



TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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

Contact: Democratic Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

23 December 2025

To: MEMBERS OF THE CABINET
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Cabinet to be held in the Council Chamber, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill on Tuesday, 6th January, 2026 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Members of the Cabinet 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.

(NB: Background papers to items referred from Scrutiny Select Committees and Committees have been omitted from printed agenda packs.)

Yours faithfully

DAMIAN ROBERTS

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

1. Guidance for the Conduct of Meetings

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PART 1 - PUBLIC

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| 2. | Apologies for absence | 11 - 12 |
| 3. | Declarations of interest | 13 - 14 |

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.

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| 4. | Minutes | 15 - 22 |
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To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18 November 2025.

Matters in accordance with Part 3 of the Constitution

Executive Key Decisions

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| 5. | Fees and Charges 2026/27 - Legal Fees, Photocopying, Land Charges, Street Name and Numbering, Tonbridge Castle, Events, Billboards and Banners and Court Fees for Council Tax and Business Rates | 23 - 40 |
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This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 covering Legal Fees, Photocopying, Land Charges, Street Naming and Numbering, Tonbridge Castle, Events, Billboards and Banners and Court Fees for Council Tax and Business Rates.

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| 6. | Review of Fees and Charges for Discretionary Planning Services 2026/27 | 41 - 74 |
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Consideration of recommendations of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of fees and charges for discretionary planning services.

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| 7. | HMO and Caravan Site Licensing Fee Charges 2026/27 | 75 - 82 |
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Consideration of recommendations of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of fees and charges for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and Caravan Site Licences.

8. Adoption of a Calculator for Indoor Sports, Outdoor Sports and Playing Pitch Developer Contributions 83 - 150

Consideration of recommendations of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of adopting the Sports England model calculator approach to securing developer contributions towards indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the Borough.

An updated Guidance Note is attached at Annex 2.

Executive Non-Key Decisions

9. Reserves Review 151 - 158

The report provides details of a review of earmarked reserves and whether there is funding available to assist with delivery of priority capital projects.

10. Planning Advisory Service - Review of the Council's Planning Service 159 - 210

Consideration of recommendations of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of the Planning Advisory Service Review report and associated Action Plan.

Matters submitted for Information

11. Minutes of Panels, Boards and Other Groups 211 - 230

The minutes of meetings of Advisory Panels, Boards and Other Groups are attached:

- Notes of Parish Partnership Panel of 20 November 2025;
- Notes of Tonbridge Community Forum of 24 November 2025;
- Notes of Joint Transportation Board of 1 December 2025.

Any recommendations arising from these minutes are set out as individual items on this agenda.

12. Decisions taken by Cabinet Members 231 - 232

A record of the decisions taken by portfolio holders since the last meeting of Cabinet are attached.

13. Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions (if available) 233 - 240

The Notice of Key Decisions anticipated to be taken between January and March 2026 is attached.

14. Urgent Items 241 - 242

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

15. Exclusion of Press and Public 243 - 244

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 in accordance with Part 3 of the Constitution

Executive Key Decisions

16. Proposed Lease of Residential Apartments in Tonbridge for Use as Temporary Accommodation 245 - 256

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

In accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Housing Strategy, proposals to lease properties to serve as temporary accommodation are presented for consideration.

17. Lease Arrangements - 8 - 10 Martin Square, Larkfield 257 - 262

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

This report sets out proposed lease arrangements for 8 – 10 Martin Square, Larkfield for consideration.

Executive Non-Key Decisions

18. Blue Bell Hill Temporary Accommodation Project - Update Report 263 - 268

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

This report updates on the project to deliver modular housing units to be used as temporary accommodation at the former commuter car park at Blue Bell Hill and seeks approval to amend the previous Cabinet delegation to approve moving into the build stage of the contract.

19. Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board - Meeting Notes 269 - 294

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

This report presents the notes of the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board of 29 August and 28 November 2025, with the accompanying report.

Please note the annexes as referred to in Annex 3 are not included as part of this item.

20. Urgent Items 295 - 296

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

Councillor M D Boughton, (Leader)
Councillor R P Betts, (Housing, Environment and Economy)
Councillor M A Coffin, (Finance, Waste and Technical Services)
Councillor D Keers, (Community Services)
Councillor A Mehmet, (Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration)
Councillor M Taylor, (Planning)

Members of the Council who are not members of the executive may attend meetings of the Cabinet. With the agreement of the Leader, any such Member may address the Cabinet on any item on the agenda but may not vote.

GUIDANCE ON HOW MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED

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

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

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

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Declarations of interest

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES

Tuesday, 18th November, 2025

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

Cllrs S Crisp, D Harman, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer and M R Rhodes were also present via MS Teams pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 23.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M A Coffin

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 25/125 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CB 25/126 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the Cabinet held on 14 October and 29 October 2025 respectively be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

CB 25/127 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - BUSINESS CASE SUBMISSION

(Decision Notice D250121CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Borough Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations, the assessment of risk and the legal implications detailed in the business case attached at Annex 3.

Cabinet welcomed the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, recognised the detailed and robust debate of Members and shared the

concerns expressed regarding the financial impact of local government reorganisation and the overall devolution timetable.

The business case (attached at Annex 3) proposed a 3-unitary model (option 3A) with a West Kent authority comprising Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone areas. Following positive engagement and collaborative working with other Kent authorities, this option was potentially supported by five councils across the County.

It was observed that this was an important decision which would have significant consequences for the future of the Borough for decades and generations to come. Particular reference was made to the views of parish/town councils and Cllr Boughton proposed that relevant supporting documentation could be included in the Borough Council's final submission if provided in sufficient time. It was also proposed by Cllr Boughton that any final drafting changes to the Borough Council's submission before the Government deadline be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader. Both of these proposals were seconded by Cllr Taylor and supported unanimously.

In recognition that the Borough Council had to submit a response to Government by 28 November 2025 and that option 3A offered the most efficient and least disruptive multi-unitary option for Kent, enabled long-term financial sustainability and reflected the position previously confirmed by Tonbridge and Malling at the interim submission to Government in March 2025, Cllr Boughton proposed, seconded by Cllr Taylor and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft proposals for Local Government Reorganisation, be noted;
- (2) based on the evidence set out in the business case (Annex 3), the 3 unitary model, Option 3a be submitted to the Government by the deadline of 28 November 2025 as the Borough Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation;
- (3) any final drafting changes ahead of the submission deadline be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Borough Council; and
- (4) any relevant supporting documentation be included in the Borough Council's final submission to Government if received in advance of the 28 November 2025 deadline.

CB 25/128 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26 - WASTE, LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

(Decision Notice D250122CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of fees and charges 2026/27 for waste, leisure and environmental health. The charging proposals reflected a range of factors including the Borough Councils overall financial position, market position, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations, the assessment of risk and the legal implications. Cabinet welcomed the proposal for introducing a charge to new property developers to include capital costs, delivery costs and a reasonable administration element for the provision of all bins and waste containers. In addition, to recovering the cost for providing bins and containers at new residential properties, the feasibility of seeking the cost for the provision of public litter bins related to new developments was supported.

In recognition of the Borough Councils overall financial position, the increasing challenges in achieving further expenditure savings and the importance of maximising income where possible, Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Keers seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposed schedule of charges for garden waste subscriptions, as set out in 5.1.4 of the report, be approved;
- (2) the proposed schedule of charges for household bulky refuse and fridge/freezer collection service, as set out in 5.2.4 of the report, be approved;
- (3) the proposed charge for “missed” refuse collection, as set out in 5.3.2 of the report, be approved;
- (4) the proposed schedule of charges in respect of Stray Dog redemption service, as set out in 5.5.4 of the report, be approved;
- (5) the proposed charge for Tonbridge Allotment, as set out in 5.6.2 of the report, be approved;
- (6) the proposed schedule of charges at Tonbridge Cemetery, as set out in Annex 1 and 5.7.2 of the report, be approved;

- (7) the proposed continuation of the pest control subsidy for residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Scheme alongside the existing charge, as set out in 5.8.1 of the report, be approved;
- (8) the proposed schedule of charges for Condemned Food Certificates, as set out in 5.9.2 of the report, be approved;
- (9) the proposed charge for Exported Food Certificates, as set out in 5.10.4 of the report, be approved;
- (10) the proposed charge for food hygiene requests for re-visits, as set out in 5.11.2 of the report, be approved;
- (11) the proposed charge for provision of services in respect of contaminated land, as set out in 5.12.5 of the report, be approved;
- (12) the proposed charge for provision of services in respect of private water supplies, as set out in 5.13.5 of the report, be approved;
- (13) the above proposed scale of charges (1) to (12) be implemented from 1 April 2026; and
- (14) the principle of charging property developers for the provision of all bins and waste containers at new developments, be approved, and the feasibility of seeking the cost for the provision of public litter bins related to new developments from developers, be explored.

EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISIONS

CB 25/129 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION RECHARGE POLICY

(Decision Notice D250123CAB)

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health sought approval for a Policy which allowed the Borough Council to recharge applicants when its temporary accommodation needed repair due to wilful damage or neglect.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations, the risk assessment and legal implications detailed in the report. The introduction of a Recharge Policy was welcomed by Cabinet who were pleased to note that a firm but fair approach would be adopted. It was also noted that a resident's vulnerabilities or disabilities would be considered when reviewing whether to apply a recharge.

Whilst the Borough Council had a requirement to ensure value for money and would spend money on legitimate repairs, Cllr Boughton proposed that if a repair was needed because of damage or neglect

caused by an applicant living in temporary accommodation the cost should be charged to that applicant. This was seconded by Cllr Betts and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the new Temporary Accommodation Recharge Policy (attached at Annex 1) be adopted.

CB 25/130 ANNUAL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN QUARTER 2 (2025/26) REPORTING

(Decision Notice D250124CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2025/26 – Quarter 2.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations, the legal implications and the assessment of risk. Cabinet welcomed the positive progress made on the activities and Key Performance Indicators and recognised further improvement works were required for those currently rated red. The challenges with Private Sector Rented Offers and CO2 emissions were also recognised.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) appreciation be recorded for the overall progress made during Quarter 2;
- (2) appreciation be recorded for the achievements made during Quarter 2; and
- (3) the areas needing focus be noted.

CB 25/131 AIR QUALITY MONITORING UPDATES AND AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS - RECOMMENDATIONS

(Decision Notice D250125CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of the revocation of four air quality management areas at Tonbridge High Street, Larkfield, Aylesford and Borough Green.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations, the assessment of risk and the legal implications. Cabinet welcomed the significant improvement in air quality and improved pollution levels and noted that this position was supported by DEFRA.

On the grounds that monitoring in some form within the areas of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) would continue, Cllr Betts proposed, Cllr Taylor seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the improvement in air quality over the last four years, be noted;
- (2) the revocation of the Tonbridge High Street, Larkfield, Aylesford and Borough Green Air Quality Management Areas, be agreed; and
- (3) the continuation of air quality monitoring across the Borough, including to respond to any specific areas of concern, be agreed.

CB 25/132 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ENFORCEMENT TEAM - UPDATE OF WORK AND REQUEST FOR FUNDING

(Decision Notice D250126CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of the continuation of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Enforcement Team.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations, the assessment of risk and the legal implications. To allow for consistency and for a more streamlined procurement process it was proposed that the Scheme be continued for a further two-year period, subject to identifying suitable funding and seeking contributions from parish/town councils.

In recognition of the high-profile and visible presence throughout the Borough which was reassuring to residents, local businesses and visitors, Cllr Keers proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the continuation of the Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement Team for a further two-year period, be agreed, subject to Council approval of the funding in February 2026 as part of the annual budget setting process*;
- (2) the request for funding from Parish/Town Councils, be agreed; and
- (3) the initiation of the procurement process for the Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement Team, be agreed.

(*approval of funding to be referred to Council)

CB 25/133 WASTE MINIMISATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT AT EVENTS ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND

(Decision Notice D250127CAB)

Consideration of the recommendations of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee in respect of a proposed new guidance now (attached at Annex 1) to support event organisers in aligning their events with the Borough Council's objective to remove single use plastics from their operations.

The difficulties in collecting waste from recreation grounds and the issues around contamination were discussed. However, it was also recognised that behaviours had changed and recycling on public land could potentially be considered for the future.

On the grounds of encouraging greater use of refills and reducing waste from Council owned sites, Cllr Keers proposed, Cllr Betts seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the proposed guidance note (attached at Annex 1) be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**CB 25/134 DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS**

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

Particular reference was made to Decision Notice D250116MEM in respect of proceeding with the introduction of parking charges in Aylesford East and West car parks. The Leader apologised for the late communication provided to residents and indicated that the Borough Council would operate a grace period where warnings would be issued instead of fixed penalty notices for a few weeks.

CB 25/135 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

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Cabinet

06 January 2026

Part 1 - Public

Executive Key Decision



Cabinet Member	Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste & Technical Services; and Des Keers, Cabinet Member for Communities
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive; and Paul Worden, Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer)
Report Author	Joy Ukadike, Head of Legal and Democratic Services; Laura French, Tonbridge Castle, Events and Customer Services Manager; Stuart Edwards, Head of Administrative and Property Services; William Waight, Revenues and Benefits Manager; and Nizete Vasconcelos, GIS Manager

Fees and Charges 2026/27 – Legal Fees, Photocopying, Land Charges, Street Naming and Numbering, Tonbridge Castle, Events, Billboards and Banners and Court Fees for Council Tax and Business Rates

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 covering Legal Fees, Photocopying, Land Charges, Street Naming and Numbering, Tonbridge Castle, Events, Billboards and Banners and Court Fees for Council Tax and Business Rates.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 It is important that fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis in accordance with a set of guiding principles to ensure the Council can continue to provide the existing range and standard of services and cover increases in expenditure.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- 1) the proposed charges for legal costs as set out in section 5.1 of the report be approved;
- 2) the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate be retained as set out in paragraph 5.2.
- 3) the Fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering as set out in section 5.3 of the report be adopted from 1 April 2026;
- 4) the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in section 5.4 of the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026;
- 5) the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Tonbridge Castle as set out in section 5.5 (5.5.4 to 5.5.13) of the report be approved;
- 6) the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Open Spaces and for charity and community events set out in section 5.6.2 of the report be approved; and
- 7) authority be delegated to the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive to negotiate fees for individual commercial events on Council-owned land as set out in section 5.6.4;
- 8) the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Billboards and Banners as set out in section 5.7.1 of the report be approved; and
- 9) the amount of costs charged in 2026/27 to recover unpaid council tax and business rates debts remain at the 2023/24 levels (section 5.8.8).

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 These proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 are normally within the purview of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee but due to cancellation this has now been sent direct to Cabinet.
- 4.2 In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2026/27 consideration has been given to a range of factors, including the Council's overall financial position, market position, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback.
- 4.3 The proposed charges for 2026/27 have also considered a set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges reproduced below for the benefit of this Committee:
 - Fees and charges should reflect the Council's strategic priorities and other corporate aims recognising there may be trade-offs as these are not mutually exclusive;

- Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- If there is to be a subsidy from the Council tax payer to the service user this should be a conscious choice;
- The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its strategic priorities and other corporate aims.
- Fees and charges should normally be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body);

4.4 Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to commercial operators;

- There should be consistency between charges for similar services;
- Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern so as not to preclude, where appropriate, access to Council services on the grounds of ability to pay.

4.5 It is essential in light of the Council's overall financial position that opportunities are taken to maximise income, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy. Attention has been given to the fees and charges applied by neighbouring Council's, and averages across the County, and these comparisons are included in relevant sections of the report for Member consideration.

5 Proposal(s)

5.1 Legal fees payable by third parties

5.1.1 From time to time the Council's legal fees can be recovered from third parties, for example, costs in connection with section 106 agreements required to be entered into by developers seeking planning permission for their schemes. Our level of fees has historically followed the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates. The guideline hourly rates were last updated on 1st January 2025 and are currently as follows for Kent, which falls under National Band 1: -

Solicitors and legal executives with over 8 years post qualification experience	£288
Solicitors and legal executives with over 4 years post qualification experience	£242
Other solicitors or legal executives and fee earners of equivalent experience	£197
Trainee solicitors, paralegals and fee earners	£139

- 5.1.2 For some Property transactions the amount to be charged in connection with the Council's legal work is indicated in the Property document or Lease and in such cases the amount stated in such documents will apply on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.1.3 For certain leasehold and miscellaneous property transactions the Council does not charge the full fee for the legal and administrative work undertaken as the operators, who are often sole traders and small businesses, have to pay full market rate for the rental of the business premises in accordance with statutory provisions. This is for instance the case with regard to lease renewals where only a contribution towards legal and administrative work is charged of £250. It is proposed to continue with this approach to assist the local economy.
- 5.1.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Council's charges follow the rates set out above and continue to reflect existing practises highlighted above. In respect of the fees set out at 5.1.1 above, the Supreme Court guideline hourly rates may change from time to time, so it is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that the level of legal fees charged by the Council is in accordance with the applicable rates set out in the Supreme Court guidelines. This will avoid the necessity of a further report should the guideline hourly rates change.

5.2 Photocopying Charges

- 5.2.1 A photocopying service is offered for members of the public calling at the council's main offices or requiring copies of Council documents sent by post. The current charges are 10p for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.
- 5.2.2 These charges are intended to cover the costs of the photocopy meter charge (including toner), paper and an allowance towards the staff time in looking out documents and postage where appropriate.
- 5.2.3 The level of charge was reduced in 2007/08 after remaining static for a number of years to comply with Freedom of Information requirements. The marginal cost per copy (including paper) is still approximately £0.10 per copy. Comparative charges in neighbouring authorities have been somewhat difficult to ascertain and many

appear not to charge for photocopying. However, it is considered appropriate to retain a charge to avoid requests for multiple copies of pages and to cover cases where documents cannot be provided by email. It is therefore suggested that the current charge be maintained.

- 5.2.4 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet be recommended to retain the current photocopying charges of £0.10 (inclusive of VAT) for each page of the same document or additional copies of the same page plus postage as appropriate.

5.3 **Street Naming and Numbering**

- 5.3.1 The requirement to provide a Street Naming & Numbering (SNN) service is derived from the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 and the County of Kent Act 1981. The TMBC Street Naming & Numbering Policy sets out the framework under which the service is delivered in this authority.
- 5.3.2 The IT GIS Team are responsible for delivery of this service. The actual cost of service delivery has been calculated by recording staff processing time, software costs and postage costs. The service generates an income of circa £46,000 a year. Neighbouring boroughs have their costs calculated in a different way from TMBC, where new developments can be more costly and single addresses can be less costly, but the overall income is balanced.
- 5.3.3 Members had previously agreed for prior year reviews with the below relevant priorities:
- 5.3.4 There should be no overall reduction of income to the Council through the SNN function;
- The cost of SNN to the Council should, where possible, be recovered through fees and charges (noting that this is not always possible, and not always desirable);
 - Ensure there are no 'perverse incentives' to apply for alternative naming schemes to minimise costs;
 - Ensure there is clarity in the fee schedule to avoid confusion and the need for officer discretion in charging fees;
 - Where workloads are sufficient to justify such, additional new fees should be considered.
- 5.3.5 One of the primary objectives is to ensure that cost of SNN to the Council should, where possible, be recovered through fees and charges. Based on estimated costs of delivery of the function and the need to meet this objective, the proposals below are based on one increase in the region of 3.5% (rounded to nearest £) effective from 1 April 2026.

New Properties

Category	Up to three in-fill properties on an existing street	Current Fee 2025/26	Proposed Fee 2026/27
1	Addressing one new in-fill property	£240	£250
2	Addressing two to three in-fill properties	£130 Per Property	£135 per Property
	Where four or more properties are to be named or numbered, the fee for new developments (below) will be levied.		
	Four or more in-fill properties on an existing street, or new properties on a new street		
3	Fee for naming of a street, other than in relation to new property addressing	£290	£302
4	Fee for addressing plots, including street naming if Required 1- 4 Units	£290 + £50	£302 + £52
Category	Up to three in-fill properties on an existing street	Current Fee 2025/26	Proposed Fee 2026/27
5	5 – 10 Units	£290 + £40	£302 + £42
6	11 or more units	£600+ £20	£624 + £21

Existing Properties

Category		Current Fee 2025/26	Proposed Fee 2026/27
7	Renumbering an existing property	£110	£114
8	Renaming an existing property, not in a current numbering scheme	£110	£114
9	Registering the addition or change or an alias to a numbered property	£110	£114
10	Removing an existing alias from a numbered property	No charge	No charge
11	Rename an existing street	£2,220	£2,309
12	Rename a block of flats	£2,220	£2,309
13	Fee for addressing units (flats) when splitting an existing property	£150 per unit	£156 per unit
14	Fee for addressing a single property when merging separate units	£240	£250

5.3.6 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that the above fee Schedule for Street Naming and Numbering be adopted from 1 April 2026.

5.4 Land Charges

- 5.4.1 Maintenance of the land charges register is a mandatory function of the Council. The Register now sits within the HM Land Registry digitised register. Search agents use this register along with collecting information from various departments within the Council to complete the Con29 (a “personal search”) which provide a commercial service to people seeking to buy a property (residential or commercial), and more generally those carrying out “due diligence” in relation to a property transaction.
- 5.4.2 The Council charge for Con29/Con29O (Enquiries of Local Authority) searches, which is backed by the Council’s indemnity insurance in the event of there being an error in the search result. The Council is therefore in competition with personal search companies for this fee: if the fee is set too high, it is likely more people will engage a search agent to undertake a personal search rather than pay the Council’s fees. The Con 29 form is a search setting out a standard set of enquiries agreed by central government, the Law Society and local authorities.
- 5.4.3 The Local Land Charges Act 1975 (“the Act”) and the Local Authorities (England) (Charges for Property Searches) Regulations 2008 (“the Regulations”) enable local authorities to charge for their property search services and set out rules for calculating the fees. The charges must be on a cost recovery basis and not on a “profit basis” and so the Council is legally restrained in its approach to such fee setting.
- 5.4.4 The regulations allow for the fact that the fee has to be set in advance and so is based on an estimate of the likely level of searches received and the likely expenditure of the local authority in connection with answering those enquiries for the forthcoming year. The Act provides that registering authorities must secure that taking one financial year with another, that fee income does not exceed the cost of providing the services. This applies to the Official Search of the Land Charges Register. The Regulations apply in respect of the Official Enquiries of Local Authorities (more commonly known as Con 29) and further provide that over any three-year period the authority should not make a profit in relation to the fees it has charged.
- 5.4.5 The housing and commercial property market is known to be a volatile area of activity where income can fall, or alternatively increase, quickly.

The LLC1 search migrated to HM Land Registry on 25th April 2024 and from this date the Council no longer receives LLC1 income, whilst retaining responsibility to maintain the register. It is envisaged that this loss of income should be accounted for (at least in part) in fee setting for 2026/27 financial year (FY). Since the migration was completed, officers have reviewed the level of fees charged to ensure that they reflect the time spent on dealing with the relevant enquiries. **The table below** shows the fees for land charges searches and enquiries currently charged by TMBC and by other Councils in Kent for comparison.

Current Search fees for Kent Authorities 2025/2026 (including VAT)					
Local Authority	Residential Con29	Commercial Con29	Optional Con29O	Additional Questions	Additional Parcels
Ashford LLC1 & Con 29	£105.00	£205.00	£17.00	£50.00	£33.00
Canterbury Con 29 only	£153.00	£207.60	£20.00 to £31.00 each for commercial £15.00 to £22.00 each for residential	£31.00	N/A
Dartford LLC1 & Con 29	£180.00	£220.00	£20.00	£20.00	£20.00
Dover Con 29 only	£165.50	£165.50	£17.15 (Q22 - £26.95)	N/A	£15.00
Folkestone & Hythe LLC1 and Con 29	£173.00	£173.00	£14.46	N/A	£20.64
Gravesham Con 29 Only	£170.40	£247.20	£16.80 (Q22 £30.00)	£30.00	£21.60
Mid Kent (Maidstone) LLC and Con 29	£195.80	£195.80	£17.85 (Q22 £33.10)	£25.20	£31.25
Medway Con 29 only	£72.00	£72.00	£15.00 (Q22 £22.00)	N/A	£22.20
Sevenoaks Con 29 only	£168.00	£168.00	£26.00	N/A	£22.00
Mid Kent (Swale) LLC and Con 29	£195.80	£195.80	£17.85 (Q22 £33.10)	£25.20	£26.45
Tonbridge & Malling Con 29 Only	£168.00	£351.60	£24.00	£27.00	£16.80

Thanet LLC and Con 29	£196.40	£225.00	£13.50 (Q22 £18.60)	N/A	£26.50
Mid Kent (Tunbridge Wells) LLC and Con 29	£195.80	£195.80	£17.85 (Q22 £33.10)	£25.20	£26.45

5.4.6 Proposed increase in fees to be effective from 1 April 2026 are as follows:

- Residential CON29 fee increase [from £168.00] to £174.00 including VAT (overall increase 3.6%)
- Commercial CON29 fee to stay at £351.60 including VAT, no change as already considered high when compared to others
- Optional CON29 questions increase [from £24.00] to £25.20 including VAT (overall increase 5.0%)
- Supplementary questions increase [from £27.00] to £28.20 including VAT (overall increase 4.4%)
- Additional Parcels increase [from £16.80] to £18.00 including VAT (overall increase 7.1%)
- Expedited fee increase [from £58.80] to £61.20 including VAT (overall increase 4.1%)
- Refined data to increase [from £12.00] to £13.20 including VAT (overall increase 10%)

5.4.7 It is not believed that it is appropriate to have any concessionary charges apply to these fees given that the search function supports the sale and purchase of private property. Members are reminded of the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have regard to the requirement to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) to advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups and (iii) to foster good relations between people from different groups, however it is not believed that these charges will have an adverse impact on any particular group protected by the 2010 legislation. The charges will be the same for everyone who requires the Services and there does not appear to be any disproportionate effect on any of the protected groups.

- 5.4.8 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for local land charges searches and enquiries set out in Section 8 be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

5.5 Tonbridge Castle

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

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

- 5.5.2 The Castle was originally programmed to be closed from November through to December 2024 for roof works, however as the duration of works was not sufficient this was moved to January through to April/May 2025. This resulted in the team not being able to book internal events, weddings and school trips for the November to December 2024 period, with this then moving to January to May 2025 which extended to end July 2025 resulting in greater losses of income through our peak period.
- 5.5.3 A report on the feasibility of an inhouse cafe operation to replace the reception area is scheduled to be presented at the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee on the 26 May 2026 with decision by Cabinet on 2 June 2026.

5.5.4 Proposed pricing for Castle tours 2026/27: -

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Adult*	£9.90	£9.90	£10.50	£10.90
Concessions* Jun/Senior/Student	£7.15	£7.15	£7.50	£7.80
Family Ticket* 2 adults 2 children	£30.00	£30.00	£32.00	£33.30
Season Ticket Adult*	£30.00	£35.00	£37.00	£38.50

5.5.5 Additional tour fees 25/26:

Item	Cost	Comment
Castle Tour Guide – Commercial	£36.50	One off - charge per tour guide

A Tour guide is a relatively new concept which was introduced for during 2024/25 and whilst it has limited demand, does offer tour groups a more personalised tour of the Castle. The fee will remain in place and has been increased in line with all charges

5.5.6 Proposed fees for schools 2026/27

5.5.7 Referring to point 5.5.2 this resulted in the team not being able to book school visits for the November to December 2024 period and then to January to May 2025. Schools were scheduled from May to July 2025 which again had to be moved or most cancelled. This is a loss of income and also work is needed to bring back the schools that have now booked with other venues.

5.5.8 Costs for school visits do not include VAT.

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

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Adult	£9.46	£9.46	£9.99	£10.40
School Children	£6.60	£6.60	£6.99	£7.30
Education Facilities includes toys, dressing up clothes, games, paper, pens and 2 tour guides (1 teacher free per 10 children. For special needs groups, carers admitted free as required)	£104.50	£110	£110	£115

5.5.9 Ceremonies – fee model – Chamber

Chamber	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Weddings -					
Monday - Thursday	£990	£1,020	£1,050	£1,090	£1,130
Friday	£1085	£1,120	£1,155	£1,200	£1,245
Saturday - Sunday	£1,125	£1,160	£1,195	£1,245	£1,295

Ceremonies – fee model - Great Hall

Great Hall	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Weddings -					
Monday - Thursday	£1,100	£1,100	£1,160	£1,200	£1,245
Friday	£1,400	£1,400	£1,460	£1,500	£1,560
Saturday - Sunday	£1,450	£1,450	£1,510	£1,550	£1,600

Ceremonies reception – fee model – Chamber

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Receptions -					
Monday - Thursday	£1,270	£1,270	£1,320	£1,370	£1,425
Friday	£1,550	£1,550	£1,600	£1,665	£1,730
Saturday - Sunday	£1,600	£1,600	£1,665	£1,730	£1,800

Other occasions to hire - Chamber

Chamber	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Events like Renewal of Vows/Baby Naming / Wakes			
Monday - Thursday	£380	£380	£400
Friday, Saturday - Sunday	£630	£630	£650

This hire is a new venture and growing so a set charge has been applied as opposed to chamber conference hire. This does not include evening hire.

5.5.10 In respect of weddings, these have suffered as a result of castle closures relating to repairs to the roof, a lag in bookings may be felt due to couples not being able to view the venue for 7 months during its closure.

5.5.11 Chamber – additional fees

Additional Ceremony fees	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Corkage Table	£55	£100	£103	£110

5.5.12 Chamber Hire – Conferencing

Venue	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Chamber Half Day	£110	£115	£119	£123
Chamber Full Day	£220	£230	£237	£245
Chamber Evening	£110	£225	£232	£240
Castle Conference Room Half day	£83	£85	£88	£91
Castle Conference Room Full Day	£165	£170	£175	£182
Castle Conference Evening	£83	£195	£200	£210

5.5.13 Castle Hire – Paranormal Investigations

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Paranormal Night Hire	£650	£680	£687	£715

5.5.14 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for Tonbridge Castle set out in Section 5.5 (5.5.4 to 5.5.13) be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

5.6 Fee and Charges for Events on open spaces

5.6.1 There are various levels of fees and charges based on numbers of people attending an event at any one time.

5.6.2 For each event there is an administration fee for the cost of processing the application, and an event fee for the associated costs of maintaining and running the open spaces.

Administration Fees – Charity and Community events

Admin Fee – per booking

Type of event	Maximum attendees (at once)	Administration fee 2025/26	Administration fee 2026/27
Charity or community	Less than 200	£29	£30
	Between 200 and 1,000	£58	£60
	More than 1,000	£116	£120

Land Hire Fees – Charity and Community events

Event Fee – per day

Type of event	Maximum attendees (at once)	2025/26 Charge “if free to attend”	2025/26 Charge “If charging to attend”	2026/27 Charge “if free to attend”	2026/27 Charge “If charging to attend”
Charity or community	Less than 100	£20	£50	£21	£52
	Between 100 and less than 500	£116	£150	£120	£156
	Between 500 – 2,000	£150	£180	£156	£187
	Between 2,001 and less than 5,000	£200	£500	£208	£520

- 5.6.3 Any changes to the fees charged will only be considered in exceptional circumstances by the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive.

Commercial Events

- 5.6.4 Agreed for 2024/25 was to allow greater flexibility in respect of one-off events, it was approved for commercial events that we do not publish any fees, as these will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis to optimise and enhance revenue income. Members are asked to note however that any negotiated fees for commercial events would not fall below previous year and will receive the appropriate % uplift
- 5.6.5 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the fees and charges 2026/27 related to Open Spaces and for charity and community events set out in section 5.6.2 of the report be approved.
- 5.6.6 It is **RECOMMENDED** that authority be delegated to the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive to negotiate fees for individual commercial events on Council-owned land as set out in section 5.6.4.

5.7 Billboards and Banners

- 5.7.1 Fees in regard to this form of advertisement were reviewed and approved by members for 2024/25 this has simplified the process and ensured that there is a charge applied for all organisations seeking this service, this was not the case in past years.

Type of event	Hire Duration 2 weeks	Charge 2025/26	Charge 2026/27
Commercial	Billboards (A0) Three billboards to show advert	£250 + VAT	£260 + VAT
	Notice boards (A2 size) Four notice boards to show advert	£150 + VAT	£156 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) Three banners to show advert	£200 + VAT	£208 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) up to 6no. Max	£350 + VAT	£364 + VAT
Type of event	Billboards - Duration 2 weeks	Charge 2025/26	Charge 2026/27
Community	Billboards (A0) Three billboards to show advert	£75 + VAT	£78 + VAT
	Notice boards (A2 size) Four notice boards to show advert	£50 + VAT	£52 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) Three banners to show advert	£50 + VAT	£52 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) up to 6no. Max	£75 + VAT	£78 + VAT

Type of event	Hire Duration 2 weeks	Charge 2025/26	Charge 2026/27
Charity	Billboards (A0) Three billboards to show advert	£30 + VAT	£31 + VAT
	Notice boards (A2 size) Four notice boards to show advert	£20 + VAT	£21 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) Three banners to show advert	£20 + VAT	£21 + VAT
	Banners (2m x 3m) up to 6no. Max	£20 + VAT	*£31 + VAT

*In 2024/25 a nominal charge to charities was made for banners in regards of up to 6 banners, this has been slightly increased to apply a fair cost based on the number of banners being displayed.

5.7.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the proposed scale of fees for Billboards and Banners set out in Section 5.7.1 be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

5.8 Council Tax and Business Rate Court Costs

5.8.1 The Council is obliged by law to collect all unpaid amounts of council tax and business rates and therefore must take recovery action through the Magistrates' Court to obtain the necessary order.

5.8.2 Following a review in 2024 the amount charged to Council Taxpayers was increased to £110.00 from April 2024. Business rates costs remained unchanged at £180.00. These amounts remained for 2025/26 and any proposed changes need to be justified to the Courts to allow the increase.

5.8.3 As the level of costs has only recently been reviewed and the Council's cost of recovery has not significantly increased, it is not proposed to seek the Court's approval to increase the level of costs requested from council taxpayers or business rate payers.

5.8.4 It is **RECOMMENDED**, therefore, that the amount of costs charged in 2025/26 should remain the same for the 2026/27 financial year.

6 Other Options

6.1 For each of the services included in the report a proposed charge has been included considering the guiding principles for the annual review. Members may of course wish to bring forward other options such as lower or higher charges.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

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

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 A decision is required now on the proposed fee structure for these activities to ensure that the Council has timely and up-to-date arrangements in place to administer service requests when received.
- 8.2 Failure to uprate fees and charges appropriately when costs are increasing will expose the council to financial pressure with its Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

9 Legal Implications

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

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 In bringing forward proposals, fees and charges of surrounding local authorities have been considered.
- 10.2 Under Section 93 of the 2003 Local Government Act there is no requirement for the Council to consult with the public.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 Implementation of all the proposed charges will be from 1 April 2026.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 No issues. Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 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.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	None

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REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR DISCRETIONARY PLANNING SERVICES 2026/27

Item HP 25/49 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 2 December 2025

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 for the provision of services in respect of development management, building control, high hedges, s106 monitoring and the Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) and Charging Schedule with effect from 1 April 2026. Fees had generally been increased by between 4-10% with a number of new fee categories proposed based on customer experience and good practice. Consideration had been given to each category and further explanation of these increases were detailed in the report.

In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2026/27 consideration had been given to a range of factors, including the Borough Council's overall financial and market positions, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback. A set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges had also been taken into account and were summarised in 4.2 of the report.

Particular reference was made to the Borough Council's significant and challenging financial position and as it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy and it was essential that opportunities to maximise income were taken, Cllr King proposed, Cllr Davis seconded and it was

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the updated Pre-application Charging Fee Schedule 2026/27 for Development Management (Annex 1) be adopted;
- (2) the updated Building Control Fee Schedule 2026/27 (Annex 2) be adopted;
- (3) the updated charging fees for enforcement, as set out in 5.4 of the report, be adopted;
- (4) the updated High Hedge fee, as set out in 5.13 of the report, be adopted;
- (5) the updated charging fees for s106 monitoring and compliance, as set out in 5.18 and 5.20 of the report, be adopted;
- (6) the new fee for registration of a s106 agreement, as set out in 5.21 of the report, be adopted;
- (7) the updated Planning Performance Agreement charging schedule (Annex 3) be adopted; and
- (8) the proposed fees be implemented from 1 April 2026.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

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Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

02 December 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Cabinet - Key Decision



Cabinet Member/s	Cllr Mike Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning Cllr Adem Mehmet – Cabinet Member for Infrastructure
Responsible Officer	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health
Report Author	James Bailey, Head of Planning

Review of Fees and Charges for Discretionary Planning Services 2026/27

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report updates the discretionary fees across the planning service for 2026/27 which would become effective on the 1st April 2026. Fees have generally been increased by 4% for Development Management and between 4-10% for Building Control. Some new fee categories have been introduced based on customer feedback and good practise. Further explanation of these increases can be found in the body of the report.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Ensuring that discretionary fees are reviewed regularly and are benchmarked against other Kent authorities ensures TMBC's fees are set to cover costs and provide an efficient service for our customers.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** to **APPROVE** the following with effect from 1st April 2026.
 - i. Adopt the updated Pre-application Charging Fee Schedule for Development Management 2026/27 as attached at Annex 1.

- ii. Adopt the updated Building Control Fee Schedule for 2026/27 attached at Annex 2.
- iii. Adopt the updated charging fees for Enforcement as set out in paragraph 5.4 below.
- iv. Adopt the updated charging fees for S106 monitoring and compliance as set out in paragraph 5.18 and 5.20 and the new fee set out in paragraph 5.21 below.
- v. Adopt the updated High Hedge fee as set out in paragraph 5.13 below.
- vi. Adopt the updated PPA charging schedule as attached at Annex 3.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2026/27 consideration has been given to a range of factors, including the Council's overall financial position, market position, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback.
- 4.2 The proposed charges for 2026/27 have also taken into account a set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges reproduced below for the benefit of this Committee:
- Fees and charges should reflect the Council's strategic priorities and other corporate aims recognising there may be trade-offs as these are not mutually exclusive;
 - Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
 - If there is to be a subsidy from the Council tax payer to the service user this should be a conscious choice;
 - The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its strategic priorities and other corporate aims.
 - Fees and charges should normally be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body);
- 4.3 Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to commercial operators;
- There should be consistency between charges for similar services;

- Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern so as not to preclude, where appropriate, access to Council services on the grounds of ability to pay.
- 4.4 It is essential in light of the Council's overall financial position that opportunities are taken to maximise income, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy. Attention has been given to the fees and charges applied by neighbouring Council's, and averages across the County, and these are included in relevant sections of the report for Member consideration.
- 4.5 The current pre-application advice and charging regime for Development Management was introduced on 1st April 2016 and has been updated annually following ongoing periods of monitoring and review. A comprehensive review of the service was undertaken and reported to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board in November 2021 – <https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cld=159&Mld+4655> and changes were recommended and made at that time to the pre-application advice service. These changes remain in place with increases to the fees on a yearly basis.
- 4.6 Building Control Fees, High Hedges and S106 Monitoring Fees have also been increased yearly to ensure that the cost of delivering these services is fully met.
- 4.7 New fee categories were introduced last year in Development Management, S106 monitoring & compliance and Building Control, with a new fee category introduced in late October 2025 for early Member engagement on pre-application submissions. A further review has been undertaken which includes market research and discussions with developers to determine whether we should be introducing new fees for the 26/27 period. New fees have been introduced which are set out in this report.

5 **Proposal**

Development Management Charges

- 5.1 No changes are proposed to the pre-application categories as part of this report as operationally these are working well and meeting the needs of customers. However, a recommendation as part of a separate review undertaken by the PAS team during the summer includes Recommendation 5 (part of a separate report to this committee) which suggests a review of the Pre-application and Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) service using the [PAS guidance](#) as a benchmark. The Action Plan accompanying this report sets out a timescale for the review to be undertaken by March 26 and an update report on these actions will be provided to this committee at that time. If recommendations are made for changes to the Fee categories, then this will be set out as part of the Action Plan.

- 5.2 A new Member pre-application category was introduced in late October of this year, as set out above, to enable early Member engagement and place shaping on evolving schemes. As this has only recently been introduced following Full Council agreeing to the fee schedule in October, an update on the uptake of this from developers cannot be given at this time, but it is expected that this will be well utilised by applicants seeking to engage with Members on evolving schemes. A new category is also proposed as part of the fee schedule update to enable those larger current site allocations in the Local Plan (Regulation 18(2) and looking beyond to Regulation 19) to engage with both policy and Development Management Officers to ensure key matters are considered at an early stage and sites can come forward to meet the Council's housing land supply requirements. A full list of reviewed and updated fees is included as **Annex 1**.
- 5.3 Fees for providing householder, listed buildings, small (minor), medium and larger developments, Majors and Strategic developments have been raised by 4% to cover inflation as there has been only a limited increase in the time spent to provide this advice.

Enforcement

- 5.4 New fees were introduced last year that enabled applicants to receive confirmation in writing to confirm whether the Council agreed that an enforcement notice has been complied with. Similarly, a fee was also proposed that enabled applicants to request that an enforcement notice is withdrawn.
- 5.5 The uptake of these new services was very limited and it is intended that greater prominence will be given to these on the enforcement pages of the website for 26/27. The updated fees propose a **4%** uplift to address inflation.

Fee Schedule

Service	Response Type	Fee -25/26	Fee - 26/27
Request to confirm compliance with an enforcement related notice	Written response only	£468	£487
Request to confirm compliance with an enforcement related notice	one meeting and written response	£720	£749
Request to withdraw an enforcement notice	Written response only	£816	£849

Request to withdraw an enforcement notice	one meeting and written response	£1,014	£1,055
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Building Control

- 5.6 Building Control fees can only be levied on a cost recovery basis and for fee earning work. Following a thorough assessment of the service with the finance team who examined the costs of providing the Building Control function, the hourly rate, currently charged at £63.67 should be increased to **£68.00 plus VAT**, an increase of 6.8% to cover the additional work that is required to provide the Building Regulation function.
- 5.7 A review has been undertaken for Building Control Fees, which has also included a benchmarking exercise against other Building Control fees across Kent, especially Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells who are our nearest authorities.
- 5.8 The review has included an assessment of the work undertaken, the number of hours required to carry out the work and the hourly charge to undertake the work. The outcome of the review demonstrates that our current fee levels are set appropriately and based on cost recovery for fee earning work. **Annex 2** sets out the standard charges across Tables A – C and includes increases of between 4-10%.
- 5.9 Table A has been increased by 10% to reflect the additional work involved for new dwellings. This brings us more in line with our neighbouring authorities Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells for this category of work. Table B has been uplifted by 4% and Table C by 4% as the fees currently cover the hours spent on these applications and has been uplifted to cover inflation. Work that is included in our Code E category has been uplifted in line with our hourly rate increase.
- 5.10 As set out above and as charges can only be levied on a cost recovery basis and having been benchmarked against other Kent based Building Control teams, it is not recommended that fees be increased further than the suggested increase.
- 5.11 It is worth noting that we are also considering removing tabled fees for work based on estimated cost (Table C items D14-D19) from April 2027. These fees would be replaced with a bespoke fee based on anticipated work involved at XX hourly rate which is more accurate and would bring us more in line with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. This has not been introduced at this stage as further work is required to facilitate this and update our customers.

Additional discretionary Fees - High Hedges and S106 Monitoring.

- 5.12 A benchmarking exercise was carried out for the 25/26 review of fees for High Hedge complaints against other Kent authorities and the average time taken to process these by the relevant officer. This established the current fees of £540.
- 5.13 A further review has been undertaken against other Kent authorities with seven raising their fees and five keeping their fees unchanged. TMBC's current fee is slightly higher than the mean average for Kent and the current median (which is Tonbridge and Malling at £540). It is proposed to raise the current fee by 4.6% which would be just above the median council (Tonbridge and Malling) and would still represent good value for money for the complainant who wishes to utilise this service. The fees are currently considered to cover the actual officer time for processing the complaint, although it should be recognised that cases vary significantly in terms of officer time and therefore the slightly larger increase in fee allows for these variations.
- 5.14 It is recommended that High Hedges Fees be increased to **£565**.

S106 Monitoring

- 5.15 A review and benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to assess the contributions charged for S106 monitoring. This varies significantly across Kent and only gives a snapshot of the charges but not the size of the teams involved in S106/CIL monitoring. Due to some local authorities being CIL charging, they also have expensive back-office monitoring systems and additional staff to manage the complexities of the CIL regime. Therefore, the benchmarking exercise does not fully assist in evaluating the cost for providing the service but does provide some useful information on fee levels.
- 5.16 The Council currently charges £460 per obligation for the monitoring fee and employs a Senior Obligations Officer who primarily manages the S106 monitoring and most (80%) of the role's time is devoted to S106 monitoring. The salary is partly funded but not all through the monitoring fees and this does not cover all the salary costs.
- 5.17 Fees were increased for the last financial year by 15% in order to recover the costs for S106 monitoring and to provide sufficient funding to cover the costs of the monitoring officer's post. It is recommended that a 10% increase in fees is proposed due to the increased complexities in monitoring agreements from the current chargeable rate of £460 to £506.
- 5.18 It is recommended that S106 Monitoring Fees be increased to **£506** for each obligation contained in the agreement.
- 5.19 Last year we introduced a new fee category for S106 monitoring which related to charging for checking compliance with S106 obligations. An additional fee was

charged should a site visit be required. Uptake on this new fee has been low, but it offers a service to the customer.

- 5.20 It is recommended that fees for S106 compliance requests which are currently charged at £175 with an additional fee of £145 should a site visit be required be increased by 4% to **£182** and **£151** respectfully with effect from the 1st April 2026
- 5.21 Following market research, some Council's see [S106 Monitoring Fees - Wealden District Council](#) charge a fee for registration of the S106 agreement which is required to be paid on completion of the agreement. This usually involves work across a number of teams within the Council and is currently not separately charged for within the S106 agreement. As this is a new fee and the market has not been tested at this time, it is recommended that an introductory fee of **£250** is introduced which will be closely monitored and a review undertaken for the next financial year 27/28.

Area	Fee	Note	Current fee
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	£250	Covers registration of S106 agreements and Deeds of Variation.	New Fee

Planning Performance Agreement and Charging Schedule

- 5.22 A comprehensive review of the Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) Protocol was undertaken in 2023/24 with an updated Protocol and increased fee schedule. Fees were increased at that time by various percentages for small (65%), medium (61%), large (49%) and strategic (32%) applications to reflect the time spent of negotiating and delivering on the PPA timescale on a cost recovery basis.
- 5.23 It is not proposed to review the Protocol for the 26/27 financial year at this time as this forms a recommendation as part of a separate review undertaken by the PAS team during the summer. One of these recommendations is Recommendation 5 which suggests a review of the Pre-application and Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) service using the [PAS guidance](#) as a benchmark. The Action Plan set out a timescale for the review to be undertaken by March 26 and an update report on these actions will be provided to this committee.
- 5.24 If changes are suggested to the Protocol and, as result the structure, content and fees, then this will be subject to a separate report to Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee.
- 5.25 Based on current evidence it is recommended that a 4% increase to all Development type fees are proposed to account for the officer time in providing the project plan and liaising with applicants to keep the PPA on target. This set out in **Annex 3**.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 A review has also been undertaken to assess whether any additional services could be offered to customers on a chargeable basis.
- 6.2 A number of new fees were introduced for the 25/26 financial year and have subsequently been increased in line with inflation for this year. A new fee has been introduced for strategic sites which are part of the Regulation 18(2) Local Plan proposed site allocations. This will include a Policy Officer and a Development Management Officer to help progress information required for the next stage of the Local Plan. A new fee has also been proposed for registering S106 agreements.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 7.1 It is appropriate to review the charging schedule every year, to ensure the Council continues to effectively recover costs. This will ensure that the Council is responsive to the needs of the customer and that the charging schedule is fairly applied and reflects the costs of delivering the service.
- 7.2 Based on the current level of uptake, the proposed increases to the fees discussed within this report will generate additional income of £77k in 2026/27 onwards, compared to the 25/26 budget. Which can be split out as follows:
 - Development Management - £46k
 - PPA's - £1k
 - Building Control - £24k
 - S106 Monitoring - £6k

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 Robust monitoring should be carried out on a yearly basis to ensure that our protocols are up to date and reflect best practice and that the charging schedule reflects the costs of delivering the service and is based on up-to-date evidence.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Local Government Act 2003 provides the power for local authorities to charge for discretionary services (as defined in the Local Government Act 1999). Discretionary services are those services that an authority has the power but not a duty to provide. An authority may charge where the person who receives the service has agreed to its provision. The power to charge under this provision does not apply where the power to provide the service in question already benefits from a charging power or is subject to an express prohibition from charging.

- 9.2 The Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on authorities to ensure that, taken one year with another, the income from charges for each kind of discretionary service does not exceed the costs of provision. An authority may set charges as it thinks fit, and may charge only certain people for a service or charge different people different amounts.
- 9.3 Local authorities are required to have regard for any guidance that may be issued by the Secretary of State in terms of carrying out their functions under the 2003 Act. Section 93(7) of the Act provides that certain prohibitions in other legislation preventing authorities from raising money are specifically dis-applied in relation to the exercise of the charging power.
- 9.4 Local Planning Authorities therefore have powers to recover the costs of preapplication advice in recognition of the time officers have to spend researching information in order to provide answers to prospective developers or applicants.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 The fee tables will be published on-line on the Council's website at least four weeks prior to start of the new financial year when the new fees will become live. Old fee tables will be removed at the start of the new financial year.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 New fees will be applied from 1st April 2026.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.

12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.1.3 There are no impacts on Climate change arising from this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

12.2.1 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.

12.3 Other If Relevant

- None

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Development Management Fees Annex 2 – Building Control Fees Annex 3 – Planning Performance Fees

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Pre-application charging schedule 2026/27

Type of Development	Criteria	Existing Fees 2025/26	Proposed Fees increase	Proposed Fees 2026/27
Householder development fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alteration or extension of individual houses for residential purposes and where the building affected is not a listed building 	Written advice only: £312	4% increase	Written advice only: £325
Small (Minor) development fees for minor /other applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alterations to an existing building where there is no increase in floor space and no new residential units are to be created New or replacement shopfronts New or replacement Advertisements Demolition Telecommunications equipment Air conditioning or ventilation equipment 	Written advice only: £473	4% increase	Written advice only: £492
Medium development fees for minor applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of one to four new residential units Where the floorspace to be created or changed in use is less than 499 square metre 	<p>Written advice only: £615</p> <p>Virtual meeting and letter: £1,221</p>	4% increase	<p>Written advice only: £640</p> <p>Virtual meeting and letter: £1,270</p>

		Meeting on site and letter: £1,322		Site visit, follow up meeting and letter £1,375
Larger scale development fees for minor applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of five to nine new residential units • Where the floorspace to be created or changed in use is between 499 to 999 sqm metres 	<p>Written advice only: £920</p> <p>Virtual meeting and letter: £1,832</p> <p>Meeting on site and letter: £2,039</p>	4% increase	<p>Written advice only: £957</p> <p>Virtual meeting and letter: £1,905</p> <p>Site visit, follow up meeting and letter £2,121</p>
Major development fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 99 new residential units • Creation or change of use between 1,000 square metres 9,999 square metres 	<p>£2,973</p> <p>The fee covers:</p> <p>Preliminary site visit by case officer</p> <p>Internal meeting by case officer with internal services</p> <p>Initial briefing by case officer to key members (where the case officer considers it necessary and proportionate to do so in liaison with those members)</p> <p>Virtual meeting between developer and</p>	4% increase	<p>£3,092</p> <p>The fee covers:</p> <p>Preliminary site visit by case officer</p> <p>Internal meeting by case officer with internal services</p> <p>Initial briefing by case officer to key members (where the case officer considers it necessary and proportionate to do so in liaison with those members)</p> <p>Virtual meeting</p>

		council teams (60 mins) Written response (format to be agreed by the parties)		between developer and council teams (60 mins) Written response (format to be agreed by the parties)
Strategic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of 100 or more new residential units • Creation or change of use of 10,000 square metres or more floorspace 	<p>£3850</p> <p>The fee covers:</p> <p>Preliminary site visit by case officer</p> <p>Internal meeting by case officer with internal services</p> <p>Initial briefing by case officer to key members (where the case officer considers it necessary and proportionate to do so in liaison with those members)</p> <p>Virtual meeting between developer and council teams (up to 2 hours)</p>	4% increase	<p>£4,004</p> <p>The fee covers:</p> <p>Preliminary site visit by case officer</p> <p>Internal meeting by case officer with internal services</p> <p>Initial briefing by case officer to key members (where the case officer considers it necessary and proportionate to do so in liaison with those members)</p> <p>Virtual meeting between developer and council</p>

		Written response (format to be agreed by the parties)		teams (up to 2 hours) Written response (format to be agreed by the parties)
Works to listed buildings fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and external works to listed buildings Enquiries relating to whether proposed works require listed building consent should be subject to a formal application for a lawful development certificate 	Virtual meeting and letter: £531 Meeting on site and letter: £704	4% increase	Virtual meeting and letter: £552 Site visit, follow up meeting and letter: £732
Requests for compliance with planning conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Householder developments Non-householder developments 	£43 £145	4% increase	£45 £151
Additional Fees for senior officer involvement for Major Development Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten to 99 new residential units Creation or change of use between 1,000 square metres 9,999 square metres 	Virtual meeting between developer and council teams (60 mins) To include Team Leader To include Development Manager To include Team Leader	4% increase	Additional £129 to Major development fees Additional £149 to Major Development Fees

		and Developer Manager		Additional £278 to Major Development Fees
Additional Fees for senior officer involvement for Strategic Development Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of over 100 or more new residential units • Creation or change of use of over 10,000 square metres or more floorspace 	<p>Virtual meeting between developer and council teams including case officer (up to 2 hours)</p> <p>To include Team Leader £129</p> <p>To include Development Manager £149</p> <p>To include Team Leader and Development Manager £278</p> <p>To include Head of Planning £179</p> <p>To include Team Leader or Development Manager and Head of Planning £348</p>	4% increase	<p>Additional £134 to Strategic Development Fees</p> <p>Additional £155 to Strategic Development Fees</p> <p>Additional £289 to Strategic Development Fees</p> <p>Additional £186 to Strategic Development Fees</p> <p>Additional £362 to Strategic Development Fees</p>

		<p>To include Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health £199</p> <p>To include Head of Planning and Director of Housing and Environmental Health £378</p> <p>To include either Leader of the Council/Chief Executive and Head of Planning or Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health £485</p>		<p>Additional £207 to Strategic Development Fees</p> <p>Additional £393 to Strategic Development Fees</p> <p>Additional £504 to Strategic Development Fees</p>
Member Briefing Session on Pre-application Development proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of 10 units or over • Creation or change of use of over 1,000 square metres or more floorspace • Must be subject of a current or recently completed pre-application submission <p>See guidance - Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council</p>	<p>Introduced October 2025</p> <p>£1,000 for initial presentation and £500 for each follow-up presentation.</p>	<p>No fee increase due to only being introduced in October 2025</p>	<p>£1,000 for initial presentation and £500 for each follow-up presentation.</p>

Proposed Strategic Local Plan Site Allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites proposed for allocation in the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18(2) and beyond) which are 250 units and above. This will include the case officer and member of the Local Plans team. • Creation or change of use of 5,000 square metres or more floorspace 	New Fee The fee covers: Preliminary site visit by case officer and Policy Officer (if required) Initial briefing by case officer to key members (where the case officer considers it necessary and proportionate to do so in liaison with those members). This may include policy input if required. Virtual meeting between developer and council team which will include a policy officer (up to 2 hours) Written response (format to be agreed by the parties)	New Fee	£4250
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Please note additional fees may be incurred for the following reasons:

- multiple proposals for the same scheme will be charged at full rate for the first proposal, then 50% of that fee for each additional proposal;
- schemes which would create additional units/floorspace in more than one use class will be charged at the relevant fee for both use class; and
- where a proposal includes development falling into one of the categories above and also alterations to a listed building both fees will apply.

Building Control



ANNEX 2

Phone: 01732 876230 Option 2

Email: building.control@tmbc.gov.uk

w www.tmbc.gov.uk

Building Control, Council Offices, Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4LZ

Standard Building Control Guide to Charges Effective from 1 April 2026

These tables and guidance notes are based on the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's Building Control Charges scheme. The charges scheme is made under the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010. The charges have been established to cover the cost of building control fee earning work in respect of commonly occurring building projects.

Charges payable for:

Before you build, extend, convert or make alterations to a property, you may need to submit a Building Regulation application to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and this will take the form of either a Full Plans application, a Building Notice submission or Regularisation application. If the basis on which the charge has been determined significantly changes, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council may either provide a refund or request a supplementary charge in writing setting out the basis and detailing the method of calculation.

Full Plans Application with Approval

If you submit a Full Plans application the Plan Charge must accompany the plans to cover an assessment of the works and the passing or rejection of the plans. The Inspection Charge becomes due after our Building Surveyors first inspection of the works on site. An invoice will be sent to the applicant for the relevant amount and this covers all necessary site inspections by Registered Building Inspectors including issuing a completion certificate.

Building Notice

Where a Building Notice is submitted, the Building Notice Charge is payable at the time of submitting the Notice. The fee covers Registered Building Inspectors visiting the site when notified to ensure the work conforms to Building Regulations and the issuing of a completion certificate. Supplementary information, ie floor plans, structural & thermal calculations, may be requested as necessary to confirm compliance with the Building Regulations 2010.

Fire Safety Order

A Building Notice cannot be used for a 'designated building' which is a building subject to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, i.e. non-domestic properties, common areas of flats and homes in multiple occupation, etc.

Regularisation

If you have carried out unauthorised building work you can apply for a Regularisation Certificate if the works were carried out on or after 11 November 1985. There is a fee to pay to cover the cost of assessing your application and all inspections, but no VAT is payable on this type of application.

Individually Determined Charges

You can request a bespoke fee quote where:

- All or part of the project falls outside of the standard charges in Tables A, B & C
- These categories do not cover all aspects of the project
- The categories do not reflect a reasonable charge
- You are unsure what standard charges to apply.

We will use or calculated hourly rate of £68.00 plus VAT for individually determined charges.

You can obtain an Individually Determined Charge by sending plans of your proposals by email: building.control@tmhc.gov.uk or by contacting us by telephone: 01732 876230 Option 2

Exemption from Charges

Existing dwelling - where the **whole** of the work is solely for the purpose of providing access for a disabled person to, from and within their residence, or for the purpose of providing accommodation, or facilities designed to secure the greater health, safety, welfare or convenience of the disabled person (subject to Regulation 4(2)) no charge shall be payable. Note: evidence of the person's disability or special needs may be required, ie, a letter from a medical practitioner or an occupational therapist.

Existing building - to which members of the public are admitted (e.g. public buildings, shops, banks, etc) - where the **whole** of the work is solely for the purpose of providing access for disabled persons to, from and within the building, or for the provision of facilities designed to secure the greater health, safety, welfare or convenience of disabled persons no charge shall be payable.

Service level

The inspection fee will cover all site inspections carried out during the construction phase including discussions and meetings with the builder, architect &/or the owner if required. Our Registered Building Inspectors provide a next day inspection service and because we are local we will do our utmost to accommodate any reasonable requests for inspections at short notice in the event of problems on site. We offer a prompt, proactive, commercially aware service and we understand the pressure involved in delivering construction projects on time including the programming issues of major builds.

The stages the Surveyor will look at include:

- Foundations
- Damp proofing
- Drainage
- Beams, floor and roof structures
- Thermal insulation
- Completion

VAT

VAT is charged at 20% (VAT is not applicable to Regularisation applications)

Payment

Payment can be made via an email payment link on request

Debit /Credit card payments are accepted by telephone; 01732 876230 Option 2 and cheques should be made payable to “Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council”.

Further guidance, application forms and advice can be obtained from:

Building Control, Council Offices,
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive,
Kings Hill, West Malling,
ME19 4LZ

Email: building.control@tmbc.gov.uk

Phone: 01732 876230 Option 2

www.tmbc.gov.uk

Standard Charges

Table A – New dwellings

Limited to work less than 300m2 floor area per plot.

Code	Bungalows or Houses less than 3 storeys	Totals	Full plans Plan Charge 25/26	Full plans Plan Charge 26/27 (approx. 10% uplift)	Full plans Inspection Charge 25/26	Full plans Inspection Charge 26/27 (approx. 10% uplift)	Building Notice Charge 25/26	Building Notice Charge 26/27 (reduced to align with FP fee)	Regularisation Charge 25/26	Regularisation Charge 26/27 (approx. 10% uplift)
H01	1 Plot	Net VAT Total	319.17 63.83 383.00	350.83 70.17 421.00	657.50 131.50 789.00	723.33 144.67 868.00	1170.83 234.17 1405.00	1074.16 214.84 1289.00	1760.00 - 1760.00	1936.00 - 1936.00
H02	2 Plots	Net VAT Total	399.17 79.83 479.00	439.17 87.83 527.00	1063.33 212.66 1276.00	1170.00 234.00 1404.00	1755.83 351.17 2107.00	1609.17 321.83 1931.00	2391.00 - 2391.00	2630.00 -- 2630.00
H03	3 Plots	Net VAT Total	479.17 95.83 575.00	527.50 105.50 633.00	1395.83 279.16 1675.00	1535.83 307.17 1843.00	2248.33 449.66 2698.00	2063.33 412.67 2476.00	3372.00 - 3372.00	3709.00 - 3709.00
H04	4 Plots	Net VAT Total	558.33 111.67 670.00	614.17 122.83 737.00	1721.67 344.33 2066.00	1894.17 378.83 2273.00	2735.00 547.00 3282.00	2508.33 501.67 3010.00	4103.00 - 4103.00	4513.00 - 4513.00
H05	5 Plots	Net VAT Total	637.50 127.50 765.00	701.67 140.33 842.00	1887.50 377.50 2265.00	2076.76 415.33 2492.00	3030.00 606.00 3636.00	2778.33 555.67 3334.00	4545.00 - 4545.00	4999.00 - 4999.00

Please request a bespoke quotation where the number of plots exceeds 5 or the floor area of any plot exceeds 300m2.

Standard Charges

Table B – Extensions to a single dwelling

Limited to work not more than 3 storeys above ground level

Code	Extensions & Conversions	Totals	Full plans Plan Charge 25/26	Full plans Plan Charge 26/27 (approx. 4% uplift)	Full plans Inspection Charge 25/26	Full plans Inspection Charge 26/27 (approx. 4% uplift)	Building Notice Charge 25/26	Building Notice Charge 26/27 (approx. 4% uplift)	Regularisation Charge 25/26	Regularisation Charge 26/27 (aprox. 4% uplift)
D01	Single storey extension with a floor area less than 10m ²	Net	154.17	160.00	381.67	396.67	535.84	556.67	801.00	833.00
		VAT	30.83	32.00	76.33	79.33	107.16	111.33	-	-
		Total	185.00	192.00	458.00	476.00	643.00	668.00	801.00	833.00
D02	Single storey extension with floor area between 10m ² & 40m ²	Net	229.17	238.33	534.17	555.83	763.33	794.17	1145.00	1191.00
		VAT	45.83	47.67	106.83	111.17	152.67	158.83	-	-
		Total	275.00	286.00	641.00	667.00	916.00	953.00	1145.00	1191.00
D03	Single storey extension with floor area between 40m ² & 100m ²	Net	306.67	319.17	610.00	634.17	916.67	953.33	1373.00	1428.00
		VAT	61.33	63.83	122.00	126.83	183.33	190.67	-	-
		Total	368.00	383.00	732.00	761.00	1100.00	1144.00	1373.00	1428.00
D04	Multi-storey extension (ie some part 2 or 3 storeys in height) & floor area not exceeding 40m ²	Net	306.67	319.17	610.00	634.17	916.67	953.33	1373.00	1428.00
		VAT	61.33	63.83	122.00	126.83	183.33	190.67	-	-
		Total	368.00	383.00	732.00	761.00	1100.00	1144.00	1373.00	1428.00
D05	Multi-storey extension (ie some part 2 or 3 storeys in height) & floor area 40m ² to 100m ²	Net	306.67	319.17	686.67	714.17	993.33	1033.33	1531.00	1592.00
		VAT	61.33	63.83	137.33	142.83	198.67	206.67	-	-
		Total	368.00	383.00	824.00	857.00	1192.00	1240.00	1531.00	1592.00
D06	Extension comprising SOLELY a garage, carport or store with a floor area less than 60m ²	Net	153.33	159.17	381.67	396.67	535.00	555.83	778.00	809.00
		VAT	30.67	31.83	76.33	79.33	107.00	111.17	-	-
		Total	184.00	191.00	458.00	476.00	642.00	667.00	778.00	809.00
D07	Single storey detached non-habitable domestic outbuilding building, floor area less than 60m ²	Net	153.33	159.17	381.67	396.67	535.00	555.83	778.00	809.00
		VAT	30.67	31.83	76.33	79.33	107.00	111.17	-	-

		Total	184.00	191.00	458.00	476.00	642.00	667.00	778.00	809.00
D08	Single storey detached domestic outbuilding / annex, floor area less than 60m2	Net	306.67	319.17	610.00	634.17	916.67	953.33	1373.00	1428.00
		VAT	61.33	63.83	122.00	126.83	183.33	190.67	-	-
		Total	368.00	383.00	732.00	761.00	1100.00	1144.00	1373.00	1428.00
Conversions										
D09	Loft conversions with a floor area less than 40m ²	Net	306.67	319.17	610.00	634.17	916.67	953.33	1373.00	1428.00
		VAT	61.33	63.83	122.00	126.83	183.33	190.67	-	-
		Total	368.00	383.00	732.00	761.00	1100.00	1144.00	1373.00	1428.00
D10	Loft conversions with a floor area between 40m ² & 100m2	Net	306.67	319.17	686.67	714.17	993.33	1033.33	1532.00	1593.00
		VAT	61.33	63.83	137.33	142.83	198.67	206.67	-	-
		Total	368.00	383.00	824.00	857.00	1192.00	1240.00	1532.00	1593.00
D11	Conversion of a garage to a habitable room	Net	153.33	159.17	279.17	290.00	432.50	449.17	648.00	674.00
		VAT	30.67	31.83	55.83	58.00	86.50	89.83	-	-
		Total	184.00	191.00	335.00	348.00	519.00	539.00	648.00	674.00

Multiple work reductions:

- a) Where more than one extension, or an extension and a loft conversion is proposed and the works are carried out concurrently, the individual fees should be combined and reduced by 30%.
- b) Where domestic alterations up to £15,000 are to be carried out at the same time as work described in codes D01 – D011 above, the charge payable in Table C can be reduced by 30%.

Standard Charges

Table C – Alterations to a single dwelling and all other non-domestic work

Limited to work not more than 3 storeys above ground level

Code	Alterations	Totals	Full plans Plan Charge 25/26	Full plans Plan Charge 26/27 (approx.4% uplift)	Full plans Inspection Charge 25/26	Full plans Inspection Charge 26/27 (approx..4% uplift)	Building Notice Charge 25/26	Building Notice Charge 26/27 (approx.4% uplift)	Regularisation Charge 25/26	Regularisation Charge 26/27 (approx.4% uplift)
D12	Renovation of a thermal element ie recovering a roof or recladding walls	Net	80.00	83.33	160.00	166.67	240.00	250.00	361.00	375.00
		VAT	16.00	16.67	32.00	33.33	48.00	50.00	-	-
		Total	96.00	100.00	192.00	200.00	288.00	300.00	361.00	375.00
D13	Replacement of windows, roof windows, or external glazed doors	Net	80.00	83.33	160.00	166.67	240.00	250.00	361.00	375.00
		VAT	16.00	16.67	32.00	33.33	48.00	50.00	-	-
		Total	96.00	100.00	192.00	200.00	288.00	300.00	361.00	375.00
D14	Cost of work not exceeding £2000	Net	80.00	83.33	160.00	166.67	240.00	250.00	361.00	375.00
		VAT	16.00	16.67	32.00	33.33	48.00	50.00	-	-
		Total	96.00	96.00	192.00	200.00	288.00	300.00	361.00	375.00
D15	Cost of work between £2,001 & £5,000	Net	110.83	115.00	221.67	230.83	322.50	345.83	486.00	505.00
		VAT	22.17	23.00	44.33	46.17	66.50	69.17	-	-
		Total	133.00	138.00	266.00	277.00	399.00	415.00	486.00	505.00
D16	Cost of work between £5,001 & £15,000	Net	200.00	208.33	335.00	348.33	535.00	556.67	762.00	792.00
		VAT	40.00	41.67	67.00	69.67	107.00	111.33	-	-
		Total	240.00	250.00	402.00	418.00	642.00	668.00	762.00	792.00
D17	Cost of work between £15,001 & £25000	Net	228.33	237.50	446.67	464.17	675.00	701.67	1011.00	1051.00
		VAT	45.67	47.50	89.33	92.83	135.00	140.33	-	-
		Total	274.00	285.00	536.00	557.00	810.00	842.00	1011.00	1051.00

D18	Cost of work between £25,001 & £50000	Net	359.17	373.33	726.67	755.83	1085.83	1129.17	1627.00	1692.00
		VAT	71.83	74.67	145.33	151.17	217.17	225.83	-	-
		Total	431.00	448.00	872.00	907.00	1303.00	1355.00	1627.00	1692.00
D19	Cost of work between £50,001 & £100000	Net	446.67	464.17	877.50	912.50	1324.17	1376.67	1963.00	2042.00
		VAT	89.33	1021.17	175.50	182.50	264.83	275.33	-	-
		Total	536.00	557.00	1053.00	1095.00	1589.00	1652.00	1963.00	2042.00

Table C continued – Alterations to a single dwelling and all other non-domestic work where a satisfactory Competent Persons Scheme notification can / will not be provided (in addition to the above, where applicable)

This charge relates to the first fix pre- plaster inspection and final testing on completion. For an electrical works Regularisation Certificate full testing and appraisal will be carried out.

Code	Alterations	Totals	Application Charge 25/26	Application Charge 26/27 (approx.4% uplift)	Regularisation Charge 25/26	Regularisation Charge 26/27 (approx. 4% uplift)
D20	Where a satisfactory competent person's certificate can / will not be provided, Electrical Part P, HETAS.	Net	329.17	342.50	409.00	425.00
		VAT	65.83	68.50	-	-
		Total	395.00	411.00	409.00	425.00

Code	Description	Totals	Charge 25/26	Charge 26/27 (hourly rate increase)	Notes
E01	Copy of Notices and Certifications	Net	64.00	68.00	Per hour dependant on the complexity of the project and the date the application was submitted
		Total	64.00	68.00	
E02	Per hour charge (after the first hour) that may be applied to an application that has been commenced and inspections carried out when a subsequent request to visit site is received after a delay of two or more years since the last inspection.	Net	64.00	68.00	Minimum fee dependant on complexity and extent of changes required.
		Total	64.00	68.00	
E03	Request to make an amendment to an application such as a change to the description of work, re-issuing of invoices, changes to named person on application etc.	Net	64.00	68.00	
		Total	64.00	68.00	

Estimated Cost of Works:

The estimated cost of work used to determine the charge in Table C should be a reasonable estimate that would be charged by a professional builder to carry out such work (excluding the amount of any VAT).

Competent Persons Schemes:

The Charges generally in Tables A, B and C have been reduced to reflect where controlled electrical and heating installations are being certified by an installer registered with one of the Governments Competent Persons Schemes. If a certified installer is not subsequently employed or Competent persons certification is not received, the charge in Table C, code D20, will be required for each unit. This is to enable checks and tests on the work to be made by our nominated contractor to establish that the work meets with the requirements of the Building Regulations 2010.

Proposed Fee Schedule from 1st April 2026/27 – Planning Performance Protocol (PPA)

All categories increased by **4%**.

Inception Fee = Was £1,302 increased to **£1354**

An Inception meeting is required before Developer/Council can enter a PPA. The final decision to progress a PPA sits with the Council.

An **Inception meeting** will discuss and agree the following:

- Develop structure and content of PPA
- Agree project vision and objectives
- A work programme setting out key deliverables (milestones) and responsibilities. Including at what stage a planning application will be submitted.
- work programme setting out key deliverables and responsibilities
- Identifying key issues for consideration to follow through into individual **topic area meetings** in the PPA
- Scope the requirements and cost to the developer of external advice

PPA Fees 2026/27

Development type	Residential Units	Commercial Floorspace (sq.m)	Meetings (intro + topic area*)	Member Briefings** (Microsoft Teams)	Number of amendments at application stage	Current PPA Fee 25/26(£)	Fee Increase	Proposed Fee 26/27
Small	10 to 49	1,000 to 2,499	1 + 1	1	1	£6,048	4%	£6,290
Hybrid (an additional fee of)						£303		£315
Medium	50 to 99	2,500 to 4,999	1 + 2	1	1	£8,463	4%	£8,802
Hybrid (an additional fee of)						£423		£440
Large	100 to 249	5,000 to 9,999	1 + 3	1	2	£11,760	4%	£12,230
Hybrid (an additional fee of)						£588		£611
Strategic	250+	10,000+	1 + 4	2	3	£19,110	4%	£19,874
Hybrid (an additional fee of)						£956		£994
Small to Strategic -	10-250+	1000 – 10,000+	1	N/A	1			

Discharge of conditions								
For 1-5 conditions						£870		£905
For 6-10 conditions						£1,172		£1,219
For 11 and above						£1,652		£1,718

Below increased by **4%**

*Additional Topic Area meetings = Was £1,252 - Proposed £1,302 per meeting

**Additional Member Briefings (Teams) = Was £525 – Proposed £546 per meeting

Additional Meeting Briefing (Council Chamber) = Was £1,669 - Proposed £1,736 per meeting (Strategic only)

Additional Meeting Site Visit Briefing = Was £1,701 - Proposed £1,769 per meeting (Strategic only)

Notes:

Fees and deductions

For the avoidance of any doubt, all PPA fees are payable in addition to the requisite application fee as set out by the Fee Regulations.

Furthermore, if it is agreed between the parties at any point during pre-application discussions that a PPA is an appropriate tool, the pre-application fees already incurred will not be refunded or deducted from the PPA fee. However, the **Inception Meeting fee** will be deducted if a PPA is progressed.

Public Engagement Events

Any public engagement event agreed through the PPA process shall be funded by the developer. Any associated Local Authority costs will be agreed on a bespoke basis.

External Specialist Advice

Any external specialist advice either during the pre-app or application stage in the PPA and not covered by statutory consultee pre-app protocols, shall be commissioned independently by the Council and paid for by the developer. For example, viability testing, conservation/urban design, ecology & EIA assessment.

External Consultee Advice

Highways, Environment Agency, and other consultee advice will need to be paid by the applicant separately to this PPA, under the relevant agency's pre-app charging schedule. These charges are in addition to the PPA charges.

Design Review

This is only on offer for the Strategic PPA and at an additional add-on cost. The developer shall pay the full costs of the Review Panel plus any additional Council costs.

Member Briefings

For all PPAs a member briefing is on offer through Microsoft Teams as part of the service. For Strategic PPAs there is also the additional option to have a face to face Member briefing at an additional charge.

Member Site Visit

A member site visit is offered only as an additional cost for strategic PPA's.

Submission of Amendments (planning application stage).

The PPA process gives the developer the opportunity to submit *at least* one round of amendments (depending on the PPA category).

HMO AND CARAVAN SITE LICENSING FEE CHARGES 2026/27

Item HP 25/50 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 2 December 2025

Consideration was given to the proposed fees for licensing houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and caravan sites for permanent residential use with effect from 1 April 2026.

In bringing forward the charging proposals for 2026/27 consideration had been given to a range of factors, including the Borough Council's overall financial and market positions, trading patterns, the current rate of inflation and customer feedback. A set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges had also been taken into account and were summarised in 4.2 of the report.

Particular reference was made to the Borough Council's significant and challenging financial position and as it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy and it was essential that opportunities to maximise income were taken, Cllr King proposed, Cllr Thornewell seconded and it was

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the proposed fee for licensing HMOs (representing an increase of 4%) as detailed in 5.1 of the report, be approved;
- (2) the proposed fee for caravan sites for permanent residential use (representing an increase of 4%) as detailed in 5.2 of the report, be approved; and
- (3) the proposed fees be implemented from 1 April 2026.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

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Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

02 December 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Cabinet - Key Decision



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Cabinet Member	Robin Betts, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy
Responsible Officer	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health
Report Author	Linda Hibbs, Head of Housing & Health

HMO and Caravan Site Licensing Fee Charges 2026/27

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed fees for licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and caravan sites for permanent residential use from 1 April 2026.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 It is important that fees are reviewed on an annual basis in accordance with a set of guiding principles to ensure the Council can continue to provide the existing range and standard of services and cover increases in expenditure.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The proposed fees for licensing of HMOs and caravan sites for permanent residential use as detailed in the report be approved; and
- 3.2 The proposed fees be implemented from 1 April 2026

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The proposed charges for 2026/27 have taken into account a set of guiding principles for the setting of fees and charges reproduced below for the benefit of this Committee:

- Fees and charges should reflect the Council's strategic priorities and other corporate aims, recognising there may be trade-offs as these are not mutually exclusive.
- Fees and charges should have due regard to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- If there is to be a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to the service user, this should be a conscious choice.
- The Council should look to maximise income subject to market conditions, opportunities and comparable charges elsewhere, in the context of its strategic priorities and other corporate aims.
- Fees and charges should normally be reviewed at least annually (unless fixed by statute or some other body).
- Fees and charges should not be used to provide a subsidy from the Council taxpayer to commercial operators.
- There should be consistency between charges for similar services.
- Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern so as not to preclude, where appropriate, access to Council services on the grounds of ability to pay.

4.2 It is essential considering the Council's overall financial position that opportunities are taken to maximise income, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve further expenditure savings to meet the targets in the Savings and Transformation Strategy. Attention has been given to the fees and charges applied by neighbouring Council's, and averages across the County, and these comparisons are included in relevant sections of the report for Member consideration.

5 Proposal

5.1 HMO Licensing Fees

5.1.1 Under the Housing Act 2004 Part 2 HMOs occupied by five or more persons living in two or more households are required to be licensed. HMOs in self-contained flats in purpose-built blocks where the block comprises three or more self-contained flats are excluded from this licensing requirement.

5.1.2 There are currently 27 licensed HMOs in the Tonbridge & Malling area.

5.1.3 The aim of licensing is to improve the controls on HMOs and to raise the standard of some of the highest risk properties that are often occupied by some of the most vulnerable people, whilst maintaining an adequate supply of rented accommodation.

- 5.1.4 The licence is for a maximum of five years and cannot be transferred.
- 5.1.5 The licence can end because of the passage of time, the death of the licence holder, the sale of the property or the revocation of the licence by the Council.
- 5.1.6 Following a review of administrative costs and using the same HMO licence fee cost calculator developed by the Kent and Medway local authorities that has previously been used and based on an increase of 4% the proposed revised charges are detailed in the table below:

Service	Current Charge	Recommended Charge	Predicted Income 2026/27
New HMO licence application fee	£779	£810	£2,430 for three new HMO licence applications.
Renewal of a HMO licence application	£699	£727	£2,181 for three licence renewals due in this period

- 5.1.7 The following table shows charges for 2025/26 HMO licence applications for Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Sevenoaks:

Local Authority	New licence	Licence renewal
Tunbridge Wells	£783 (5 to 7 occupants) £875 (8 or more occupants)	£675 (5 to 7 occupants) £721 (8 or more occupants)
Maidstone	£760 standard £740 for accredited landlords	£720 standard £700 for accredited landlords
Sevenoaks	£1,006.02 up to 5 bed plus £23.81 for each additional habitable room	£1,006.02 up to 5 bed plus £23.81 for each additional habitable room

5.2 Caravan Site Licensing Fees

- 5.2.1 The Mobile Homes Act 2013 amended the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 to allow local authorities from the 1 April 2014 to charge a fee for the licensing of residential mobile (park) home sites (“relevant protected sites”) and recover their costs in undertaking this function.
- 5.2.2 A caravan site must have planning consent for use as a caravan site before it can be licensed and once licensed it remains in perpetuity until a change of use or planning consent has expired.
- 5.2.3 Following a review of administrative costs associated with charging for caravan site licences based on our experience over the last twelve months the proposed revised charges based on an increase of 4% are shown in the table below:

Service	Current Charge	Recommended Charge	Predicted Income Full Year 2026/27
New residential caravan site licence application fee	£492	£512	Nil
Transfer of a residential caravan site licence	£240	£250	£250 based on the transfer of one caravan site licence

5.2.4 The Council does not charge any fee with respect to holiday caravan sites.

5.2.5 The following table shows charges for 2025/26 to process a licence application for a new caravan site and transfer of the licence in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks:

Local Authority	New licence	Licence transfer
Tunbridge Wells	£360	£175
Sevenoaks	Single pitch £0 2 to 10 pitches £745.20 11 to 25 pitches £796.95 26 to 50 pitches £881.82 51 to 100 pitches £1,052.60 101 to 200 pitches £1,395.18 201 to 400 pitches £2,643.39 401 to 800 pitches £4011.16	Same as new licence

5.2.6 Where a licence holder of a permanent residential site wishes to register their site rules with the Council, the Council can charge a fee for administering and publishing the site rules on their website. The fee charged for this in 2025/26 was £62.

5.2.7 It is proposed to increase this fee for the 2026/27 period to £64.

5.2.8 The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 introduced a fit and proper person test for site owners/caravan site licence holders or for their person appointed to manage the mobile home/caravan/park home site. This only applies to relevant protected sites other than non-commercial family occupied sites.

- 5.2.9 The Regulations require site owners/caravan site licence holders to apply to be included or their appointed manager to be included on a register of fit and proper persons. Inclusion on the register is for five years.
- 5.2.10 The Council adopted a fee policy for processing fit and proper person test applications and the fee charge in 2025/26 was £283. It is proposed to increase this fee for the 2026/27 period to £294.
- 5.2.11 There are 2 fit and proper person test applications due for renewal in 2026/27.
- 5.2.12 The fee charged by our neighbouring boroughs of Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks in 2025/26 is £150 and £107.48 respectively.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 For each of the services included in the report a proposed charge has been included considering the guiding principles for the annual review. Members of this Committee may of course wish to bring forward other options such as lower or higher charges.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

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

8 Risk Assessment

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

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Council is legally required to licence certain HMOs and caravan sites under the Housing Act 2004 Part 2 and the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (as amended by the Mobile Homes Act 2013) respectively. For this licensing function they may charge a fee to fund the costs to process an application.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 In bringing forward proposals surrounding local authorities have been consulted so Members can make appropriate comparisons.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 Implementation of all the proposed charges will be from 1st April 2026.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Following corporate guidelines for all the charges included in this report has ensured a standard approach across different services.

12.2 Climate Change and Biodiversity

12.2.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.

12.2.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.3 Equalities and Diversity

12.3.1 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.

12.4 Other If Relevant

- None

Background Papers	None
Annexes	None

ADOPTION OF A CALCULATOR FOR INDOOR SPORTS, OUTDOOR SPORTS AND PLAIN PITCH DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

Item HP 25/51 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 2 December 2025

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided an update on the progress being made towards implementing a key action from the adopted Indoor Sports and Outdoor Sports and Playing Pitches Strategy.

It was recommended that the Borough Council adopted the Sports England model calculator approach to securing developer contributions towards indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the Borough. Potential contributions for indoor sports facilities based on the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan allocations were set out in Annex 1 for illustrative purposes. Developer contributions were calculated using the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator and applying this to the number of housing units and average occupancy against the identified needs for future provision.

Members were advised that, in respect of playing pitches the Sports England calculator considered demand for football, rugby, hockey and cricket but excluded demand for tennis courts, netball courts, baseball pitches, bowling greens and athletics tracks. To ensure that a wider range of sports provision could be mitigated for it was proposed that additional metrics were used, such as the Fields in Trust calculator and the Sport England Facility Cost Guidance. The Guidance Note (attached at Annex 2) aimed to provide a methodology to enable developers and Borough Council Officers to calculate the needs for on-site or off-site forms of provision and to negotiate the associated land provision, financial contributions and maintenance costs.

Reference was made to a minor discrepancy in figures used in Annex 1 and Annex 2 in respect of people per unit. This would be double-checked and corrected if necessary before consideration at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

In recognition of ensuring that where development was approved it provided appropriate funding for sports facilities and that these facilities were delivered against a strategic plan and mitigated the impact of development on local communities, Cllr King proposed, Cllr Dalton seconded and it was

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) to secure appropriate contributions towards indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the Borough, the Sports England calculator and associated metrics for Development Management purposes be adopted;
- (2) the draft Guidance Note (attached at Annex 2) on operational use of the calculator be noted and finalised by the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Planning and Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration, before consideration by Cabinet; and

- (3) subject to the views of Cabinet, the Guidance Note when finalised be adopted.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

Cabinet Member	Cllr Adem Mehmet, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure & Tonbridge Regeneration
Responsible Officer	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health
Report Author	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health

Adoption of a Calculator for Indoor Sports, Outdoor Sports and Playing Pitch developer contributions

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to advise Members on progress towards implementing a key action from the agreed Indoor Sports and Outdoor Sports & Playing Pitch Strategies.
- 1.2 The report proposes adoption by the Council of the Sports England model calculator approach to securing developer contributions towards indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the borough and lays out some of the key considerations.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance.
- 2.2 By ensuring that where development is approved it provides appropriate funding for sports facilities, the Council can ensure that these facilities are delivered against a strategic plan and mitigate the impact of development in local communities.

3 Recommendations

The Scrutiny Select Committee is asked to;

- 3.1 RECOMMEND to Cabinet the adoption of the Sports England calculator and associated metrics for Development Management purposes by the Council to Cabinet to secure appropriate contributions towards indoor and outdoor sports facilities in the borough.

- 3.2 NOTE the attached draft guidance note on operational use of the calculator, which will be finalised by officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Planning and Infrastructure ahead of being presented to Cabinet for approval alongside the recommendation at 3.1

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Currently policy CP25 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that infrastructure necessary to serve a development proposal is either available or will be made available by the time it is needed. This can take the form of the actual infrastructure required or for financial contributions to be secured either through conditions or S106 legal agreements.
- 4.2 Contributions are secured for a number of infrastructure projects, for instance highway improvement works, secondary/primary schools, land acquisition costs for schools, health care (to name but a few) which seek to mitigate the impacts of development. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council also seek provision of and collects contributions for open space under policy OS3 of the Managing Development and the Environment DPD.
- 4.3 As part of the evolving evidence base for the emerging Local Plan the Indoor Sports Strategy and Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategies were endorsed by this committee in July 2025 and approved by Cabinet in September 2025. These reports highlighted that further actions would be required to implement the strategies. These strategies require further work, in the form of 'Stage E reviews', which there is agreement in place to complete alongside the development of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.
- 4.4 In order to meet identified deficiencies in the borough and secure mitigation set out by these strategies, work has been commissioned to prepare a calculator, using the Sports England model, to identify relevant contributions for forthcoming housing developments. Alongside this, an advice note for use by Development Management officers in securing developer contributions is also being drafted.
- 4.5 Although the calculator provides a set of figures to be requested for contributions, these are subject to the same viability processes as other developer contributions and as they are not required by statutory providers of Highways, Education or Health, they will be assessed in a similar way to Affordable Housing contributions. As part of the Local Plan process, the Council will develop detailed developer contributions guidance and Members may need to consider what priority if any they wish to give to different types of contribution. However, at this stage, as the evidence base is still emerging, these considerations will need to be made on a case-by-case basis by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the relevant Council teams.
- 4.6 The usual parameters for developer contributions still apply to these contributions, in that there will be a requirement for the requesting authority, in this case the

Local Planning Authority, to be able to demonstrate if required how the schemes identified for the contributions to be utilised for are directly mitigating the impact of the development they are being requested from.

- 4.7 This includes consideration of geographical proximity, the time period in which the development and the project or scheme identified for contributions are happening and how the project or scheme is being funded in totality. The tests are set out at Regulation 122 of the <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/regulation/122>
- 4.8 This will apply to 10 units or more - - see NPPF definition: Major development: For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Members will note that current Policy OS3 sets a threshold of 5 units for open space contributions; this is being reviewed as part of the development of the Local Plan and the intention is to set the sports facilities contribution in line with the Major development definition as above.
- 4.9 It is important to note that the Council has not previously sought contributions in a structured, policy led approach for sports facilities, although individual schemes have been identified and supported through developer contributions in the past. As set out above, it should also be noted that the Council has an existing calculation spreadsheet for the provision of Open Space, which is scheduled to be reviewed alongside the preparation of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Sports England Facilities Calculator functions and associated metrics relevant to Indoor Sports Facilities, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches are adopted by the Council. In respect of Playing Pitches, the Sports England Calculator considers demand for football, rugby, hockey, and cricket but excludes demand for tennis courts, netball, courts, baseball pitches, bowling greens, and athletics tracks. However, in order to ensure that need for a wider range of provision as identified in the Council's recently adopted Playing Pitches & Outdoor Sports Strategy can be mitigated for, it is proposed that additional metrics are utilised including the Fields In Trust Calculator alongside Sport England Facility Cost Guidance. This will be detailed in the operational advice note and provided as guidance for applicants.
- 5.2 For indoor leisure facilities, the approximate per unit contribution that is proposed is £478. How this applies to the draft allocations in the Regulation 18 Local Plan is laid out at Annex 1 for information. This figure could then be utilised as a guide for any other development proposals that come forward as speculative proposals, followed by a detailed calculation being progressed at application stage.

- 5.3 For playing pitches & outdoor facilities, the calculations are split down by various sports and types of provision, and therefore a standard per unit figure cannot be provided. Schemes will be considered on a case-by-case basis, utilising the adopted strategy and the need identified in it as the starting point.
- 5.4 The draft guidance note is attached to this report and this will be finalised prior to this report being presented to Cabinet for approval. This will enable officers to identify relevant contributions and discuss these with applicants.

6 Other Options

- 6.1 The strategies that have been adopted will be based following their stage E reviews on proposed housing growth as laid out in the Council's emerging Local Plan. An alternative option would be to develop the calculator alongside the Local Plan process. However, due to the fact that there are a number of sites (both proposed allocations and otherwise) already being presented to the Local Planning Authority, either via pre-application enquiries or as applications for approval, it is considered prudent to ensure that where this evidence exists, the Council is able to gather relevant contributions to support the development of appropriate sports and leisure facilities which have already been identified as being required to meet the needs of Tonbridge and Malling residents to mitigate the impacts of these developments should they be approved.

7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 7.1 A key source of evidence for potential schemes will be the Council's Capital Plan lists, as these can provide evidence to explain the project or scheme and the proposed scope and approach to delivery. As part of preparation for the updated Capital Plan to be presented to Members for approval in February 2026, these schemes are being reviewed by the Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health and the Head of Planning to ensure that they are meeting this purpose as well as the other core purposes that they have for budget setting and scheme evaluation.
- 7.2 It should be noted that due to the nature of developer contributions and the wider considerations for their being secured as laid out in this report, it is not a straightforward calculation to consider the level of contribution that could be available for any particular scheme or project. This would depend on timing, location and individual development viability.

8 Risk Assessment

Developers challenge the proposed contribution	<p>Adopted evidence – current versions already adopted, updated versions to be adopted following stage E review.</p> <p>Adopted calculator following this</p>
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	<p>process.</p> <p>Development of guidance note for public information.</p>
Projects are not sufficiently defined as to demonstrate deliverability	Adopted strategies provide a strategic plan. Council can then have proposals for specific Council owned/led schemes and advise third party owners/operators on requirements.
Contribution is successfully challenged at appeal	<p>Development of guidance note for public information.</p> <p>Inclusion of relevant policies in emerging Local Plan.</p>

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Developer contributions will remain subject to legal requirements, currently section 106 agreements. Should the Council become a CIL charging authority (which there are no current plans to do), the relevant legislative requirements would replace s106 to a large extent.
- 9.2 The Council as Local Planning Authority will need to see a reasonable 'cut off' for existing applications is, as although this guidance could technically become effective immediately from when it is approved and would therefore have a potential impact on any scheme that had not yet been determined, if a scheme has already been submitted with an established viability position based on existing known developer contributions, the Council must be seen to act reasonably. Therefore officers are proposing that this will apply to recently submitted applications but for the avoidance of doubt will not apply to those applications that already have a resolution to approve (by Area Planning Committee) or where applications have been under negotiation for a considerable period of time and matters such as viability have already been the focus of considerable discussion.

10 Consultation and Communications

- 10.1 An important stakeholder group for this policy change is developers and agents. A specific communication will be made via case officers for any cases in the pre-application or early stages of the application processes to ensure that these schemes are aware of this change.
- 10.2 Engagement with Members is proposed to take place as laid out in this report, alongside contributions being collected under this approach being reported to

Members via the s106 Strategic Monitoring Group and via formal reporting including the Infrastructure Funding Statement at the end of each calendar year.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 The changes would be advertised on the relevant pages on the Council's website and communicated to developers and agents.
- 11.2 Future consideration will be given to developing a contributions statement for the developer contributions specifically collected by the Council, mirroring the documents provided by the County Council and the Integrated Care Board.

12 Cross Cutting Issues

12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.
- 12.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

12.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.2.1 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.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	<p>Annex 1 - Potential contributions for indoor sports facilities – draft Local Plan allocations</p> <p>Annex 2 – draft guidance note on contributions for indoor and outdoor sports facilities</p>

Tonbridge and Malling

Allocated Housing Sites - Developer Contributions for indoor sports facilities

The future need for indoor sports facilities in the borough is set out in Table 4 of the TMBC Supplementary Planning Guidance and in Table 1 below. The Developer Contribution is calculated using the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator; this is applied to the number of housing units and average occupancy (2.4), against the identified needs for future provision (Built Facility Assessment and Strategy 2024/25, and the Supplementary Planning Guidance V2 November 2025).

Future needs for sports hall provision can only be met if the existing Angel Leisure Centre is re-provided. Therefore, contributions for new housing developments should be sought as a priority to support the re-provision of the existing facility.

Other priorities for future provision include additional fitness stations and gymnastics.

Table 1 Future Need for Indoor Sports Facilities

Facility type	Current Needs	Future needs (lower population growth)	Future needs (higher population growth)
Sports halls	All needs met subject to re-provision of the Angel Sports Centre sports hall	All needs met subject to re-provision of the Angel Sports Centre sports hall	All needs met subject to re-provision of the Angel Sports Centre sports hall
Swimming pools	All needs met with some programming and opening times refinements	All needs met by current spare capacity	All needs met by current spare capacity
Health and fitness	All needs met	All needs met by current spare capacity	42 extra fitness stations
Squash courts	All needs met	Additional needs met by current spare capacity	Additional needs met by current spare capacity
Indoor tennis courts	All needs met	Additional needs met by current spare capacity	Additional needs met by current spare capacity
Indoor bowls	All needs met	Additional needs met by current spare capacity	Additional needs met by current spare capacity
Gymnastics facilities	Additional capacity needed	New provision in the Mallings sub-area or extension to the existing specialist facility	New provision or extension to the existing specialist facility

The developer contributions to be sought in relation to allocated housing sites are set out in Table 2.

Table 2 Developer Contributions to be sought from Allocated Housing Sites towards identified needs for future indoor sports facility provision

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
EC1	Land Opposite Hale House, Pilgrims Way, Aylesford	Aylesford	Eccles	40	96	0.02	£19,127	Y
AY1	Land at Aylesford Lakes,	Aylesford	Eccles, Aylesford Village	800	1,920	0.47	£382,546	Y
AY2	Land south of High Street, Aylesford	Aylesford	Aylesford Village	33	79	0.02	£15,740	Y
AY3	North of Pratling Street, Aylesford	Aylesford	Aylesford	90	216	0.05	£43,036	Y
AY4	Land east of 4 Pratling Street and south of Pratling Street,	Aylesford	Aylesford	40	96	0.02	£19,127	Y
MG1	Land off Hall Road, Royal British Legion Industries, Aylesford	Aylesford	Medway Gap	75	180	0.04	£35,864	Y
MG2	Existing premises at	Aylesford	Medway Gap	10	24	0.01	£4,782	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
	Heart of Kent Hospice, Preston Hall, Aylesford							
MG3	Land at Bunyards, Beaver Road, Allington, Maidstone	Aylesford	Medway Gap	435	1,044	0.26	£208,009	Y
MG4	Land east of Kiln Barn Road and west of Hermitage Lane, Aylesford	Aylesford	Medway Gap	1300	3,120	0.77	£621,637	Y
BG1	Land north of Borough Green, Sevenoaks	Borough Green	Borough Green	3000	7,200	1.77	£1,434,547	Y
BG2	Land south and west of Tillmans Off, Crouch Lane, Sevenoaks	Borough Green	Borough Green	50	120	0.03	£21,909	Y
MG8	Winterfield Farm, East Malling	East Malling and Larkfield	Medway Gap	25	60	0.01	£11,955	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
EM1	Paris Farm, Rocks Road, East Malling	East Malling and Larkfield	East Malling and Mill Street	105	252	0.06	£50,209	Y
KH1	Land at Broadwater Farm, Kings Hill, West Malling	East Malling and Larkfield, Kings Hill	Kings Hill	900	2,160	0.53	£430,364	Y
MG5	Existing premises at 56 to 62 Martins Square, Larkfield	East Malling and Larkfield	Medway Gap	16	38	0.01	£7,571	Y
MG6	Land adjacent to Larkfield Library	East Malling and Larkfield	Medway Gap	30	72	0.02	£14,345	Y
HS1	Land west of Hale Street, East Peckham, Tonbridge	East Peckham	Hale Street	140	336			Y
EP1	Land west of Addlestead Road, East Peckham, Tonbridge	East Peckham	East Peckham	50	120	0.02	£19,127	Y
EP2	Land south of Church Lane, Hale Street	East Peckham	East Peckham and Hale Street	396	950	0.23	£189,280	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
HA1	Land north of The Paddock and East of Carpenters Lane, Tonbridge	Hadlow	Hadlow	120	288	0.07	£57,382	Y
HA2	Land south of Common Road, Hadlow	Hadlow	Hadlow	101	242	0.06	£48,217	Y
HA3	Land north of Court Lane, Hadlow Court Lane Nurseries, Court Lane, Hadlow, Tonbridge	Hadlow	Hadlow	65	156	0.04	£31,082	Y
HA4	Court Lane Nurseries, Court Lane, Hadlow, Tonbridge	Hadlow	Hadlow	85	204	0.05	£40,645	Y
TO3	Hilden Farm Road, Tonbridge	Hildenborough	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	30	72	0.02	£14,345	Y
TO4	Land north west of Hilden Park, Tonbridge	Hildenborough	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	289	694	0.17	£138,274	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
HI11	East of Riding Lane, Hildenborough	Hildenborough	Hildenborough	77	185	0.05	£36,860	Y
HI12	Land off Stocks Green Road, Hildenborough	Hildenborough	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	629	1,510	0.37	£300,856	Y
IG1	Land Known as Churchfields Farm and Coney Field, Fen Pond Road, Ightham	Ightham	Ightham	8	19	0	£3,786	Y
IG2	Land south of Bramleys, Rectory Lane, Ightham, Sevenoaks	Ightham	Ightham	10	24	0.02	£19,127	Y
KH3	Existing premises at 1 Tower View, Kings Hill, West Malling	Kings Hill	Kings Hill	60	144	0.04	£28,691	Y
KH4	Existing premises at 50 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill	Kings Hill	Kings Hill	55	132	0.03	£26,300	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
KH5	Existing premises at 11 Tower View, Kings Hill, West Malling	Kings Hill	Kings Hill	70	168	0.04	£33,473	Y
KH6	Existing premises at 32 Tower View, Kings Hill, West Malling	Kings Hill	Kings Hill	60	144	0.04	£28,691	Y
KH7	Existing premises at 34 Tower View, Kings Hill, West Malling	Kings Hill	Kings Hill	45	108	0.03	£21,518	Y
MG7	Land between Ashton Way and London Road, Leybourne, West Malling	Leybourne	Medway Gap	70	168	0.04	£33,473	Y
PL1	Rear of Platt Mill Close, Platt	Platt	Platt	10	24	0.02	£19,127	Y
PL2	Land south of Potash Lane and north of Paddock Orchard, Platt	Platt	Platt	5	12	0	£2,391	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
RY1	Holmes Paddock, Ryarsh	Ryarsh	Ryarsh	20	48	0.01	£9,564	Y
SN1	Land north of Holborough Lakes, Snodland	Snodland	Snodland	1300	3,120	0.77	£621,637	Y
TO1	Land north east of Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	1671	4,010	0.98	£798,963	Y
TO2	Coblans Nursery and Little Trench Farm, Trench Road, Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	294	706	0.17	£140,665	Y
TO5	Land at south west Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	423	1,015	0.25	£202,231	Y
TO6	Land adjacent to Vauxhall Gardens and The Vauxhall Inn, Vauxhall Lane, Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	75	180	0.04	£35,864	Y
TO7	Land north of Priory Road,	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	136	326	0.08	£64,953	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
	south of the Railway, Tonbridge							
TO8	Angel Centre, Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	56	134	0.03	£26,699	Y
TO9	Sovereign Way North, Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	122	293	0.02	£58,378	Y
TO10	The River Centre, Tonbridge	Tonbridge	Tonbridge and Hilden Park	118	283	0.07	£56,386	Y
WA1	Land east of Red Hill, Wateringbury, Maidstone	Wateringbury	Wateringbury	30	72	0.02	£14,345	Y
KH2	Land west of King Hill and Northwest of Ashton Way / Malling Road roundabout, West Malling	West Malling	Kings Hill	30	72	0.02	£14,345	Y
W01	Land at Wouldham Allotments and rear of Oldfield	Wouldham	Wouldham	40	96	0.02	£19,127	Y

Reference	Sites	Parish	Settlement	Number of Units	Population Full buildout (number of housing units x 2.4 (av. Number of people per dwelling))	Sports Halls (courts)	SFC – identified cost-contribution £000s	Off Site Contribution
WR1	Drive, Wouldham, Rochester Land south of London Road and rear of Howlands Court, Wrotham, Sevenoaks	Wrotham	Wrotham	25	60	0.01	£11,955	Y
Total						7.92	£6,488,525	

Fitness Facilities

Additional community accessible fitness stations (42) and studios should be included in new community sports facilities e.g. the Angel re-development.

Other Indoor Sports Facilities

Developers' contributions should also be collected by 2042 towards the provision of

- Support for local gymnastics clubs in identifying sites for expansion/ development of purpose-built facilities particularly in the Mallings sub area.

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Open Space, Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports and Indoor Sports Guidance Note

Version 4.

December 2025

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1. Introduction

This is the Open Space, Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Guidance Note for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC). It follows on from the preceding Open Space Study July 2025 ([Open Space Study](#)), Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy August 2025 ([Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy](#)) and the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy June 2025 ([Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy](#)).

The provision of good quality and easily accessible open space, playing pitches, outdoor and indoor sport facilities is paramount to the establishment of sustainable communities. Such spaces and facilities contribute to a good quality of life, enhancing the health and well-being of the local community by providing opportunities to be physically active and socialise. Open spaces, can also enhance the quality of the natural environment, including biodiversity, and are important for a place to adapt to and mitigate further climate change. In addition, open spaces also have an important role in the character of a place, providing a setting to the built environment.

New housing development can generate additional need for open spaces, outdoors and indoor sports facilities in the borough. The planning system has tools to enable those additional needs to be met by requesting additional provision on the development site or by securing planning contributions to deliver new provision off-site or to improve the quality of existing spaces or facilities.

The open space typology of Formal Outdoor Sports is covered within the associated Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Study (PPOS). The PPOS is undertaken in accordance with the methodology provided in Sport England's 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a Playing Pitch Strategy' (2013). The Indoor Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy is in accordance with Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) for indoor and outdoor sports facilities 2014.

The aim of this document is to:

- Summarise the current provision and any gaps in supply in terms of open space and outdoor and indoor sport facilities in the Borough drawing on the findings from the three evidence base studies.
- Provide a methodology to enable developers and Development Management officers to calculate the needs for on-site or off-site forms of provision, according to the demand generated by the scale and type of proposed development, and to negotiate the associated land provision, financial contributions, and maintenance costs.
- Include best practice design for open space, playing pitches and indoor sports provision.

2. Policy and Legal Context

This section outlines the national and local policy context at the time of writing, including the current framework for seeking planning contributions.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF) states in paragraph 96 that Planning Authorities should make policies and decisions that encourage and contribute to healthy lifestyles. This includes the provision of green infrastructure such as open spaces, as well as recreational and sport facilities.

Provision of such infrastructure is important to meet the social and recreational needs of local communities and therefore contribute to the retention and creation of sustainable places and communities, as outlined in paragraph 98. In addition, paragraph 103 expands on the importance of open spaces, not only in terms of the benefit to health and well-being, but also for the positive impacts on nature, and to help adapt to climate change and mitigate future worsening of the climate crisis.

Tonbridge and Malling Corporate Strategy

Corporate vision: The Council's current aspirations for the borough are set out in its 'Innovation, Transformation and Delivery: Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2027 (2020). The vision of the plan is 'to be an innovative and forward-thinking council, who leads the people and businesses of the borough towards a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable future.'

To achieve this vision the Strategy sets out four priorities:

- Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment
- Improving housing options for local people whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance
- Investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth.

The Corporate Strategy states the Council's commitment to 'continue our successful management of parks, open spaces and leisure centres so the best recreational facilities are available to everyone'.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Adopted Development Plan

TMBC's adopted local development plan comprises the following documents:

- Core Strategy 2006-2021 (September 2007).
- Development Land Allocations DPD (April 2008).
- Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan (April 2008).
- Managing Development and the Environment DPD (April 2010).
- Local Plan Policies Map illustrating the policies and proposals contained in the Development Plan.

- Please also see the Minerals safeguarding map for the borough that forms part of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan Saved policies (April 2010).

Policies currently used for the provision of new or enhanced open space, sports and recreation facilities include Policy CP25 from the Core Strategy and Policy OS3 from the Managing Development and the Environment DPD (April 2010). Policy CP25 comments that all development proposals must either incorporate the infrastructure required because of the scheme or make provision for financial contributions and/or land to secure such infrastructure or service provision at the time it is needed, by means of conditions or a planning obligation.

Policy OS3 sets out a requirement for housing developments of 5 (Net) or more dwellings to provide or contribute to the provision of new open spaces and playing pitches or contribute to the improvement of existing ones. The policy requires onsite open space provision where there is a local deficiency in the quantity of open space and/or where a proposed residential scheme does not have good access to existing open spaces, unless it is demonstrated that it is not appropriate or feasible to provide on-site. In those instances, the policy requires a contribution to either provide new open-space off-site or to improve the quality of existing open spaces nearby.

Policy OS3 also refers to Policy Annex OS3. This provides open space quantitative standards and accessibility standards. The source for these standards is the Tonbridge and Malling Open Space Strategy (February 2009).

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's new Local Plan

Following the withdrawal of a Local Plan from examination in 2021, the Council has been progressing a new Local Plan. An early Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation was undertaken in Autumn 2022, and the Council has recently consulted upon (10th November 2025 – 2nd January 2026) a Stage 2 Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation.

The New Local Plan will be the key planning document for the borough which will provide a vision for and a range of strategic objectives for the borough covering a minimum 15-year period from adoption, a long-term spatial strategy setting out the locations for future housing and employment growth and will provide both strategic and non-strategic policies to guide development contributing to social, environmental and economic (sustainability) goals. Once adopted, the plan will replace all existing adopted plans and policies and will be used to assess and make decisions on planning applications, as well as to be used to help inform investment and the provision of infrastructure to support development, including sports provision.

Mechanism for providing new or enhanced open space, sports and recreation provision

Tonbridge and Malling is not a CIL charging authority. It was decided at the meeting of the Community Infrastructure Levy Panel on 19 December 2011 to not move forward with production of a CIL Schedule, although this position is continually kept under review. In determining planning applications for new development, the Council therefore relies on S106 provisions of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to ensure that appropriate and successful mitigation of development takes place in all instances.

Section 106 agreements are a mechanism designed to ensure a development proposal is acceptable in planning terms where it would not otherwise be acceptable. S106 income is used to help fund the provision of supporting infrastructure in association with development and maximise the benefits and opportunities from growth, such as employment opportunities and affordable homes. The statutory tests for such agreements are that the obligations must be:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
- directly related to the development; and

- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Financial contributions and provision of Open Space, sport and recreation facilities

There are many types of open space that can be addressed through S106 agreements including Parks and Gardens, natural and semi-natural green spaces, green corridors, outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space, play areas, allotments, cemeteries, and other burial grounds.

The provision of new or the enhancement of existing indoor sport and recreation facilities can also be addressed through S106 agreements. The Open Space Strategy 2015 had previously set out standards regarding the provision of open space and identified the locations where obligations were required through S106 and other sources to address deficiencies in the borough's open space network.

Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended)

Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) sets out limitations on the use of planning obligations that can be sought when a planning permission is being granted. These limitations are that planning obligations should be:

- a** “(a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms”; If the proposed development is likely to create additional demand for open spaces, outdoor or indoor sport facilities or exacerbate existing deficiencies then it is considered reasonable to request planning obligations to compensate for these impacts on the local community.
- b** “(b) directly related to the development; and”; Planning contributions will be sought if future residents of the new development will not have access to an appropriate amount and quality of open spaces, outdoor and indoor sport facilities as expected by local standards set out in this document.
- c** “(c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development;” Planning contributions will be sought for major residential developments and the amount required will be based on the number of dwellings proposed. It will therefore be proportionate to the scale of development.

Up to date open space, sports and recreation evidence

The Council has produced a new Open Space Strategy 2025, a new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2025 and an Indoor Sports Strategy 2025. These three new strategies now form part of the evidence base to help inform both the new emerging local plan as well as to provide information and evidence to support planning decisions.

The Open Space Strategy 2025 provides an up-to date position on quantity standards, current deficiencies in open space and accessibility to open spaces, as well as identifies how the Borough's existing open spaces can be improved and indeed where new open spaces would contribute to the health and well-being of communities. Likewise, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and Action Plan (adopted 2025) replaces the Open Space Strategy typology of Formal Outdoor Sports. The 2025 Strategy and Action Plan draws findings from the current outdoor sports provision, identifies any gaps in meeting current and future demand, and sets out specific recommendations. Similarly, the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy (2025) provides key facts on the current provision of such facilities in the Borough. The findings of these studies are summarised in Section 3.

Given that previous considerations for open space, sports and recreation provision are dated and that new and up-to-date evidence is now available, this guidance note is provided to assist in the interpretation and implementation of the open space, playing pitch and indoor sports evidence.

The Guidance Note will be used when assessing planning applications and development proposals relating to open space, sports and recreation provision including where contributions are required as part of new residential development. The Guidance note will be used as a 'material consideration' and should be used in decision making as appropriate.

3. Evidence Base of Open Spaces, Playing Pitch and Indoor Sport Facilities Provision in Tonbridge and Malling

In this section, the findings of the studies will be summarised, including information about the level and quality of existing provision, and any deficiencies in meeting current demand.

Open Space Study

The 2025 Open Space Study (OSS) assessed the quantity, quality, and accessibility of public open spaces within the Borough. The study categorised open spaces into the following typologies:

Table 1: The typologies of formal and informal open space

Type	Abb	Definition	Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens	PG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country Parks Parks Formal public gardens 	Accessible, high quality open space that offers opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces	NG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heathland and nature reserves Woodland Wetlands Water course and ponds Unimproved grassland Cliffs Dunes 	Wildlife, conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness. Nature conservation will usually take priority over recreational uses in determining management regimes. Where the land is subject to a statutory designation such as SSSI, SAC or SPA, the Council has a duty to proactively manage it for nature conservation purposes.
Amenity Greenspace	AGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal recreational open space Green space in residential development Village greens 	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.

Type	Abb	Definition	Primary Purpose
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other incidental landscaped areas Private greenspace that has visual or other value, even if no physical public access is possible. 	
Play Areas for Children and Young People	CYP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipped play facilities Wheeled sports facilities (e.g. Skatepark) Ball courts Meeting places and shelters 	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people such as equipped play areas, teenage shelters
Allotments	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotments Community gardens City farms 	Opportunities for those people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health, and social inclusion.
Cemeteries & Churchyards	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public cemeteries Burial grounds Churchyards Crematoria grounds 	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead. Provision is linked to historical and cultural values. Sites may have value for the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Based on these typologies, the strategy provides an assessment of the existing provision across the Borough. In a first instance, the quantity assessment (i.e. the surface area of public open spaces available per 1,000 inhabitants) enables the identification of the current level of provision across the borough, and feeds into the setting of local standards. Once the local standards are set, this enables the identification of areas where deficiencies or surpluses exist.

In a second instance, the quality assessment of the spaces, including their value for the local community, enables the identification of those sites that need further investment and in a third instance, gaps identification in terms of accessibility to green spaces, using maps showing areas not located within standard accessible distances defined in guidance from the Field in Trust or Natural England, can assist in the planning decision-making process. It is to be noted that a local area might have enough public open spaces per population, but if all are concentrated in one or few locations then there could still be accessibility gaps where a new residential development is being proposed.

In total, excluding outdoor sports 357 open spaces were assessed covering 1045.57 ha.

The Open Space Study (OSS) (2025) assesses the quantity, quality, and accessibility of public open spaces within the borough and categorises open spaces into a number of typologies. Based on these typologies, the study provides an assessment of the existing provision of open space across the borough and defines local standards in relation to quality, accessibility and quantity (Table 2). This is the baseline against which requirements for open space provision from new residential developments will be assessed.

Table 2: Summary of Open Space Standards

Typology	Quantity Standards (ha per 1000 population)	Access Standard
Parks and Gardens	0.80	1200 radial walking distance (20 minutes' drive time for strategic parks)
Amenity Greenspace	0.80	480m radial walking distance
Natural Greenspace	1.80	960m radial walking distance
Children's and Young Peoples Play	0.25	480m radial walking distance
Total for new provision	3.65	
MUGAs	1 per 7,500 people	10 minutes' walking time
Skateparks/BMX Tracks	1 per 20,000 people	15 minutes' cycling time
Outdoor Fitness Gyms	1 per 10,000 people	15 minutes' walking time

The quantity and accessibility standards set out in table 2 should be used as a starting point to calculate future open space requirements alongside a consideration of the Council's open space priorities, evidence and any other relevant and up-to-date information. Therefore, table 2 supersedes the quantity and accessibility standards provided in Policy Annex OS3 – Open Space Standards (Managing Development and the Environment DPD (April 2010) and the standards provided in the Open Space Strategy 2015.

Access standards are a tool to capture whether communities are served by existing facilities, defined as the distance that would be travelled by most users. They are provided as a starting point to help identify deficiencies in a catchment area.

In accordance with the latest Open Space evidence, developments that deliver a net increase of 6 dwellings or more will be required to contribute to new or enhanced open space provision. When calculating requirements, the following occupancy rates should be used. This is based on 2021 census data.

New developments of 6 net dwellings will need to provide 3.65 hectares of open space provision per 1,000 population. This equates to 36.5 sqm per person.

Occupancy Rates by dwelling size

The occupancy levels to be used to determine the additional population from a development proposal is provided below. Where occupancy is unknown, the average household occupancy rate of 2.4 can be used.

Table 3: Household Occupancy Rates Based on Size of Dwelling

Number of Bedrooms	Occupancy Rate (persons per household)
1 bedroom	1.80
2 bedrooms	2.30
3 bedrooms	2.70
4 bedrooms	3.10
5+ bedrooms	3.50

On or off-site provision

The Council will take a sequential approach to the provision of open space. Firstly, on-site provision will be sought in accordance with the adopted standards set out in table 2 above, where the site is in an area of quantitative deficiency, i.e. there is a need for additional open space.

On-site provision will be dependent on the size of the development, where larger developments will be expected to provide all types of provision on-site to serve the additional population.

Best practice guidance from organisations such as Fields In Trust (FIT), recommends that provision below certain sizes should not be provided as on-site provision and instead provided as off-site contributions. This is to avoid the creation of numerous small sites often of less recreational value (and quality over time). The following minimum area sizes are suggested to help inform when new provision should be provided on-site:

Table 4: On-site provision – minimum area sizes

Play space	Average No. of dwellings	Minimum area (ha)
Local Areas of Playspace (LAP) and informal play space	21 – 99 homes	0.01
Local Areas of Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) and informal play spaces	100 – 499 homes	0.04
Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) and informal play spaces	500+ homes	0.1
Open space		

Play space	Average No. of dwellings	Minimum area (ha)
Amenity / Natural Greenspace	16 homes	0.05
Park – small / medium / large	41 / 208 / 416 homes	0.3 / 1.5 / 3
Natural Green Space to meet Natural England standard (AGNSt)	500+ homes	2
MUGA	100+ homes	0.08
Skateparks / BMX tracks	500+ homes	0.02 for a skatepark 0.0375 for a freestyle BMX park
Outdoor Fitness Gyms	100+ homes	0.002
Allotment / Community Garden	500+ homes	0.0125 for allotment 0.006 for community garden

New provision for amenity, parks and natural green greenspace should be considered in relation to multifunctional greenspace in relation to local deficiencies. It may be that there are circumstances where smaller parks are warranted and this will need to be considered on a case by-case basis.

Play provision requirements for any development which does not trigger the on-site contribution will generally be sought as offsite contributions. However, if the development is not within reach of an existing play site than onsite provision may be warranted regardless of the small size of the development

Consideration for the provision and requirement of allotments or community gardens will need to be on a case-by-case basis

Open Space Study (2025) recommendations

The open space study also made six recommendations as detailed below.

Recommendation 1 - Protect open space provision

It is important for all open space to be protected. This is due to gaps in catchment mapping and the identified additional future need as set out in Part 5 of the study. The distribution of open space varies across the borough, however, there are identified shortages of at least 1 typology of open space in all parishes. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there is an existing shortfall of supply.

Recommendation 2 - Ensure low quality sites in areas of quantity or accessibility shortfalls are prioritised for enhancement

The policy approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality. This is especially the case if the site is deemed to be of high value. Such sites should be protected, along with all open space sites, for their quality to be improved.

Annex 1 of the study identifies those sites that should be given priority for enhancement. It is also important for other low-quality sites to be addressed in terms of their quality deficiency. Some of the key observations which relate to site enhancement include:

The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as Parks and Gardens and Play Space.

- The need for additional and improved facilities for young people.
- The need to ensure high quality open spaces are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
- The importance of rights of way and natural green space, and the need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity.
- The role of open space in contributing to wider initiatives and strategies, such as health and wellbeing.
- Extending and enhancing the network of green infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

Recommendation 3 - Recognise role of high quality and value sites

Sites within this category should be viewed as being key areas of open space provision. The quality and value data in Annex 1 of the Study identifies those sites rating high for quality and value. Such sites are likely to provide multiple social and value benefits. Sites rating low for quality and/or value should also be retained with a view, to either improving quality or exploring their ability to help meet gaps/deficiencies in other forms of open space.

The focus should be on continuing to improve the quality and facilities at multifunctional and strategic sites. The larger Children's Play Areas should continue to be enhanced. These sites are highly valued by residents, and many people are willing to drive there, as the facilities provide a 'day out' for visitors.

Recommendation 4 - Parishes identified as having gaps in quantity or catchment mapping should be recognised through protection and enhancement

These are sites which might help to meet the identified catchment gaps, or quantity deficiencies for other open space typologies, such as amenity greenspace to natural and semi- natural greenspace, or new parks and gardens as the population grows.

Section 3.3 of the Open Space Strategy provides maps by parish showing the quality and value audit results, as identified within the quality audit, provided to the Council as an Excel database. An overview of the open space quality audit scores is provided in Annex 2. Where new housing development is proposed, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the parish where the development is located and / or improving accessibility to open space types that are not available through new site provision.

Recommendation 5 - The need for additional allotments should be led by demand

Waiting lists at allotment sites within some of the parishes imply that supply is not meeting demand in some areas. Consultation with the parish councils will identify if new sites are required. Therefore, waiting list numbers, rather than the application of a standard should be used to determine the need for new allotment provision.

Recommendation 6 - Keeping data, report and supporting evidence base up to date to reflect changes

Whilst significant changes are not as common for open space, inevitably over time changes will occur through the creation of new provision, loss of provision and/or alterations to site boundaries and management. Population change and housing growth are also another consideration to review when undertaking any form of update as this may impact on quantity levels and provision standards. Keeping up to date GIS data or other records to help identify where new open space has been created is recommended.

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy

An updated Playing Pitch Strategy has been prepared in line with paragraph 103 of the NPPF and in accordance with Sport England's "Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: an approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy" to reflect current best practice for the analysis of provision of sports facilities.

The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) was adopted in August 2025. The pitches and outdoor sports facilities included in the strategy are as follows and were selected on the basis that there is identified demand and need for each of the sports in Tonbridge and Malling:

- Football.
- Cricket.
- Rugby Union.
- Hockey.
- Bowls.
- Netball.
- Athletics.
- Baseball.
- Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs).

Two different methodologies were applied to assess the playing pitch and outdoor sports needs in TMBC:

- Sport England's 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' (2013) for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, and baseball pitches.
- Sport England's 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' (2014) for croquet courts, tennis courts, bowling greens, netball courts, athletics tracks and MUGAs.

The methodology for the pitches follows the 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' (2013) developed by Sport England. The process involves five stages and ten steps as follows:

- Stage A - Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1).

- Stage B - Gather information on the supply of and demand for provision (step 2 gather supply information and views and step 3 gather demand information and views)
- Stage C - Assess the supply and demand information and views (step 4 understand the situation at individual sites, step 5 develops the current and future pictures of provision and step 6 identify the key findings and issues).
- Stage D - Develop the strategy (step 7 develop the recommendations and action plan and step 8 write and adopt the strategy).
- Stage E - Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (step 9 apply and deliver the strategy and step 10 keep the strategy robust and up to date).

The methodology applied to assess the needs and opportunities for outdoor sports facilities follows Sport England's recommended approach, advocated in 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' (2014). The process involves three stages as follows:

- Stage A - Prepare and tailor the approach.
- Stage B - Gather information on supply and demand.
- Stage C - Assessment - bringing the information together.

Assessing playing pitch needs in Tonbridge and Malling using the approach advocated by Sport England in its 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' and outdoor sports facilities using its 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' has ensured that the exercise is both robust and evidence-based and as a result complies with the provisions of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

To assist with analysing provision at a more local level and to assess the differential spatial impact on supply and demand for sports facilities arising from housing growth the borough has been divided into two sub-areas.

These have been selected on the basis that they comprise discrete areas within which the resident population will typically look to access sports facilities locally. The sub-areas are as follows:

Table 5: PPOSS Sub Areas

Sub-area	Wards
Tonbridge and surrounds	Hildenborough
	Judd
	Vauxhall
	Cage Green and Angel
	Higham
	Trench
	Bourne

Sub-area	Wards
	East and West Peckham, Mereworth and Watlingtonbury
The Mallings and surrounds	Pilgrims with Igtham Borough Green and Platt East Malling, West Malling, and Offham Kings Hill Aylesford South and Ditton Birling, Leybourne and Ryarsh Larkfield Aylesford North and North Downs Snodland West and Holborough Lakes Snodland East and Ham Hill Walderslade

Recommendations and Options

The PPOSS has set out recommendations under the three main headings ‘Protect,’ ‘Enhance,’ and ‘Provide’ for Football, Cricket, Hockey, Rugby Union and Baseball and options under these three main headings.

Football

The PPOSS has six recommendations for football arranged under the three main headings of ‘Protect,’ ‘Enhance,’ and ‘Provide.’ The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Study identifies a need for all current and disused football pitch sites to be retained, based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of the sport and/or other wider open space functions in Tonbridge and Malling both now and in the future.

It is therefore recommended that existing planning policies continue to support the retention and protection of all sites, based upon the evidence in the PPS. If any pitch sites do become the subject of development proposals, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy. This states that ‘the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development’.

Recommendation 2 - Security of tenure: 3.7% of the football pitches in the borough are on sites without secured community use. Without Community Use Agreements it is impossible to assume their continued availability for the community. It is therefore recommended that efforts are made to achieve security of Community Use Agreements at sites without them at present.

Enhance

Recommendation 3 - Improving existing 'poor' quality provision, including disused sites: 20 pitches in the borough (15.9%) are rated as 'poor' quality and several more are rated at the lower end of 'standard' quality. Additionally, 27 pitches (21.4%) are served by 'poor' quality or no changing facilities. This reduces the quality of playing experience and may deter potential participants. Improving the pitches at Larkfield Recreation Ground, The Racecourse Sports Ground and Watlington Recreation Ground would have the greatest impact on current deficiencies.

- The owners of sites with 'poor' quality pitches should subscribe to the Football Foundation's Pitch Power programme, a low-cost service that provides a pitch quality assessment and recommendations on how to improve maintenance to enhance capacity.
- The site owners concerned should be supported to apply for external funding for facility enhancements, including the receipt of developer contributions (see below) where the usage capacity would be enhanced.
- User clubs at council-owned pitches should be offered the opportunity to take over the maintenance of the pitches to improve quality and capacity, with appropriate initial support such as the loan of equipment, training, and financial support.

Recommendation 4 - Developer contributions and external funding (enhancements): Some of the additional demand for football arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041 can be accommodated by enhancing existing pitches and facilities. Improving the pitches at Larkfield Recreation Ground, The Racecourse Sports Ground and Watlington Recreation Ground would have the greatest impact on current deficiencies. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments and that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

Provide

Recommendation 5 - '3G' football turf pitches: Based upon the FA's guide figure, there is a current shortfall of three full-sized '3G' pitches in the borough, with additional demand equivalent to 1.5 full-sized pitches being generated by the higher population growth projection to 2041. '3G' pitches are an important component of provision because their all-weather nature and floodlights enable a high volume of play to be accommodated on good quality playing surfaces. The provision of additional '3G' pitches to meet needs identified in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS should be supported as a priority in appropriate locations.

Recommendation 6 - Developer contributions and external funding (new provision): Some of the extra demand for football in particular arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling, may need to be accommodated through the provision of new pitches and facilities, once options for improving capacity at existing sites have been explored. It is recommended that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions to meet the specific future needs identified in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS to cover the capital and revenue implications of new provision.

Cricket

The PPOSS has four recommendations for cricket arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for cricket in the borough. The PPS identifies a need for all current cricket pitch sites to be retained and protected based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of the sport in Tonbridge and Malling both now and in the future. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites based upon the evidence in the PPS. If any pitch sites do become the subject of development proposals, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Enhance

Recommendation 2 - Improving existing 'standard' and 'poor' quality pitches: The pitches at 12 sites are rated as 'standard' quality. If improved to 'good' quality, it would add 160 seasonal match equivalent sessions to overall capacity, eliminating the current deficit of 102 sessions. It is recommended that the site owners should be supported to improve pitch quality, including the receipt of developer contributions (see below) where the usage capacity would be enhanced.

Recommendation 3 - Developer contributions and external funding (enhancements): Most of the demand for cricket arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling can be accommodated through enhancements to existing pitches and facilities. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments and that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

Provide

Recommendation 4 - Developer contributions and external funding (new provision): Some of the extra demand for cricket arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling, may need to be accommodated through the provision of new pitches and facilities. It is recommended that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to provide cricket facilities to meet the future needs identified in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS.

Hockey

The PPOSS has four recommendations for hockey arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for hockey in the borough. The PPS has identified a need to increase local hockey pitch capacity and to this extent, it will be important for all current community used hockey pitch sites to be retained and protected. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites, based upon the evidence in the PPS. If proposals to redevelop hockey pitches do come forward, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Since the introduction of 3G pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way of replacing their tired sand-based carpet and generating money from hiring out a 3G pitch to football clubs and commercial football providers. This has come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams being displaced from their preferred geographical area.

Due to its impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand-based AGPs are retained for the playing development of the sport. To that end, a change of surface should require a planning application and, as part of that, the applicants should have to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Opportunities to incorporate this into planning policy should therefore be explored, and advice from Sport England and EH should also be sought prior to any planning application being submitted.

It should also be noted that, if a surface is changed, it could require the existing floodlighting to be changed and, in some instances, noise attenuation measures may need to be put in place.

The 3G surface is limited in the range of sport that can be played or taught on it. Those proposing a conversion should take advice from the appropriate sports' governing bodies or refer to Sport England guidance 'Selecting the Right Artificial Grass Surface' which can be found on Sport England's website: <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-costguidance/artificial-sports-surfaces/>

Recommendation 2 - Managing the football-hockey demand interface: Football clubs in the borough currently use 24 hours per week of midweek artificial grass pitch time for training purposes, displacing some hockey demand. Managing this demand via co-operative working between the FA and England Hockey is key to ensuring that all existing hockey pitches are retained and that additional '3G' pitches provision is made to redeploy demand from football for sports lit training/match facilities. England Hockey will also support schools with hockey pitches with business modelling for hockey-only pitch operation.

Enhance

Recommendation 3 - Maintaining existing pitch capacity: The pitches in the borough will all need to be resurfaced in the next five years to ensure that they remain usable.

Provide

Recommendation 4 - Developer contributions and external funding: It is recommended that the action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for seeking an appropriate level of financial contributions under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of securing additional hockey pitch capacity to meet the needs of the additional population arising from housing growth.

Rugby

The PPOSS has three recommendations for Rugby arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for rugby union in the borough. The PPS has identified a need to increase local rugby pitch capacity and to this extent, it will be important for all current community used rugby pitch sites to be retained and protected. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites, based upon the evidence in the PPS. If proposals to redevelop rugby pitches do come forward, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Enhance

Recommendation 2 - Improving existing pitch capacity: Additional pitch capacity would best be developed at existing pitches by improving the quality of pitch drainage and maintenance at the Jack Willams Ground with related floodlighting provision.

Recommendation 3 - Developer contributions and external funding: All the additional demand for rugby arising from housing development in Tonbridge and Malling, should be accommodated through the recommendations outlined above. It is recommended that the action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for seeking an appropriate level of financial contributions under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements, in conjunction with any other external sources of funding that might be available.

The PPOSS has three recommendations for Baseball arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for baseball in the borough. The PPS identifies a need for all current baseball pitch sites to be retained and protected based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of the sport in Tonbridge and Malling both now and in the future. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites based upon the evidence in the PPS. If any pitch sites do become the subject of development proposals, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.

This states that ‘the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development’.

Enhance

Recommendation 2 - Enhancing existing facilities: Disability access is ‘poor’ at Borley Field and ‘standard at Williams Field. It is recommended that the site owners should be supported to improve pitch quality, including the receipt of developer contributions (see below) where the usage capacity would be enhanced.

Recommendation 3 - Developer contributions and external funding (enhancements): Most of the demand for baseball arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling can be accommodated through enhancements to existing pitches and facilities. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments and that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

Tennis

The options for securing existing and additional tennis court capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing tennis courts through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

There is a need to provide six additional courts to meet demand arising from the higher population growth projections and there is a case for making locally accessible provision in any major new housing developments.

Enhance

Enhancing existing tennis court capacity by:

- Addressing the disabled access issues at the five sites where this is rated as ‘poor.’
- Ensuring that the courts and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements, funded by S106 developer contributions where appropriate.
- Considering the addition of floodlights at appropriate sites, particularly in conjunction with netball developments at shared use sites.

The additional lights will extend the time that outdoor facilities can be used, particularly in the winter, thereby increasing the health and well-being benefits they provide.

There are an estimated 3,504 playable daylight hours per year for an unlit court. This would increase to 4,368 hours per year for a sports-lit court, an increase of about 25%. For working adults or school age juniors available (on average) after 5pm on weekdays, the availability increase is even more significant. The additional capacity provided by sports lighting would allow year-round activity and therefore provide more opportunities for local people to maintain healthy and active lifestyles.

Bowls

The options for securing existing bowls green capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing bowls greens through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

There is no need to provide additional facilities based on current and projected future demand.

Enhance

Enhancing existing bowls green capacity by:

- Addressing the issues at the site where features are rated as 'poor.'
- Ensuring that the greens and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements.

Netball

The options for securing existing netball court capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing netball courts through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

There is a current need to provide one additional court as part of the proposed facilities development project at Aylesford Bulls RFC, two further additional courts will likely be required to meet demand arising from the lower population growth projections and three additional courts to meet demand from higher population growth projections as currently tested as part of the emerging Local Plan. There is a case for making locally accessible provision in any large strategic new housing developments.

Enhance

Enhancing existing netball court capacity by delivering indoor courts at Aylesford Bulls RFC.

Athletics

The options for securing existing athletics facilities capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing athletics facilities through the Local Plan will be key to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

England Athletics has identified potential demand for an 'ActiveTrack' in the Malling sub-area. The feasibility of this should be examined further.

Enhance

The Tonbridge School Track should complete the requirements for achieving 'TrackMark' status.

Informal sports

The options for securing existing informal outdoor facilities capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing informal outdoor facilities through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

A range of informal outdoor facilities will be required to meet the needs of the additional population arising from housing developments.

Enhance

Enhancing existing informal outdoor facilities capacity by ensuring they receive regular maintenance, and improvements will be key to preserving current provision.

The Key Strategic Actions for each sport are set out in Annex 3 and the Individual Site-Specific Actions are set out within Annex 4 of this guidance note. Further information on all playing pitches / sports considered can be found within the Playing Pitch Strategy (2025).

Tonbridge and Malling is made up of 28 Parish Councils, which are often responsible for the management of the parks, playgrounds, public open spaces, and equipped areas for children's and young people's play activities in their area. Within Tonbridge, sites are usually managed by the Borough Council.

The strategy summarised the current provision in open spaces in the Parish Council areas of the Borough.

Finally, the Strategy made six recommendations:

Recommendation 1 - Protect open space provision

It is important for all open space to be protected. This is due to gaps in catchment mapping and the identified additional future need as set out in Part 5. The distribution of open space varies across the borough, however, there are identified shortages of at least 1 typology of open space in all parishes. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there is an existing shortfall of supply.

Recommendation 2 - Ensure low quality sites in areas of quantity or accessibility shortfalls are prioritised for enhancement

The policy approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality. This is especially the case if the site is deemed to be of high value. Such sites should be protected, along with all open space sites, for their quality to be improved. Annex 1 identifies those sites that should be given priority for enhancement. It is also important for other low-quality sites to be addressed in terms of their quality deficiency. Some of the key observations which relate to site enhancement include:

The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as Parks and Gardens and Play Space.

- The need for additional and improved facilities for young people.
- The need to ensure high quality open spaces are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
- The importance of rights of way and natural green space, and the need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity.
- The role of open space in contributing to wider initiatives and strategies, such as health and wellbeing.
- Extending and enhancing the network of green infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

Recommendation 3 - Recognise role of high quality and value sites

Sites within this category should be viewed as being key areas of open space provision. The quality and value data in Annex 1 identifies those sites rating high for quality and value. Such sites are likely to provide multiple social and value benefits. Sites rating low for quality and/or value should also be retained with a view, to either improving quality or exploring their ability to help meet gaps/deficiencies in other forms of open space.

The focus should be on continuing to improve the quality and facilities at multifunctional and strategic sites. The larger Children's Play Areas should continue to be enhanced. These sites are highly valued by residents, and many people are willing to drive there, as the facilities provide a 'day out' for visitors.

Recommendation 4 - parishes identified as having gaps in quantity or catchment mapping should be recognised through protection and enhancement

These are sites which might help to meet the identified catchment gaps, or quantity deficiencies for other open space typologies, such as amenity greenspace to natural and semi- natural greenspace, or new parks and gardens as the population grows.

Section 3.3 Open Space Strategy provides maps by parish showing the quality and value audit results, as identified within the quality audit, provided to the Council as an Excel database. An overview of the open space quality audit scores is provided in Annex 2. Where new housing development is proposed, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the parish where the development is located and / or improving accessibility to open space types that are not available through new site provision.

Recommendation 5 - The need for additional allotments should be led by demand

Waiting lists at allotment sites within some of the parishes imply that supply is not meeting demand in some areas. Consultation with the parish councils will identify if new sites are required. Therefore, waiting list numbers, rather than the application of a standard should be used to determine the need for new allotment provision.

Recommendation 6 - Keeping data, report and supporting evidence base up to date to reflect changes

Whilst significant changes are not as common for open space, inevitably over time changes will occur through the creation of new provision, loss of provision and/or alterations to site boundaries and management. Population change and housing growth are also another consideration to review when undertaking any form of update as this may impact on quantity levels and provision standards. Keeping up to date GIS data or other records to help identify where new open space has been created is recommended.

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy

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The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) was adopted in August 2025. The pitches and outdoor sports facilities included in the strategy are as follows and were selected on the basis that there is identified demand and need for each of the sports in Tonbridge and Malling:

- Football.
- Cricket.
- Rugby Union.
- Hockey.
- Bowls.
- Netball.

- Athletics.
- Baseball.
- Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs).

Two different methodologies were applied to assess the playing pitch and outdoor sports needs in TMBC:

- Sport England's 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' (2013) for football, cricket, rugby, hockey, and baseball pitches.
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The methodology for the pitches follows the 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' (2013) developed by Sport England. The process involves five stages and ten steps as follows:

- Stage A - Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1).
- Stage B - Gather information on the supply of and demand for provision (step 2 gather supply information and views and step 3 gather demand information and views)
- Stage C - Assess the supply and demand information and views (step 4 understand the situation at individual sites, step 5 develops the current and future pictures of provision and step 6 identify the key findings and issues).
- Stage D - Develop the strategy (step 7 develop the recommendations and action plan and step 8 write and adopt the strategy).
- Stage E - Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (step 9 apply and deliver the strategy and step 10 keep the strategy robust and up to date).

The methodology applied to assess the needs and opportunities for outdoor sports facilities follows Sport England's recommended approach, advocated in 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' (2014). The process involves three stages as follows:

- Stage A - Prepare and tailor the approach.
- Stage B - Gather information on supply and demand.
- Stage C - Assessment - bringing the information together.

Assessing playing pitch needs in Tonbridge and Malling using the approach advocated by Sport England in its 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance' and outdoor sports facilities using its 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' has ensured that the exercise is both robust and evidence-based and as a result complies with the provisions of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

To assist with analysing provision at a more local level and to assess the differential spatial impact on supply and demand for sports facilities arising from housing growth the borough has been divided into two sub-areas.

These have been selected on the basis that they comprise discrete areas within which the resident population will typically look to access sports facilities locally. The sub-areas are as follows:

Table 6: PPOSS Sub Areas

Sub-area	Wards
Tonbridge and surrounds	Hildenborough Judd Vauxhall Cage Green and Angel Higham Trench Bourne East and West Peckham, Mereworth and Wateringbury
The Mallings and surrounds	Pilgrims with Igtham Borough Green and Platt East Malling, West Malling, and Offham Kings Hill Aylesford South and Ditton Birling, Leybourne and Ryarsh Larkfield Aylesford North and North Downs Snodland West and Holborough Lakes Snodland East and Ham Hill Walderslade

Recommendations and Options

The PPOSS has set out recommendations under the three main headings 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide' for Football, Cricket, Hockey, Rugby Union and Baseball and options under the three main headings for

The PPOSS has six recommendations for football arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Study identifies a need for all current and disused football pitch sites to be retained, based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of the sport and/or other wider open space functions in Tonbridge and Malling both now and in the future. It is therefore recommended that existing planning policies continue to support the retention and protection of all sites, based upon the evidence in the PPS. If any pitch sites do become the subject of development proposals, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Recommendation 2 - Security of tenure: 3.7% of the football pitches in the borough are on sites without secured community use. Without Community Use Agreements it is impossible to assume their continued availability for the community. It is therefore recommended that efforts are made to achieve security of Community Use Agreements at sites without them at present.

Enhance

Recommendation 3 - Improving existing 'poor' quality provision, including disused sites: 20 pitches in the borough (15.9%) are rated as 'poor' quality and several more are rated at the lower end of 'standard' quality. Additionally, 27 pitches (21.4%) are served by 'poor' quality or no changing facilities. This reduces the quality of playing experience and may deter potential participants. Improving the pitches at Larkfield Recreation Ground, The Racecourse Sports Ground and Watlington Recreation Ground would have the greatest impact on current deficiencies.

- The owners of sites with 'poor' quality pitches should subscribe to the Football Foundation's Pitch Power programme, a low-cost service that provides a pitch quality assessment and recommendations on how to improve maintenance to enhance capacity.
- The site owners concerned should be supported to apply for external funding for facility enhancements, including the receipt of developer contributions (see below) where the usage capacity would be enhanced.
- User clubs at council-owned pitches should be offered the opportunity to take over the maintenance of the pitches to improve quality and capacity, with appropriate initial support such as the loan of equipment, training, and financial support.

Recommendation 4 - Developer contributions and external funding (enhancements): Some of the additional demand for football arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041 can be accommodated by enhancing existing pitches and facilities. Improving the pitches at Larkfield Recreation Ground, The Racecourse Sports Ground and Watlington Recreation Ground would have the greatest impact on current deficiencies.

It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments and that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

Provide

Recommendation 5 - '3G' football turf pitches: Based upon the FA's guide figure, there is a current shortfall of three full-sized '3G' pitches in the borough, with additional demand equivalent to 1.5 full-sized pitches being generated by the higher population growth projection to 2041. '3G' pitches are an important component of provision because their all-weather nature and floodlights enable a high volume of play to be accommodated on good quality playing surfaces. The provision of additional '3G' pitches to meet needs identified in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS should be supported as a priority in appropriate locations.

Recommendation 6 - Developer contributions and external funding (new provision): Some of the extra demand for football in particular arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041, may need to be accommodated through the provision of new pitches and facilities, once options for improving capacity at existing sites have been explored. It is recommended that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions to meet the specific future needs identified in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS to cover the capital and revenue implications of new provision.

The PPOSS has four recommendations for cricket arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for cricket in the borough. The PPS identifies a need for all current cricket pitch sites to be retained and protected based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of the sport in Tonbridge and Malling both now and in the future. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites based upon the evidence in the PPS. If any pitch sites do become the subject of development proposals, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Enhance

Recommendation 2 - Improving existing 'standard' and 'poor' quality pitches: The pitches at 12 sites are rated as 'standard' quality. If improved to 'good' quality, it would add 160 seasonal match equivalent sessions to overall capacity, eliminating the current deficit of 102 sessions. It is recommended that the site owners should be supported to improve pitch quality, including the receipt of developer contributions (see below) where the usage capacity would be enhanced.

Recommendation 3 - Developer contributions and external funding (enhancements): Most of the demand for cricket arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041 can be accommodated through enhancements to existing pitches and facilities. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments and that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

Provide

Recommendation 4 - Developer contributions and external funding (new provision): Some of the extra demand for cricket arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041, may need to be accommodated through the provision of new pitches and facilities. It is recommended that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to provide cricket facilities to meet the future needs identified in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS.

The PPOSS has four recommendations for hockey arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for hockey in the borough. The PPS has identified a need to increase local hockey pitch capacity and to this extent, it will be important for all current community used hockey pitch sites to be retained and protected. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites, based upon the evidence in the PPS. If proposals to redevelop hockey pitches do come forward, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Since the introduction of 3G pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way of replacing their tired sand-based carpet and generating money from hiring out a 3G pitch to football clubs and commercial football providers. This has come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams being displaced from their preferred geographical area.

Due to its impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand-based AGPs are retained for the playing development of the sport. To that end, a change of surface should require a planning application and, as part of that, the applicants should have to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Opportunities to incorporate this into planning policy should therefore be explored, and advice from Sport England and EH should also be sought prior to any planning application being submitted.

It should also be noted that, if a surface is changed, it could require the existing floodlighting to be changed and, in some instances, noise attenuation measures may need to be put in place.

The 3G surface is limited in the range of sport that can be played or taught on it. Those proposing a conversion should take advice from the appropriate sports' governing bodies or refer to Sport England guidance 'Selecting the Right Artificial Grass Surface which can be found on Sport England's website: <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-costguidance/artificial-sports-surfaces/>

Recommendation 2 - Managing the football-hockey demand interface: Football clubs in the borough currently use 24 hours per week of midweek artificial grass pitch time for training purposes, displacing some hockey demand. Managing this demand via co-operative working between the FA and England Hockey is key to ensuring that all existing hockey pitches are retained and that additional '3G' pitches provision is made to redeploy demand from football for sports lit training/match facilities. England Hockey will also support schools with hockey pitches with business modelling for hockey-only pitch operation.

Enhance

Recommendation 3 - Maintaining existing pitch capacity: The pitches in the borough will all need to be resurfaced in the next five years to ensure that they remain usable.

Provide

Recommendation 4 - Developer contributions and external funding: It is recommended that the action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for seeking an appropriate level of financial contributions under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of securing additional hockey pitch capacity to meet the needs of the additional population arising from housing growth by 2041.

The PPOSS has three recommendations for Baseball arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for rugby union in the borough. The PPS has identified a need to increase local rugby pitch capacity and to this extent, it will be important for all current community used rugby pitch sites to be retained and protected. It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites, based upon the evidence in the PPS. If proposals to redevelop rugby pitches do come forward, this will only be permissible they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Enhance

Recommendation 2 - Improving existing pitch capacity: Additional pitch capacity would best be developed at existing pitches by improving the quality of pitch drainage and maintenance at the Jack Willams Ground with related floodlighting provision.

Recommendation 3 - Developer contributions and external funding: All the additional demand for rugby arising from housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041, should be accommodated through the recommendations outlined above. It is recommended that the action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for seeking an appropriate level of financial contributions under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements, in conjunction with any other external sources of funding that might be available.

The PPOSS has three recommendations for Baseball arranged under the three main headings of 'Protect,' 'Enhance,' and 'Provide.' The recommendations are:

Protect

Recommendation 1 - Safeguarding existing provision: The Tonbridge and Malling PPS comprise a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for baseball in the borough. The PPS identifies a need for all current baseball pitch sites to be retained and protected based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of the sport in Tonbridge and Malling both now and in the future.

It is therefore recommended that planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites based upon the evidence in the PPS. If any pitch sites do become the subject of development proposals, this will only be permissible if they are replaced and meet policy exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This states that 'the playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development must be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

Enhance

Recommendation 2 - Enhancing existing facilities: Disability access is 'poor' at Borley Field and 'standard at Williams Field. It is recommended that the site owners should be supported to improve pitch quality, including the receipt of developer contributions (see below) where the usage capacity would be enhanced.

Recommendation 3 - Developer contributions and external funding (enhancements): Most of the demand for baseball arising from the proposed housing development in Tonbridge and Malling to 2041 can be accommodated through enhancements to existing pitches and facilities. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling PPS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments and that an appropriate level of financial contributions be sought under S106 developer contributions and/or through applications for external funding to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

The options for securing existing and additional tennis court capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing tennis courts through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

There is a need to provide six additional courts to meet demand arising from the higher population growth projections and there is a case for making locally accessible provision in any major new housing developments.

Enhance

Enhancing existing tennis court capacity by:

- Addressing the disabled access issues at the five sites where this is rated as 'poor.'
- Ensuring that the courts and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements, funded by S106 developer contributions where appropriate.
- Considering the addition of floodlights at appropriate sites, particularly in conjunction with netball developments at shared use sites.

The additional lights will extend the time that outdoor facilities can be used, particularly in the winter, thereby increasing the health and well-being benefits they provide.

There are an estimated 3,504 playable daylight hours per year for an unlit court. This would increase to 4,368 hours per year for a sports-lit court, an increase of about 25%. For working adults or school age juniors available (on average) after 5pm on weekdays, the availability increase is even more significant.

The additional capacity provided by sports lighting would allow year-round activity and therefore provide more opportunities for local people to maintain healthy and active lifestyles.

The options for securing existing bowls green capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing bowls greens through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

There is no need to provide additional facilities based on current and projected future demand.

Enhance

Enhancing existing bowls green capacity by:

- Addressing the issues at the site where features are rated as 'poor.'
- Ensuring that the greens and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements.

The options for securing existing netball court capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing netball courts through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

There is a current need to provide one additional court as part of the proposed facilities development project at Aylesford Bulls RFC, two further additional courts by 2041 to meet demand arising from the lower population growth projections and three additional courts to meet demand from higher population growth projections. There is a case for making locally accessible provision in any major new housing developments.

Enhance

Enhancing existing netball court capacity by delivering indoor courts at Aylesford Bulls RFC.

The options for securing existing athletics facilities capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing athletics facilities through the Local Plan will be key to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

England Athletics has identified potential demand for an 'ActiveTrack' in the Malling sub-area. The feasibility of this should be examined further.

Enhance

The Tonbridge School Track should complete the requirements for achieving 'TrackMark' status.

The options for securing existing informal outdoor facilities capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

Protect

Protecting existing informal outdoor facilities through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality, and accessibility.

Provide

A range of informal outdoor facilities will be required to meet the needs of the additional population arising from housing developments.

Enhance

Enhancing existing informal outdoor facilities capacity by ensuring they receive regular maintenance, and improvements will be key to preserving current provision.

The Key Strategic Actions for each sport are set out in Annex 3 and the Individual Site-Specific Actions Annex 4 to this SPD.

4. Indoor Sports Facility Strategy

The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy (2025) provides information on the current provision for:

- Multi-use sports halls (including consideration of specific requirements for gymnastics).
- Competition and leisure swimming pools including diving facilities.
- Health and fitness facilities.
- Squash courts.
- Indoor tennis facilities.
- Indoor bowls facilities.

The study assessed the supply and demand for the above facilities and undertook an audit of the facilities. As with the PPOSS the borough has been divided into sub areas shown in Table 5 above.

To supplement and complement the strategic assessment, TMBC commissioned an additional assessment of sports hall and swimming pool needs using the Sport England Facilities Planning Model (FPM) spatial modelling tool. The FPM study is a quantitative, accessibility and spatial assessment of the supply, demand and access to sports halls and swimming pools in the borough.

The sports hall modelling included three modelling 'runs':

- A baseline assessment of provision in 2023.
- A forward assessment of demand for sports halls and their distribution, based on the projected changes in population including residential development between 2023 and 2041.
- An assessment of a reduction in supply at The Angel Centre in meeting the demand for sports halls and their distribution up to 2041, given its potential role in town centre redevelopment.

The swimming pool modelling included two modelling runs:

- A baseline assessment of provision in 2023.
- A forward assessment of demand for swimming pools and their distribution, based on the projected changes in population including residential development between 2023 and 2041.

The Angel Centre - Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is currently considering options for the reprovision of facilities currently provided at the Angel Centre in Tonbridge. This is in the wider context of regeneration proposals for the town centre. The facility was built in 1982, has a sub-optimal layout and requires major refurbishment, in particular:

- The boilers need replacing.
- The centre is not watertight.

- The drains are in poor condition.
- The Medway Hall floor is in poor condition.

No structural or condition surveys have been carried out, but it is estimated that around £2 million of work is required on mechanical and electrical services and structural repairs. This expenditure would be remedial and would not expand the range of leisure opportunities available to customers.

The recommendations for the Indoor Sports Facility strategy are:

Protect

Recommendation 1: Safeguarding existing provision - The Tonbridge and Malling Sports Facilities Strategy (SFS) comprises a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for sports facilities in the borough. The Assessment has identified a need for all current facilities to be retained, based on the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of sport in the borough both now and in the future. It is therefore recommended that existing planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites, based upon the evidence in the SFS.

Recommendation 2: Community access to education sports facilities - A significant proportion of some types of sports facility (sports halls) in Tonbridge and Malling are located on school sites. Most of these facilities are not subject to formal Community Use Agreements and external use could, therefore in theory be withdrawn at any time. Some education sports facilities have no community use at all at present, which does not optimise the use of public resources. Furthermore, the management arrangements for many school sports facilities with external use are not conducive to maximising that use. It is therefore recommended that:

- Efforts are made to secure formal Community Use Agreements at existing education sports facilities.
- Community Use Agreements become a standard condition of planning consent at all new education sports facilities, along with a design and specification that is consistent with maximising school and community use.
- Community Use Agreements become a standard condition of receiving funding from developer contributions to improve or enhance the capacity of existing sports facilities on education sites, to meet the additional demand arising from housing developments.
- Support be offered to schools with their community use management arrangements, including funding for community access improvements if feasible.

Enhance

Recommendation 3: Capacity improvements - Some of the current demand for sports facilities in Tonbridge and Malling can be accommodated through enhancements to existing facilities that will facilitate extra usage at existing sites. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling SFS be used as the basis for prioritising facilities enhancements that will help to alleviate the current identified and future projected deficits.

Recommendation 4: Developer contributions (enhancements) - Some of the additional demand that will arise from future housing development and the related population growth in Tonbridge and Malling, can be accommodated through enhancements to existing sports facilities. It is therefore recommended that:

- The action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling SFS be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments.
- An appropriate level of financial contributions should then be sought under Section 106, using Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator tool, to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements. This has been applied to calculate the future need for, and related costs of, additional sports halls, swimming pools, and indoor bowls facilities in this strategy.

Provide

Recommendation 6: New sports facilities - The Tonbridge and Malling SFS consider two population growth scenarios:

- The ONS 2018 sub-national population projections forecast a population of 152,859 by 2041, an increase of 20,659 (or 15.6%).
- A projection based on assessed housing needs predicts a population of 168,864 by 2041, an increase of 36,664 (or 27.7%).

Whilst spare capacity in most types of sports facility can meet current and future needs to 2041, subject to maintaining the quantity quality and accessibility of existing provision, specific shortfalls identified in the Tonbridge and Malling SFS by an evidence-based needs assessment based upon the above projections, that would best be met through new provision include:

Table 7: Future needs

Facility type	Current Needs	Future needs (lower)	Future needs (higher)
Sports halls	All needs met subject to re-provision of the Angel Sports Centre sports hall	All needs met subject to re-provision of the Angel Sports Centre sports hall	All needs met subject to re-provision of the Angel Sports Centre sports hall
Swimming pools	All needs met with some programming and opening times refinements	All needs met by current spare capacity	All needs met by current spare capacity
Health and fitness	All needs met	All needs met by current spare capacity	42 extra fitness stations
Squash courts	All needs met	Additional needs met by current spare capacity	Additional needs met by current spare capacity
Indoor tennis courts	All needs met	Additional needs met by current spare capacity	Additional needs met by current spare capacity
Indoor bowls	All needs met	Additional needs met by current spare capacity	Additional needs met by current spare capacity
Gymnastics facilities	Additional capacity needed	New provision in the Mallings sub-area or extension to the existing specialist facility	New provision or extension to the existing specialist facility

Recommendation 7: Developer contributions (new provision) - Some of the additional demand arising from future housing development in Tonbridge and Malling can be accommodated through the provision of new sports facilities. It is therefore recommended that:

- The action plan in the Tonbridge and Malling SFS be used as the basis for determining new facility provision that demonstrably relates to the scale and location of specific developments.
- An appropriate level of financial contributions should then be sought under Section 106, using Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator tool, to cover the capital and revenue implications of providing the facilities. This has been applied to calculate the future need for, and related costs of, additional sports halls, swimming pools, and indoor bowls facilities in this strategy.

Annex 5 provides the Indoor Sports Facility Strategies Key Specific Actions and Annex 6 provides the Indoor Sports Facilities Individual Site-Specific Actions.

5. Determining Open Space and Sports Provision from New Residential Development

In this section the process to assess whether provision for open space, playing pitches and/or indoor built sport facilities should be required for the proposed development is set out. This could take the form of providing or contributing to new provision (either on the development site or off-site) or contributing to the maintenance/improvement of existing sites/facilities.

Open Space Study

Section 106 developer contributions will be applied to all proposals of 5 residential units or above (Net) as set out in TMBC Managing Development in the Environment Development Plan Document (Adopted April 2010). A sequential approach will be pursued by the Council to the provision of open space. Firstly, on-site provision will be sought in accordance with the adopted standards set out in Table 2 of this Guidance Note, where the site is in an area of quantitative deficiency, i.e. there is a need for additional open space.

Where this is not practicable, new off-site open space provision will be sought within the relevant accessibility threshold for the category of open space in accordance with the adopted standards. If it is not practicable to achieve this, or if there are no deficiencies in quantity of certain forms of open space provision, developer contributions will be sought to enhance the quality of existing provision within the relevant accessibility threshold, with priority given to those sites listed in Annex 1 Open Space to be Protected and Enhanced, although regard should also be paid to any relevant projects listed in the Council's Capital Plan.

If, after going through the previous steps, it is evident that deficiencies in quality cannot be met within the relevant accessibility threshold, contributions will be sought to enhance the quality of open spaces that fall beyond the outer limit of the relevant accessibility threshold but still reasonably accessible to the proposed development. The contributions will be spent on enhancing their quality in terms of their recreational, biodiversity, amenity, and/or historic value.

The following 4 steps will be used in determining planning applications involving the requirement for open space:

Step 1 - Determine the open space requirement resulting from the development based on the recommended quantity standards. The following forms of development will generate an open space requirement:

- Open market housing
- Affordable housing (including proposals for 100% affordable housing)
- Permanent mobile homes and static caravans
- Substitution house types where the number of bedrooms is different (subject to re-calculation)

Proposals for sheltered housing may generate an open space requirement, depending on the type of accommodation and the characteristics of residents. They will be considered on their own merits but in all cases, they will not generate a requirement for children's play space.

The following forms of development **will not** generate an open space requirement:

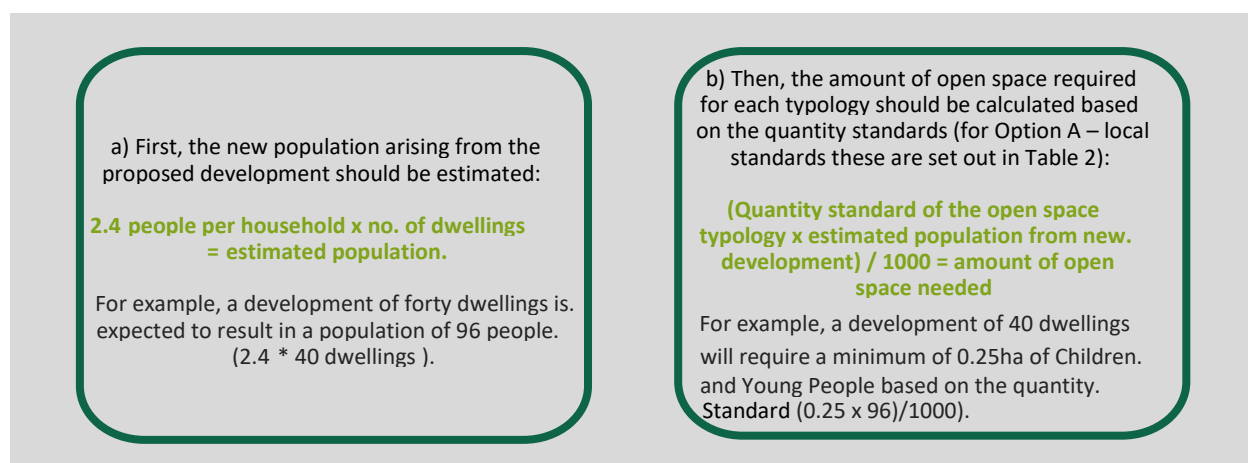
- Extensions to dwellings
- Nursing homes
- Substitution house types where the number of bedrooms remains the same.

Step 2 – Consider whether the size of the development warrants onsite provision as per table 4? If certain typologies are not warranted, consider increasing the size of other typologies considering the size and location of the development and proximity to other open spaces.

Step 3 – If on site provision is not suitable or appropriate, determine which sites could benefit most from an offsite contribution considering recommendations set out in the Open Space Strategy 2025.

Step 4 - Calculate the financial offsite contribution.

The additional pressure on open spaces arising from demand from new development will be calculated according to the following two steps, based on a standard occupancy rate.



How is Maintenance to be included in the calculations ?

The cost of open space maintenance is dependent on a number of different elements and can only be calculated on a case-by-case basis. The cost is expected to cover a period of 20 years.

It is important that for a cost to be provided, the applicant provides as much information as possible regarding the proposed open space. Information on the following items should be provided:

- Amount of grass
- Number of trees
- Number and type of bins.
- Number and type of gates.
- Length of and size of hedges and fencing

- Number and type of signage.
- Type and length of footpath
- Number and type of seating.
- Play area – number and type of equipment.
- Any planting areas

Where applications are in outline and the details of the open space are not yet known, the S106 will include a clause so that the figure is finalised at the reserved matters stage.

Pooling of Contributions - Off-site contributions may be pooled and subsequently allocated to a relevant facility within the immediate area or settlement catchment. Pooling may take place if the level of open space generated by the development proposal will have some impact but not sufficient to justify the need for a discrete piece of infrastructure.

Adoption of open spaces and the use of management companies

The Council cannot dictate who adopts or maintains open space or pitch assets and there are several options available to the developer/applicant including the Borough Council, the Parish Council, an appropriate community association, or a private management company.

The most important objective is that facilities are made available and that the maintenance of the facilities is effectively and permanently secured at the point of decision making, with such details agreed and specified in a legal agreement.

Where an application is in outline and the details are not yet known, options for the future maintenance will be set out in a legal agreement, with the exact details to be set out with the reserved matters application.

For those applications where on-site provision is to be provided, regardless of who is to be responsible for the maintenance of the open space, the applicant/developer will be required to seek agreement of the Council that the provision has been completed to the required quality standard.

In those situations where the open space will be signed over to a management company, the applicant/developer or management company must provide a copy of the management plan to TMBC for agreement. Where appropriate consultation on the management plan will take place. Management Plans should include:

- Name and Contact of Management Company
- Arrangements for the management group set up including terms of reference etc.
- Full maintenance schedule for each element of the open space
- Arrangements for resident liaison e.g. a resident association set up or use of a liaison officer.

In those situations where a management company will be the responsible party, paid for by a service charge, it is vital that home purchasers are made aware of the responsibility for making any ongoing financial contributions towards the maintenance of playspace and recreational areas. This information will be obtained via the home purchasers' solicitor during the conveyancing process.

In determining contributions, the TMBC S106 Calculator for open space and other sports not covered by the Playing Pitch or Indoor Sports Calculator should be used.

Calculating the Cost of Playing Pitches

The use of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator [Playing Pitch Calculator | Sport England](#) to calculate planning contributions for playing pitches should be used. The calculator estimates the demand arising from a proposed development and calculates the costs of providing the required number of pitches to meet the demand. The Playing Pitch Calculator will need to be accessed via TMBC Planning Officers.

It considers demand for football, rugby, hockey, and cricket but excludes demand for tennis courts, netball, courts, baseball pitches, bowling greens, and athletics tracks.

Using the team data for football, rugby, hockey and cricket from the Playing Pitch Strategy (2025), the calculator estimates capital cost for grass and artificial pitches, lifecycle cost, and ancillary facilities costs such as changing rooms. This would be a simpler approach which harvests the findings from the assessment report built onto the calculator and would not need to be reviewed yearly based on inflation due to the calculator being updated by Sport England based on their facility cost guidance.

Once a planning application is received, the demand based on the number of dwellings proposed will be entered onto the calculator to estimate the level of contributions.

The new population arising from the proposed development will be estimated based on the number of dwellings proposed multiplied by the average of 2.4 person per dwelling.

New development demand for tennis courts / netball courts can be calculated by using Sport England Sports Facility Calculator. See Indoor Sports Facilities cost calculations below.

For baseball pitches, athletics tracks and netball courts it is advised to use the Fields In Trust Calculator: [Green space calculator | Fields in Trust](#) as relevant to 'Courts, greens, tracks and trails. This will set out what a development should provide in terms of hectares of provision, which will allow a contribution of costs to be identified for either on or off site provision by using the Sport England Facility Cost Guidance [Facility Costs 3Q2024](#).

For informal sports, the quantity standard is identified in Table 1. The facility cost element can be provided by using Sport England Facility Cost Guidance above.

Calculating the cost of Indoor sports Facilities

The Sport England Built Sport Facilities Calculator [Sports Facility Calculator | Sport England](#) will be used to calculate development contributions to either combine/ pool resources for the provision of a new sports hall or swimming pool, or for the maintenance or improvements of existing facilities in the Borough.

As for the Playing Pitch Calculator above, once a planning application is received, the new demand based on the number of dwellings proposed will be entered onto the calculator to estimate the contribution.

The new population is estimated based on the number of dwellings proposed multiplied by the average of 2.4 person per dwelling. As for the Playing Pitch Calculator, there will be no need to review annually this figure for inflation as the calculator considers facility costs which are updated every quarter by Sport England.

An example of the use of the Sport England Built Facility Calculator and Playing Pitch Calculator is provided via the following hyper link.

The Built Facility Calculator has been added to by the Local Authority to provide for fitness gyms, fitness space and village and community halls [Microsoft Word - Appendix C Calculation examples](#)

To use the Green Space Calculator for netball courts, the scale of the development i.e. number of residential units x the average occupancy is used to calculate the number of courts needed.

6. Design Principles and Stewardship

All developments should demonstrate consideration of active design principles as set out by Sport England. Active Design sets out how the design of our environments can help people to lead more physically active and healthy lives – it's about helping to create environments [Active Design | Sport England](#). The key relevant principles are:

- 1 Activity for all - Neighbourhoods, facilities and open spaces should be accessible to all users and should support sport and physical activity across all ages.
- 2 Walkable communities - Homes, schools, shops, community facilities, workplaces, open spaces, and sports facilities should be within easy reach of each other.
- 3 Connected walking & cycling routes - All destinations should be connected by a direct, legible, and integrated network of walking and cycling routes. Routes must be safe, well lit, overlooked, welcoming, well-maintained, durable, and clearly signposted. Active travel (walking and cycling) should be prioritised over other modes of transport.
- 4 Co-location of community facilities - The co-location and concentration of retail, community and associated uses to support linked trips should be promoted. A mix of land uses and activities should be promoted that avoid the uniform zoning of large areas to single uses.
- 5 Network of multifunctional open space - A network of multifunctional open space should be created across all communities to support a range of activities including sport, recreation and play plus other landscape features including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), woodland, wildlife habitat, and productive landscapes (allotments, orchards). Facilities for sport, recreation and play should be of an appropriate scale and positioned in prominent locations.
- 6 High quality streets and spaces - Flexible and durable high-quality streets and public spaces should be promoted, employing high quality durable materials, street furniture, and signage.
- 7 Appropriate infrastructure - Supporting infrastructure to enable sport and physical activity to take place should be provided across all contexts including workplaces, sports facilities, and public space, to facilitate all forms of activity.
- 8 Active buildings - The internal and external layout, design and use of buildings should promote opportunities for physical activity.
- 9 Maintaining high-quality flexible spaces - Spaces and facilities should be effectively maintained and managed to support physical activity. These places should be monitored to understand how they are used, and flexible so that they can be adapted as needed.
- 10 Activating spaces - The provision of spaces and facilities which can help to improve physical activity should be supported by a commitment to activate them, encouraging people to be more physically active and increasing the awareness of activity opportunities within a community.

In addition, Sport England provide other design and planning guidance that can be obtained her. [Facilities and planning | Sport England](#).

The [National Design Guide](#) provides useful guidance on well-designed natural environment and public spaces. For example, it sets out that well-designed places for nature:

- Integrate existing and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place, biodiversity, and water management, and addresses climate change mitigation and resilience.
- Prioritise nature so that diverse ecosystems can flourish to ensure a healthy natural environment that supports and enhances biodiversity.
- Provide attractive open spaces in locations that are easy to access, with activities for all to enjoy, such as play, food production, recreation, and sport, to encourage physical activity and promote health, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

Also, well-designated public spaces:

- Include well-located public spaces that support a wide variety of activities and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and civic inclusion.
- Have a hierarchy of spaces that range from large and strategic to small and local spaces, including parks, squares, greens, and pocket parks.
- Have public spaces that feel safe, secure, and attractive for all to use; and
- Have trees and other planting within public spaces for people to enjoy, whilst also providing shading, and air quality and climate change mitigation.

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework includes a [Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide](#) with guidance on the building block of Green Infrastructure including green spaces and how to design these spaces to derive multiple functions or benefits and on how to apply the Green Infrastructure standards in various area types.

Design guidelines available on the [Make Space For Girls](#) website should also be taken into consideration to design open spaces and parks that are attractive and feel safe for teenage girls.

In addition, an Urban Greening Factor [The Urban Greening Factor and New Developments - urbanspec](#) has also been developed by Natural England. This is a voluntary tool which aims to enhance the delivery of green infrastructure and improve the amount of greening in towns. The tool sets out a target score for a minimum proportion of greening for a particular site. In general, a factor of 0.4 is recommended for residential sites and a factor of 0.3 is advised for commercial sites. The calculation attributes different weights to different types of surface cover.

There are a number of council policies to be considered:

- Lighting Policy DC5 of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan states that proposals for new leisure facilities will be permitted subject to there being no unacceptable adverse impacts arising from lighting.
- Policy CP2 (Sustainable Transport) of the Council's Core Strategy seeks to ensure that new developments are well located relative to public transport links, provide a choice of transport modes, are compatible with the character and capacity of the highway network, provide for any necessary enhancements to the safety of the highway network and ensure accessibility for all.

- Policy SQ8 (Road Safety) of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan comments that development proposals will only be permitted where they would not significantly harm highway safety and where they comply with parking standards.
- Parking and cycle parking - maximum standards are set out within Kent County Council guidance, within the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (Supplementary Planning Guidance 3 and 4) and with other relevant guidance.
- Electric Vehicle charging facilities proposed should be provided in accordance with the relevant building requirements.
- Any planning proposed initiatives would be considered to minimise the need to travel by private car and would promote sustainable travel modes as required by the provisions of the NPPF. The submission of a Travel Plan pursuant to the approved Framework Travel Plan will need to be secured.
- Policy CP10 (Flood Protection) of the Council's Core Strategy ultimately seeks to reduce flood risk and Policy CC3 (Adaptation - Sustainable Drainage) of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan comments that development proposals will not be permitted unless they incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) appropriate to the local ground water and soil conditions, local drainage regimes and in accordance with the Groundwater Regulations.
- Policy NE2 (Habitat Networks) of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan sets out that biodiversity of the borough and in particular priority habitats, species and features, will be protected, conserved, and enhanced. The restoration and creation of new habitats will be pursued and promoted.
- Policy NE3 (Impact of Development on Local Biodiversity) of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan comments that development that would adversely affect biodiversity or the value of wildlife habitats across the borough will only be permitted if appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures are provided which would result in overall enhancement.
- Policy NE4 (Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland) of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan seeks to retain and where possible enhance tree and hedgerow coverage along with preserving ancient woodland.
- Policy SQ6 (Noise) of the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document requires proposals to demonstrate that noise levels are appropriate for the proposed use and respect the surroundings. The policy also identifies that proposals for built development should incorporate design measures such that internal noise levels are in accordance with relevant guidance.
- Policy SQ4 of the Council's Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document relates to air quality and sets out that development will only be permitted where the following criteria are met: (a) the proposed use does not result in a significant deterioration of the air quality of the area, either individually or cumulatively with other proposals or existing uses in the vicinity; (b) proposals would not result in the circumstances that would lead to the creation of a new Air Quality Management Area; (c) proximity to existing potentially air polluting uses will not have a harmful effect on the proposed use; and (d) there is no impact on the air quality of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of nature conservation interest or appropriate mitigation is proposed to alleviate any such impact.
- Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) of the Council's Core Strategy refers to the need for 10% of energy consumption to be generated on-site from alternative energy sources for proposed developments. Policy CC1 (Mitigation - Sustainable Design) of the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document discusses the requirement for proposed developments to incorporate passive design

measure into the design to reduce energy demand. Further noting how developments should be configured, type of ventilation and the use of green roofs to ensure a reduction in energy demand.

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Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Gibson Building

Gibson Drive

Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent

ME19 4LZ

Cabinet

06 January 2026

Part 1 - Public

Executive Non-key Decision



Cabinet Member	Matthew Boughton – Leader of the Council; and Martin Coffin - Deputy Leader; and Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical;
Responsible Officer	Paul Worden – Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer;
Report Author	Paul Worden – Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer

Reserves Review

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 As part of the Annual Service Delivery Plan 13.8 the Head of Finance is charged with

*Review earmarked reserves with a view to free up funding to assist with delivery of priority capital projects. (subject to formal approval) with Officer review to be undertaken by **October 2025** with report to Cabinet by **November 2025**.*

- 1.2 This report gives the outcome of that review.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 The review and potential reallocation of resources will assist with the achievement of Corporate priorities.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to **approve** the transfers from reserves detailed in paragraph 5.4 and **[Annex 1]**.
- 3.2 Cabinet are asked to **approve** the transfers from reserves detailed in paragraph 7.2.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The Council currently holds 23 reserves totalling £39.4m for various purposes with current balances of between £11m (General Revenue) and £7k (Democratic Representation).
- 4.2 These reserves can be broadly classified into three categories
- General - These are reserves that have no specific purpose
 - Risk - These are reserves that have been set up for contingent purposes.
 - Specific - These are reserves that have been established for specific projects.
- 4.3 Using the current MTFS and allowing for additional withdrawals agreed by members the balance on the reserves will reduce to £29m by the assumed date of re-organisation in April 2028. This does not allow for the use of reserves for the 'New Angel' post RIBA stage 2 but if the project was to continue the reserves would reduce by a further £8.75m to £20.2m. It should also be noted that the General Revenue Reserve (GRR) would also require a further £3.3 million in 2028/29, primarily as a result of increased costs on the Waste Contract and assumed reductions in Government Funding, reducing the balance to £17.9m.
- 4.4 This includes below zero balances in respect of Building Repairs and Planning, both have higher expenditure levels than previously anticipated and examination of these areas are required in more detail to maintain a positive balance.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 In examining the balances held, the Head of Finance has discussed the reserves with individual services to assess any requirements for the need for balances in the next few years.
- 5.2 Where the service and Head of Finance are in agreement, any excess funds have either been released to the General Revenue Reserve or transferred to a more appropriate reserve.
- 5.3 Details of the proposal have been shown in **[Annex 1]**, the result is a transfer of £2.1m to the General Revenue Reserve and a further £100,000 between already established reserves.
- 5.4 The main changes to the reserves are as follows;
- Property and Multi Asset Reserve - The reserve was established to assist with any losses that may have arisen from the capital value of the balances held. In recent years two of the investment companies have returned funds

to the Council and the losses have remained stable. The proposal is that the balance held will equate to the current capital losses shown and a contingent balance. It is felt that allowing for this balance £1.25m could be released for other purposes.

- **Business Rates Retention Reserve** – This reserve was established to hold any gains that we made under the Business Rates Retention Scheme established in 2013. The balance held includes funds used for economic regeneration purposes and a contingent sum to cover losses if the Council falls into what is known as a safety net position. Following the last two Business Rates revaluations and the increased development of businesses within the Borough, the Council is now above the Government set baseline. It is felt that the remaining contingency could be reduced or fully released up to a maximum of £400,000.
- **Leisure Trust Reserve** – This reserve was established upon the creation of the Leisure Trust in 2013 to cover short term losses that could have occurred within the Trust. Following discussions with the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services, it is felt that the Trust are well established, and losses are now unlikely, enabling the release of the remaining £200,000 held within the reserve.
- **Invest to Save** – It is proposed that the balance is transferred to the Transformation Reserve to assist with further projects within the Council.
- **Elections Reserve** – This reserve has been established to smooth the effect of the Borough Council elections held every 4 years, contributing £35,000 per annum to the reserve and then withdrawing the actual costs when the election is held. Following discussions with the Elections Manager it is felt that the contribution could be reduced to £30,000 per annum and the balance reduced by £50,000 to allow sufficient funds for any elections that are due in the next few years.
- **Budget Stabilisation Reserve** – This reserve was primarily established using additional funds awarded from Covid and Funding Guarantee arrangements over recent years. These funds were subsequently used to pay for the costs associated with the utility guarantee for the Leisure Trust, market supplements and the costs associated with additional costs of finance staffing associated with the monitoring of large scale projects being undertaken by the Council. In the case of the Leisure Trust Utility payments, it is felt that this is no longer required as a result in the changes in market and inflation conditions. Market Supplements although were agreed for a three year period now form part of the base budget within the MTFS from 2026/27 onwards. This leaves the commitment in respect of staffing, depending on the members thoughts and the timing of Local Government Reorganisation, the Head of Finance believes that a sum of £200,000 could be released back to the General Revenue Reserve.

- Transformation Reserve – there are three elements to this reserve, the first arises from New Burdens awards received for the payment of administrative and software arrangements relating to Revenues and Benefits arising from changes to discounts and Covid arrangements that did not cost the full grant allocation. The second is Corporate Transformation where changes to certain areas of process is required to assist with improved digital interface both externally to the public and internally between officers. The final element relates to Local Government Reorganisation, a small balance of £200,000 was allocated at the end of the 2024/25 financial year to assist with staffing transition from the current position to the one due to be announced in 2026.
- Other changes – Where there are small balances held it is proposed that these are released to the General Revenue Reserve and any future costs be funded from this balance.

5.5 Following these transfers the General Revenue Reserve will hold a balance of £11.25m

6 Maintaining Reserve Balances

- 6.1 At the present time the council only has one stipulation on the levels of balances held, this comes from the MTFS and states that the General Revenue Reserve balance should be at least £3m at the end of the 10 year MTFS period and cannot fall below £2m at any year end. That being said, the Head of Finance, as the Section 151 Officer, should make provision within the reserves to ensure that planned expenditure is met and the reserve does not fall into a negative position.
- 6.2 Although the transfer back to the General Revenue Reserve is welcome, the authority is facing pressures on several other reserves, such as Building Repairs, Local Plan, Planning Appeals and funds held to support the Council's transition for Local Government Reorganisation.
- 6.3 Building Repairs – The maintenance of Council owned assets are a key priority to maintain services. Since Covid the costs of both labour and building supplies have significantly increased to the point where the previously standard contribution of £750,000 per annum, rising to £820,000 to allow for the costs of Council owned Homelessness Properties will not be sufficient and the reserve is expected to fall into a negative position. Whilst there will always be slippage between years, a one off injection of funds should prevent the negative position occurring.
- 6.4 Local Plan – The Council is currently undertaking Regulation 18 consultation on the local plan. The MTFS currently has a contribution of £160,000 per annum to provide the plan, however the estimated costs to provide full consultation and approval of the plan would require a further estimated £300,000 to £350,000 by the time the plan is implemented in 2028.

- 6.5 Planning Appeals – In the absence of a formally agreed local plan the council remains open to appeal challenge in relation to planning applications rejected by officers and members. The current budget includes an annual sum of £100,000 to deal with what are considered minor application appeals, the council also holds a small reserve in respect of the Council cost of major application appeals, a recent report to members has highlighted this issue and requested an additional sum to improve the ability to finance the council's defence on appeals lodged. There is no provision for the award of costs against the Council contained within the current budget or reserves.
- 6.6 Local Government Reorganisation – This has been highlighted by the Council's External Auditors that the costs of preparation for Local Government Reorganisation can be significant. Whilst most costs are likely to fall to the Shadow and New Unitary Authority, both the Chief Executive and Head of Finance consider that the current balance needs to be increased to assist our staff to improve their knowledge and chances for employment post reorganisation. In addition, there is likely to be a need to 'backfill' posts who are working on LGR projects in order to keep business as usual ongoing. Considering this other Districts are being canvassed to assess their levels of funding they consider necessary, but a balance in the order of £2m would not be considered excessive.

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 Firstly, Cabinet should consider the proposed transferred back to the General Revenue Reserve. They then need to consider the potential uses for these funds given the information provided above.
- 7.2 The Head of Finance is suggesting the transfers from the General Revenue Reserve to the following reserves

To	Transfer Value £000's
Angel Centre Build Costs	1,000
Building Repairs	250
Local Plan	350
Transformation – Local Government Reorganisation	400
Total	2,000

- 7.3 This will leave an estimated balance of £9.25m in the General Revenue Reserve on 31st March 2028 based upon the current MTFs projections. Cabinet should note that an estimated £3.5m is expected to be withdrawn from the General Revenue Reserve in 2028/29 to cover various revenue expenditure.

8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

8.1 Covered within this report

9 Risk Assessment

9.1 The Council is required to hold adequate reserves for major expenditure issues that may arise.

10 Legal Implications

10.1 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Financial Officer (in our case the Head of Finance) when making the statutory calculations required to determine its council tax to report to an authority, on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides. These changes will be reflected in the statement presented to members in February 2026.

11 Consultation and Communications

11.1 None required.

12 Implementation

12.1 If approved the changes will be reflected in the estimates presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2026.

13 Cross Cutting Issues

13.1 None.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - Reserves Analysis

Description	Directorate	Purpose of Reserve	RAG Rating	Actual Balance as at 31 March 2025	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2026	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2027	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2028	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2029	Proposed Movement	£	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2028	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2029
				£	£	£	£	£			£	£
General Revenue Reserve	CORP	The Council maintain a financial cushion should something unexpected happen that leads to significant unplanned expenditure or reduced income. The General Revenue Reserve is also intrinsically linked to the objectives of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.		11,023,954	11,044,746	12,704,746	9,145,746	5,994,746	From Below	2,106,596	11,252,342	8,101,342
General Fund	DFT			1,250,000	0	0	0	0				
Revenue Reserve for Capital Schemes	CORP	Established to finance future capital expenditure.		8,117,883	2,841,883	2,793,883	2,908,883	3,663,883			3,663,883	3,663,883
Building Repairs Reserve	DCS	Established to finance general repairs and maintenance expenditure to Council owned buildings.		1,111,636	313,076	(47,774)	(351,324)	(412,524)	Additional Contribution required but should allow for slippage		(412,524)	(412,524)
Property & Multi Asset Fund Reserve	DFT	Established to recognise proceeds from the sale of Council owned assets and other funds set aside for long term investment with the aim of generating a higher rate of return.		3,250,000	3,250,000	3,250,000	3,250,000	3,250,000	Losses estimated to be in region of £1.5M allow for contingency of £0.5m therefore £1.25m could be surrendered to GRR	(1,250,000)	2,000,000	2,000,000
Earmarked Reserves												
Democratic Representation	CE/DCS	Used for Freeman/Alderman Ceremonies		6,596	6,596	6,596	6,596	6,596	Surrender to GRR	(6,596)	0	0
Special Projects	see below	Established to enhance or progress specific projects or activities within the Council.		163,660	92,660	0	0	0		0	0	0
Planning Services	DPHEH	Established to meet costs in respect of planning services related work including the Local Plan.		1,198,568	365,802	48,802	(307,598)	(147,598)	Additional Contribution required	0	(147,598)	(147,598)
Homelessness Reduction	DPHEH	Established to meet costs associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act.		1,543,650	443,650	443,650	443,650	443,650		0	443,650	443,650
Election	CE	Established to meet the costs of administering borough council elections which are held once every four years.		201,991	231,991	261,991	171,991	201,991	TMBC elections due once every 4 years reduce contribution to £30,000 per annum, excess balance to GRR?	(50,000)	151,991	151,991
Asset Review	DCS/DPHEH			27,531	27,531	27,531	27,531	27,531	Transfer to Climate Change	(27,531)	0	0
Training	DCS			143,325	143,325	143,325	143,325	143,325			143,325	143,325
Invest to Save	CORP	Established to meet costs associated with service reviews with the aim of identifying savings opportunities.		73,533	73,533	73,533	73,533	73,533	?? Transformation	(73,533)	0	0
Housing & Welfare Reform	DFT	??		109,109	109,109	109,109	109,109	109,109			109,109	109,109
Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust	DSSLTS	Established to meet obligations on the Council as part of the agreement with the		286,200	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	Contingent Sum to contribute to losses? Trf to GRR	(200,000)	0	0
Housing Assistance	DPHEH	Established to smoooth the cost of discretionary housing assistance grant funding between years.		358,350	314,000	268,763	268,763	268,763	?? Uses a RECS for DFG		268,763	268,763
Business Rates Retention Scheme	see below	Established, in the main, to take account of accounting arrangements.		1,471,384	543,184	543,184	543,184	543,184		(400,000)	143,184	143,184
Public Health	DPHEH			17,283	17,283	17,283	17,283	17,283	Clarification needed?		17,283	17,283
Tree Safety	DSSLTS			25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	To offset overspend on safety Budget		25,000	25,000
Regeneration of Tonbridge	CORP	Established to fund the Regeneration of the Town Centre and the assets within it. This includes funding set aside for the new		4,315,761	10,537,461	1,709,161	1,659,411	1,659,411		0	1,659,411	1,659,411
Transformation (Revs & Bens, Finance)	DFT	Established to fund initiatives that deliver operational efficiencies.		1,168,798	1,035,948	994,348	951,948	951,948	See below	73,533	1,025,481	1,025,481
Climate Change	CE			640,951	399,951	399,951	399,951	399,951		27,531	427,482	427,482
Budget Stabilisation	DFT	Established to manage risk and or assist in meeting future savings and transformation contributions.		2,868,693	412,543	368,643	323,843	323,843	Being used to pay for posts	(200,000)	123,843	123,843
				14,620,383	14,979,567	5,640,870	5,057,520	5,247,520		(856,596)	4,390,924	4,390,924
GRAND TOTAL				39,373,856	32,429,272	24,341,725	20,010,825	17,743,625		0	20,894,625	17,743,625

Description	Directorate	Purpose of Reserve	RAG Rating	Actual Balance as at 31 March 2025	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2026	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2027	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2028	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2029	Proposed Movement	£	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2028	Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2029	
				£	£	£	£	£			£	£	
Analysis of Special Projects Reserve													
Housing Survey	DPHEH	<div></div>	<div></div>	8,997	8,997	0	0	0	Housing Survey required 2026/27	0			
Minimum Energy Efficiency Project	DPHEH			38,500	38,500	0	0	0	Housing Survey required 2026/27	0			
Domestic Abuse	DCS			78,302	29,102	0	0	0		0			
Peer Review	CE			37,861	16,061	0	0	0		0			
				163,660	92,660	0	0	0		0			
Analysis of Planning Services Reserve													
Local Plan	DPHEH	<div></div>	<div></div>	936,590	240,240	(76,760)	(433,160)	(273,160)	TFr to Local Plan	15,673			
Green Belt Funding				70,000	0	0	0	0			0		
Planning Enforcement Fund				15,889	15,889	15,889	15,889	15,889					
Borough Green Gardens				66,416	0	0	0	0					
Hildenborough Neighbourhood Area Plan				5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000					
Planning Appeals		<div></div>	<div></div>	89,000	89,000	89,000	89,000	89,000	TFr to Local Plan				
Biodiversity Net Gain				15,673	15,673	15,673	15,673	15,673		(15,673)			
				1,198,568	365,802	48,802	(307,598)	(147,598)		0			
Analysis of Homelessness Reserve													
Rough Sleeping Initiative	DPHEH	<div></div>	<div></div>	128,281	128,281	128,281	128,281	128,281	Tfr to Single pot to boost Homelessness				
Next Steps Accommodation Programme				36,214	36,214	36,214	36,214	36,214					
Homelessness Prevention Grant				212,779	212,779	212,779	212,779	212,779					
Temp Accomodation - Modular Homes				1,100,000	0	0	0	0					
Ex-Offenders Accommodation Grant				28,740	28,740	28,740	28,740	28,740					
Home Office Grant				29,750	29,750	29,750	29,750	29,750					
Domestic Abuse Contribution				5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000					
BHAL Insurance Rebate				2,886	2,886	2,886	2,886	2,886					
				1,543,650	406,014	406,014	406,014	406,014			0		
Analysis of Business Rates Retention Sch Res													
Business Rates Retention Scheme	DFT	<div></div>	<div></div>	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	Safety net for 2 years? GRR	(400,000)			
Kent BR Pool Growth Fund	CE/DFT			958,895	56,910	56,910	56,910	56,910	Ec Dev				
1819 Kent & Medway BR Pilot Growth Fund	CE/DFT			112,489	86,274	86,274	86,274	86,274	Ec Dev				
				1,471,384	543,184	543,184	543,184	543,184		(400,000)			
Analysis of Tonbridge Town Centre Reserve													
Town Centre Manager (3 years)	R126	<div></div>	<div></div>	207,950	129,650	51,350	1,600	1,600	New Angel Centre - Borrowing from 27/28				
Angel Centre Build Costs	R127			2,450,000	8,750,000	0	0	0					
Tonbridge Farm	R128			483,443	483,443	483,443	483,443	483,443					
Alliance				(72,100)	0	0	0	0					
Area East of High Street	R129			1,246,468	1,174,368	1,174,368	1,174,368	1,174,368					
		4,315,761	10,537,461	1,709,161	1,659,411	1,659,411		0					
Transformation Reserve													
Finance and Transformation (Digital)	DFT	<div></div>	<div></div>	385,928	320,028	278,428	236,028	236,028	This pays for Graduate Trainee - Ringfenced Sums Adelante				
Corporate Issues	Corp			582,870	515,920	515,920	515,920	515,920		73,533			
Local Government Review	Corp			200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000					
				1,168,798	1,035,948	994,348	951,948	951,948		73,533			

PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE – REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL’S PLANNING SERVICE

Item HP 25/52 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 2 December 2025

Careful consideration was given to the report of the Planning Advisory Service in respect of the Borough Council’s planning service (attached at Annex 1). A number of recommendations had been made and proposed actions, timescales and ownership were set out in the Action Plan (attached at Annex 3).

Members welcomed the views of the Planning Advisory Service, recognised the importance of maintaining an effective working relationship between Officers and Cllrs and improving communication, supported consideration of heritage, design and landscape as part of a wider service review and noted that validation of planning applications would be formally monitored as a Key Performance Indicator from 2026/27. Further detail was requested in respect of planning appeal statistics and these would be provided out of meeting.

Particular reference was made to recommendations in respect of rebuilding member-officer relationships and the pre-application service, as detailed in R3 and R5 of the Action Plan (Annex 3) and on the grounds of improving engagement and communication with Members the Chair proposed that these be amended to include:

- (i) Area Planning Chairs and Vice-Chairs; and
- (ii) the Cabinet Member for Planning and Chair of Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee respectively.

These were seconded by Cllrs Hood and Thornewell respectively and supported unanimously.

The Chair proposed, Cllr Dalton seconded and it was

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the contents of the Planning Advisory Service Review report, including the recommendations for action, be noted and commended to Cabinet;
- (2) subject to the amendments set out at (i) and (ii) above, the proposed Action Plan (Annex 3) for delivering on the Planning Advisory Service Review recommendations be endorsed and commended to Cabinet for adoption;
- (3) the proposed timescales in the Action Plan be noted and commended to Cabinet; and
- (4) an update on progress on the Action Plan be reported to the May meeting of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

02 December 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Cabinet - Non-key Decision



Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning
Responsible Officer	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health;
Report Author	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health

Planning Advisory Service - Review of the Council's Planning Service

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report presents the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review report to Members for approval along with an action plan for delivering on the recommendations of the review.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 By having an external service review carried out, the Planning Service has the opportunity to build on existing good practice and to develop more efficient processes and more effective working practices.

3 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- 3.1 NOTE the contents of the Planning Advisory Service Review Report including the recommendations for action and RECOMMEND to Cabinet that they endorse this report.
- 3.2 ENDORSE the proposed action plan for delivering on the PAS Review recommendations and RECOMMEND to Cabinet that this is adopted.
- 3.3 NOTE the proposed timescales in the action plan and AGREE that progress will be reported back to the Housing & Planning Scrutiny Select Committee in May 2026.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The undertaking of a PAS Review is an identified project in the Council's 25/26 Annual Service Delivery Plan.
- 4.2 The scope of the review was presented to Members of this committee on 20 May 2025 for endorsement.
- 4.3 The Review took place in two stages – the first was a review of operational Development Management matters, which included a desktop review of performance information and a series of workshop sessions with Development Management Officers in July 2025. A specific report on this element of the review has been provided and is appended to this report as Annex 1.
- 4.4 The second stage was the full PAS Review, which took place between Monday 15 and Thursday 18 September 2025. The PAS Review team comprised of:
 - **Councillor David Brackenbury**, North Northamptonshire Council
 - **Mark Cassidy**, Chief Officer – Planning and Climate Change, Lancaster City Council
 - **Christine Lyons**, Executive Director Growth and Partnerships, Basildon Borough Council
 - **Rachel Murtagh**, Principal Consultant, PAS
 - **Peter Ford**, Peer Review Manager and Principal Consultant, PAS
 -
- 4.5 The PAS team ran a debrief session at the end of their time at the Council to give initial feedback. The draft report was received by officers in late October and reviewed for factual issues before a final draft was issued in November. It is appended to this report as Annex 2.

5 PAS Review Action Plan

- 5.1 The PAS Review report makes a number of recommendations which have been formulated into an action plan with a proposed set of actions, timescales and ownership. This is appended to the report at Annex 3 for Members' consideration.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 The costs of the Review were met through a specific budget allocation drawn from the Transformation Reserve.
- 6.2 Any items in the action plan that require funding, either on a one off or ongoing basis, will be subject to the Council's usual business case and financial management processes.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 The issues highlighted in the PAS review report that relate to appeals percentages have been reviewed and added to the Planning Service Risk Register and to the Strategic Risk Register.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Legislative changes may be required to implement proposed changes to Planning Committee structures. The timescales for this are therefore outside of the Council's control

9 Implementation

- 9.1 As per the proposed action plan, the intention is to monitor the progress of the action plan through regular meetings between senior Members and officers. Officers will undertake operational monitoring through existing structures including team meetings and 121s.
- 9.2 The first formal review point is proposed for the meeting of this committee in May 2026.

10 Cross Cutting Issues

10.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 10.1.1 Significant impact on reducing emissions in support of carbon neutral by 2030 or enhancing the natural environment.

- 10.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

10.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 10.2.3 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people.

10.3 Others If Relevant

- Business Continuity / Resilience

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - PAS Review Annex 2 - PAS Review (Development Management operational) Annex 3 - PAS Review Action Plan



Planning Peer Challenge

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

15 – 18 September 2025

Feedback Report

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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a peer review of the Planning Service at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC). The review was organised at the request of the council by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and Local Government Association (LGA), it was undertaken on site between the 15th and 18th September 2025.
- 1.2 TMBC's Planning Service is clearly on an improvement journey and there have been significant steps made to improve the development management performance and culture and to focus on adopting a Local Plan under the current plan-making system. Even though TMBC will shortly be subject to local government reorganisation the officers and members at TMBC want the council to be in the best possible position to ensure that planning at TMBC will be a positive benefit to the new council. Possibly the most important attribute of the Planning Service is that people like working at TMBC and value the environment where they live and work.
- 1.3 TMBC has a strong senior leadership. It has a Chief Executive who has a clear vision for the area and is well regarded by staff and members. In turn, the Leader of the Council has a clear set of priorities and the Cabinet member is committed to delivering a high quality Planning Service. This strategic management is focussed and works well. The Planning Service also has a clear leadership structure with strong lines of management communication with committed managers at all levels of the service. No political party has overall control at TMBC, however, it is led by members who understand the planning system and understand the importance of a clear planning vision through the Local Plan and defensible decision-making. They also have a clear understanding of the challenge in adopting a Local Plan under the current plan-making system when there is an anti-growth / pro conservation agenda from some members and strong resistance to growth from some parts of the community.
- 1.4 One of the biggest obstacles to TMBC meeting its planning ambitions is the lack of understanding and trust between some members and officers. This is by no means a situation that affects all members and officers, but the issue is creating a culture of caution, defensiveness and upward delegation. This is played out most practically in decision-making. Officers feel the need to write very long, detailed reports to cover every issue that could be raised by members and managers feel the need to protect officers rather than delegating decisions. This behaviour is because some members feel the need to robustly scrutinise officer recommendations to identify weaknesses in their arguments and to challenge officers in a public forum such as planning committee. The peer team found that at the strongest performing councils there will be a mutual trust between officers and members where there is healthy scrutiny of officers' recommendations, but also respect for the role of the professional officer and the elected member.
- 1.5 Whilst the peer team saw clear statistical evidence that TMBC's Planning Service has improved over the last year, there remains a culture that has not fully embraced the objectives and priorities in the new Corporate Strategy. It appears that some officers do not fully understand the ambition of the council to work openly and in partnership with the local community and this could be creating a resistance to change. Compounding this there are some elements of a "them and us" culture between the plan-making and decision-making parts of the Planning Service with some officers having a lingering legacy of a *development control* rather than *development management* approach. This has led to a tendency among some staff in upward delegation rather than taking responsibility directly. The peer team would like to emphasise that this is not common to all staff, but perhaps a legacy. The overall direction of travel is positive and we are confident the culture is changing for the better.

- 1.6 The Planning Service has a stark lack of specialists and relies almost entirely on planning officers and technical support staff. There is therefore a strong dependence on external sources to advise the planning staff from outside the Planning Service and assistance is sought from councils such as Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council. This is surprising given the council's growth ambitions and the prominence given to the built and natural heritage and good design. The lack of specialists is both putting significant pressure on planning staff workloads and also fostering a more insular culture. There is a reliance on others telling staff how to respond rather than proactive, collaborative working with partners across the council and externally.
- 1.7 The Planning Service is also hindered by its processes and inefficiencies. This is mostly due to the imposition a few years ago of a new software system that officers consider is not fit for purpose. This has resulted in a disruptive return to the original Uniform IDOX system. The peer team feels that it is important that officers reflect on why such a high impact decision was taken with insufficient involvement and understanding of the requirements of the planning staff and service. In this way the same problems should not be replicated in the return to the Uniform IDOX system. However, it has become apparent that the software system is not the only problem with the development management processes as there is also a lack of consistency in approaches with some staff creating their own systems rather than adopting a service wide approach to managing their own workloads and performance. This issue is covered in greater detail in the Development Management Review (appendix 1).
- 1.8 There are some significant improvements taking place at TMBC and the Planning Service has a feel of transition taking place that is very positive and encouraging. Leadership is strong at the highest level of the council, and the Planning Service is very self-aware of its challenges as it moves towards local government reorganisation and requirements nationally to meet the Government agenda on growth. The Planning Service is in a good position to meet these challenges provided it stays focused on its key priorities and breaks away from its past weaknesses in terms of culture and anti-growth agenda.

2.0 Key Recommendations

- 2.1 The table below sets out the key recommendations from our review. Further detail on each can be found in the main body of the report.

R1	<p>Embed strategic leadership, vision and culture</p> <p>Build on the updated Corporate Strategy by working with the planning teams and members to better articulate how planning supports the ambition and long-term vision in the Corporate Plan. The involvement with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member is important in this process to foster a culture of trust, collaboration, and strategic thinking within the Planning Service.</p>
R2	<p>Enhance governance and delivery capacity</p> <p>Introduce a programme of training for middle management within the Planning Service to increase their skills and awareness in delivering the corporate ambitions of the wider council. This should provide these key individuals with better confidence to deliver the ambitions set out in the emerging Local Plan.</p>
R3	<p>Rebuild member-officer relationships</p> <p>Invest in targeted member development and joint officer-member working initiatives and training opportunities to reduce the “us vs them” dynamic. Promote shared ownership of the Local Plan and democratic decision-making. This can be carried out in different ways and could include: learning from experience discussions from appeal decisions and other contentious planning decisions; a joint exercise to review the format of officer reports; and chair of planning committee “meet the staff” sessions.</p>
R4	<p>Review of the service structure</p> <p>To strengthen the effectiveness of the current Planning Service, a review of the current staff structure is required to address existing skills deficiencies—particularly in the areas of heritage and design support, which are increasingly critical to good planning outcomes.</p> <p>There are opportunities within the service to better support Planning Officers and build capacity without exceeding the existing budget envelope. This could be achieved through a strategic redesign of roles and responsibilities. For example, the Technical Team, which is relatively large for a service of this size, could be better utilised to provide broader support across the service.</p> <p>Additionally, the Business Support Manager post is a valuable resource that is currently underutilised. A clearer alignment of this role with service needs could significantly enhance operational efficiency and coordination.</p> <p>This review should be approached with a view to maximising internal talent, improving service resilience, and ensuring TMBC is equipped to meet both current and future demands.</p>
R5	<p>Pre-application service</p> <p>As part of the wider review of the Planning Service, the Business Support Manager role presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen operational delivery and strategic oversight. A focused review of this post will enable TMBC to assess its alignment with service needs and unlock its potential to support key functions more effectively.</p>

	<p>In particular, this review should include a comprehensive evaluation of the Pre-Application and Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) service, using the PAS guidance as a benchmark. This is a critical area where improved structure, performance monitoring, and customer value can significantly enhance planning outcomes.</p> <p>By refining this service, there is the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address current gaps in performance and consistency. • Introduce a robust performance management system to assess effectiveness and ensure accountability. • Reinforce the value of the PPA and pre-application process to developers, members, and residents. • Generate additional income to support service delivery and capacity building. <p>This approach will also help ensure that the service is transparent, responsive, and aligned with the Council's broader growth and regeneration objectives. It is essential that any enhancements are embedded within a framework that supports member and resident oversight, while also delivering a high-quality, commercially viable Planning Service.</p>
R6	<p>Planning software transfer</p> <p>As part of the ongoing transfer of planning software from Agile to IDOX Uniform, ensure that all staff are engaged in testing the software to confirm that it meets the requirements of all staff within the Planning Service who will need to use the software. This should include a learning through experience exercise so that the service can understand why the previous transfer from Uniform IDOX to Agile did not meet the expectations of staff and ensure the same mistakes are not replicated.</p>
R7	<p>Parish council and other community engagement</p> <p>Create a stronger relationship with parish councils and other community groups so that TMBC can maximise the local knowledge and expertise from within the local community whilst managing the expectations in delivering the Government's wider growth targets. A practical example of achieving this would be through the local community support in preparing a local list and conservation area management plans. This will ensure the local community can have a clear role in bringing forward a Local Plan that properly respects the heritage of the local area.</p>
R8	<p>Community engagement in the Local Plan process</p> <p>Ensure that the local community is empowered to engage positively in the Local Plan process. This should ensure there are clear messages from the senior leadership in the council about the growth agenda that needs to be delivered at TMBC, whilst articulating how the community can engage in a meaningful and timely way.</p>
R9	<p>Neighbourhood planning</p> <p>Provide support to parish councils / community groups to establish neighbourhood planning forums so that, where appropriate, neighbourhood plans can be prepared by the local community in parallel with the Local Plan timetable. This should include a training programme so that community expectations are managed and there is a greater understanding of the role of neighbourhood planning in the development plan process.</p>
R10	<p>Development and agents forums</p> <p>Engage with developers and local agents in a more structured way. This should take the form of developer and agents forums so that the development community has a channel for finding out about key initiatives taking place at TMBC, such as key stages in the Local Plan process. The forums should also be used to improve performance and customer service and create a collaborative environment whereby the development community can help improve the Planning Service provided by TMBC.</p>

R11	<p>Connections with wider partnerships</p> <p>Ensure that the Planning Service is in the best possible position to engage in local government reorganisation by improving its involvement in existing wider partnerships. For example, the Planning Service would benefit from greater involvement with the local Chamber of Commerce, Kent Nature Partnership, the Kent Association of Local Councils and joint planning initiatives involving neighbouring authorities.</p>
R12	<p>Member and officer planning committee learning</p> <p>Undertake a joint training programme with officers and members to learn from other best practice councils in running planning committees. This should involve discussing different approaches to running planning committees and how they impact on planning outcomes. Through this joint learning TMBC should review its current planning committee protocol so that it both meets the requirements set out by Government whilst also addressing the priorities for TMBC. Reference should be made to the PAS planning committee best practice self-assessment toolkit to help the planning committee review.</p>
R13	<p>Planning appeals</p> <p>Introduce a learning through experience process whereby members and officers can reflect on key planning decisions made, learning from areas of best practice and avoiding, wherever possible, planning appeal overturns and costs awards. The learning should build on the current regular reporting at planning committee on appeal decisions to a more active learning approach.</p>
R14	<p>Planning enforcement</p> <p>Build on the progress that has already been made on strengthening planning enforcement performance by creating a culture of proactive enforcement. This should involve local members in helping officers to prioritise planning enforcement activities that makes the biggest impact to areas of most concern to the local community.</p>

3.0 The Peer review approach

The Peer review team

3.1 Peer reviews, often referred to as peer challenges, are delivered by experienced elected councillors and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer review and peers were selected based on their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- **Councillor David Brackenbury**, North Northamptonshire Council
- **Mark Cassidy**, Chief Officer – Planning and Climate Change, Lancaster City Council
- **Christine Lyons**, Executive Director Growth and Partnerships, Basildon Borough Council
- **Rachel Murtagh**, Principal Consultant, PAS
- **Peter Ford**, Peer Review Manager and Principal Consultant, PAS

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS)

3.2 PAS is an LGA programme funded primarily by a grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It is our principal mission to ensure that Local Planning authorities (LPAs) are continuously improving in their execution and delivery of Planning Services.

3.3 To achieve this, the PAS work programme focuses on:

- Helping local government officers and councillors to stay effective and up to date by guiding them on the implementation of the latest reforms to planning.
- Promoting a 'sector-led' improvement programme that encourages and facilitates local authorities to help each other through peer support and the sharing of best practice.
- Providing consultancy and peer support, designing and delivering training and learning events, and publishing a range of resources online.
- Facilitating organisational change, improvement and capacity building programmes - promoting, sharing and helping implement the very latest and best ways of delivering the Planning Service.

3.4 PAS also delivers some of its services on a commercial basis including change and improvement programmes for individual and groups of planning authorities.

Scope of the review

3.5 The aims of this review were developed following initial conversations and correspondence with TMBC as well as consideration of background documents. They are to:

- The strength of the development management and enforcement service and how it engages with the other areas of planning, the wider council and its customers
- The effectiveness of the planning committees
- Resourcing across the service and particularly development management
- The culture within planning and how it aligns with the direction of the council

3.6 These aims and the issues they raise were examined by the peer team across five key themes, which are common to all peer reviews and form the structure for this feedback report. They are:

- **Vision and leadership** - how the authority demonstrates leadership to integrate planning within corporate working to support delivery of corporate objectives
- **Performance and Management** - the effective use of skills and resources to achieve value for money, and the effectiveness of processes (and the roles of officers and members) in decision-making on development proposals.
- **Community engagement** – how the authority understands its community leadership role and community aspirations and uses planning to help deliver them.
- **Partnership engagement** – how the authority works with partners to balance priorities and resources to deliver agreed priorities.
- **Achieving outcomes** - how well the service leverages national and Local Planning policy to deliver the sustainable development and planning outcomes its community requires.

3.6 The peer challenge work was preceded by a separate Development Management Review that was carried out by PAS in July 2025. The review was based on the [PAS Development Management Challenge Toolkit](#). The toolkit provides an opportunity for councils to undertake a 'health check' on their development management service. The purpose of the review was not to cover every aspect of the development management service, but to focus on the areas that had been highlighted by TMBC as being of particular concern in relation to performance. TMBC was asked to identify the most relevant of the 15 sections covered in the PAS Development Management Challenge Toolkit. The specific sections selected by TMBC to focus on were:

- Performance management
- Workload management
- Team management
- Officer reports

The development management report with specific recommendations should form an addendum to this peer challenge report and is included as appendix 1.

The peer review process

- 3.7 Peer reviews are improvement focused, and it is important to stress that the review of TMBC's Planning Service was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of all plans and proposals or to undertake a forensic analysis of every aspect of service. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by TMBC as well as by people they met and the things they saw, reviewing this through a strategic lens to focus on the most important issues for the Planning Service.
- 3.8 The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information to ensure we were familiar with the Planning Service and the challenges it is facing. The team then carried out the core of the review onsite between 15th and 18th September 2025. As well as in-person meetings, some meetings were held virtually during the onsite review to reach as many people as possible. In total, the team gathered information and views from over 50 people. All the information collected is on a non-attributable basis to inform this report. In addition, the peer team was taken on a bus tour of the council area to visit some of the key opportunity sites that are coming forward as part of TMBC's emerging Local Plan. It also attended the live Area 2 Planning Committee on 17th September 2025.
- 3.9 In presenting this feedback report, the peer team has done so as fellow local government members and officers. By its nature, the review represents a snapshot in time, and the peer team appreciates that some of the points in this report may touch on things that TMBC is already addressing or progressing. However, the team is keen to provide a comprehensive report and full understanding of its conclusions. As part of the work, the peer team presented

a verbal summary of this report and evolving recommendations to an audience made up of some of those who took part in / were interviewed as part of the review.

- 3.10 The peer team would like to thank councillors, staff, community representatives and partners for their open, honest and constructive responses during the review process. The team was made to feel very welcome and appreciate the time that everyone committed to their work.

4.0 Context and background to the review

- 4.1 TMBC is a two-tier district council that has 44 councillors covering 19 wards. There are 21 Conservative, 11 Liberal Democrat, 8 Green, 2 Labour and 2 Independent councillors. Therefore, the council is under no overall control. TMBC forms part of the Kent councils and is undergoing local government reform. A decision on the new Kent councils structure is still to be decided with proposals to be submitted by 28th November 2025. Whatever the final outcome, TMBC has a limited period of time in its current structure, and the council wants to ensure that its Planning Service is in the best possible condition when local government reform takes place.
- 4.2 The Council's current Local Plan dates from 2007. It comprises the Core Strategy with a subsequent Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document adopted in 2010. Work is currently underway on a replacement plan with a Regulation 18 Consultation due to take place in November 2025, Regulation 19 in August 2026 and submission by November 2026. A previous Local Plan was withdrawn in 2019 since it failed to meet the Planning Inspector's test on duty to cooperate. Considerable work is taking place to ensure that the emerging plan will be seen as 'sound' when tested through the examination process. The council does not have a five-year housing land supply and at the time of the review it had 2.89 years of housing land supply (interim position from January 2025).
- 4.3 The Council deals with approximately 2000 planning and related applications per year. It has a formal scheme of charging for pre-application advice. In line with the national economic picture, application numbers have steadily increased in the past couple of years. In the financial year 2024/25 planning application fee income was slightly higher than forecast. This was due to the submission of a significant strategic application for 1300 dwellings. This planning application is being managed by an external consultancy secured through a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA).
- 4.4 The Planning Service comprises a development management officer team, a policy team and a separate technical support team. The team is led by a Head of Planning Services with a Head of Development Management (vacant at the time of the peer review), a Head of Planning Policy and Business Support Manager.
- 4.4 With regard to the Government's measures of planning performance on decision-making TMBC is currently well clear of the Government's minimum threshold in respect to speed of decision-making. For the year October 2024 to September 2025 TMBC has so far determined 95% of its majors in time (against a minimum threshold of 60%) and 79% of its non-majors in time (against a minimum threshold of 70%). The last quarter of data (July to September 2025) is still to be collected. However, with regard to quality of decision-making TMBC has had four upheld appeals for the 45 major decisions in the period April 2023 to September 2024. The Government will next be assessing the quality of decision-making between April 2023 and March 2025 and at present TMBC is close to the maximum threshold set by Government with 8.9% of major decisions upheld at appeal against the maximum threshold of 10%. The council has also been exposed to a significant costs award for one of its appeals amounting to £311,000.

- 4.5 Most unusually for a council the size of TMBC the council operates three planning committees operating on an area basis with every member of the council sitting on one of the planning committees. Between January and August 2025, a total of 13 planning committee meetings were held and another 6 were cancelled due to lack of items coming forward.
- 4.6 The planning enforcement team deals with between 260-300 requests to investigate in a year. The Council's Enforcement Policy was reviewed through an internal scrutiny process in 2022. A limited number of notices are issued each year with the emphasis being on seeking to ensure that breaches of control are regularised. With the recruitment of a new Planning Enforcement Manager, the Council is seeking to take a more pro-active stance with enforcement appeals and is looking to refresh the Local Enforcement Plan in the coming months. The Council operates a priority system with regard to cases requiring enforcement action based on the requirements sets out in the Local Enforcement Plan.
- 4.7 There are over 1318 listed buildings (over 90% which are Grade II, 5 % Grade II* and 3% are Grade I) and 60 conservation areas in TMBC. The council has no dedicated Conservation Officer with conservation advice being provided by Sevenoaks District Council for eight hours per week.
- 4.8 The peer review took place at a time when a major change was taking place over the processes used to manage the development management information. The council is moving back to using Uniform IDOX as its software provider after an unsuccessful change to Agile. This is causing significant upheaval within the Planning Service both logistically and in terms of relationships as the Agile system has been unpopular among staff and a common reason blamed by staff on application backlogs and inefficiencies. The Development Management Review (appendix 1) considers the implications of this change in greater detail than can be included in this peer review report.

5.0 Detailed Feedback

- 5.0.1 The following sections set out the findings of the peer review, including an analysis of strengths and areas for improvement. In line with the peer review process, findings are structured around each of the five key themes considered in a review.

5.1 Vision and Leadership

Ambition & Strategic Direction

- 5.1.1 TMBC is a council that has a clear vision as articulated in the updated Corporate Strategy. It has four clear priorities, all of which closely align with the planning agenda in terms of efficient services, sustainability, housing needs for the local population and supporting local businesses for promoting sustainable growth. These strategic priorities should help to steer the direction of the Local Plan and, in turn, ensure that the priorities for inward investment and clear decision-making give a clear steer to the customers of the planning system. This is both in terms of the potential applicants and the community who will be affected by planning decisions.
- 5.1.2 TMBC has not managed to adopt a Local Plan since 2007 and has not been able to meet its requirements in consenting housing schemes that has resulted in the council operating under paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - presumption in favour of sustainable development. The peer team saw a clear commitment from officers and some members to move the Local Plan process forward so that it can be submitted in line with the Government's target of December 2026 under the current plan-making system. However, the peer team was unconvinced that this focus was shared across the broad political leadership. TMBC's Local Plan had previously been withdrawn in 2019 due to issues with the duty to cooperate and the peer team understands that, even if it had passed the duty to cooperate test, it may well have been withdrawn for other reasons. A crucial meeting is being held with members on site allocations in October 2025 and the peer team is curious as to whether the importance and sense of urgency to move the Local Plan forward is owned throughout the council. A quote from one interviewee was "The Local Plan process is seen as solidifying sites that members don't want to come forward".
- 5.1.3 The peer team also saw evidence of a lack of joined up thinking to deliver key strategic projects that are critical to the delivery of the council's corporate objectives. One example was issues of temporary accommodation where the peer team observed a fragmented approach across council departments. The council has rightly pushed back on this perception that the peer team has gained on the lack of joined up thinking and it is certainly acknowledged by the peer team that there are areas of best practice exhibited across the council. However, in the same way, specific examples of lack of cohesion within the council are damaging the council's reputation to external partners.

Leadership & Political Engagement

- 5.1.4 The peer team was very impressed by the clarity of direction articulated by the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member. This strong leadership is enabling the council to move forward on key planning priorities such as the delivery of the key housing allocation sites. The council also has active MPs who are able to champion the priorities of the council at the national level. In the same way there are areas of excellence within the

Planning Service with individuals who display strong political awareness and strategic thinking.

- 5.1.5 The peer team found that in planning there was an inconsistent approach to following the clear leadership from the senior managers and members. At an officer level, a heavy reliance is being placed on the Head of Planning Services to lead in plan-making and decision-making. It was unfortunate that there was no Head of Development Management in place when the peer team carried out the peer review and therefore the peer team could not see the management team operating as it would normally. This temporary gap in the team structure might explain why senior managers appeared unwilling to delegate responsibilities, even though there are clearly some excellent professionals within the Planning Service. However, it was also clear to the peer team that staff relied on the Head of Planning Services to make decisions and that there was a culture of upward delegation.
- 5.1.6 An example of the approach to management was demonstrated when the peer team watched a planning committee meeting. The items on the agenda were very minor and the case officer and team leader seemingly addressed the concerns of members. However, there was a view by both officers and members that a very straightforward decision should be deferred to the Head of Planning Services following discussion over changes. In the peer team's view, it was unnecessary for the Head of Planning Services to intervene in the decision-making process in this way and the officers had provided all the necessary information for members to make a decision.
- 5.1.7 With regard to leadership at member level, TMBC has a very unusual arrangement of three planning committees operated by members from three different political parties. This arrangement is not unique amongst English councils, but is not regarded by PAS as good practice. The peer team noted that only one of the planning committees dealt with the majority of the strategically important planning applications with the other committees largely dealing with very minor planning applications and even applications that did not constitute planning applications. In addition, there were a notable number of deferrals of planning decisions and also a referral system that is being used to Full Council for some planning decisions. This level of uncertainty in political decision-making was commented on by developers and is being interpreted by some as inconsistent political leadership (refer also to section 5.5 (Achieving Outcomes)). The deferral / referral system is not conducive to efficient planning application decision-making or always the most responsible use of public money.

The Planning Service and wider organisational issues

- 5.1.3 The Planning Service has a strong management structure with a manager responsible for the overall Planning Service, supported by a Head of Development Management, a Head of Planning Policy and a Business Support Manager supporting the technical services related to planning. In PAS's experience this is a structure that is likely to be most effective in a council the size and make-up of TMBC. The Planning Service also appears to be financially sound with a strong income stream through planning applications and pre-application discretionally income. However, the strong income is partly dependent on the PPA income from a single 1,300 dwelling development that will have a finite income stream.
- 5.1.4 There is evidence of commitment from the management team to upskill more junior staff and to develop staff in-house. The council appears to have learnt its lessons from a recent loss of key staff to other councils or the private sector who were offering greater employment

prospects and career progression. As a consequence, there appears to be a stronger commitment to staff development that, hopefully, will reduce the loss of key staff in the future.

- 5.1.5 There is also clear evidence that the Planning Service is improving both in terms of speed of decision-making and customer service and this has been acknowledged both within the council and externally. A quote from a staff member within the Planning Service was “We are a small shire with large ambitions” and from an external customer “Officers try to be positive and proactive”. Individual case officers were singled out during interviews as having a positive attitude and performing to a very high professional standard.
- 5.1.6 A key hindrance to effective leadership in the Planning Service is the ongoing distrust of members in the planning process and the distrust from officers in making sound decisions. The vast majority (approximately 98%) of planning decisions are delegated to officers and so the quality of decision-making is not being unduly affected by member decisions. However, the peer team found a culture within planning whereby officers are preparing extremely detailed reports to counter questions that they might be asked by members and members are taking, in the words of one interviewee a “forensic approach” to challenging officer recommendations. This is evidenced in the length of officer reports and examples seen by the peer team of reasons for referral to planning committee. This lack of trust from both members and officers is exacerbating workload pressures. More detail on the issues in officer reports is highlighted in the Development Management Review (appendix 1).
- 5.1.6 The member distrust in the planning system is also impacting on the risk to the Local Plan with members openly challenging many of the site allocations that will need to come forward if the council is to meet its commitment to housing delivery. Members at a very senior level are openly stating their opposition to sites being put forward in the Local Plan whilst another rejected the notion that the Local Plan needed to be advanced without delay. This suggests to the peer team that the ability to bring the Local Plan to examination stage within the current plan making period is extremely challenging. The peer team believes that member uncertainty over the planning process is partly down to training and understanding the implications of a decision-by-appeal environment. However, it is also due to the range of political views and priorities within the council.
- 5.1.7 The peer team observed evidence of frustration from both the development industry and the local community over the uncertainty on plan-making and decision-making. A quote from the community representatives was “The public is losing confidence in the planning system” largely based on the concern at the pressures being put on the council to deliver large quantities of housing in the plan period. A quote from the development industry was “Get on and get a Local Plan in place!”. This was borne by the frustration from developers that the council was taking so long in adopting a Local Plan. Also, the uncertainty when applications were submitted which, as they saw it, was causing delays and uncertainty through the appeals process.

5.2 Performance and management

Development Management performance

- 5.2.1 The peer team heard from a broad spectrum of users of the Planning Service and there was a general feeling that the reputation of development management is improving after a difficult period where there were a number of staff changes, use of agency staff and consequence

backlog in processing planning applications. The development management teams are nearly fully staffed now, and this is having a positive impact on the quality and speed of service. In particular, the people who the peer team spoke to identified individuals within the development management service who they felt provided a particularly good service. The peer team also observed the professional competence of individual staff in the way that they presented to the planning committees and addressed member questions.

- 5.2.2 The overall improvement does, however, appear to be inconsistent and, anecdotally, the peer team heard about poor service persisting in some areas. For example, the peer team was told that a member of staff had taken two months to reply to their email. The peer team also heard some worrying comments from members of staff that indicates that the overall improvements were not *owned* by everyone in the teams. A couple of quotes heard during the interviews: “We pay little attention to residents”; and “Members of the public are seen as an irritant!”. This attitude reflects the pressures that the national growth targets are having in a sensitive area that is rather resistant to large scale development. The written information given to applicants also does not instil a sense of commitment to customer service and states “We will try and meet the timescales, but we cannot guarantee”.
- 5.2.3 The Government performance standards on speed of decision-making are easily being met by TMBC with current figures standing at 95% of majors in time (against a Government target of 60%) and 79% of non-majors in time (against a Government target of 70%). However, this takes into account extensions of time. The performance figures without extensions of time are 21% for majors and 43% for non-majors. Whilst these figures are by no means exceptional and broadly in line with the national average, the council should be aware that, if as has been suggested through recent consultations, the Government was to remove extensions of time for some applications, or set a national target, TMBC may have an issue with meeting performance targets.
- 5.2.4 TMBC’s performance on quality of decision-making is of greater concern with current performance at 8.9% of major applications overturned at appeal for decisions made between April 2023 and June 2024, against a maximum target of 10%. The Government will be assessing decisions up until March 2025 and therefore there is a real possibility of TMBC of being subject to possible designation. This matter will be covered in more detail under section 5.5 (Achieving outcomes).

Skills within the Planning Service

- 5.2.5 The planning team has a number of planning professionals at different stages in their careers. This is a healthy position for the Planning Service as it allows staff to develop in their careers and gain experience from staff who have been at the council longer. The technical support team is reasonably well staffed with a Business Support Manager and, in addition, 6.7 full time equivalents (FTEs) (4 full time and 4 part time), plus a vacant post. 4 staff have responsibilities for validation. The number of technical support staff is higher than the peer team would expect for the size of the council and number of planning applications received. The peer team would be cautious in advising that the team are overstaffed as there was not sufficient time to fully understand all the roles being provided by the technical team and the team is also aware that the team is carrying some vacancies. However, it is an area of staff resourcing that should be considered further in light of other areas of resource deficiency outlined below.
- 5.2.6 The main areas of improvement that the peer team identified in the planning teams is the lack of specialist skills. The council does employ a Landscape and Tree Officer which is very positive and important for providing advice on tree issues and determining specific

applications relating to trees. The council does not have a Heritage Officer even though it has 60 conservation areas and 1,318 listed buildings. This is very unusual for a council with such heritage significance. Support is provided by Sevenoaks District Council, but this is only for 8 hours a week and is acknowledged by both TMBC and Sevenoaks officers that it is insufficient with many heritage matters being considered by planning officers without the necessary specialist knowledge. TMBC also does not have an Urban Designer or dedicated Landscape Officer, which again is surprising given the scale of growth that is being planned for through the emerging Local Plan.

- 5.2.7 Planning staff reported to the peer team that they are overworked and are still struggling to meet their performance targets, even though, based on the caseload figures provided to the peer team, the workload would appear to be manageable in the context of best practice found elsewhere in the country. The cause of the work pressures are likely due to the extra work that case officers need to undertake as part of their duties. This will also cause additional pressures on staff when they feel they do not have the skills to undertake their work. The peer team was told about concerns in particular on case officer design and landscaping skills. It would therefore be helpful if there was a review of the staff structure to see if staff with these specialist skills could be recruited into the service.

Planning application processes

- 5.2.8 The Development Management Review covers in detail the issues with development management processes at TMBC and the lack of consistency that has been highlighted by PAS. This is in part due to the issues over the changeover from the Agile software system to Uniform IDOX. A major advantage that TMBC has in its staff structure is the Business Support Manager position. A Business Support Manager post is often identified by councils as a resource that can be used to embed more consistent and streamlined processes and be a conduit for public relations between users of the service, including applicants, and TMBC's planning team. The post is also used by many councils to provide capacity for the planning managers and carry out activities that require wider organisational skills rather than planning technical skills. At TMBC the written role description of the Business Support Manager identifies some of these key roles in ensuring processes run effectively. However, the peer team found that the purpose of the Business Support Manager is, in reality, less clearly defined and is not being used as effectively as it could be. A wider review of staff structures would be an ideal opportunity to reassess the role of the Business Support Manager and to learn from best practice at other councils where this role has enabled significant service improvements.
- 5.2.9 Related to the point above is the issue of delegation and officer empowerment. One of the key obstacles identified by staff in workflow management was the delays caused by the need for more senior officers to check work of case officers. It is important that there are checks and balances in place in a development management service to ensure consistency of decision-making and to ensure that, in particular, more junior officers are given the support they need in making sound decisions. However, a common complaint raised by staff was the delays caused by officer recommendations needing to be checked by team managers. This is causing bottlenecks and impacting on individual staff performance and morale (i.e. officers were being cited by applicants as the cause of delay, when in reality their reports had already been submitted to managers). The peer team suggests that signoff procedures are therefore reviewed based on a risk-based approach. For example, team leaders could limit themselves to checking the more complex, contentious decisions so that delegation can be moved further down the staff hierarchy.

5.3 Community Engagement

Local Plan engagement

- 5.3.1 The council is going through a critical stage in its community engagement programme on the Local Plan. The community is already very engaged in the process through the strong network of parish councils and other community organisations. The Leader and Cabinet Member are both committed to properly engaging with the community and to champion the policy and site allocations within the Local Plan. Some of the sites being identified will be contentious with local residents and it is very positive that the key leaders in the Local Planning process are committed to meeting the very challenging Local Plan adoption requirements and timetable.
- 5.3.2 It was clear to the peer team from discussions that local community representatives feel exposed by the out-of-date Local Plan and the lack of a five-year housing land supply. This is leading to a position where the planning balance is weighing heavily towards a presumption in favour of sustainable development and local community representatives appear very aware of the importance of having an up-to-date Local Plan.

Development management engagement

- 5.3.3 As with the Local Plan engagement process, local community representatives are very knowledgeable and engaged in the development management process with strong representations at the planning committees from parish councils and other community groups. However, there is a level of scepticism within the community on the decisions made by TMBC on key planning decisions. This is leading to a loss of confidence by some in the planning system generally and a feeling of powerlessness in being able to influence decision-making.
- 5.3.4 In some ways the dynamic between the Planning Service and the local community will inevitably be adversarial because the council needs to respond to the Government's agenda on growth and this will inevitably conflict with the views of local residents who tend to be resistant to growth. However, the peer team feels that there are a number of lost opportunities that could and should be taken up with the engaged local community groups that can empower them to be able to influence planning decisions.

Heritage management

- 5.3.5 TMBC has a very rich built heritage and this heritage is, in part, protected through conservation area and listed building status. However, the council acknowledges its weakness in being able simply to respond to developments that impact on its heritage and is unable to resource any proactive heritage work. Many councils will actively engage their local communities to help prepare Conservation Area Management Plans and the preparation of local lists. These can provide important evidence and guidance to support the

preparation of Local Plans. TMBC's neighbour, Sevenoaks District Council, has a strong heritage resource, and worked with the Sevenoaks Society to prepare a local list that is now a Supplementary Planning Document as part of the Development Plan. TMBC equally has engaged heritage groups who could take a proactive role in working with officers to better manage the council's built heritage.

Neighbourhood planning

- 5.3.6 The peer team understands that little progress has been made within TMBC with regards to neighbourhood planning. The main reason cited is the lack of an up-to-date Local Plan. Whilst the issues with the Local Plan are a considerable hindrance to the progress of neighbourhood plans, many communities in other councils are working with the council in parallel to produce neighbourhood plans so that the community can take a proactive role in policy development. With such an engaged local community and strong network of parish councils, neighbourhood planning could be a good way to channel local knowledge in a positive way working in partnership with TMBC and might also prove helpful in sharing information regarding the Government's growth agenda.

5.4 Partnership Engagement

Consultee engagement

- 5.4.1 The relationship between the Planning Service at TMBC and both internal and external consultees is good both within development management and on the Local Plan. Consultees acknowledge how busy officers are at TMBC but found them willing to engage with consultees and to take on board the advice that is given. However, the observation that was repeatedly made was that consultees were often consulted at the last minute and the consultees that the peer team spoke to often felt it challenging to meet the timeframes set by TMBC. This was the position expressed for both the planning applications process and for Local Plan input.
- 5.4.2 The peer team also heard of some very positive partnerships that had been forged between TMBC and its partners. For example, reference was made to the preparation of a heritage strategy with Historic England and also work with Kent Downs National Landscape on developing model policies for the Local Plan. Reference was also made by external consultees to TMBC staff attending cross county officer forums to ensure that TMBC is properly engaged with Kent wide related issues. Whilst this proactive work is encouraging, there are some key gaps in the level of engagement TMBC has with its partners and particularly in taking advantage of wider county and sub regional partnerships and collaborations. For example, at the time of the review the peer team could find little evidence of a coordinated approach with wider nature, climate and environmental priorities in planning to achieve the council's corporate priority of "*Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment*". However, since the review a Climate Change Officer has been appointed who works collaboratively with planning and other departments in the Council to further our ambitions on Climate Change. TMBC is a supporting authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy. As Local Planning Authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the relevant (LNRS) strategy for their area TMBC needs to be developing Local Plan policies that link to this strategy.

Engagement with developers and agents

- 5.4.3 The peer team found some positive engagement with developers and agents with the recently introduced pre-application briefings between developers and members receiving a positive response from both members and the development community. It is also clear that TMBC is willing to enter into PPAs on key development opportunities so that appropriate resources can be channelled to key development opportunities. In general, the peer team heard that the engagement with developers was limited and inconsistent and that more work is needed to enable the council to bring forward some of the key development opportunities that are coming forward in the Local Plan.
- 5.4.4 TMBC does not operate an agents' forum and there appeared to be limited enthusiasm for agents to engage with the peer team during the peer review. This is a potential opportunity missed as the best performing councils find that agents' forums are an ideal way to engage with local agents on discussing changes in policy and processes and to help improve performance. TMBC is reaching a critical stage both in Local Plan preparation and in the migration to a new software provider. It is an ideal time to build relations with developers and agents so that the challenges facing the council can be owned by all participants in the development process.

5.5 Achieving Outcomes

Pre-application process

- 5.5.1 TMBC has taken positive steps to give greater priority to pre-application discussions as a way to de-risk planning outcomes and better bring together the development community and the local community. The introduction of pre-application briefings for members is a clear sign of this commitment to front-loading engagement. TMBC is also willing to enter into PPAs and commit to resourcing these agreements. The peer team found that this attitude has changed even since the development management review that took place in July 2025 where staff were openly saying that they were discouraging pre-application discussions because the council was not prioritising such engagement.
- 5.5.2 Pre-applications are not performance monitored at TMBC and there was limited information about the outcomes, so it is too early to assess the difference whether these pre-application and PPA commitments are having a meaningful impact on outcomes and whether there has been a genuine change in culture at TMBC to show a step change in performance and customer service through front-loading the development process, but the initial signs are encouraging.

Planning Committee outcomes

- 5.5.3 TMBC has an unusual planning committee set up whereby every member of the council sits on a planning committee and only one of these planning committees sits on a regular basis. The [PAS Modernising Planning Committees Survey 2025](#) identified that only 21% of councils had more than one planning committee and when there was more than one planning committee 51% operated a strategic developments committee due to the growth agendas taking place at the councils. It is extremely unusual for a council the size of TMBC to have three planning committees, particularly as only 14 major applications were determined in the year 2024/25. In the period August 2024 to July 2025 only six major applications were considered across the three committees and the other applications considered were for minor, household or non-planning application issues.

- 5.5.4 The planning committees also have an unusually generous speaking arrangement. Until recently there was no limit to the number of speakers allowed and only this year has this changed to a maximum of seven speakers (each allowed to speak for three minutes). Whilst planning committee meetings are not excessively long – averaging at approximately two hours per meeting – the speaking arrangements are far more generous than most councils. The PAS Modernising Planning Committees Survey 2025 found that most councils have three speakers – an objector, a supporter and a ward councillor.
- 5.5.5 There are many issues that were identified by the peer team regarding the planning committee arrangements that did not align with national best practice. However, the peer team understands that the current arrangements are popular with members because every member can take an active part in planning decisions within their areas. However, the Government will shortly announce changes to the planning committee arrangements that are likely to involve a national scheme of delegation, limits to the number of members who can sit on a planning committee and mandatory training. The peer team therefore recommends that the council reviews its planning committee arrangements, particularly the protocols for planning committee, once the national requirements are better understood.

Appeals

- 5.5.6 As outlined in para 4.4 TMBC is close to the Government's maximum level of major decisions allowed at appeal with four appeals allowed out of a total of 45 major decisions between April 2023 and September 2024. Some of these appeals have been expensive and damaging for the council with one where costs awarded amounted to £311,000 due to an error by the council. The council also has an appeal ongoing on a site at Ivy Farm that is very contentious and has an uncertain outcome. The reasons for the recent appeal overturns have been due to a combination of planning committee decision-making and officer delegated decisions and so it is essential that TMBC closely monitors decisions and avoids putting itself under risk of designation due to the quality of decision-making. The council already reports appeal decisions at the planning committees to allow reflection and consider any lessons to be learnt. It will be even more important in the coming months for members and officers to own planning decisions, to celebrate successes and learn from poor decision-making.

Planning enforcement

- 5.5.7 TMBC has made improvements to its planning enforcement service in recent months with new appointments and an impressive reduction in the number of outstanding enforcement cases in recent months. The council has a Local Enforcement Plan with a clear system of prioritising cases. The peer team was also told that the council is reviewing the existing Local Enforcement Plan. TMBC officers are quite open in stating "We don't do proactive enforcement; we are only reactive". This is perhaps understandable given the historic backlog of cases and resource difficulties. However, it is an area that members and the local community feel strongly about, and many councils have built better relations with local communities by increasing the level of pro-active enforcement by focusing activity in areas that might have the greater impact and are of greatest concern to local residents. For example, there is an active and involved local heritage group who are concerned at the limited and reactive focus on heritage enforcement.
- 5.5.8 The peer team also heard that Members would welcome further training on enforcement matters, particularly the issues of expediency. This type of training will help make the

planning enforcement system more transparent. Similar 'enforcement system' training might also reasonably be provided in due course to Parish Councils.

6.0 Implementation, next steps and further support

- 6.1 It is recognised that TMBC and the Planning Service will want to consider and reflect on these findings.
- 6.2 To support openness and transparency, we recommend that the Council shares this report with officers and that they publish it for information for wider stakeholders. There is also an expectation that the Council responds to the findings and recommendations in the report with an action plan, publishing this alongside the report itself.
- 6.3 Where possible, PAS and the LGA will support councils with the implementation of the recommendations as part of the Council's action plan. A range of support from the [LGA](#) and [PAS](#) is available on their websites.
- 6.4 TMBC is also invited to discuss ongoing PAS support with Peter Ford, Principal Consultant, peter.ford@local.gov.uk and any corporate support with Nick Searle, Senior LGA Regional Nick.Searle@local.gov.uk.
- 6.5 As part of the LGA's peer review peer impact assessment and evaluation, PAS and the LGA will contact the Council in 6-12 months' time to see how the recommendations are being implemented and the beneficial impact experienced.
- 6.6 The author of this report is Peter Ford (peter.ford@local.gov.uk), on behalf of the peer review team.
- 6.7 This report was finalised in agreement with the Council on 3rd November 2025.

We are grateful for the support of everyone that contributed to this review.



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Appendix 1 Development Management Review

(separate document)



Development Management Review: Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

A PAS DM review of performance management, workload management, team management and officer reports

3rd November 2025

Get in touch with us at: pas@local.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Development Management Review is being carried out as part of a package of support provided by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC). It is a self-contained review into the processes followed by TMBC in delivering its development management function. However, it also forms part of a wider Planning Services Peer Challenge that will be carried out in September 2025. As such it should not be read in isolation, but as an evidence-based report that forms part of the wider peer challenge report. The peer challenge will look at the whole of the Planning Service and look at the broader themes around: vision and leadership; performance and management; community engagement; partnership engagement; and achieving outcomes.

1.2 The overall performance of TMBC's development management service is good when measured against the [Performance Standards](#) set by Government. However, the council would like PAS to look in more detail into the performance of its development management service prior to the wider peer challenge.

1.3 The council in particular would like PAS to consider wider performance issues over and above the performance measured by Government. It would also like PAS to consider whether the staff structure is fit for purpose in relation to workloads, whether the IT set up is fit for purpose for TMBC's requirements and whether enough attention has been given to providing staff with sufficient guidance and management support.

2. The review

2.1 This review of TMBC's Development Management service seeks to identify opportunities for improvement to performance, specifically aiming to highlight ways to enhance decision making efficiency and speed, whilst limiting the risk of challenge. This review was undertaken by Peter Ford (Principal Consultant) and Zain Muhammad (Consultant) from PAS. PAS is part of the Local Government Association (LGA) and provides high quality help, advice, support and training on planning and service delivery to Local Planning Authorities in England.

2.2 The review was based on the [PAS Development Management Challenge Toolkit](#). The toolkit aims to provide a 'health check' for Local Planning Authorities and acts as a straightforward way to develop an action plan for improvements to development management. The purpose of this review is not to cover every aspect of the development management service, but to focus on the areas that have been highlighted by TMBC as being of particular concern in relation to performance. TMBC was asked to identify the most relevant of the 15 sections covered in the PAS Development Management Challenge Toolkit. The specific sections selected by TMBC to focus on were:

- Performance Management
- Workload Management
- Team Management
- Officer Reports

2.3 The on-site work was supplemented by a detailed review of TMBC's development management data and guidance. This was based on information passed to the PAS team to review and supplemented by data collected nationally through the [MHCLG Live Tables Dashboard](#). TMBC also provided the PAS team with examples of guidance notes, officer reports and management communications. TMBC has also recently been through a detailed process mapping exercise to plot the processes followed for each stage in the planning applications decision-making process. This provided valuable context for the PAS team in understanding how the processes followed by TMBC compared to other councils in England.

2.4 On the 1st July 2025, the PAS team worked through the relevant sections of the toolkit with various officers involved in the development management process. The recommendations in this report are based on insights shared by officers during these sessions. All those interviewed were friendly, welcoming, and fully engaged in the process. Their honest opinions and feedback are greatly appreciated. Discussions with officers were open and wide ranging, covering several questions under the topics listed, and the report is structured accordingly.

2.5 A development management review carried out by PAS would normally include discussions with representatives of the local community and applicants to ensure that the customer perspective is considered as part of any recommendations to the council. However, as a wider peer challenge will be undertaken in September 2025 it was agreed that it was not appropriate at this stage.

2.6 The recommendations are set out across short, medium, and long-term priorities. TMBC's immediate focus is on better use of performance tools, exploring ways to improve staff retention and overall service delivery in DM. Work is already underway, including the finalisation of the local validation list, while an internal checklist remains under review. In the longer term, a comprehensive review of the current Agile system is underway with a proposed move back to using the Uniform system.

2.7 Additional actions are proposed to improve performance by increasing work process efficiencies and focusing on income generation to support the resourcing of the improvement programme. As such, the recommendations in this report have been prioritised to suggest when and how they should be addressed, based on:

- **Short term** - "quick win" recommendations that could be implemented immediately without taking valuable capacity away from the priority of dealing with the current workload of planning applications.
- **Medium term** - recommendations that could be implemented over the next four to six months, changes that may take some time and capacity from the team to introduce but which will result in a more efficient service very quickly.
- **Longer term** - recommendations beyond the next six-month period, that may take more time as well as some political will to introduce but will create a much more resilient service and help avoid potential maladministration risks. This will further improve performance and the welfare of the staff involved in the service, subsequently improving staff retention and recruitment. Preparation could start now to ensure these changes are achievable within 12 months.

3. Context to the review

3.1 TMBC has provided PAS with two team structures under the development management service, one for Planning officers and enforcement and the other for the technical team. Under the planning officers and enforcement structure, there are in total 21 (FTEs), 1 (0.6FTE) and 1 (0.8FTE) based on the assumption a full-time contract is 37hrs per working week. This amounts to 24 members of staff under this team structure. Under the technical team structure, there are 10 (FTEs) with 4 (FTEs) having particular responsibility for the validation of new applications. In total the development management service at TMBC currently has 34 staff in total with one post vacant. The Development Management Manager will shortly be leaving TMBC and the PAS team understands that a replacement has been appointed and due to start in October 2025.

3.2 The current software system being used by TMBC is Agile. Power BI features were highlighted to be of use to support with performance management, however the PAS team understands that this has yet to be fully implemented. It was noted that the service previously used Uniform and there was considerable debate amongst staff about the merits of both software systems. The PAS team was advised that Uniform will be re-introduced as the council's development management software by the end of 2025.

3.3 As of February 2025, following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024, TMBC is progressing work on its local plan. On the 12th February 2025, a local plan update and local development scheme were discussed at the council's Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee. A meeting of the council's Cabinet was held on the 4th March 2025 where a new local development scheme was agreed. The council has highlighted they will be undergoing Regulation 18: Second stage of consultation beginning in October 2025. With adoption of the local plan proposed by quarter 3 of 2027/28.

3.4 TMBC's performance for the year 2024/25 against the Government's performance standards was very good. 96% of Majors (23/24) were determined in time (against a minimum Government target of 60%), 79% of Minors (139/176) were determined in time and 82% of Other applications (518/630) were determined in time (the minimum Government target for all non-Majors is 70%). With regard to quality of decision-making 7.5% of Major decisions within the current assessment period (April 2023 to March 2025) have been overturned at appeal (3 in total) with three quarters of performance data still to be assessed. As the maximum threshold set by Government is 10%, TMBC will need to keep a close eye on appeal decisions as it is close to reaching the 10% threshold. The PAS team understands that performance is now being monitored to ensure that TMBC has a better understanding of up-to-date performance information.

3.5 With regard to enforcement cases TMBC opened 269 enforcement cases in 2024/25 and closed 326, indicating a healthy position with regards to keeping on top of enforcement enquiries.

3.6 Based on performance data from April 2024 to March 2025, shared with PAS, the TMBC Planning Service is exceeding its own performance targets for both speed of determining major and minor applications, and surpasses the target for 'Other' applications by 2%. While performance is good overall, there is a notable reliance on agreeing extensions of time (EoTs) and, in particular, a high reliance on EoTs for Other category applications even though there have been indications from Government that EoTs may, in the future, not be permitted for very

these types of applications.

3.7 TMBC has a relatively high number of applications that are currently out of time at 337 (as of end of March 2025). The PAS team was not provided with information on the number of applications that have exceeded the Planning Guarantee deadlines, but did note that many applications had been in the decision-making system for a considerable amount of time; one householder application took 406 days to determine against a target of 56 days.

3.8 A good indicator on how a council is managing its caseload of applications is to look at the number of applications on hand at the beginning of a quarter against decisions made at the end of the quarter. A well performing council should be in parity i.e. registering as close to a ratio score of 1 as possible. At the end of March 2025 the national average was 1.49 and at TMBC it was 1.69 i.e. above the national average. However, TMBC's performance has been very erratic over recent quarters after a very stable and health position before 2022. TMBC is aware of these challenges and efforts are ongoing to stabilise resources and improve resilience across the team.

3.9 The PAS team was provided with performance figures for individual officers and, in general, no officers appeared to have unachievable caseloads. However, individual performance on speed of determination was very variable. Perhaps the most concerning from the PAS team was a high number of applications that were being determined only a few days after the statutory determination periods. This is an indicator of a council not monitoring effectively their performance.

3.10 The council's corporate priorities, set out in the [Corporate Strategy](#), are relevant to this development management review and include operating as an efficient and effective organisation. Key performance indicators (KPIs) also cover government targets for major and minor planning applications, as well as customer service standards. According to the 2024/25 [End of Year Report](#):

- TMBC staff numbers (FTE) met or exceeded targets for the year.
- Vacant posts fell short of the target, with a gradual rise from Q1 to Q4, though it is noted that this was due to newly created roles which will require time to fill.
- Government targets for major, minor and other applications were met or exceeded.
- Email response targets (within 24 hours) were achieved, though handled rate and webchat response times were just below target.
- Targets for formal complaints were met or exceeded, though no targets were set for planning appeals or enforcement cases.

3.11 There are clear concerns regarding the current Agile system, particularly the need to make better use of Power BI to track officer performance and improve internal processes. The process maps shared with the PAS team by TMBC are detailed and provide step-by-step guidance across a wide range of application types and development management tasks. A further process map is planned for Section 106 procedures. Whilst these process maps are very helpful they are extremely detailed and, in some cases, very complex. For example, the process mapping for validation is described in enormous detail for a process that is, fundamentally quite straightforward and is very similar to the majority of other councils. By mapping the processes to such a detailed extent, the PAS team does question whether it will create unnecessary work in updating the mapping when, inevitably, day-to-day refinements will be needed to fine-tune the processes and whether, in reality, all staff are following the procedures to the level outlined in the process mapping work.

Recommendations

Over the short term (i.e immediate)

R1 Review the current forms of communication within the development management teams to understand why staff are not responding effectively to management directions and guidance. In particular consider the way that the Planning Business Manager can be used to improve the way that the planning officers and technical team can work more effectively in a team approach.

R2 Undertake awareness training in the use of Power BI so that all staff can appreciate its use as a project management tool and to enable all managers to use it to monitor performance within the development management teams.

R3 Review the current guidance provided to staff on their day-to-day work in development management and internal communication channels to inform staff of procedural matters. Included in this should be a consistent approach between managers on how communication is carried out across all teams. This should involve all staff to ensure it meets the needs of everyone involved in development management work.

R4 Introduce a process for monitoring the time taken to validate applications so that there is a better understanding of how validation is impacting on performance management and procedural efficiencies.

Over the medium term (i.e within 4-6 months)

R5 Ensure that the action plan is delivered that has involved a skills audit of all staff across the two teams to identify specialist expertise, service-relevant skills, knowledge gaps, and individual development goals. The implementation of the action plan should include all members of the service and serve as an ongoing reference point. It also presents a valuable opportunity to support future resource planning, as this work will facilitate improvements to internal communications and workload balance.

R6 Review the current approach to providing pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) to create a more customer-focused service. This should be linked to a consistent approach to dealing with amendments to live planning applications. The review should use [PAS Guidance on Pre-Applications and PPAs](#).

R7 Consider with neighbouring Planning Authorities the merits of holding joint agents' forum meetings, where there are issues of common interest such as approaches to pre-application discussions and invalid submissions. This is also an opportunity for the service to work with local agents to limit the use of EoTs.

R8 Keep the revised officer scheme of delegation under review to monitor how effective it is in allowing pressure to be taken off managers to sign-off all applications. Where appropriate this should be accompanied with further training for affected staff to ensure it is easing workload pressures and improving the quality of service to customers.

R9 Introduce a learning through experience process whereby the teams can learn from customer feedback, both positive and negative, so that the council can continuously learn from feedback received and improve the service it provides to customers accordingly.

R10 Prioritise the migration of the changes in the software systems from Agile to Uniform to allow a more stable and consistent approach to workload management and to maximise the benefits of the use of Power BI

Over the long term (i.e 6-12 months)

R11 Review officer report templates so staff can take a more proportionate amount of time to prepare officer reports. This should include streamlined reports for more straight forward decisions using the [PAS Best Practice in Officer Report Writing](#) for guidance.

4. Performance management

4.1 TMBC recognises the importance of performance management, and the PAS team observed evidence of regular reporting. Statistics on appeals continue to be shared with committees. At the time of the review, there was a reasonably high backlog of applications undetermined, but the volume of applications being received was manageable based on the staff numbers. In addition, TMBC appears to have a high number of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) ongoing for a relatively small two-tier district council with 20 PPAs quoted (no details received). In addition, a persistent theme raised by staff was the inefficiency of the Agile software system since its introduction in 2023 in supporting the development management service in monitoring performance.

4.2 Power BI has been introduced and is viewed positively by some in leadership roles, yet feedback remains mixed. Most staff at the workshops appeared unaware of the value of Power BI in managing performance. While most were aware of the existence of the system, some were unclear about its purpose or how it is being applied. However, the Development Management Manager advised the PAS team that monthly performance data is sent to staff and staff have access to live data through Power BI. It would appear that there is a significant communication issue within the teams and the PAS team heard about staff unnecessarily using their own processes to monitor their performance. This is creating additional, unnecessary, duplication and inefficient use of staff time.

4.3 TMBC currently has a relatively high number of applications that are out of time, with the total standing at 337 at end of March 2025. Although the PAS team was not provided with data on how many applications have exceeded the Planning Guarantee deadlines, it was evident that several had been in the system for extended periods. The continued reliance on EoTs has been attributed to delays from statutory and other internal consultees. Several staff members also expressed concern about delays in receiving information from applicants that is causing delays in the validation of applications. The PAS team was informed that there is no monitoring carried out on days to validate applications and so these delays were based on anecdotal evidence provided by members of staff. It was unclear to the PAS team why this monitoring was not taking place as it is a task that would routinely be carried out by a council's administration / technical support team.

4.4 The service does not currently operate an agents' forum, and reporting on appeal decisions is inconsistent. While appeal outcomes are shared with both members and officers, there is limited structured engagement around these decisions. There is limited engagement with agents regarding performance matters, and the absence of an agents' forum has been noted as a missed opportunity by members of the teams. Establishing such a forum could support better communication and help improve the quality of submissions.

4.5 It was noted that the service does operate a formal pre-application service, however, the PAS team was told by staff that it is not being prioritised due to staff sickness and vacant posts. During one of the discussions a member of staff even stated that the technical team is advising applicants not to make a pre-application submission because of the low priority it is being given. This approach was challenged by the Development Management Manager who explained that pre-applications are now being given priority. The PAS team was also told that pre-applications cannot be registered on the Agile system. PAS strongly supports the prioritisation of pre-applications as a way of positively engaging applications to overcome issues prior to the formal application process and to both de-risk and speed up the decision-making process. The PAS team was also very concerned at the mixed messages that appear to be being sent to applicants about the priority given to the pre-application service. More guidance can be found on the PAS website on the benefits of pre-application engagement.

4.6 The self-serve process on the council's website redirects applicants to the Planning Portal, which is considered best practice, but this also means enquiries are not formally logged or tracked. The PAS team discussed the merits of allowing amendments to planning applications during the determination period and there appears to be no consistent process followed by officers in allowing amendments even though this is key to managing performance. The council's website outlines clearly its policy on amendments under the heading [view and comment on planning applications](#). However, TMBC appears to contradict itself on the website by also stating ["we operate a no amendments policy on applications that do not have a Planning Performance Agreement in place"](#). This indicates a significant communication issue within the teams whereby staff appear to be unsure of what approach to take on matters of procedure. Many councils limit the number of times an applicant can amend an application and instead focus resources on providing a customer-focused pre-application service. However, in TMBC's case this would be difficult to implement if, as some staff have indicated, the pre-application service is not being prioritised.

5. Workload management

5.1 The PAS team was told that it is difficult to consistently schedule one-to-one meetings, which limits opportunities for staff to monitor workloads in collaboration with managers. We were also told that the use of one-to-ones across the service is inconsistent, reducing the effectiveness of one-to-ones as a tool for performance support and staff development. However, this was challenged by the Development Management Manager who understands from team managers that one-to-one meetings are being held at least every fortnight. Persistent challenges with staff retention and periodic reliance on agency workers also impact the stability of workloads within the service. Even short-term absences, such as sick leave, can have a noticeable effect on capacity. The PAS team was also advised that when experienced team members leave, they are often replaced by temporary or agency staff, which can lead to a loss of continuity and affect overall service quality.

5.2 The service currently operates with very rigid job roles, which limits flexibility in managing workloads across the Planning teams. For example, technical support staff are given limited opportunities to progress into Planning Officer roles and there is limited overlap or collaboration between the policy and development management functions. However, we were told of some notable exceptions where staff have been able to progress careers and undertake relevant training. The limitations and inconsistency in career progression was a recurring theme during the review and was identified as a key factor affecting staff morale and retention. Concerns were raised that former staff had moved to neighbouring authorities in search of more specialised roles and clearer progression pathways. Additionally, the PAS team was told that there is little co-ordination between the policy and development management teams to enable effective management of workloads between teams; for example, through policy staff helping with planning applications and development management staff helping with policy work.

5.3 The role of the Planning Business Manager appears to be under-utilised within the service. In other local authorities, this role is central to managing workloads and facilitating internal communication. For example, one member of the technical support staff told the PAS team that they were unaware that pre-application fees had increased, despite the member of staff being managed by the Planning Business Manager. Concerns were also raised about the communication of fees and annual increases more generally, with staff appearing to be unaware of changes, even though we saw clear evidence from emails that the new fees information had been communicated to staff through emails. Again, this is a task that the PAS team would expect to be carried out by the Planning Business Manager.

5.4 The Agile system appears not being used effectively to monitor and manage workloads in a meaningful way even though it has the ability to do so. The PAS team was told that many of these monitoring inefficiencies are due to the planned transition back to the Uniform software system. As a result, officers have adopted their own tools, such as Excel spreadsheets to duplicate processes and maintain oversight of their caseloads. There also appears to be bottlenecks being created in the signing off process for issuing decisions with a lack of co-ordination between case officers and managers, leading to applications slipping over time or getting very late management input. Clearly, the uncertainty of a preferred software system and delays in fully utilising the benefits of Agile and Uniform are creating additional work for staff and impacting on staff morale.

6. Team management

6.1 A very positive management tool used within the development management service is the use of a strategic development panel to enable senior managers to be forewarned of development proposals and to ensure that there is a strategic steer for case officers on the approach to be taken in the consideration of such applications. It was unclear from the discussions how well this panel was being used and how this is being communicated to case officers.

6.2 Development Management service meetings are held approximately every 6–8 weeks, focusing on legislation, policy and procedure updates. The Development Management Manager explained that these are compulsory for staff to attend even though some staff were less clear about how useful they found the meetings. Regular team meetings (at least monthly) are also identified as a key objective for team managers. However, staff told the PAS team that these are typically brief, lack clear communication, and are not supported by a consistent agenda. The PAS team saw evidence of regular communication from management both through meetings and email communication, however, it is not always effective. This has contributed to mixed levels of engagement and clarity across the teams. It was

also noted that team leaders have differing management styles, with staff tending to approach different managers depending on the issue. This suggests a lack of consistency in leadership and highlights the need for greater clarity around roles, responsibilities, and organisational boundaries.

6.3 At the time of the review, a considerable amount of guidance was available, however it was not centralised and instead spread across various notes and email communications. This makes it difficult for staff to access consistent information when needed. The PAS team understands that this information has now been centralised in a shared folder for staff to access. Many councils have created a manual for all aspects of the development management function that will be held as a single document or shared folder of information. This would consist of both "how to do it" procedural matters as well as setting out a clear direction on the cultural approach that the council will take on all aspects of delivering a development management service. The PAS team will be able to point TMBC to best practice from other councils.

6.4 Appraisals were reported as taking place, but some staff questioned the priority given to appraisals to support staff development and performance management. Appraisals can be a very effective way to understand the untapped skills and ambitions of staff and can be used to both retain and motivate staff to progress their careers within a council.

6.5 The PAS team was told that new staff often face significant backlogs when joining the service, which can affect their ability to settle in and contribute effectively. This situation is perhaps inevitable when staff leave and therefore caseloads build up. However, some of the most successful planning teams will have a strict policy of not overloading new members of staff. The PAS team heard that this has been the case at TMBC for recent appointments to support staff and help with retention. This is very encouraging to hear and we suggest that this approach is continued to help with the retention and motivation of staff, whilst also addressing operational needs. This also links to the reference to consistent communication and guidance. It is really important, particularly for new members of staff, that they are not introduced to bad habits by a lack of understanding on the 'right' way of carrying out their development management responsibilities.

6.6 The PAS team was advised that the development management service undertakes complaint handling effectively and there is not a significant issue with complaints being upheld. However, there appeared to be limited feedback to officers unless a complaint was upheld. The best learning councils will include a learning through experience feedback process whereby officers can continuously learn from customer feedback, both positive and negative. In this way managers can ensure that processes and culture can be reviewed when there is negative feedback, but equally staff can be praised and recognised when positive comments are received.

7. Officer reports

7.1 TMBC has a good set of officer report templates that are used for different types of applications and includes a simple, tick box template for the simplest applications. However, the PAS team was told that the templates are poorly integrated into the Agile system, which results in unnecessary duplication of effort and additional administrative work. Also, staff reported that they do not always follow the template format. We were also told that there is limited guidance provided on how to write reports, and concerns were raised about the lack of clarity around formatting and content expectations.

7.2 Feedback indicated that there is a lack of consistency in report writing, both in style and structure and this was confirmed with the PAS team's review of a selection of reports. The PAS team was informed that a small team of officers took responsibility for designing the report templates.

7.3 The staff reported that they found writing reports through the Agile system problematic which has created additional work for officers and reduced levels of consistency.

7.4 The PAS team looked at a selection of committee reports, many of which were extremely detailed reflecting a cautious and risk-averse culture aimed at minimising the likelihood of legal challenges. Applications that are either recommended for refusal or are likely to be refused through a committee overturn will need to be detailed to ensure that ensure that any appeal can be robustly defended. However, officers also suggested that there is a lack of trust between members and officers and this contributes to the increasing length of reports. Committee reports, in particular, are written for an audience who are not Planning specialists and so it is particularly important that they are accessible in terms of length and language.

7.5 Listed below are a list of positive and negative points that the PAS team observed when reviewing a selection of officer reports:

Straightforward delegated reports

Positives:

- The target date for determination is clearly identified;
- There is a clear section on the status of the Local Plan;
- There are simplified report formats for the more straightforward reports, such as householder applications and prior notifications; and
- There is a clear format that 'tells a story' starting with the principle of development.

Areas for improvement

- The planning history is not filtered so includes planning history that is not relevant to the application;
- Some of the most straightforward applications are unnecessarily long;
- There is no section on: The Equality Act; Human Rights Act; and financial considerations; and
- There is no proactive working informative – a requirement from the Planning Practice Guide

Committee reports

Positives:

- The reason for the call in is clearly identified;
- A link to the recommendation is given at the beginning of the report;
- There is a clear explanation on the publicity that has taken place;
- There is a section on determining factors that is very helpful;
- The reports conclude with a summary of the planning balance; and
- Some of the longer reports have an executive summary.

Areas for improvement

- Some of the very long reports do not have an executive summary;
- No target determination date is identified;
- Representation of consultation responses is inconsistent – sometimes written in full and sometimes summarised;
- Some of the longer sections have conclusions, but this is inconsistent; and
- Conditions are not separated under pre-commencement, pre-occupation etc.

7.6 PAS has produced [Best Practice Guidance](#) on both delegated and committee officer reports.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The development management service provided by TMBC is not a cause for any concern nationally with the council easily meeting the nationally set standards on speed of decision-making and no immediate concerns about the quality of decision-making. The staffing levels appear sufficient for the workload, but with some usage of agency staff to address staff absences and a staff structure that would appear to adequately manage the demands in development management. A software system that is used by many councils is in operation even though it is not popular with many of the staff.

8.2 There is a concerning issue with communication within the development service with staff and managers, at times, providing contradictory information to the PAS team on policies and practices within the service. The role of the Planning Business Manager also appears to be under-utilised in comparison with other councils with similar posts and who use their business managers as a key conduit for communication within the teams.

8.3 TMBC's development management service is grappling with a number of structural and operational challenges, particularly in relation to staff support, procedural consistency, and the effective use of systems. It is evident that performance management is not currently seen by some staff as being given sufficient prominence and is identified as a cause for hindering both individual development and organisational improvement, especially for new staff to the organisation.

8.4 Another challenge is inefficiencies arising from the use of the Agile system. Although Agile is used very effectively by other councils the system's limitations are being identified by staff as reasons for unnecessary administrative burdens and restricted flexibility. These technical constraints are compounded by inconsistent practices, such as the varied use of templates and differing approaches to report formatting and content, which reflect a wider lack of standardisation across the service. A proposed move back to the Uniform needs to be progressed urgently to avoid continued inefficiencies.

8.5 It is also apparent that decision-making processes are being identified as causes for time pressures and operational demands placed on managers.. This responsibility is being seen by some managers as limiting their

capacity to scrutinise work effectively and contributes to a large backlog of applications.

8.6 The culture of the service appears to be marked by caution and a desire to reduce risk, as evidenced by the length and detail of officer reports. While this approach may serve to mitigate legal challenges, it also reflects an underlying tension between officers and members.

8.7 This review has been written without the benefit of any discussion with councillors or the users of the planning system at TMBC and, therefore, should be used as an evidence base to the wider planning peer challenge that is taking place in September 2025. This peer challenge will explore some of the themes raised in this report in much greater depth and with the benefit of discussion with a wider audience.

9. Next steps

9.1 This development management review will form an annex to the planning services peer challenge that is taking place in September 2025 and the recommendations outlined in this report will be revisited and refined as necessary once the final planning peer challenge report is agreed.

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Draft Action Plan - PAS Review

	Recommendation	Action	Timescale	Owner
R1.	Embed strategic leadership, vision and culture Build on the updated Corporate Strategy by working with the planning teams and members to better articulate how planning supports the ambition and long-term vision in the Corporate Plan. The involvement with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member is important in this process to foster a culture of trust, collaboration, and strategic thinking within the Planning Service.	Organise a 'check in' session with Leader, Cabinet Member, Area Planning Committee Chairs, CE, DPHEH and Head of Planning to review this action plan and consider additional actions/communications.	March 2026	DPHEH
R2.	Enhance governance and delivery capacity Introduce a programme of training for middle management within the Planning Service to increase their skills and awareness in delivering the corporate ambitions of the wider council. This should provide these key individuals with better confidence to deliver the ambitions set out in the emerging Local Plan.	Corporate programme for middle management already being developed – identify relevant Planning staff to attend this. Set one off individual meetings for DPHEH/HOP to meet with relevant Planning staff to talk about career and skills development. Via Team Leader meetings, the middle management within the Planning Service will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring this action plan. The meetings will be held at least monthly and will have a rotating Chair to empower these staff and provide an opportunity to develop skills within their own working environment.	Tbc In Jan/Feb 2026 From November 2026	HR via HOP DPHEH DM

R3 & DM11	Rebuild member-officer relationships Invest in targeted member development and joint officer-member working initiatives and training opportunities to reduce the “us vs them” dynamic. Promote shared ownership of the Local Plan and democratic decision-making. This can be carried out in different ways and could include: learning from experience discussions from appeal decisions and other contentious planning decisions; a joint exercise to review the format of officer reports; and chair of planning committee “meet the staff” sessions.	Links to DM11. Development Manager and Team Leaders will develop a programme of workshop sessions (via their meetings above) to discuss with Area Planning Chairs	From February 2026 onwards	DM
R4.	Review of the service structure To strengthen the effectiveness of the current Planning Service, a review of the current staff structure is required to address existing skills deficiencies—particularly in the areas of heritage and design support, which are increasingly critical to good planning outcomes. There are opportunities within the service to better support Planning Officers and build capacity without exceeding the existing budget envelope. This could be achieved through a strategic redesign of roles and responsibilities. For example, the Technical Team, which is relatively large for a service of this size, could be better utilised to provide broader support across the service.	Consider Heritage/Design/Landscape and other skills as part of wider service structure review, to be carried out by May 2026 and implemented by October 2026. This will include considering options to work on a partnership basis with neighbouring authorities. Include a specific review of Business Support Manager role and Technical Team capacity and skills, alongside implementation of validation software and move of front-line calls to the Customer Service team.	Work commences from December 2026. From November 2026	HOP HOP

	<p>Additionally, the Business Support Manager post is a valuable resource that is currently underutilised. A clearer alignment of this role with service needs could significantly enhance operational efficiency and coordination.</p> <p>This review should be approached with a view to maximising internal talent, improving service resilience, and ensuring TMBC is equipped to meet both current and future demands.</p> <p>As part of the wider review of the Planning Service, the Business Support Manager role presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen operational delivery and strategic oversight. A focused review of this post will enable TMBC to assess its alignment with service needs and unlock its potential to support key functions more effectively.</p>			
R5.	<p>Pre-application service</p> <p>In particular, this review should include a comprehensive evaluation of the Pre-Application and Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) service, using the PAS guidance as a benchmark. This is a critical area where improved structure, performance monitoring, and customer value can significantly enhance planning outcomes.</p>	Review to be undertaken by relevant staff, with specific actions implemented for new financial year.	By March 2026	DM

	<p>By refining this service, there is the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address current gaps in performance and consistency. • Introduce a robust performance management system to assess effectiveness and ensure accountability. • Reinforce the value of the PPA and pre-application process to developers, members, and residents. • Generate additional income to support service delivery and capacity building. <p>This approach will also help ensure that the service is transparent, responsive, and aligned with the Council's broader growth and regeneration objectives. It is essential that any enhancements are embedded within a framework that supports member and resident oversight, while also delivering a high-quality, commercially viable Planning Service.</p>			
R6 & DM10	<p>Planning software transfer</p> <p>As part of the ongoing transfer of planning software from Agile to IDOX Uniform, ensure that all staff are engaged in testing the software to confirm that it meets the requirements of all staff within the Planning Service who will need to use the software. This should include a learning through</p>	<p>TMBC considers this action to already be largely completed – this is evidenced by the audit undertaken on the previous project, the creation of a Service Transformation Manager role to specifically manage these issues for the return to IDOX and the agreement of specific JD insertions for key staff to be given responsibility and</p>	By January 2026	STM

	experience exercise so that the service can understand why the previous transfer from Uniform IDOX to Agile did not meet the expectations of staff and ensure the same mistakes are not replicated.	training/support to deliver on software improvements.		
R7.	Parish council and other community engagement Create a stronger relationship with parish councils and other community groups so that TMBC can maximise the local knowledge and expertise from within the local community whilst managing the expectations in delivering the Government's wider growth targets. A practical example of achieving this would be through the local community support in preparing a local list and conservation area management plans. This will ensure the local community can have a clear role in bringing forward a Local Plan that properly respects the heritage of the local area.	This will be included in the 2026/27 Annual Service Delivery Plan.	26/27	PPM
R9.	Community engagement in the Local Plan process Ensure that the local community is empowered to engage positively in the Local Plan process. This should ensure there are clear messages from the senior leadership in the council about the growth agenda that needs to be delivered at TMBC, whilst articulating how the	TMBC can evidence that this is underway through communication with key groups such as Parishes/MPs/interest groups, a leaflet drop to the whole borough etc	Ongoing until December 2026	HOP

	community can engage in a meaningful and timely way.			
R10 & DM 7	Development and agents forums Engage with developers and local agents in a more structured way. This should take the form of developer and agents forums so that the development community has a channel for finding out about key initiatives taking place at TMBC, such as key stages in the Local Plan process. The forums should also be used to improve performance and customer service and create a collaborative environment whereby the development community can help improve the Planning Service provided by TMBC.	This will be included in the 2026/27 Annual Service Delivery Plan. There will be two tiers to this – one will be a DM focused agents/developer forum and the second will be a strategic development forum that will include Planning, Housing, Economic Development.	26/27	DM (for agents' forum) DPHEH (for strategic developer forum)
R11.	Connections with wider partnerships Ensure that the Planning Service is in the best possible position to engage in local government reorganisation by improving its involvement in existing wider partnerships. For example, the Planning Service would benefit from greater involvement with the local Chamber of Commerce, Kent Nature Partnership, the Kent Association of Local Councils and joint planning initiatives involving neighbouring authorities.	Programme of meetings for DPHEH and HOP to meet with relevant contacts for introductory meetings, followed up by Planning attendance at existing partnership meetings.	By summer 2026	HOP
R12.	Member and officer planning committee learning Undertake a joint training programme with officers and members to learn from other best practice councils in running planning	Develop a 26/27 training programme for Members and Officers, including constitutional matters. This will consider use of external resources to deliver some training sessions.	Programme by March 2026, delivery throughout 26/27	DM

	committees. This should involve discussing different approaches to running planning committees and how they impact on planning outcomes. Through this joint learning TMBC should review its current planning committee protocol so that it both meets the requirements set out by Government whilst also addressing the priorities for TMBC. Reference should be made to the PAS planning committee best practice self-assessment toolkit to help the planning committee review.	Wider review of committee structure will take place alongside Government guidance on Planning committees following their recent consultation.	Dependent on Government	DPHEH
R13.	Planning appeals Introduce a learning through experience process whereby members and officers can reflect on key planning decisions made, learning from areas of best practice and avoiding, wherever possible, planning appeal overturns and costs awards. The learning should build on the current regular reporting at planning committee on appeal decisions to a more active learning approach.	Include appeal specific sessions in training programme at R12 above. This could include external trainers from PAS.	As above	DM
R14.	Planning enforcement Build on the progress that has already been made on strengthening planning enforcement performance by creating a culture of proactive enforcement. This should involve local members in helping officers to prioritise planning enforcement activities that makes the biggest impact to	A review of the Local Enforcement Plan is due to be completed in 25/26. Completion of business case for implementation of software to help manage enforcement cases and provide real time information to Members – this will be part of the ASDP.	By March 2026 By March 2026	HOP STM

	areas of most concern to the local community.			
	Development Management Review			
	Short term			
DM1	Review the current forms of communication within the development management teams to understand why staff are not responding effectively to management directions and guidance.	<p>A central database has been created and is accessible via the Teams folder, providing a single point of reference for key service information. All key communications/process/legal information are stored here.</p> <p>Development Management service-wide meetings will continue to take place as scheduled led by the Development Manager and his management team. Team Leaders will take an active part in these meetings, including presenting items.</p> <p>In addition, the Planning Officer team meetings — which are led by Team Leaders - are scheduled to occur at least once a month to support team cohesion and communication.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>DM</p> <p>DM</p>
DM2	Undertake awareness training in the use of Power BI so that all staff can appreciate its use as a project management tool and to enable all managers to use it to monitor performance within the development management teams.	<p>All staff have access to the relevant Power BI dashboards. and Team Leaders have been tasked with encouraging their teams to actively use these tools to support case management and performance monitoring.</p> <p>New power-bi dashboards together with training of the new Enterprise system (when operational) under Idox will be prioritised.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>During 2026</p>	<p>DM</p> <p>STM</p>

DM3	Review the current guidance provided to staff on their day-to-day work in development management and internal communication channels to inform staff of procedural matters. This should involve all staff to ensure it meets the needs of everyone involved in development management work	As set out in DM1 a dedicated Teams folder has been created to centralise key service information. All key communications which involve processes will be directed through this channel with Development Manager and Team Leaders responsible for ensuring it is updated regularly. This will be a standing item on service meetings to ensure this is fit for purpose for use.	Ongoing	DM
DM4	Introduce a process for monitoring the time taken to validate applications so that there is a better understanding of how validation is impacting on performance management and procedural efficiencies.	This is an objective for the Business Manager and has been tasked as a priority for power-BI reporting following the return to Uniform.	By March 2026	PBM
	Medium Term			
DM5	Ensure that the action plan is delivered that has involved a skills audit of all staff across the two teams to identify specialist expertise, service-relevant skills, knowledge gaps, and individual development goals. The implementation of the action plan should include all members of the service and serve as an ongoing reference point. It also presents a valuable opportunity to support future resource planning, as this work will facilitate improvements to internal communications and workload balance.	This work is already partly underway. The Planning Business Manager has been tasked with ensuring the Skills Matrix is up to date for the technical team. A similar Skills Matrix will be developed for Planning Officers and will be in place for use by managers from the 26/27 financial year.	By March 2026 By March 2026	PBM DM
DM6	Review the current approach to providing pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) to create a more customer-focused service. This should be linked to a consist approach to	The pre-application module will be reintroduced as part of the transition back to the Uniform system.	By end of 2025	STM

	dealing with amendments to live planning applications. The review should use PAS Guidance on Pre-Applications and PPAs .	In addition, an 8-week target has now been introduced, for completion of pre-apps. This will be supported by confirmation of the timeframes on the Council's website. This target is intended to support more consistent and timely handling of pre-application cases across the service.		
DM8	Keep the revised officer scheme of delegation under review to monitor how effective it is in allowing pressure to be taken off managers to sign-off all applications. Where appropriate this should be accompanied with further training for affected staff to ensure it is easing workload pressures and improving the quality of service to customers.	A revised Scheme of Delegation is already in place and is currently being updated to increase the resilience within the team. This flexible approach will ensure that the scheme supports service delivery without placing undue pressure on teams during periods of reduced staffing or high workload.	Ongoing	HOP
DM9	Introduce a learning through experience process whereby the teams can learn from customer feedback, both positive and negative, so that the council can continuously learn from feedback received and improve the service it provides to customers accordingly.	This will be a standing item on the service meetings where customer feedback will be discussed and ideas for change supported.	Ongoing	HOP/DM
	Long Term			
DM11	Review officer report templates so staff can take a more proportionate amount of time to prepare officer reports. This should include streamlined reports for more straight forward decisions using the PAS Best Practice in Officer Report Writing for guidance.	See R3 above where Members will also be involved in suggested streamlining, together with a cohort of officers.	By end of March 2026	DM

DPHEH – Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health

DM – Development Manager

HOP – Head of Planning

PBM – Planning Business Manager

PPM – Planning Policy Manager

STM – Service Transformation Manager

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Agenda Item 11

The minutes of meetings of Advisory Panels, Boards and Other Groups are attached. Any recommendations arising from these minutes are set out as individual items on this agenda.

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

MINUTES

Thursday, 20th November, 2025

Present: Cllr R W Dalton (Chair), Cllr Mrs M Tatton (Vice-Chair),
Cllr R P Betts, Cllr B Banks, Cllr M D Boughton and Cllr M Taylor

Together with representatives of Addington, Aylesford*, Birling, Borough Green, Burham, Ditton*, East Malling and Larkfield, East Peckham, Hadlow, Hildenborough, Ightham, Kings Hill, Leybourne*, Platt, Plaxtol, Shipbourne*, Snodland*, West Malling, Wouldham, Wrotham Parish/Town Councils, County Cllr H Rayner and Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) (Parish Cllr S Barker)

(*participated via MS Teams)

In attendance: Councillors D Davis*, D Keers, M Rhodes* and K Tanner* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bell*, P Boxall, L Chapman*, M A Coffin, S Crisp*, S M Hammond, P M Hickmott*, Mereworth, Ryarsh, Trottiscliffe, Watlington, County Cllr S Hudson, County Cllr A Kennedy and County Cllr D Sian.

(*apologies submitted for in-person attendance and participated via MS Teams)

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PPP 25/26 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

PPP 25/27 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPP 25/28 UPDATE ON ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

There were no matters required to be updated.

PPP 25/29 UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

A comprehensive update was provided by the Council Leader (Cllr M Boughton) and the Chief Executive (Mr D Roberts) to members of the Parish Partnership Panel on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation process, which outlined the Borough Council's preferred three-unitary model, its financial and operational implications, the anticipated timeline, and the expected impact on Parish and Town Councils.

Following consideration and recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet had approved for Option 3A, the three-unitary model with the West Kent authority comprising Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone areas, to be submitted to the Government by the deadline of 28 November 2025 as the Borough Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation. This option demonstrated balanced populations while providing sufficient scale to withstand financial shocks, respected local identities and maintained existing boundaries, aligned closely with other public sector providers, such as the NHS, Kent Police and Fire and Rescue Services, and represented an option with the lowest implementation and disaggregation costs among the multi-unitary options.

It was expected that, following submission of the proposals for new unitary councils in November, the Government consultation would be commissioned in early 2026 with a final decision on geography to be announced in the Summer. Elections for the new shadow unitary authorities would be planned for May 2027, with the new unitary councils operational from April 2028.

Particular reference was made to the opportunities and risks for Parish and Town councils, including the potential to strengthen their role and scope in the context of larger unitaries and the creation of Area Committees to bridge the gap between parishes and unitary councils, with further discussion around the scope of devolution of powers from Whitehall to a new strategic combined authority, although frustration was shared over the lack of clarity from the Government about a timetable for devolution to happen in Kent while Local Government Reorganisation was underway. It was noted that a joint statement by the Parish Alliance was being prepared for submission to the Government about the key role of Parish Councils in any future plans for Local Government. Support for the joint statement was being sought from Parishes and those Councils that had not yet indicated their support were encouraged to do so.

PPP 25/30 UPDATE ON LOCAL PLAN

The Head of Planning (Mr J Bailey) provided an update on the ongoing public consultation of the Regulation 18 (2) version of the draft Local Plan, demonstrating the online platform, explaining housing and employment targets, site allocations, evidence base, and the importance of parish and resident feedback. Participation via the website was encouraged for efficiency, although alternative submission methods were also available.

In order to meet the minimum objectively assessed housing need calculated using the standard method introduced by the Government, the Local Plan must deliver 1,097 dwellings per year throughout the plan period from 2024 to 2042, totalling 19,746 homes. Employment needs were set at approximately 60,000 for office and 301,000 for light/general industrial and storage/distribution, creating a total of over 360,000 square metres of employment floorspace, as indicated by the available evidence. The challenge of meeting these targets and the importance of site allocations and Land Availability Assessments were recognised.

It was highlighted that while the Local Plan at Regulation 18 stage had very limited weight as a material planning consideration, it would be gaining weight as it progressed through the Local Plan process. The Borough Council aimed to submit the Plan by December 2026, in line with government deadlines set for plan submission under the existing plan-making system, despite the impending Local Government Reorganisation.

Particular reference was made to engagement with Parish Councils and residents during the consultation process, as detailed feedback and responses, including specific concerns and potential benefits of development, would be valuable to inform the next stages of the plan-making. It was suggested that relevant Ward Councillors could be copied into submissions made by Parishes and residents to ensure awareness.

PPP 25/31 UPDATE ON PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

An update on Planning Enforcement function of Planning Services was provided by the Planning Enforcement Manager (Mr J Solomons) to members of the Parish Partnership Panel, covering team structure, performance improvements, review of the Local Enforcement Plan, s215 Direct Action on Untidy Land and migration underway to the IDOX Uniform system.

Concerns were raised by Parish representatives about enforcement effectiveness, resource constraints, and data accessibility, in response to which it was explained that with Enforcement being a discretionary service, it would always have to be balanced against the Council's other priorities in terms of resourcing. Suggestions were made for parish-

funded Tree Preservation Order reviews and potential legislative changes to enforcement fees were discussed.

It was agreed that an update on Enforcement would be provided at the next meeting of the Parish Partnership Panel in February 2026, including progress on Article 4 directions and digitalisation projects, with ongoing efforts to improve transparency and responsiveness.

PPP 25/32 INFORMAL LANDFILL REGISTER

An informal Landfill Register was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Planning (Cllr M Taylor), which was compiled with input from Parish and Town Councils to record information about historical landfill and contaminated sites, with an aim to preserve local knowledge.

The Panel discussed its use as evidence for the emerging Local Plan, its value for environmental health and future contaminated land assessments, and noted that it would be reviewed by the Environmental Health Team as part of the process to update the Borough Council's contaminated land strategy to ensure the statutory duty was fulfilled.

PPP 25/33 UPDATE ON THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ENFORCEMENT TEAM

Members of the Parish Partnership Panel were provided with an update by the Cabinet Member for Community Services (Cllr D Keers) on the success of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Enforcement Team, contracted by the Borough Council from May to November 2025, and the recent approval of Cabinet for the scheme to continue for a further two-year period in 2026/27, under a rebranded new name of 'Safer Neighbourhoods Team'.

A request for contribution to the cost had been circulated to all Parish and Town Councils within the borough, with a flat-rate funding of £2,000 per parish per year suggested. However, in recognition of some feedback raised by smaller parishes about affordability, the Cabinet Member for Community Services agreed to review the proposed fee structure in liaison with Officers.

PPP 25/34 UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts) and the Climate Change Officer (Ms L Stewart) presented updates on the Borough Council's recent climate and sustainability actions and initiatives, including promotion of food waste recycling campaigns, single-use plastics reduction, energy efficiency projects at leisure centres, and the forthcoming green business grants.

Particular attention was drawn to two site visits arranged for members of the Parish Partnership Panel on 27 November 2025, to learn operation

at the Allington Household Waste Recycling Centre and the Blaise Farm Composting Facility.

A suggestion was made by the Chair of Kent Association of Local Councils (Tonbridge and Malling) (Parish Cllr S Barker) for climate change actions of the Parish and Town Councils to be recognised and promoted as part of the borough-wide initiatives, which was welcomed by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy.

PPP 25/35 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Community Awards

Suggestion was made on improving communication to parishes for future rounds of the award scheme to maximise parish awareness and participation.

(2) Information relating to Budget for Street Scene Services

In response to a query raised by a representative of the Ightham Parish Council, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy (Cllr R Betts) advised that information being requested on the allocation and expected outcomes of the street cleansing budget would be provided as soon as available.

(3) Promotion of Local Plan Community Engagement Meetings

As part of the commitment to engage local communities on the Regulation 18 (2) consultation of the Local Plan, a series of public meetings and drop-in sessions had been arranged in partnership with Parish Councils, including a virtual session on 15 December 2025 for those unable to participate in person. Details could be viewed on the website at: [Local Plan community engagement events – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council](#).

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM

MINUTES

Monday, 24th November, 2025

Present: Cllr L Athwal (Chair), Cllr D W King (Vice-Chair), Friends of Mill Stream (Vice-Chair), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr A Cope, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr R W G Oliver, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr S Pilgrim, Cllr K S Tunstall, County Cllr P Stepto and County Cllr M Hood

Together with representatives from:

Angel Indoor Bowls Club
Feast
Imago Community
Rotary Club of Tonbridge
TBUG
Tonbridge Civic Society
Tonbridge District Scout Council
Tonbridge Historical Society
Tonbridge Lions Club
Tonbridge Sports Association
Tonbridge U3A

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M R Rhodes.

TCF 25/39 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members nominated for this meeting.

TCF 25/40 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

TCF 25/41 UPDATE ON ANY ACTION IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST MINUTES

(1) Minute Number TCF 25/35 (meeting held on 1 September 2025) - Community Governance Review

During the summer, an initial consultation was held to determine whether residents were in favour of establishing a Town Council in Tonbridge. The findings of this consultation were presented to Full Council on 28 October 2025. The report not only shared the consultation outcomes, but also sought approval to proceed with a

further, more detailed consultation focused on the potential structure of a future Town Council.

The recommendations contained within the report were unanimously supported by Full Council. Following this endorsement, a second round of consultation commenced on 31 October 2025. As part of this consultation, the Borough Council website was updated including the survey questions. In addition, regular posts had been made on social media and direct emails sent to residents on 5 November 2025, encouraging participation and to express their views.

The consultation period was scheduled to run until 12 December 2025. To date, 805 responses had been received, which exceeded expectations, given the technical and detailed nature of the survey questions.

Upon conclusion of the consultation, all responses would be analysed and used to formulate recommendations. These recommendations would be discussed with the cross-member working group in early January 2026. Subsequently, a final report would be produced and presented to Full Council on 24 February 2026, at which point a decision would be made regarding the establishment of Tonbridge Town Council.

**(2) Minute Number TCF 25/34 (meeting held on 1 September 2025)
Tonbridge Town Centre**

Tom Freke reported that the Civic Society had responded to, and engaged with plans concerning the area east of the High Street in Tonbridge. The Civic Society believed that any development plan must be carefully managed to address the town's parking usage and requirements. Councillor Adem Mehmet, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration addressed the parking issues, highlighting that the car parks were usually empty except occasionally in peak periods, and a balanced approach was required. Feedback from the consultation revealed a clear preference for retaining the car park located between the High Street and Sainsbury's and Cabinet had taken this feedback into account and was actively exploring the possibility of increasing parking capacity in this area. In terms of phasing, the new Angel Centre was identified as a key priority, and attention was also turning towards the riverside area. The parking element, including the prospect of increasing provision, would continue to be reviewed as the project moved into the planning application stage.

TCF 25/42 PRESENTATION FROM HIKENT

Following an invitation from the Forum, Brian Piner provided a brief overview of 'Hi Kent', a registered charity for deaf and hard of hearing

people in Kent. Established in 1986, the charity provided practical support and services to help people manage hearing loss and raise awareness of their needs. The charity offered a wide range of services, including Hearing Aid Aftercare Clinics, education and training, assistive equipment, support services, assessments, information and advice.

Brian Piner took the opportunity to raise concern regarding parking charges for volunteers and in response, organisations impacted were asked to contact the Chair or Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services. County Councillor Mark Hood further enquired about the possibility of reviewing the existing parking charges and it was clarified that the Administration currently had no plans to introduce changes to the parking charges.

The Chair proposed, seconded by Councillor Anna Cope, and it was unanimously agreed that 'Hi Kent' be appointed as a member of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

RESOLVED: That 'Hi Kent' be appointed as a member of the Tonbridge Community Forum.

MATTERS RAISED IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

TCF 25/43 KENT POLICE UPDATE

Due to unforeseen circumstances, a representative from Kent Police was unable to attend and an update would be circulated outside of the meeting.

TCF 25/44 LOCAL PLAN

The consultation for the Local Plan was currently underway. This stage, known as Regulation 18, represented a key phase and was the last major opportunity for public consultation. It was strongly encouraged that all interested parties submit their views at this time. Details of the Regulation 19 consultation were highlighted and further information would be shared in due course.

A series of public engagement events were being organised to facilitate input from the community. These included:

- 25 November 2025 - Drop-in session to be held at the Council Offices, Gibson Building, West Malling, 4.00pm to 7.00pm
- 27 November 2025 – In person meeting held at the Angel Centre at 7.30pm
- 4 December 2025 – Drop-in session to be held at Tonbridge Castle, 4.00pm – 7.00pm
- 15 December 2025 – Online webinar at 7.00pm (to register click [here](#)).

Comments on the Local Plan could be submitted online utilising the Commonplace software platform at <https://tmbcconsult.commonplace.is>.

TCF 25/45 TONBRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

The Forum received a presentation from Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health, on the Tonbridge Infrastructure Statement, which served as a formal mechanism to collect information on proposed local projects that might require funding or partnership support. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council introduced Parish Infrastructure Statements to enable Parishes to identify and bring forward projects within their communities. These projects could then be considered during section 106 discussions related to development sites, ensuring local needs were recognised in planning decisions.

Parishes were responsible for leading on their statements, identifying projects that might seek funding through section 106 or that might require collaborative working for delivery. It was important to note that these statements did not cover strategic infrastructure, which was instead addressed by the Borough Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan or by the relevant statutory authorities' delivery plans.

As Tonbridge itself was not parished, the Borough Council acted as the most local level of government for the area, meaning the Borough Council must take ownership of the Tonbridge Infrastructure Statement. The Tonbridge Community Forum remained a key consultative body in this process.

In terms of progress to date and next steps, the Borough Council's Head of Planning previously attended a Tonbridge Community Forum meeting to discuss section 106 and infrastructure statements. Since then, the Forum had gathered community feedback on possible projects; this list was not exhaustive. Projects already included in the Borough Council's Capital Plan had also been considered.

Projects had been categorised and discussed to clarify responsibilities, outline next steps, and suggest potential funding sources. Following the discussions at the Forum, a draft Tonbridge Infrastructure Plan would be presented to the Borough Council's Cabinet for approval in January or February 2026. Projects lacking cost estimates might see actions included to address this gap.

All of this was set against the backdrop of ongoing local government changes, including the Community Governance Review in Tonbridge and wider Local Government Reorganisation in Kent. An annual review of the Tonbridge Infrastructure Statement, as was common in Parishes, would be proposed as part of its adoption.

In response to a question regarding how schools obtain funding, with particular reference to the ongoing need for additional school places, it

was noted that Kent County Council included academies in their growth projections, taking into account both population forecasts and the demand for pupil places. When considering broader community facilities, such as the provision of additional sports amenities that would benefit the wider community, it was highlighted that schools could bring potential projects to the attention of both the planning authority and Kent County Council. Such proposals could then be considered for future development opportunities. Collaboration with organisations such as Sport England would also be sought where appropriate.

County Councillor Mark Hood advised that consideration had previously been given to School Streets initiative, however it was emphasised that the success of such schemes was dependent on the active buy-in and support from the school itself.

The Chair suggested that a sub-group be formed to identify and explore potential projects in the new year.

TCF 25/46 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE PENNY SHELTER, RIVER WALK

The Penny Shelter had recently sustained damage after a waste collection vehicle reversed into it. The responsible party had accepted liability, and the issue was now being handled through the insurance process. Following the completion of the insurance claim, the Borough Council would consider whether to replace the shelter on a like-for-like basis or to explore alternative design options. Community input on this matter was welcomed, during which it was suggested that a permanent stage in the area would be a positive addition. The Historical Society emphasised the importance of reinstating the shelter due to its historical significance and proposed the installation of a plaque to explain the history of River Walk.

It was suggested that a resident survey could help determine the preferred outcome for the shelter and the wider River Walk area, noting there was potential to accommodate both a shelter and a stage. However, it was pointed out that, with several consultations already ongoing, it may not be practical to conduct another survey at this time. The parameters of what could be achieved remained unclear until the insurance process was finalised.

Questions regarding possible restrictions on developments in the area were raised, as well as a desire to see improved amenities along the river walk and restrictions on vehicle movements. Any groups or individuals with views or suggestions on these matters were encouraged to contact Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

TCF 25/47 SPEED LIMIT ON LOWER HAYSDEN LANE

Concern was raised regarding the current speed limit of 40 mph between Brook Street and Haysden Country Park. This section of road was hazardous due to its narrowness, raising significant safety concerns particularly for cyclists and pedestrians. The question of whether it was possible to lower the speed limit in this area had been raised.

County Councillor Mark Hood explained that requests had been made to Kent County Council over a number of years to reduce the speed limit. However, Kent Police had stated that they would not allow a reduction in speed limit unless the road was illuminated, which would require the installation of street lights. Unfortunately, there was currently no funding available to install the necessary lighting along the lane, therefore achieving a reduction in the speed limit was not currently possible.

Efforts had been made in collaboration with Kent County Council Right of Ways officers and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's Leisure Services. These parties had met and reached an agreement whereby the bridleway would access the end of the driveway to Haysden Country Park. Rights of Way were currently in the process of drafting a proposal for this scheme.

Should there be any developments or progress regarding this issue, County Councillor Hood would provide an update to the Forum.

TCF 25/48 PROMOTION OF UPCOMING EVENTS

(1) Tonbridge Rotary Christmas Festival

Tonbridge's popular festive tradition would return with a spectacular community celebration on 30 November 2025. The High Street would be closed to traffic and transformed into a bustling Christmas market. There would also be a family fun fair in Sovereign Way Mid car park and a firework finale at 5.30pm at the Big Bridge, near River Walk.

(1) Tonbridge Christmas Fest – Bailey Lawn only

Tonbridge Castle would come alive with festive magic at the Tonbridge Christmas Fest which would be held between 12 – 23 December 2025.

(2) Historical Society

The Tonbridge Historical Society would be hosting The History of Pantomime on 11 December 2025 and Commonwealth War Graves on 12 February 2026. Both events would be held at the Angel Centre and commence at 7.45pm.

(3) Lions Club

Since 1950, the Lions Club had been supporting local charities, good causes and disadvantaged individuals. The club would be collecting donations throughout December on Fridays and Saturdays in Waitrose car park and Sainsbury's east side, in Tonbridge.

(4) Tonbridge School Market

Tonbridge School Christmas Market would be held on 30 November 2025, 10.00am – 4.00pm.

(5) Round Table Santa Sleigh

From 12 December to 20 December 2025, the Round Table would be collecting food donations on behalf of FEAST and Sustain Community Food Banks who support people in need by running community larders in Tonbridge for families and individuals on a low income.

TCF 25/49 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Update on the Banking Hub

Sally Pearce delivered an update regarding the status of the banking hub in Tonbridge. It was confirmed that a suitable site had been identified on the High Street and negotiations were taking place.

The meeting ended at 8.58 pm

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES

Monday, 1st December, 2025

Present: Cllr A Mehmet (Chair), County Cllr S Hudson (Vice-Chair), Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr A Cope, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr D Thornewell, County Cllr M Hood, County Cllr H Rayner, County Cllr D Sian and County Cllr P Stepto

In attendance: Councillors L Chapman*, M R Rhodes*, R V Roud and Mrs M Tatton* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Barker (representative of the Kent Association of Local Councils)* and County Cllr Mrs T Dean.

(*apologies submitted for in-person attendance and participated via MS Teams)

PART 1 - PUBLIC

JTB 25/15 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Members noted the recent appointment of Councillor Adem Mehmet as Chair of the Joint Transportation Board.

JTB 25/16 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

JTB 25/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

JTB 25/18 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on 16 June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**JTB 25/19 PARKING UPDATE REPORT**

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services covered the progress with current parking work and reviews, including the larger area Parking Reviews and updates on the phased Parking Action Plan.

Particular attention was brought to Phase 15 of the parking review process. This phase had previously undergone informal consultation and was subsequently presented to the Board in June 2025 for consideration. The proposals arising from this consultation were currently being transferred to the Kent County Council's ParkMap system, which was a necessary step in preparing for the next stage of the process. Formal consultation on these proposals was scheduled to take place in spring 2026. Following the completion of this consultation, the outcomes and any further recommendations would be reported back to a future meeting of the Joint Transportation Board for review and decision.

The Board received an update regarding the ongoing and planned parking reviews within the borough. It was reported that the formal consultation for the Hildenborough Parking Review had previously been discussed at the Board meeting held in June 2025. The implementation of the associated proposals was scheduled to take place in the New Year, following the sealing of the relevant traffic regulation parking order. The Borough Council had already undertaken informal consultation concerning the Hadlow Parking Review. Plans were in place to commence the formal consultation process early in the forthcoming year.

Additionally, a future review of parking arrangements in Snodland was programmed. This review would be initiated once sufficient capacity became available within the schedule, however it was raised by local Members that parking patterns had returned to normal following the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such, it might no longer be necessary to continue with the parking review and that discontinuing the review at this stage would help maintain the current balance and avoid unnecessary disturbance.

Attention was brought to the proposals in respect of Rocks Road parking. There had been a suggestion to increase the size of areas with uncontrolled parking, thereby allowing for more ad hoc parking opportunities. However, it was acknowledged that implementing this suggestion could prove challenging due to the road widths and visibility issues, particularly concerning driveways and the pedestrian entrance on the south side of the road.

Members enquired about the timetable for the review of parking charges in Martin Square. It was clarified that the current charges were

implemented in May 2025 and that a review would take place after twelve months once parking patterns had been established. However, this was not an automatic process and would be based on feedback received.

JTB 25/20 HIGHWAYS FORWARD WORKS PROGRAMME 2024/25 AND 2025/26

The report of the Kent County Council Highways and Transportation summarised schemes programmed for delivery in 2024/25 and 2025/26. The report provided an update on Road, Footway and Cycleway Renewal and Preservation Schemes (Appendix A), Drainage Repairs and Improvements (Appendix B), Street Lighting (Appendix C), Transportation and Safety Schemes (Appendix D), Developer Funded Works (Appendix E), Bridge Works (Appendix F), Traffic Systems (Appendix G), Combined Members Grant (Appendix H) and Road Markings (Appendix I).

Members enquired about the status of works to the street lighting column located on Wrotham Road (reference JWCCP13). Specifically, questions were raised as to whether the works had been abandoned. In the event that the project had indeed been discontinued, clarification was requested regarding whether Kent County Council's asset register would be amended to reflect this change.

Members were provided with details of the work entailed in the footway protection works in Tonbridge and an update was sought on an unlisted large ornate light fitting in Tonbridge High Street which had been removed.

JTB 25/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business raised.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

JTB 25/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.02 pm

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Executive Decisions Record - November 2025

Decision Number	Title	Cabinet Member	Date of Decision	Date Published	Call-in period ends	Called in	Scrutiny Committee Consideration	Referred back to Cabinet	Referred back to Council	Council referred to Cabinet	Date Decision Effective
D250118MEM	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2025/26 Update	Housing, Environment and Economy	12.11.25	12.11.25	19.11.25						20.11.25
D250119MEM	Business Rates Discretionary Relief Awards	Leader (on behalf of Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Techncial Services)	13.11.25	18.11.25	25.11.25						26.11.25
D250120MEM	Application for Section 13A 1(C) Council Tax Discount	Leader (on behalf of Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Techncial Services)	13.11.25	18.11.25	25.11.25						26.11.25
D250121CAB	Local Government Reorganisation - Business Case Submission	Cabinet	18.11.25	19.11.25	26.11.27						27.11.15
D250122CAB	Review of Fees and Charges 2025/26 - Waste, Leisure and Environmental Health										
D250123CAB	TA Recharge Policy										
D250124CAB	Annual Service Delivery Plan 2025-26 - Quarter 2										
D250125CAB	AQMAs										
D250126CAB	ASB Enforcement Team - Update and funding										
D250127CAB	Waste Minimisation and Waste Management at Events on Council Owned Land										
D250128MEM	Cross Channel Geopark	Cabinet Member for Planning	20.11.25	21.11.25	28.11.25						29.11.25
D250129MEM	Green Business Grant Scheme Round 6	Housing, Environment and Economy	28.11.25	01.12.25	08.12.25						09.12.25

Decision pending	Call in period	Key Decision	Private	Urgent
	Subject to call in			

URG - outside of budget and policy framework

*Due to Bank Holiday

Number of monthly call-ins:	0
Number of call-ins for year:	0

Executive Decisions Record - December 2025

Decision Number	Title	Cabinet Member	Date of Decision	Date Published	Call-in period ends	Called in	Scrutiny Committee Consideration	Referred back to Cabinet	Referred back to Council	Council referred to Cabinet	Date Decision Effective
D250130MEM	Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024/25	Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration	2.12.25	4.12.25	11.12.25						12.12.25
D250131MEM	Authority Monitoring report 2024/25	Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration	2.12.25	4.12.25	11.12.25						12.12.25
D250132MEM	20-28 Martin Square, Larkfield - Lease	Housing, Environment and Economy	3.12.25	11.12.25	18.12.25						19.12.25
Decision pending	Call in period	Key Decision	Private	Urgent							
	Subject to call in										

URG - outside of budget and policy framework

*Due to Bank Holiday

Number of monthly call-ins:	0
Number of call-ins for year:	0

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS**

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, at least 28 days before a key decision is expected to be taken a Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions will be published. A 'key decision' is an executive decision which is likely either

- (a) to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or functions to which the decision relates.

'Significant' when applied to expenditure or savings shall mean a sum in excess of £100,000 or such other sum as may be specified in any enactment or other statutory provision.

or

- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the local authority.

The Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions sets out:

- (a) the matter in respect of which a key decision is to be made;
- (b) details of the decision taker and the date on which the key decision will be made;
- (c) a list of documents to be submitted to the decision taker for consideration in relation to the matter;
- (d) the address from which, subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of or extracts from any document listed is available and the procedure for requesting details.

All key decisions will be made by the Cabinet on the dates specified unless otherwise stated*. The agenda and documents to be submitted to the Cabinet (unless they contain exempt information) will be available for inspection at the Council Offices and on the website 5 clear working days before the meeting. Copies or extracts are available from committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk or Democratic Services, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4LZ.

This document also gives notice of the Council's intention to hold a private meeting (or part thereof) of the Cabinet. It indicates any items where it is likely that the public will be excluded because public discussion would disclose confidential or exempt information and the reasons in each case. Any representations against the intention to hold a private meeting may be made to committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk or Committee Services, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4LZ.

Members of the Cabinet and their areas of responsibility:

Councillor Matt Boughton (Leader)
Councillor Robin Betts (Housing, Environment and Economy)
Councillor Martin Coffin (Deputy Leader; and Finance, Waste and Technical Services)
Councillor Des Keers (Community Services)
Councillor Adem Mehmet (Infrastructure and Tonbridge Regeneration)
Councillor Mike Taylor (Planning)

(*Note: This Notice is subject to change as the reporting/governance timetable may change and it may become necessary to defer decisions until the next meeting of Cabinet)

NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS – JANUARY TO MARCH 2026

Description of Decision	Date of Cabinet	Who is to be consulted	Contact Officer	Documents to be submitted to Cabinet	Public or Private (reason if Private)
Review of Fees and Charges - Legal, Committee Services, Street Name and Numbering and Court Summons for Council Tax	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 28 Feb 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer	Officer report	Public
Review of Fees and Charges 2026/27 - Discretionary Planning Services	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 27 Feb 2026	Internal consultation via Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee and Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members	Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health	Officer report	Public
HMO and Caravan Site Licensing Fee Charges 2026/27	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 27 Feb 2026	Internal consultation via Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee and Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members	Head of Housing and Health	Officer report	Public

Description of Decision	Date of Cabinet	Who is to be consulted	Contact Officer	Documents to be submitted to Cabinet	Public or Private (reason if Private)
Homelessness Strategy - Adoption	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee and Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members. (Note: This matter is a non-key decision until the Strategy is presented for adoption).	Head of Housing and Health	Officer report	Public
Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Calculator	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee and Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health	Officer report	Public
Decisions relating to the Government Programme of Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation (if required)	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Chief Executive	Officer report	Public

Description of Decision	Date of Cabinet	Who is to be consulted	Contact Officer	Documents to be submitted to Cabinet	Public or Private (reason if Private)
Lease Proposal for Temporary Accommodation Properties in Tonbridge	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Head of Administrative and Property Services	Officer report	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Lease Arrangements at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Head of Administrative and Property Services	Officer report	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Description of Decision	Date of Cabinet	Who is to be consulted	Contact Officer	Documents to be submitted to Cabinet	Public or Private (reason if Private)
Lease Renewal at Martin Square, Larkfield	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Head of Administrative and Property Services	Officer report	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Proposals for Future of Council-owned Assets in Tonbridge	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Head of Housing and Health	Officer report	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Description of Decision	Date of Cabinet	Who is to be consulted	Contact Officer	Documents to be submitted to Cabinet	Public or Private (reason if Private)
Bluebell Hill Temporary Accommodation Scheme	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Head of Administrative and Property Services	Officer report	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board - Recommendations (If any)	Between 1 Jan 2026 and 31 Mar 2026	Internal consultation via Cabinet as detailed in the reports to be considered by Members.	Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Manager	Officer report	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
<p>Contact: committee.services@tmhc.gov.uk</p> <p>Published: 9 December 2025</p>					

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Agenda Item 14

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

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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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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item 20

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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