

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

Tuesday, 24th February, 2026

At the meeting of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council held at Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Tuesday, 24th February, 2026

Present: His Worship the Mayor (Councillor C Brown), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor K B Tanner), Cllr B Banks, Cllr K Barton, Cllr Mrs S Bell, Cllr A G Bennison, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr P Boxall, Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr L Chapman, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr A Cope, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr S M Hammond, Cllr D Harman, Cllr P M Hickmott, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr S A Hudson, Cllr D Keers, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr D W King, Cllr Mrs A S Oakley, Cllr R W G Oliver, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr S Pilgrim, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr R V Roud, Cllr Mrs M Tatton, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr D Thornevell, Cllr K S Tunstall and Cllr C J Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Athwal, M A Coffin, S Crisp and Mrs T Dean, who all attended via MS Teams.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

C 26/5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

C 26/6 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the proceedings of the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the Council held on 28 October 2025 and 27 January 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

C 26/7 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised of a number of engagements attended since the last meeting of Council and made particular reference to the following civic and charity events:

- The Festival of Remembrance at Rochester Cathedral
- Aylesford Jobs Fair
- RBLI 'Special Announcement' Event

- Neurocafe Event at North Kent College
- TMBC's Community Awards Ceremony at the Council Offices, Kings Hill
- Rotary Club of Tonbridge's Young Musician Competition at Somerhill School
- Recognition Event for the Haydsen Country Park Volunteer Group at Tonbridge Castle
- Tonbridge Rotary Club's Christmas Festival
- Kent Charities Christmas Draw 2025
- Leybourne Grange Riding Centre for the Disabled Nativity
- Tonbridge Philharmonic Society and Tonbridge Round Table's Family Carols at Tonbridge School
- Hospice in the Weald's Carols at Christmas Event at Tonbridge School

Arrangements were being finalised for future civic and charity events and the following were noted:

- Primary School Visit and Schools Debate – 27 February and 12 March
- Tour and Afternoon Tea at Tonbridge School – 17 April 2026
- Cheque Presentation to Mayoral charities - TBC
- Annual Council – 12 May 2026

Finally, the Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor and Past Mayors for attending a number of events on their behalf.

C 26/8 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.5

No questions were received from Members pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.5.

C 26/9 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.6

No questions were received from members of the public pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.6.

C 26/10 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader opened by reflecting on the recent deaths of two Honorary Freeman and paid tribute to Sir John Stanley MP and Mrs Jill Anderson by highlighting their significant contributions to the Borough and the impact of their loss on the Council and community.

Reference was made to the successful Tonbridge and Malling Community Awards ceremony which recognised outstanding community

achievements. It was intended to host another awards event later in the year.

Details were shared of the extensive Local Plan Consultation process undertaken by the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Planning, which had included 27 public meetings, 2150 attendees and over 6,400 comments. Feedback from the consultation would be reviewed by the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee before the Local Plan progressed to Regulation 19. The challenges related to infrastructure and water supply were recognised.

The ongoing Government consultation on local government reorganisation was outlined and the Borough Council's preference for Option 3A was reiterated. The importance of engaging with parish/town councils and the need for careful planning to avoid negative impacts was also emphasised.

A recent public engagement exercise on proposals for the replacement Angel Leisure Centre had finished at the weekend and responses were currently being assessed. However, the overall exercise had been positive.

Finally, the Leader advised that in response to local concerns about water supply resilience in light of recent outages and future housing developments the Borough Council had proactively sought input from infrastructure providers during the Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation. Further professional advice on the weight of these concerns in reaching planning decisions was awaited.

Full Leaders announcements were available on the Borough Council's [YouTube channel](#).

MATTERS FOR DECISION

C 26/11 SETTING THE BUDGET 2026/27

Item CB 26/19 referred from the Cabinet of 10 February 2026.

The Leader of the Borough Council proposed that Council Procedure Rule No 6.4 be suspended to allow the leading speakers from each Group to exceed the time limit on speeches when debating the budget proposals. Time limits on speeches would be reapplied following discussions on Setting the Budget and Setting the Council Tax. This was seconded by Cllr Betts and supported by the Council.

In presenting the budget proposals, which had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet on 22 January and 10 February 2026 respectively, both the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services and the Leader highlighted the positive financial outlook, the Borough Council's continued debt-free status, the

achievement of a balanced budget for 2026/27, the removal of savings targets and significant transfers to reserves totalling approximately £5.2 million.

The budget also included allocations for the replacement Angel Leisure Centre, a Local Plan reserve and a Local Government Reorganisation reserve.

Although Tonbridge and Malling faced the second highest reduction in core spending nationally strong financial planning had allowed for a balanced budget without the need for a Savings and Transformation Strategy. The importance of maintaining flexibility and investing in key capital projects was emphasised. Planned capital investments included digital CCTV, water safety systems, new sports facilities and improvements to public spaces. The Borough Council would also continue supporting services such as temporary accommodation and homelessness initiatives.

Members expressed support for the positive financial management and the focus on protecting services.

It was proposed by Councillor Boughton and seconded by Councillor Betts that the recommendations at Minute CB 26/19 be adopted. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 8.5 voting was recorded as follows:

Members voting for the motion:

Cllrs Banks, Barton, Bell, Bennison, Betts, Bishop, Boughton, Boxall, Bridge, Brown, Cannon, Chapman, Clokey, Cope, Dalton, Davis, Hammond, Harman, Hickmott, Hood, Hoskins, Hudson, Keers, King, Lark, McDermott, Mehmet, Oakley, Oliver, Palmer, Parry, Pilgrim, Rhodes, Roud, Tanner, Tatton, Taylor, Thornewell, Tunstall and Williams

Total: 40

Members voting against the motion: 0

Total: 0

Members abstaining: 0

Total: 0

(Total number of Members eligible to vote = 40)

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 26/19 be approved.

C 26/12 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX 2026/27

Item CB 26/20 referred from the Cabinet of 10 February 2026 recommended that 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 be approved.

As the billing authority, the Council was required to resolve the levels of council tax for each Band and for each area within the borough consolidating the requirements from all precepting authorities. A Council Tax Resolution incorporating all this information was presented to Members as a supplement to the agenda (attached at Annex 1).

It was proposed by Councillor Boughton and seconded by Councillor Betts that the recommendations at Minute CB 26/20 be adopted.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 8.5 voting was recorded as follows:

Members voting for the motion:

Cllrs Banks, Barton, Bell, Bennison, Betts, Bishop, Boughton, Boxall, Bridge, Brown, Cannon, Chapman, Clokey, Cope, Dalton, Davis, Hammond, Harman, Hickmott, Hood, Hoskins, Hudson, Keers, King, Lark, McDermott, Mehmet, Oakley, Oliver, Palmer, Parry, Pilgrim, Rhodes, Roud, Tanner, Tatton, Taylor, Thornewell, Tunstall and Williams

Total: 40

Members voting against the motion: 0

Total: 0

Members abstaining: 0

Total: 0

(Total number of Members eligible to vote = 40)

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the recommendations at Minute CB 26/20 be approved; and
- (2) the Council Tax Resolution 2026/27, as set out as an Annex to these Minutes, be adopted.

C 26/13 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2026/27

Item CB 26/21 referred from Cabinet of 10 February 2026

It was proposed by Cllr Boughton and seconded by Cllr Betts that the recommendation of Cabinet be approved.

RESOLVED: That the draft Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27(attached as Annex 1) be approved.

C 26/14 TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026/27

Item CB 26/22 referred from Cabinet of 10 February 2026

It was proposed by Cllr Boughton and seconded by Cllr Betts that the recommendation of Cabinet be approved.

RESOLVED: 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

C 26/15 LOCALISM ACT - PAY POLICY

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee of 21 January 2026 in respect of the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and an updated Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27 as set out in Annex 1.

As there had not been many significant changes in the Borough Council's remuneration policy, the substantive content of the updated Policy was nearly identical to the Borough Council's Pay Policy Statement 2025/26. The key updates related to the actual pay received by staff, the pay multiple data and the number of officers in specific graded posts. A new section had been added to reflect the current Long Service Award scheme operated within the Council.

An amendment to recommendation GP 26/4 to include the Real Living Wage as a consideration in the Pay Policy was proposed by Cllr Clokey and seconded by Cllr Banks. It was clarified that this would not bind the Borough Council but would require formal consideration when setting the annual pay award.

Concern was expressed that including the Real Living Wage as a consideration would reduce the Borough Council's flexibility in setting local pay levels, potentially leading to prescriptive outcomes and

impacting its ability to address market conditions and recruitment challenges.

Following a formal vote, the amendment motion was lost with 20 Members voting in favour and 20 Members voting against. The Mayor used their casting vote against the amendment.

In recognition that having a robust Pay Policy Statement assisted in providing efficient services for residents and maintained an effective council, Cllr Rhodes proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Council

RESOLVED: That the Pay Policy Statement set out in Annex 1 be endorsed and adopted.

C 26/16 PAY AWARD 2026/2027

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee of 21 January 2026 in respect of a proposed pay award for employees for 2026/27.

Due regard was given to the views of the Committee, the financial and value for money considerations and the challenges regarding recruitment and retention, particularly for professional M grade roles was recognised. Cllr Rhodes proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Council

RESOLVED: That a pay award of 4% for application to all salary scales be adopted with effect from 1 April 2026.

C 26/17 TONBRIDGE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The report of the Chief Executive and Electoral Registration Officer set out the results of the Community Governance Review process and recommended the creation of a Town Council for Tonbridge.

Due regard was given to the views of the Community Governance Review Member Working Group and residents. A further consultation seeking views on whether the Town Council should be warded, the potential number of Town Councillors and whether it should have a Mayor was undertaken and a detailed overview of the outcomes was attached at Annex 2.

In recognition that the establishment of a Town Council would contribute to or impact the efficient and effective delivery of local council services to the residents of Tonbridge, Cllr Brown proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Council

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the results of the Community Governance Review consultations be noted;
- (2) the creation of a new parish within Tonbridge (as set out in Annex 1) be approved;
- (3) the naming of the new parish as 'Tonbridge' be approved;
- (4) the new parish has a parish council called 'Tonbridge Town Council' comprising:
 - a) the division of the Town Council area into 6 wards that are the same as the existing 6 borough wards (as set out in Annex 2):
 - Cage Green and Angel
 - Higham
 - Judd
 - Oast (area outside of Hildenborough parish)
 - Trench
 - Vauxhall
 - b) 18 councillors sitting on the Town Council as outlined below:

Ward	Number of Cllrs
Cage Green and Angel	4
Higham	3
Oast	1
Judd	3
Trench	3
Vauxhall	4

- (5) the change taking effect for electoral purposes ahead of the publication of the revised register planned for 1 December 2026 be approved;
- (6) the parish coming into effect from 1 April 2027 for administration purposes be approved;
- (7) the first election for the Town Council taking place on 6 May 2027, and every four years thereafter, be approved;
- (8) delegated authority be granted to the Electoral Registration Officer to undertake the proposed next steps as set out in 7 of the report; and
- (9) support for a Mayor that carries out ceremonial duties and chairs meetings be noted.

C 26/18 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The report of the Monitoring Officer set out recommended changes to Committee Procedure Rules 15.24 and 15.25 to provide a definition for the term 'risk of significant costs' and to clarify the decision-making route for items of business covered by more than one Area Planning Committee.

The proposed amendment to CPR 15.25 would ensure that the determination of a planning application would remain a matter for Council, unless both Area Planning Committees were agreed on both the proposed recommendations and the reasons for refusal, or in the case of a proposed approval, the conditions to be attached to the planning permission. In this situation, the Director of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services would determine the application with no further consideration by Full Council.

With regard to CPR 15.24, it was reported that the current threshold of £5,000 to represent 'significant costs' had led to some relatively minor planning applications being reported to Council for determination, which was not the intended use of this rule. CPR 15.24 was intended to ensure that, where planning determinations could have an unplanned impact on the authority's financial position that Members were fully aware of the implications and to ensure appropriate due diligence on decision making was provided. It was, therefore, proposed that a financial threshold of £50,000 be applied to represent a 'significant risk'.

Members welcomed the clarification in respect of CPR 15.25 and in recognition that the proposals would contribute to maintaining an efficient service for residents by ensuring that planning applications were determined in the most efficient and equitable way, Cllr Brown proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Council

RESOLVED: That the changes to Committee Procedure Rules 15.24 and 15.25, as set out in 4.4 and 4.9 of the report, be approved.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION**C 26/19 MINUTES OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

The Minutes of meetings of the Cabinet and Committees for the period October 2025 to January 2026 set out in the Minute Book (Volume 5), attached as a supplement, were received and noted.

Any recommendations to the Council from Cabinet or Committees were resolved elsewhere on the agenda.

C 26/20 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: That authority be given for the Common Seal of the Council to be affixed to any instrument to give effect to a decision of the Council incorporated into these Minutes and proceedings.

C 26/21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Mayor moved, it was seconded by Cllr Boughton and

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

PART 2 - PRIVATE**MATTERS FOR DECISION****C 26/22 ESTABLISHMENT REPORT**

(Reason: Part 2 – Private – LGA 1972, Schedule 12A Paragraph 2 – Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of a number of establishment changes recommended by the Borough Council's Management Team.

Cllr Rhodes proposed, Cllr Boughton seconded and Council

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a new full-time Information Governance Manager post at grade M8 be permanently established;
- (2) the hours of the Principal Planning Policy Officer (post DJ0318) (M8) be permanently increased from 32 to 37 hours per week; and
- (3) the hours of the Senior Planning Policy Officer (post DJ0319) (M8) be permanently increased from 30 to 37 hours per week.

C 26/23 DISPENSATION - COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

(Reason: Part 2 – Private – LGA 1972 Schedule 12A Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)

The report of the Chief Executive sought approval for the continued absence of a Borough Councillor from meetings on the grounds of ill health and/or injury.

To give the Member sufficient time to recuperate, follow medical advice and focus on their recovery, Cllr Boughton proposed, Cllr Betts seconded and Council

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a waiver of the 6-month attendance rule, as set out in s85 of the Local Government Act 1972, be approved on the grounds of ill health/injury as detailed in the report (contains exempt information); and
- (2) the extension of the permitted non-attendance time for a further 6-month period until 21 October 2026 be approved.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm