage district to be known as “the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage District.”

(3) A new internal drainage board to be known as “the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board” is constituted for the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage District.

4. — (1) On the commencement date the new Board is constituted to comprise 11 elected members.

(2) The first elected members of the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board are to be appointed by the Secretary of State and are to hold office until the expiry of one year from the first occurrence of the 1st November following the day on which they are appointed.

5. On the commencement date, all property and rights and obligations of the abolished Boards are transferred to and vested in, or fall to be discharged by, the new Board.

6. All arrears of rates levied by the abolished Boards before the commencement date in respect of any period ending before the commencement date may be recovered by the new Board, in the same manner as if they had been rates levied by the new Board.


7. This Scheme operates as conclusive evidence of any thing transferred under this Scheme without the necessity of further assignments, conveyance or deed of transfer.

8. The accounts of each of the abolished Boards must be made up to the day before the commencement date by the new Board and audited as if this Scheme had not come into force.

DATED 28th May 2025

The Common Seal of the)
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY)
was affixed to this Scheme)
In the presence of)




LAURA MILTON
DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND AUDIT SERVICES
AUTHORISED SIGNATORY

Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee

22 July 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Information



Cabinet Member Martin Coffin - Deputy Leader; and Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical

Responsible Officer Sharon Shelton – Director of Finance and Transformation

Report Author Paul Worden – Chief Financial Services Officer

2024/25 Financial Outturn and May 2025 Budgetary Control

1 **Summary and Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 In accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules this report informs Members of the 2024/25 Financial Outturn and current financial position to the end of May 2025 for the 2025/26 Financial Year.

2 **Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 The reporting of both outturn and budgetary control demonstrates governance and control of the Council's financial resources.

3 **2024/25 Outturn**

- 3.1 As presented to Cabinet on 30 June, a detailed revenue and capital outturn position for the year 2024/25 is provided through the Revenue and Capital Outturn Booklet attached at **[Annex 1]** which has been compiled in liaison with Chief Officers including, where appropriate, explanatory notes of variations between revised estimates and outturn. Variations between the original and revised estimates for 2024/25 were highlighted in the notes to the Annual Estimate papers presented to Members during the 2025/26 budget cycle.
- 3.2 In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Statement of Accounts, which shows the outturn in the format specified by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23, will be presented to the Audit Committee for approval. The Director of Finance and Transformation

presented an unaudited copy of the Statement of Accounts to the Audit Committee on 21 July 2025.

- 3.3 The Council's revenue position for 2024/25 is a contribution to the Council's General Revenue Reserve of £1,109,493, some £21,376 less than anticipated at revised estimate. This is after having set aside additional reserve movements explained in paragraph 3.13.
- 3.4 The variance prior to these adjustments was a contribution of £2,658,493; some £1,550,000 above the contribution agreed at the revised estimate. The predominant reasons for this favourable variance arose from several areas as detailed in the table and paragraphs below.

	Revised Budget £	Outturn £	Variation £
Salaries	13,660,750	13,544,650 -	116,100
Major Income Streams	- 7,971,650 -	8,086,737 -	115,087
Investment Income	- 2,948,750 -	3,325,833 -	377,083
Multiplier Grant (Business Rates)	- 464,300 -	1,272,270 -	807,970
Business Rates	- 6,192,171 -	6,328,417 -	136,246
Other Grant Income	- 200,000 -	377,665 -	177,665
Recruitment Expenses	11,200	23,456	12,256
Council Offices - Utility Costs	185,000	145,365 -	39,635
IT Software & Maintenance Costs	1,211,000	1,100,525 -	110,475
Homelessness Accommodation	1,056,850	1,237,443	180,593
Planning Appeal Costs (including Legal)	112,500	226,101	113,601
External Audit Fees	147,450	160,828	13,378
Refuse Contract Consultancy	60,000	13,093 -	46,907
Trees - Health and Safety Work	110,000	149,193	39,193
Car Parking Repairs and Maintenance	38,000	48,889	10,889
Other Variations	12,790,556	12,819,191	28,635
Additional reserve Contributions (see Paragraph 3.13)		1,550,000	1,550,000
Net Outturn before Contribution to General Revenue Reserve	11,606,435	11,627,811	21,376

- 3.5 Positive variations occurred in the salaries budget due to ongoing vacancies in the establishment. In respect of income, higher income on Car Parking and Recycling Performance Payments were offset by lower income on Planning and Land Charges Fees but overall saw a net increase.
- 3.6 The excess in investment income has arisen because of the Bank of England interest rates being held at higher than anticipated levels and higher yield from overnight cash investments.

- 3.7 The business rates system is extremely complex. This is due to the mechanics of the retention system, compounded by additional factors by being part of a pool. In addition, the Government pays a multiplier award to local authorities because it held down business increases to below CPI levels. The calculation of this award for 2024/25 was compounded even more by changes to the multipliers.
- 3.8 Bearing in mind the parallel running of the estimates and audit, unfortunately the team were unable to undertake a full assessment of these grants during Revised Estimates, and this was not completed until the final Government return for 2024/25. It is possible that we have not reflected the full impact for 2025/26 in the current estimates (potentially good news) which could help to boost reserves and is explained with the current year's monitoring at paragraph 4.7.
- 3.9 As mentioned in the budgetary control reports during the past year, client numbers and the costs of overnight homelessness accommodation remained high, although client number did drop to 126 at the end of the financial year. The overspend shown in the table has been reduced using a contribution from the Homelessness reserve of £200,000 to mitigate the final outturn overspend to £180,593.
- 3.10 Planning Appeals remain another area of overspend with both Council commissioned costs and awarded costs being reflected in the outturn position. The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health is in the process of preparing a report for Members to consider options on these costs.
- 3.11 The variation on other grant and contribution income has arisen from additional unbudgeted grants and contributions from Government and Kent County Council. It is not expected that these will reoccur in 2025/26.
- 3.12 The line showing other variations includes a £250,000 payment from Sainsbury's which was agreed should be transferred into the Angel Centre replacement fund through Decision Notice D240097MEM 11/10/2024.
- 3.13 Given the outturn variation, as in prior years, Cabinet considered and approved additional reserve movements have been made to assist with the delivery of corporate priorities and future needs of the authority. The table below shows the additional movements.

	Proposed Reserve Movement £
Angel Centre	1,100,000
Building Repairs (BRREP)	250,000
Transformation Reserve	200,000
General Revenue Reserve (balance)	(21,376)
Total	1,528,624

- 3.14 The reserve movement for the Angel Centre replacement project will bring the resources, including the transfers occurring in 2025/26, to £9.15 million, mitigating the potential level of borrowing for the new centre.
- 3.15 BRREP, whilst underspent in 2024/25, is expected (with current budgeted expenditure and planned contributions) to fall into deficit by the end of 2025/26 by £205,000. This linked with the increased costs of building materials would warrant the top up suggested.
- 3.16 The balance remaining will be transferred to the General Revenue Reserve giving a balance as of 31st March 2025 of just over £11.0m. Members should note however that over the course of the MTFS this balance is expected to fall to circa £5.95m by the end of the period providing all savings targets and assumptions are achieved.
- 3.17 Details of the Reserve Balances held at 31 March 2025 can be found in **[Annex 2]** to the report.
- 3.18 Members will note a Capital Plan spend of £2,886,000 against a revised estimate of £4,947,000. The majority of the underspend comes from delays in various large capital projects such as Wouldham River Wall, Car Parking upgrades and the Gibson Building project. Full details of the capital programme spend can be found in the Outturn Booklet at **[Annex 1]**.

4 2025/26 Budgetary Control

- 4.1 As with standard financial practice the finance team have undertaken a review of the major areas of financial impact for the authority.
- 4.2 In February 2025 the Council set a revenue budget of £13,188,568 with a contribution to the General Revenue Reserve of £20,792 giving a Council tax requirement of £13,209,360.
- 4.3 Since setting the Budget in February, a number of Cabinet and Committee decisions have been taken. These decisions have been detailed in full in **[Annex 3]** to this report and currently amount to **£608,365**. However, after additional reserve contributions the net effect on the revenue budget is an increase of **£148,702**.
- 4.4 Salaries Monitoring – appended at **[Annex 4]** is the budgetary control statement against the proportional budget for May 2025. Cabinet will **note** the underspend against the original budget allowing for any changes identified in Annex 3. The current position is an underspend of £24,350, primarily due to vacancies above the budgeted position.

- 4.5 Income Monitoring - appended for information at **[Annex 5]** is the budgetary control statement covering income, fees, and charges from the major income streams. The current position shows a small over recovery of income of £1,704 against the current proportioned estimate. The variation between short and long Stay Car parking is because of how the estimate were set following the charge increases that occurred in August last year. Overall, Members will note that there is a positive variation.
- 4.6 Investment Income – due to the reporting of long term investments the details surrounding core and cashflow investments is as follows:
- 4.6.1 Core Funds – as at the end of May 2025, core funds stood at £30.17m representing an increase of £36,000 when compared to the position on 31 March 2025. Income generated from these investments amount to £241,000, delivering an average return of 4.72%. This has resulted in a positive variance of £6,000 against the original estimate for the same period. It is expected that core investments will reduce as the need for cashflow in the current year increases to commence capital project works.
- 4.6.2 Cashflow funds – as at the end of May 2025, cashflow funds stood at £18.72m representing an increase of £2.87m when compared to the position on 31 March 2025. Income generated from these investments amount to £180,000, delivering an average return of 4.45%. This has resulted in a positive variance of £65,000 against the original estimate for the same period.
- 4.7 As of the end of May the following areas have been identified as variations to the original estimate:-
- 4.7.1 Inflation on Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract – At the time the budget was set the inflationary increase included within the base estimate was a 3.5% increase. The actual increase was 1.07% meaning that the budget is overstated by approximately £120,000. It is proposed to adjust the budget down to this revised level.
- 4.7.2 Business Rates Multiplier Under Indexation Grant – As mentioned in paragraph 3.7, the Council receives grant awards above those contained in the Final Local Government Settlement for 2025/26 of around £288,000. This information is based upon the Government Return submission made in the final stages of the estimates preparation and was not confirmed until after the budget has been set.
- 4.7.3 Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust – Utility Support Payments. The outturn for 2024/25 included an adjustment for the final quarter and reconciliation of the full year balance. The Trust have now provided this reconciliation showing the amount due was £32,000 less than recorded in the 2024/25 accounts and will be adjusted accordingly against the current estimate.

- 4.7.4 Temporary Accommodation for Homelessness Clients – This was highlighted last year, and Members are advised that client numbers at the end of May were 129 compared to the March ‘outturn’ position of 126 clients noted earlier in this report. The 2025/26 budget was set with a long term reduction to 120 clients by the end of the year. As at the end of May, there is an overspend against profiled budget of circa £40,000 and therefore if the current client numbers and placements were not to change the predicted overspend against the original budget by year end would be £241,000. Efforts continue by the Housing team to reduce both client numbers and overnight costs to the levels estimated.
- 4.7.5 The Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services has identified two additional overspends arising from a water leak at the Racecourse Ground and additional Grounds maintenance at the Castle amounting to £57,300.
- 4.8 Revenue Budgetary Control Summary – The table below summaries the result of information shared above.

Description	Budget to	Actual to	Variance
	May	May	
	£	£	£
Salaries Monitoring Statement	2,350,250	2,325,900	(24,350)
Income Monitoring Statement	(1,152,250)	(1,153,954)	(1,704)
Treasury Management	(350,000)	(421,000)	(71,000)
Approved Variations to the Revenue Budget		148,702	148,702
Revenue Budgetary Control		(342,700)	(342,700)
Net Variance	848,000	556,948	(291,052)

Figures in brackets represent a favourable variance

- 4.9 Members will note from the table that there is a current net favourable variance of £291,052 as at the end of May.

5 Business Rates Monitoring

- 5.1 The Original Estimate set an overall net income to the council of £4,209,769.
- 5.2 As at the end of May the predicted net income is £4,011,309 a variation of £198,640. This is because of increased levels of empty business properties and the awaited valuations of business properties adjacent to Junction 5 of the M20.

6 Capital Expenditure

- 6.1 In February 2025 the Council agreed a capital budget for 2025/26 of £10.2m.
- 6.2 Spend to the end of May 2025, was £400,000, but Members are reminded that the larger projects including Temporary Accommodation & Resettlement Scheme, and

Gibson East Refurbishment, make up a significant proportion of the agreed budget. Further updates will be shared with Members in due course.

7 Annual Service Delivery Plan and the MTFS Funding Gap

- 7.1 The annual service delivery plan contains an objective to identify at least £300,000 of the current year's £600,000 savings target by the end of the summer 2025.
- 7.2 Work with services is approaching completion to identify this target and will be reported to Members at the September meeting of this Scrutiny Select Committee.
- 7.3 A larger exercise to address the balance of this year's target and the £2.2m ongoing targets in years beyond 2025/26 has commenced with involvement from both Management Team and Service Managers. Options for consideration will be presented to Cabinet over the remainder of this financial year.

8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 8.1 As set out above.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Budgetary control is a prerequisite of good financial management, financial planning and control and needs to be kept under review to ensure it remains effective and relevant.
- 9.2 Homelessness and Planning Appeals currently present the greatest challenges to the approved budgets and are being monitored carefully.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 This report fulfils the requirement of the Local Government Act 2003 which places a statutory duty on the authority to monitor income and expenditure against budget and to act if overspends or shortfalls in income emerge. If monitoring establishes that the budget situation has deteriorated, authorities are required to take such action as they consider necessary. This might include action to reduce spending in the rest of the year, to increase income or to finance all or part of the shortfall from reserves.

11 Consultation and Communications

- 11.1 None.

12 Implementation

- 12.1 Budgetary control is ongoing so no implementation issues.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024/25 Annex 2 – Reserves Position 31 March 2025 Annex 3 – Member Decisions Annex 4 – Salary Monitoring Annex 5 – Income Monitoring

This annex is published as a supplement due to its size.

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Reserves Balances 31st March 2025

Description	Directorate	Balance as at 31 March 2024 £	2024/25 Actual Contribution		Balance as at 31 March 2025 £
			From £	To £	
General Revenue Reserve	CORP	9,915,461		1,108,493	11,023,954
General Fund	DFT	1,250,000			1,250,000
Revenue Reserve for Capital Schemes	CORP	9,435,928	1,328,717	0	10,764,645
Building Repairs Reserve	DCS	1,121,839	1,000,000	0	2,121,839
Property & Multi Asset Fund Reserve	DFT	3,250,000			3,250,000
Earmarked Reserves					
Democratic Representation	CE/DCS	8,200	(1,604)		6,596
Special Projects	see below	215,871	(124,892)	72,681	163,660
Planning Services	DPHEH	1,075,182	(731,384)	854,770	1,198,568
Homelessness Reduction	DPHEH	508,949	(1,250,513)	2,285,214	1,543,650
Election	CE	111,316		90,675	201,991
Asset Review	DCS/DPHEH	32,081	(4,550)		27,531
Training	DCS	122,270		21,055	143,325
Invest to Save	CORP	141,391	(67,858)		73,533
Housing & Welfare Reform	DFT	109,109			109,109
Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust	DSSLTS	369,200	(83,000)		286,200
Housing Assistance	DPHEH	358,350			358,350
Business Rates Retention Scheme	see below	915,387	(61,853)	617,850	1,471,384
Public Health	DPHEH	22,683	(5,400)		17,283
Tree Safety		0		25,000	25,000
Regeneration of Tonbridge		650,000	(158,007)	3,823,768	4,315,761
Transformation (Revs & Bens, Finance)	DFT	432,157	(170,048)	906,689	1,168,798
Climate Change	CE	878,334	(737,383)	500,000	640,951
Budget Stabilisation	DFT	2,497,126	(1,015,433)	1,387,000	2,868,693
		8,447,606	(4,411,925)	10,584,702	14,620,383
GRAND TOTAL		33,420,834	(2,083,208)	11,693,195	43,030,821

Reserves Balances 31st March 2025

Description	Directorate	Balance as at 31 March 2024 £	2024/25 Actual Contribution		Balance as at 31 March 2025 £
			From £	To £	
Analysis of Special Projects Reserve					
Housing Survey	DPHEH	8,997			8,997
Minimum Energy Efficiency Project	DPHEH	38,500			38,500
Domestic Abuse	DCS	102,499	(96,878)	72,681	78,302
Peer Review	CE	65,875	(28,014)		37,861
		215,871	(124,892)	72,681	163,660
Analysis of Planning Services Reserve					
Local Plan	DPHEH	574,154	(395,527)	757,963	936,590
Green Belt Funding				70,000	70,000
Planning Enforcement Fund		15,889			15,889
Borough Green Gardens		66,416			66,416
Hildenborough Neighbourhood Area Plan		5,000			5,000
Planning Appeals		400,000	(311,000)		89,000
Biodiversity Net Gain		13,723	(24,857)	26,807	15,673
		1,075,182	(731,384)	854,770	1,198,568
Analysis of Homelessness Reserve					
Rough Sleeping Initiative	DPHEH	121,971	(385,264)	391,574	128,281
Next Steps Accommodation Programme		36,214			36,214
Homelessness Prevention Grant		289,638	(665,249)	588,390	212,779
Temp Accomodation - Modular Homes		0	(200,000)	1,300,000	1,100,000
Ex-Offenders Accommodation Grant		28,740			28,740
Home Office Grant		24,500		5,250	29,750
Domestic Abuse Contribution		5,000			5,000
BHAL Insurance Rebate		2,886			2,886
		508,949	(1,250,513)	2,285,214	1,543,650
Analysis of Business Rates Retention Sch Res					
Business Rates Retention Scheme	DFT	400,000			400,000
Kent BR Pool Growth Fund	CE/DFT	364,172	(23,127)	617,850	958,895
1819 Kent & Medway BR Pilot Growth Func	CE/DFT	151,215	(38,726)		112,489
		915,387	(61,853)	617,850	1,471,384
Analysis of Tonbridge Town Centre Reserve					
Town Centre Manager (3 years)	R126	100,000	(42,050)	150,000	207,950
Angel Centre Build Costs	R127	500,000		1,950,000	2,450,000
Tonbridge Farm	R128		(16,557)	500,000	483,443
Alliance			(72,100)		(72,100)
Area East of High Street	R129	50,000	(27,300)	1,223,768	1,246,468
		650,000	(158,007)	3,823,768	4,315,761
Transformation Reserve					
Finance and Transformation (Digital)		432,157	(77,068)	30,839	385,928
Corporate Issues		-	(92,980)	875,850	782,870
		432,157	(170,048)	906,689	1,168,798

Decision Notices with budget implications
Period Ending May 2025
2025/26 Financial Year

Decision Note Reference	Cabinet Member / Officer	Decision Notice Title	Brief description of decision made	Date of Decision	Revenue Impact	Capital Impact	Financed from Reserves? Y/N	Financed from Grant Y/N
<u>Non-Salaries</u>					£	£		
D250040MEM	Cabinet Member for Community Services	Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement Team	The cost of four Officers, working in two pairs across the borough from Wednesday 7 May 2025 until Sunday 2 November 2025. Funding is made up from £37,000 to support further community initiatives in 2025/26, as agreed by Cabinet on 10 December 2024 and £45,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26.	16/04/2025	82,000	0	N	Y
D240121MEM	Cabinet Member for Finance & Housing	Hoarding Work within Housing	Consideration was given to the provision of a Hoarding Co-ordinator service for residents of Tonbridge and Malling and associated clearance and clean-up works. This to be funded via the disabled facilities grant element of the Better Care Fund (BCF). The decision notice is for £30k for a hoarding co-ordinator and £15k for a clean and clearance budget – all to be funded from the better care fund (DFG), along the same lines as the previous co-ordinator/shared support we currently fund.	03/12/2024	45,000	0	N	Y
	Full Council	Recruitment of Head of Finance	Appointment of a specialist recruitment search and selection partner, following an appropriate procurement process, to manage the process of the of the search and selection of the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer post.		25,000	0	N	N
	Full Council	Tonbridge Town Centre Community Governance review	Budget for the conduct of the Community Governance Review to be funded through a supplementary estimate from the General Revenue Reserve.		12,000	0	N	N
	Cabinet	The Government's Local Government Reorganisation Programme	An initial budget of up to £10,000 funded from the Transformation Reserve to help fund the preliminary financial and technical data analysis and evidence base that had been necessary to inform this work, be agreed.		5,868	0	Y	N
					169,868	0		
<u>Salaries</u>								
D250005MEM	Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing	Staffing - Housing Solutions Team	Sickness cover and backfill arrangement	30/01/2025	6,641	0	Y	
GP25/15	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Planning Officer - regrade	12/03/2025	4,028	0	N	
GP25/15	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Planning Enforcement Manager - regrade	12/03/2025	7,646	0	N	
GP25/15	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Temporary Accommodation Welfare Officer	12/03/2025	29,547	0	N	
D250025MEM	Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing	Housing Solutions - Extension of Contracts	Housing Allocation Assistants / Move on Officer	13/03/2025	57,586	0	Y	
D250026MEM	Cabinet Member for Planning	Recruitment of a Six-month Temporary Contractor Senior Planning Officer	Temporary Contractor Senior Planning Officer	14/03/2025	55,944	0	Y	
D250028MEM	Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing	Housing Improvement Team – Extension of Temporary Resource	Temporary agency resource	20/03/2025	10,500	0	Y	
GP25/19	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Director of Finance - Deletion of post	12/05/2025	(90,283)	0	N	
GP25/19	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer - New post	12/05/2025	85,742	0	N	
GP25/19	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Ring fenced savings - 12 months	12/05/2025	4,541	0	N	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Revenue & Benefits Officer / Overpayment Recovery Assistant - change in hours	11/06/2025	(839)	0	N	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Housing Solutions Manager - regrade	11/06/2025	5,735	0	N	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Housing Allocations Team Leader - regrade	11/06/2025	6,837	0	N	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Housing Allocation Officer - regrade	11/06/2025	9,562	0	N	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Housing Allocation Officer - regrade	11/06/2025	6,347	0	Y	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Contracts and Procurement Lawyer - increased hours	11/06/2025	27,781	0	N	
	General Purposes Committee	Establishment Report	Resilience Officer - increased hours / regrade	11/06/2025	21,405	0	N	
	Cabinet	Housing Staffing	Extension of 4 x Housing Allocation Officers and 2 x additional posts for one year + Overtime for 16 weeks	03/06/2025	189,777	0	Y	
					438,497	0		
					Total Growth/(Saving)	608,365	0	
					Funded from Reserves	(332,663)	0	
					Funded from Additional Grant	(127,000)	0	
					MTFP Impact	148,702	0	

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Salaries Budgetary Control Monitoring Statement

Annex 4

Period Ending May 2025

2025/26 Financial Year

Service	Annual Budget As amended £	2025/26		Above (Below) Budget (b - a) £
		Budget to end of May (a) £	Actual to end of May (b) £	
Central				
Administration & Property	1,207,350	201,300	197,100	(4,200)
Legal	711,450	118,600	126,000	7,400
HR & Customer Services	856,300	142,750	131,900	(10,850)
Executive	712,950	126,150	117,650	(8,500)
Finance & Transformation				
Finance	2,055,100	342,500	329,950	(12,550)
Information Technology	1,301,950	217,000	221,800	4,800
Planning, Housing & Environmental Health				
Environmental Health & Housing	2,051,150	341,850	379,250	37,400
Planning	2,891,750	481,950	462,550	(19,400)
Street Scene, Leisure & Technical	2,403,800	402,150	366,450	(35,700)
Sub-total	14,191,800	2,374,250	2,332,650	(41,600)
Non-budgeted spend on recruitment & other expenses to the end of May				34,400
Budgeted ring-fenced sum to the end of May				0
Adjustments for expenditure funded from reserves or grants				(41,150)
Budgeted management savings to the end of May				24,000
Above / (Below) Budget				(24,350)

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Income Budgetary Control Monitoring Statement

Annex 5

Period Ended May 2025**2025/26 Financial Year**

Service	Annual Budget £	2025/26		(Above) Below Budget (b - a) £
		Budget to end of May (a) £	Actual to end of May (b) £	
Central				
Land Charges	(236,000)	(38,000)	(25,732)	12,268
Licensing	(374,850)	(62,550)	(57,439)	5,111
Sub-Total	(610,850)	(100,550)	(83,171)	17,379
Planning, Housing & Environmental Health				
Planning Applications	(1,169,950)	(195,000)	(177,888)	17,112
Building Regulations	(341,550)	(56,950)	(62,609)	(5,659)
Sub-Total	(1,511,500)	(251,950)	(240,497)	11,453
Street Scene, Leisure & Technical				
Garden Waste Collection	(1,753,400)	(83,300)	(83,263)	37
Recycling Performance Payment	(628,000)	0	0	0
Bulky Refuse Collection	(165,600)	(27,600)	(28,524)	(924)
Tonbridge Cemetery	(151,050)	(25,200)	(32,513)	(7,313)
Short Stay Car Parking	(2,150,000)	(358,350)	(345,697)	12,653
Long Stay Car Parking	(780,000)	(130,000)	(169,889)	(39,889)
Penalty Charge Notices	(700,000)	(116,650)	(90,427)	26,223
Car Parks Season Tickets	(112,000)	(18,650)	(20,676)	(2,026)
Residents Parking Permits	(145,000)	(24,150)	(31,023)	(6,873)
Haysden Country Park Parking	(95,000)	(15,850)	(28,274)	(12,424)
Sub-Total	(6,680,050)	(799,750)	(830,286)	(30,536)
Grand Total	(8,802,400)	(1,152,250)	(1,153,954)	(1,704)

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Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee

22 July 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Information



Cabinet Member Cllr Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services

Responsible Officer Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and Transformation

Report Author Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and Transformation

Consultation – ‘The Fair Funding Review 2.0’

1 **Summary and Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 A report to advise Members of the release of the “Fair Funding Review” consultation which was launched on 20 June 2025 and closes on 15 August.

2 **Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Government funding is an important element of the overall finance package for the delivery of local services. It is therefore important that the Council comments on the proposals of Government to protect the services it delivers.

3 **Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 The Government has opened a further consultation on the funding regime following on from one earlier in the year which the Council also responded to. This will likely see major changes to the main funding formula with a stronger link to levels of deprivation and population.
- 3.2 The details of the consultation can be found at: [The Fair Funding Review 2.0 - GOV.UK](#)
- 3.3 The consultation does **not** include provisional allocations at local authority level. It is envisaged that this indicative information will be available in the early Autumn through a policy statement.

- 3.4 It is still the Government's intention to implement funding changes in the 2026/27 local government finance settlement.
- 3.5 One of the key points set out is to reduce the number of individual grants and roll them into the settlement funding assessment (SFA) and, as a result, be redistributed using the new funding methodology.
- 3.6 Most notably, the Government proposes ending the New Homes Bonus and rolling in the equivalent sum into SFA. This will also apply to grants for homelessness prevention, rough sleeping and temporary accommodation.
- 3.7 The Government intends to reset the baseline for retained business rates in full in 2026/27. There is an intention to provide transitional funding, including a minimum funding floor, to protect councils from the full impact of the funding changes. A three-year phased transition period is proposed.
- 3.8 **Statutory duties:** The Government is seeking views on statutory duties that impose significant burden without significant value for residents.
- 3.9 **Sales, fees and charges reform:** The Government is seeking to review the current system and implement changes (devolution of specific charges, adjustment of nationally set fee levels, or do-nothing) in a phased manner.

4 Proposal

- 4.1 Officers will formulate a response to the consultation, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services, and complete the submission before the 15 August 2025 deadline.
- 4.2 Given the significance of the potential impact of the proposed changes, it is suggested that the response is reported to the September meeting of this Scrutiny Select Committee, for Members' information.

5 Other Options

- 5.1 There is no obligation to respond, but it is important that the council's voice is heard especially given that district councils are likely to be hit harder (as we have been forecasting in the MTFS).

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 This Council has not fared favourably on previous assessments of need and following the consultation in 2018, we have anticipated a reduction in government funding within our MTFS.
- 6.2 A policy statement is expected in late September/October which should give indicative figures which will enable an updated MTFS to be produced.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 There has been so much uncertainty and volatility that financial planning has become increasingly difficult with the increased risk of significant variances compared to projection. This had had consequential implications on the level of reserves held to deal with potentially greater income volatility. A multi-year settlement, as proposed, would at least give a greater degree of certainty for planning finances.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 None at this stage.

9 Consultation and Communications

- 9.1 This is the second consultation by government on the future of local government financing.

10 Implementation

- 10.1 A response to the consultation will be sent in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services before the deadline of 15 August.

11 Cross Cutting Issues

- 11.1 Equalities and Diversity

- 11.1.1 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.

Background Papers	None
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Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee

22 July 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Information



Cabinet Member	Cllr Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services
Responsible Officer	Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and Transformation
Report Author	William Waight, Revenue and Benefits Manager

Consultation – Modernising and Improving the Administration of Council Tax

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 A report to advise Members of the release of a consultation “Modernising and improving the administration of council tax” which was launched on 20 June 2025 and closes on 12 September 2025.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Council Tax is an important source of funding for local government. Efficient and effective collection of sums due is imperative to ensure funds are available for delivery of services.

3 Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The government has opened a consultation, seeking views from local authorities, particularly those responsible for the administration and collection of Council Tax, setting out proposals for modernising and improving the administration of council tax. The details of the consultation can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax>
- 3.2 The ministerial foreword emphasises the intention to create a “fair and reasonable” tax system where deliberate tax avoidance is not to be tolerated but account is taken of the financial pressures still felt by many households.

- 3.3 The closing date by which the Council must submit its response is 12 September 2025.
- 3.4 *The proposals included in the consultation are set out below:*
- 3.4.1 “The government proposes changing council tax billing from 10-months to 12-months by default. This will assist households in managing their finances. It proposes maintaining the ability for households to pay over 10 months where this is preferable.
- 3.4.2 The government is seeking views on ways it can improve the transparency of council tax information. This change will help taxpayers understand what their council tax is spent on and help them connect their council tax to local services. The change is also intended to provide taxpayers with information on the support available to them and how to access it.
- 3.4.3 The government is seeking views on how it can modernise council tax disregards to ensure they continue to support those they were intended to support. The criteria for disregards have not been reviewed in decades.
- 3.4.4 The government also proposes changing the outdated and alienating name of the ‘severe mental impairment’ disregard and amending its definition to encourage more eligible people to make use of the disregard.
- 3.4.5 The government is interested in views on how could improve efficiency in billing for councils. The requirements for how councils communicate council tax information is still much the same as when council tax was introduced. This consultation seeks views on how this may be modernised to deliver value for money for councils and taxpayers.
- 3.4.6 The government is seeking views on whether there is anything the government can do to remove barriers to effectively challenging bandings, recognising that some households could be paying more than they should and do not have a straightforward mechanism to check and challenge their council tax band.
- 3.4.7 Finally, the government is proposing changes to processes for collecting and enforcing council tax charges. It is right that councils have the power to recover debts owed to them and to tackle cases of avoidance. However, the government believes households should be free from concerns of disproportionate enforcement action. The government is proposing increasing the time before councils can request a full-bill from households and capping the costs charged on households in seeking liability orders for debts.”

4 Proposal

- 4.1 Officers with formulate a response to the consultation, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services, and complete the submission before the deadline.

- 4.2 Given the potential significance of the impact of the proposed changes, it is suggested that the response is reported to the September meeting of this Scrutiny Select Committee for information. If Members have any points they would like the Council to make in its response, they can be shared with officers at the meeting.

5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 5.1 In the response, proper account will be taken of the potential difficulty certain changes could cause to the council's cash flow, as well as the continued ability to effectively collect and enforce non-payment of Council Tax.

6 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Cashflow could potentially be affected. Unless precept payment dates to major preceptors are revised, this could mean in a worst case scenario that the Council as billing authority could have to make payments before collections have been made.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 None at this stage.

8 Consultation and Communications

- 8.1 This consultation ends on 12 September 2025.

9 Implementation

- 9.1 The response to the consultation will be sent in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services.

10 Cross Cutting Issues

- 10.1 Equalities and Diversity

- 10.1.1 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.

Background Papers	None
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FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE – UPCOMING MATTERS							
2025-26							
C=Council; CAB = Cabinet; DEL = Delegated to Committee; INFO = matters for information. Cabinet are responsible for ALL Key Decisions (KD). Some Non-Key Decisions (NKD) can be taken by Cabinet Members outside of the meeting.							
DECISION (TITLE)	DESCRIPTION	C/CAB/ DEL/INFO	KD/NKD	CAB MEMBER DN Y/N	PART 1 OR 2	MEETING DATE	OFFICER IN PERSON ATTENDANCE Y/N
Cabinet Member report	Finance – Cllr M Coffin	Info				16 September 2025	
Delivery of Savings and Transformation Strategy	Base budget review to identify savings options as set out in Annual Service Delivery Plan						
Matters Arising from Services in between cycles:							
Work Programme	Standing item	Info					
Review of Fees and Charges 2025/26		CAB	KD	N		18 November 2025	
Cabinet Member report	Regeneration/Property – Cllr R Betts	Info					
Matters Arising from Services in between cycles:							
Work Programme	Standing item	Info					
						17 February 2026	

Matters Arising from Services in between cycles:							
Work Programme	Standing item	Info					
						26 May 2026	
Matters Arising from Services in between cycles: To be confirmed							
Future items to be scheduled for scrutiny: To be confirmed							

Annual updates in respect of the following Outside Bodies to be scheduled during 2025/26:

- Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board - early 2026
- Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board - early 2026
- Rochester Airport Delivery Board
- West Kent Partnership

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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Agenda Item 16

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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