

## Council

13 May 2025

### Part 1 - Public

#### Matters for Decision



Cabinet Member	Cllr Matt Boughton, Leader
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive
Report Author	Allison Parris, Principal Democratic Services Officer

#### Programme of Meetings 2025/26 and 2026/27

##### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The programme of meetings for the municipal years 2025-2027 are attached for approval.

##### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Having a programme in place for the next two years supports an efficient service for all our residents and maintains an effective council by ensuring that the Borough Council has the ability to take decisions in a timely manner.

##### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Programme of Meetings for 2025-27 (as set out in Annexes 1 and 2) be adopted.

##### 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of the annual meeting of the Council to approve a programme of meetings for the coming year.
- 4.2 The programme of meetings was approved by Council on 8 April 2025 to go forward to the meeting of Annual Council for adoption.
- 4.3 There are a number of factors to be taken into account when preparing a programme of meetings. The aim is to allow Annual Council to approve a schedule which is fixed for the upcoming municipal year, whilst recognising the need to respond to specific and changing circumstances. If a programme was not

in place the Borough Council's ability to take decisions in a timely manner could be affected.

4.4 There were no changes required to be made and the final programme is attached at Annexes 1 and 2 for adoption.

4.5 Any additional meetings required to be made to the programme will be set up in consultation with the relevant Chair, the Leader and Cabinet Member.

4.6 Democratic Services will continue to review the cycle for Committees with Services to ensure an even spread of meetings where possible throughout the year.

## **5 Proposal**

5.1 The programme of meetings for 2025-2027 approved by Council on 8 April 2025 is presented for adoption.

## **6 Other Options**

6.1 There were no other significant options considered as the framework for Borough Council meetings already exists.

6.2 However, consideration was given to avoiding scheduling meetings during school holidays. Whilst this is not practical given the number of meetings to be held small changes have been made where possible to accommodate this request.

## **7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

7.1 The use of external venues, audio/visual equipment and livestreaming facilities incurs some expenditure arising from room and equipment hire, some of which can be significant.

7.2 It should be noted that there has been a small cost saving as a result of relocating the Tonbridge Community Forum to the Tonbridge Methodist Church Hall. This will be kept under review during the trial period in 2025.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

8.1 There is a risk that the implementation of decisions and/or outcomes could be delayed if there wasn't a programme in place and a meeting couldn't be scheduled at short notice, either due to a venue or Members being unavailable.

8.2 It is much more practical for Members in terms of diary management to have a programme in place for the municipal year. This also ensures that all statutory deadlines in respect of publishing notices of meeting and agendas are met.

8.3 Members should also note that any risk related to the use of venues and equipment is managed when using Kings Hill as the Health and Safety Officer, the

Head of Administration and Property and Head of IT ensure that all appropriate safety checks are undertaken.

- 8.4 However, there is a potential health and safety risk when using other venues and there is a requirement for appropriate safety checks and forms to be completed.
- 8.5 Members should note that there is a risk to the meeting programme being subject to change during 2025-2027 as a consequence of elections and any unforeseen circumstances.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 Except in the year of election of Councillors, the Borough Council is under a legal duty to hold its annual meeting during a particular period (March/April/ May) and to have calculated the council tax requirement by a specific date (11 March). The programme proposed meets these requirements.
- 9.2 It is also the responsibility of the annual meeting to agree and confirm the Borough Council's programme of meetings for the forthcoming year.

## **10 Consultation and Communications**

- 10.1 Management Team, Senior Officers and Cabinet Members have been consulted on the proposed dates. The detail has been communicated to all councillors via a detailed report to Council on 8 April 2025. Consulting with all Members early in the process provides opportunity for any suggested amendments to be considered in advance of adopting the programme at Annual Council.

## **11 Implementation**

- 11.1 If approved at Annual Council the programme will be effective immediately and available on the Borough Council's website as soon as possible.

## **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 The Borough Council has adopted a paper light, moving to paperless, approach in circulating meeting papers with agendas available online and via Member iPads.

### **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.

12.2.2 The Borough Council operates a hybrid model of meetings and for those meetings where public speaking is allowed individuals can attend online.

12.2.3 Meetings are also livestreaming which means that residents have greater access to see how decisions are made.

12.3 Other If Relevant

- None

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Programme of Meetings 2025/26 Annex 2 – Programme of Meetings 2026/27