

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES

Tuesday, 10th February, 2026

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

Cllrs S A Hudson, Mrs A S Oakley, M R Rhodes and K B Tanner were also present pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 23 and participated via MS Teams.

An apology for in person attendance was received from Councillor M A Coffin who observed via MS Teams.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 26/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CB 26/18 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6 January 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

CB 26/19 SETTING THE BUDGET 2026/27

Further to the reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the cycle the joint report of the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services updated the Cabinet on issues relating to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and gave details of the necessary procedures to be followed in order to set the budget for 2026/27.

Members noted that at the time of publishing the report the final settlement had not been confirmed and all figures contained in the report were based on the provisional local government settlement. Whilst the settlement for 2026/27 was better than expected within the MTFS there was an overall funding decrease on the notional equivalent funding for 2025/26 of £182,000 (2%). This decrease continued with further reductions of £335,000 (3.7%) and £378,000 (4.4%) in the 2027/28 and 2028/29 financial years respectively. This meant that in 2028/29 the

Borough Council would receive reduced grant of £895,000 (9.8%) compared to the notional amount for 2025/26.

Since the publication of the report, the Head of Finance advised that the final local government finance settlement had been confirmed. Whilst there was no fundamental impact on the proposed budget for 2026/27, there would be a reduction of £173,000 in 2027/28 resulting in a change to the General Revenue Reserve which would reduce to £4.6M (from £4.8M).

However, as the provisional settlement was better than the prudent approach taken in the MTFs this allowed additional funds to be targeted to key priorities, such as the regeneration of the Tonbridge Town Centre.

In addition, the Business Rates Reset had resulted in previous gains being eliminated from the baseline settlement. There were a number of properties awaiting valuation by the Valuation Office that could give additional growth above the current baseline level.

Referendum principles meant that council tax could only rise by greater than 3% of £5. A 3% increase in the Borough Council element of the council tax bill represented a council tax at Band D for 2026/27 of £252.65 a cash increase of £7.35 per annum.

Allowing for the issues summarised above, and detailed in the report, the Funding Gap had reduced to zero over the medium-term but was dependent on committed savings of £200,000 in relation to office accommodation, £200,000 costs in relation to temporary accommodation and £400,000 service fee income from the Leisure Trust.

Finally, it was recommended that six schemes be added to the Capital Plan 2026/27.

Due regard was given to the financial and value for money considerations, the assessment of risk and the legal implications. Whilst the uncertainty surrounding local government finances had reduced, issues around longer-term funding could give rise to further funding gaps in later years. The impact of current economic conditions, such as inflation and interest rates, were difficult to predict and made financial planning challenging.

In recognition that the Borough Council was required to set a budget and the proposals presented best value for money, Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Taylor seconded and Cabinet

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) The details of the final grant settlement and the associated adjustments to future years be noted and approved;

- (2) the Revenue Estimates, as presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2026, together with the subsequent adjustments and transfers detailed at paragraph 9, be endorsed and adopted by Council;
- (3) the Capital Strategy as presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2026, be endorsed and adopted by Council;
- (4) the Capital Plan be updated, as set out at paragraph 11.13 and adopted by the Council;
- (5) the prudential indicators listed in paragraph 12.7, including the liability benchmark indicator and 12.11, be endorsed and adopted by the Council;
- (6) for the financial year 2026/27, the Borough Council's annual minimum revenue provision be noted as 'nil'; subject to the comment at paragraph 12.8;
- (7) the updated MTFs, set out at Annex 10a be noted and endorsed;
- (8) the special expenses calculated in accordance with the Special Expenses Scheme and set out at Annex 13b, be endorsed;
- (9) the Statement provided by the Head of Finance as to the Robustness of the Estimates and the Adequacy of the Reserves, as set out at Annex 16a, be noted and endorsed; and
- (10) the calculation of the Borough Council's council tax requirement at Annex 17 be noted.

***Recommended to Council**

CB 26/20 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX 2026/27

The joint report of the Chief Executive, Head of Finance, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services set out the requirements under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for a billing authority to set an amount of council tax for each category of dwelling in its area. Members were advised of the position concerning the determination of their respective precepts for 2026/27 by the major precepting authorities.

Consideration was given to a draft resolution (attached at Annex 2) identifying the process to be undertaken in arriving at the levels of council tax applicable to each part of the Borough. The resolution and further information regarding the precepts of the other authorities would be reported to Council on 24 February 2026.

In recognition that Council Tax provided the major proportion of the Borough Council's Revenue Funding and to provide an efficient service for all residents, Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Betts seconded and Cabinet

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the draft resolution, which would be completed and presented to the Council, be noted; and
- (2) the Council be recommended to approve a 3% or £7.35 per annum increase in the Borough Council's element of the council tax for 2026/27, representing a notional 'average' charge at Band D of £252.65.

***Recommended to Council**

CB 26/21 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2026/27

Consideration was given to the Draft Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27 (attached at Annex 1 to the report) which had been revised to bring it in line with statutory prescribed requirements from Government national benefit rates. The scheme had also been uplifted in line with new rates of National Living Wage (NLW), where NLW was used as a factor in calculating income discount bands.

Members noted that for pension age households the separate Government Scheme prescribed maximum help to 100% of council tax liability, a minimum requirement of a pension age scheme.

In recognition that the Borough Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme provided essential support to residents who were on a low income and, where applicable, provided a reduction based on the personal circumstances of each applicant, Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Keers seconded and Cabinet

***RECOMMENDED:** That the draft Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27 (attached at Annex 1) be commended to Council for adoption.

***Recommended to Council**

CB 26/22 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2026/27

All budgetary matters were considered in detail in the substantive item on Setting the Budget 2026/27 (Minute Number CB 26/19). However, the recommendations from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 22 January 2026 in relation to the formulation of the initial draft proposals in respect of the Budget, including Revenue Estimates

(Minute Number OS 26/4) were given due consideration as part of the substantive discussion.

CB 26/23 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2025/26

All budgetary matters were considered in detail in the substantive item on Setting the Budget 2026/27 (Minute Number CB 26/19). However, the recommendations from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 22 January 2026 in relation to the formulation of initial draft proposals in respect of the Budget, including the Capital Plan (Minute Number OS 26/5) was given due consideration as part of the substantive discussion.

CB 26/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026/27

Consideration was given to recommendation AU 26/4 of the Audit Committee of 26 January 2026 in respect of treasury management.

Due regard was given to the views of the Audit Committee, the details of investments undertaken and return achieved in the first eight months of the current financial year, the financial and value for money considerations and legal implications. Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Taylor seconded and Cabinet

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the treasury management position as at 30 November 2025, be noted; and
- (2) the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy for 2026/27 (attached at Annex 5), be adopted.

***Recommended to Council**

MATTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISIONS

CB 26/25 ANNUAL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2026/27

(Decision Notice D260014CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Annual Service Delivery Plan. This was a performance management tool setting out the Borough Council's priority actions for the year, along with key milestones and targets that could be used to monitor progress with delivery.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value money considerations, the assessment of risk and the legal implications. The amendments, corrections and points of clarification raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been reviewed in liaison with Services and reflected in a revised Annual Service Delivery Plan (attached at Annex 1).

It was also reported that due to external factors, such as awaiting legislation or funding from Central Government, the current Plan was missing some information. It was hoped that this missing information would be provided as part of the Quarter 1 update.

In recognition that without an effective performance management framework in place the authority would not be able to identify any required improvements or achieve value for money, Cllr Keers proposed, Cllr Taylor seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the draft Annual Service Delivery Plan 2026/27 (attached at Annex 1) be approved; and
- (2) any updated information addressing current gaps in information be considered during Quarter 1 reporting of the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2026/27.

CB 26/26 PROCUREMENT PARTNERSHIP - FORMAL REVIEW

(Decision Notice D260015CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of a number of options for the Procurement Partnership.

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 was pleased to note that the Procurement Partnership had been very well received, an improvement in high quality procurement and contracting activity.

In recognition that membership of the Mid-Kent Procurement Partnership supported full compliance with relevant legislation, maintained an effective council and on the grounds of providing certainty and continuity for the future Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Mehmet seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) subject to ensuring appropriate budget provision, Option 3 to continue with the Procurement Partnership be approved; and

- (2) a further review of the Procurement Partnership be undertaken in 4 years' time.

CB 26/27 RISK MANAGEMENT

(Decision Notice D260016CAB)

Consideration of recommendations of the Audit Committee in respect of the risk management process and the current status of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR).

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 noted that the risks categorised as 'RED' were:

- Failure to adopt a Local Plan
- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Local Government Reorganisation in Kent

In recognition of the importance of efficient and effective risk management in protecting the Borough Council's assets, employees and customers and ensuring value for money, Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Betts seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the updates to the Strategic Risk Register since the last iteration with particular emphasis on those risks categorised as 'RED' (summarised above) and set out in Annexes 1 and 1(a) be noted; and
- (2) the service risks identified in Annex 2 be noted.

CB 26/28 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK: PROPOSED REFORMS AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

(Decision Notice D260017CAB)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Borough Council's response to proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system. A draft response was attached at Annex 1.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations, assessment of risk and the legal implications.

Particular reference was made to better decision-making on contaminated land (166) and Cllr Taylor proposed a further amendment to strengthen and emphasise the role of the developer in remediation. For example:

- (i) This includes the requirement that responsibility for securing a safe development principally rests with the developer and/or landowner where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to monitor and approve.

This amendment was seconded by Cllr Boughton and supported by the Cabinet, subject to further consultation with the Director of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services.

A further minor correction was also identified at (145) on page 40 of Annex 1 and this had been drawn to the attention of Officers.

In recognition that the Borough Council had to submit a response to the consultation by the deadline of 10 March 2026, Cllr Taylor proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council response to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system be approved;
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Borough Council and the Cabinet Member of Planning, to make any necessary minor changes to the Borough Council's response before submission.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CB 26/29 DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS

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

CB 26/30 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Notice setting out Key Decisions anticipated to be taken during the period March to April 2026 was noted.

CB 26/31 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, Cllr Taylor seconded and it was

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

PART 2 - PRIVATE**MATTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION****EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISIONS****CB 26/32 TONBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE PROGRAMME BOARD - NOTES OF 16 JANUARY 2026**

(Decision Notice D260018CAB)

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

The report of the Director of Central Services presented the notes of the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board held on 16 January 2026.

Cabinet noted the comments of the Programme Board in respect of the delivery of a number of key priorities in connection with Tonbridge Town Centre.

RESOLVED: That the Notes of the Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Board of 16 January 2026 be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.04 pm