

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING AND PLANNING SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025

Present: Cllr D W King (Chair), Cllr Mrs S Bell (Vice-Chair), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr P M Hickmott, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr R W G Oliver, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr R V Roud, Cllr M R Rhodes (substitute), Cllr D Thornewell and Cllr K S Tunstall (substitute).

In attendance: Cllrs A G Bennison, R P Betts*, D Keers*, A Mehmet, Mrs A S Oakley* and M Taylor* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K B Tanner and C J Williams

HP 25/46 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute Members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr Rhodes substitute for Cllr Williams
- Cllr Tunstall substitute for Cllr Tanner

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these Councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

HP 25/47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

HP 25/48 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee held on 21 October 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

HP 25/49 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR DISCRETIONARY PLANNING SERVICES 2026/27

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**

HP 25/50 HMO AND CARAVAN SITE LICENSING FEE CHARGES 2026/27

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**

HP 25/51 ADOPTION OF A CALCULATOR FOR INDOOR SPORTS, OUTDOOR SPORTS AND PLAYING PITCH DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

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**

HP 25/52 PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE - REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S PLANNING SERVICE

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**

HP 25/53 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT 2024/25

(Decision Number D230130MEM)

Members reviewed the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2024/25 which set out the infrastructure delivery and contributions collected by the Borough Council, allocations made within the monitoring period, projects delivered within the relevant period and new agreements entered into. Contributions agreed over the 2024/25 period were also outlined.

The Borough Council had a statutory requirement under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (Regulation 121A) to publish an annual IFS by the end of December each year. The purpose of which was to summarise all financial and non-financial developer contributions.

Members discussed the allocation and identification of specific projects identified in Annex 1, including open space contributions and recurring requests for quotes for parish/town councils which created an administrative burden. Consideration would be given to reviewing the process to reduce this administrative burden.

Reference was made to Local Government Reorganisation and the position of longstanding s106 funds in the event of a move to a unitary authority. It was clarified that such contributions remained attached to the original permissions and land, which ensured their continued availability for the designated purposes.

Finally, it was suggested that the established s106 Monitoring Group be used to enable Members to ask questions in advance and outside of formal meetings. Consideration would be given to the process for feedback and resolution via this Group.

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024/25 and associated documents be endorsed; and
- (2) the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024/25 be approved for publication by the end of December 2024.

***Recommended to Cabinet - Decision taken by Cabinet Member**

HP 25/54 AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2024/25

(Decision Number D250131MEM)

The report outlined the Borough Council's latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) (attached as Annex 1), which reviewed the effectiveness

of the organisations planning policies and helped to ensure that progress was being made towards achieved the objectives as set out in the suite of Adopted Development plan documents. The AMR was a statistical document to help guide the direction of travel for future corporate and planning policy.

Members noted that the AMR covered the previous financial year due to the period for data collection and reported on the period 2024/25. The last AMR was published by Tonbridge and Malling in 2024 and this version sought to provide an up to date consideration of the effectiveness of policies as well as progress in preparing planning documents as set out in the Local Development Scheme and actions taken in relation to the duty to cooperate.

***RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the Authority Monitoring Report for the period 2024/25 (attached at Annex 1 be endorsed; and
- (2) the Authority Monitoring Report for the period 2024/25 be approved for publication by the end of December 2025.

***Recommended to Cabinet - Decision taken by Cabinet Member**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

HP 25/55 CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING - SERVICE DELIVERY UPDATE

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided a detailed overview of service performance within the planning portfolio area and Members noted a sustained improvement in Development Management over the past year and that the external review by the Planning Advisory Service had been an invaluable tool in maintaining an efficient and effective service.

The Cabinet Member for Planning also reflected on improvements in Member engagement, advocated for early Member involvement in large applications to reduce public concerns and appeals, reported good progress in updating conservation area appraisals and the introduction of conservation statements to protect vulnerable areas and called for continued work to build mutual trust and improve decision-making processes.

HP 25/56 WORK PROGRAMME 2026

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2026/27 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters and the following were identified:

(1) Planning Advisory Service Review – Progress of Action Plan

As referenced earlier in the meeting, the Chair committed to providing a report on the progress being made to address the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Service Review to the earliest possible meeting.

(2) Challenges of Housing Associations – Kent Housing Group

To better understand the issues facing local Housing Associations, consideration would be given to inviting the Kent Housing Group, who were a forum for housing organisations based in Kent and Medway, to address the Scrutiny Select Committee. This remained subject to confirmation.

(3) Active Travel Strategy

It was reported that the Active Travel Strategy was part of the Local Plan Consultation. However, consideration would be given to establishing an Officer/Member workshop to develop appropriate mechanisms for further engagement and ensuring alignment with the Local Plan process.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

HP 25/57 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.44 pm