

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26th May, 2026

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

In attendance: Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr M A Coffin*, Cllr P M Hickmott, Cllr D Keers*, Cllr A Mehmet* and Cllr Mrs A S Oakley* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FRP 26/10 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

FRP 26/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Although not being members of the Committee, for reasons of transparency, Councillor G Bridge declared that he held ownership shares in Tonbridge Angels Football Club and Councillor M Hood declared that he held a season ticket for the Club. Following advice from the Monitoring Officer, neither declaration constituted a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Significant Interest and there was no requirement for either to withdraw from the meeting or to not participate in the debate.

FRP 26/12 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee held on 17 February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

FRP 26/13 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION - FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

Members considered a report proposing amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution to reflect updated operational practices, strengthen risk and budget management arrangements and allow greater flexibility in the use of virements and

supplementary estimates without increasing the Council's overall net budget requirement.

Members noted the key proposed changes, including revised financial thresholds, updated provisions relating to banking, credit cards, risk management, procurement and electronic signatures, together with the introduction of a section on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Savings and Transformation Strategy.

The Committee considered the proposed increase in the limit for officer virements and raised questions regarding the scale of the increase, the potential reduction in Member oversight and the risk of repeated virements materially altering the approved budget. In response, it was noted that the change was intended to provide greater operational flexibility within the existing revenue budgets and would not increase the overall budget requirement. It was explained that virements between revenue and capital budgets would not be permitted and that any significant or repeated changes would be subject to challenge and scrutiny. Members were further advised that the budget remained a matter for Full Council and that any changes outside the approved framework would require the appropriate decision-making process. Assurance was also given that such virements would be reported through the budgetary control process and that any repeated use for a single issue would prompt further review.

Cllr R Cannon proposed, seconded by Cllr D Harman and it was

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the changes to the Financial Procedure Rules as summarised in section 5 of the report and shown in tracked changes contained at Annex 1 to the report, be recommended to Council; and
- (2) the virement for funds exceeding £100,000 as detailed in section 6 of the report, be recommended to Council.

***Recommended to Council**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FRP 26/14 COUNCIL TAX ADMINISTRATION: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Members received an update on the Government's response to the consultation on modernising Council Tax administration.

Members were advised that the proposed changes included the introduction of twelve monthly instalments by default from April 2027 for new taxpayers and more widely from April 2028, revised enforcement

arrangements, a proposed cap on liability order costs, changes to taxpayer communications and support, and further work on disregards and data sharing.

It was noted that the detailed financial and operational impact on the Council could not yet be fully assessed, but the proposals were likely to affect cashflow, collection processes, system requirements and resident communications. Officers would continue monitoring the emerging legislation, guidance and implementation requirements.

Members considered the proposed change to make twelve monthly council tax instalments the default from April 2028 and discussed the likely process for notifying taxpayers and enabling those who preferred to continue paying over ten months to make that request. Members were advised that the detailed mechanism would depend on the legislation once enacted, although it was anticipated that affected taxpayers would be contacted directly and that options for changing instalment preferences would be made available through existing communication channels and the online portal.

Concern was raised regarding the potential impact on the Council's cash flow, software requirements and administration costs. In response, it was noted that the financial implications would need to be assessed in more detail once the final arrangements were known, including any effect on cash balances, incoming profiling and system changes, and it was hoped that any new burdens arising from the change might be supported by Government funding.

Members also discussed whether residents could be encouraged to return to ten monthly instalments, but were advised that, whilst communications could potentially be used to explain available options, any incentive-based approach would need to be treated with caution given the potential cost to the billing authority.

FRP 26/15 WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2026/27 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest matters by liaison with the Chair of the Committee and the Scrutiny Officer.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FRP 26/16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, it was seconded by Cllr M Rhodes and

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

PART 2 - PRIVATE

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

**FRP 26/17 LEASE ARRANGEMENTS FOR TONBRIDGE FARM
SPORTSGROUND**

(Reason: Part 2 – Private: LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

Careful consideration was given to the report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive which set out a proposal to extend the current lease to Tonbridge Angels Football Club at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground.

Following in-depth discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable further negotiations to take place and provided a steer to officers on a number of issues.

Cllr M Rhodes proposed, seconded by Cllr Harman and it was supported by the majority of Members that:

- (1) the item be DEFERRED to enable further details to be considered at the next meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.17 pm