

Council

21 April 2026

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Decision



Cabinet Member	Cllr Matt Boughton, Leader
Responsible Officer	Adrian Stanfield, Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive
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Programme of Meetings 2026/27 and 2027/28

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The programme of meetings for the municipal year 2026/27 is attached for consideration. Management Team, Senior Officers and Cabinet Members have been consulted on the proposed dates. The draft programme for 2027/28 is also attached for consideration.
- 1.2 Subject to any amendments identified by Members the programmes will be presented to Annual Council for endorsement.

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 2026/27 (as set out in Annex 1) be approved and presented to Annual Council for endorsement; and
- 3.2 That the draft Programme of Meetings for 2027/28 (as set out in Annex 2) be agreed, subject to final approval at Annual Council in May 2026.

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. However, it is considered sensible to present the programmes to this meeting to allow time for any proposed revisions to be made.
- 4.2 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.

5 Proposal

5.1 Programme of Meetings 2026/27

- 5.1.1 A programme for the municipal year 2026/27 has been prepared for approval and is attached as **Annex 1**.
- 5.1.2 There have been a number of changes to the programme agreed in May 2025 and these are set out below:
- To avoid the LGA Conference (7-9 July 2026), Cabinet of 7 July 2026 has been moved to 30 June 2026;
 - Audit Committee of 21 September 2026 moved to 28 September at request of Service;
 - Tonbridge Community Forum of 28 September 2026 moved to 21 September to accommodate the above;
 - Audit Committee of 11 January 2027 moved to 25 January at request of Service;
 - Due to a drafting error the Audit Committee of 19 April 2027 was missed off the original programme;
- 5.1.3 As a result of a number of high profile and significant projects for the Borough Council in advance of Local Government Reorganisation, such as the Local Plan, an ordinary meeting of the Council has been scheduled for Thursday 3 September 2026. To accommodate this meeting, Area 1 Planning Committee has been moved to Wednesday 2 September 2026. By including this meeting of Council in the programme it provides sufficient notice to all Members and provides a timetable for Officers to work too.

5.1.4 Members are also reminded that there are a number of significant projects to be considered by Full Council during 2026/27 and this may have implications for the meeting programme. However, notice of any changes will be given as soon as possible.

5.1.5 The programme of meetings is set out in a table format and colour coded for easier reference. Dates for Bank Holidays, Elections and other events are also included.

5.1.6 The colour coding highlights significant meetings, such as Annual and Budget Council, where a meeting is to be held in Tonbridge and when a meeting is to be held on a different day than usual.

5.2 Programme of Meetings 2027/28

5.2.1 A draft programme for the municipal year 2027/28 has been prepared for consideration and is attached as **Annex 2**. Members are invited to comment on whether there should be any changes.

5.2.2 It is anticipated that a programme of meetings will be required if the Borough Council is operating as a 'shadow authority' under local government reorganisation. Therefore, a schedule of meetings has been planned to enable decision making to continue.

5.2.3 For awareness, further consideration is required on the following points and these will be progressed by Democratic Services in liaison with Services and relevant Members:

- Clarification on the budget setting cycle, subject to confirmation of dates for the Kent County Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service budget meetings. KCC have indicated that their budget meeting is scheduled for Thursday 11 February 2027, with a reserve date of Thursday 25 February 2027. Kent Fire and Rescue Services have indicated that their budget meeting is scheduled for Thursday 18 February 2027, with no reserve date. **Provisional Borough Council programme allows for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2027; Cabinet on 9 February 2027 and Council on 23 February 2027 and is subject to change.**
- Whether there is potential to change the scheduling of Council to create a better distribution throughout the year. There are certain timetables that have to be followed which will need to be reflected in any changes. For example, the budget setting process requires a meeting of Council in February and there is a requirement for the Annual Council to meet in May.

5.2.4 There are a number of other changes to the programme for 2027/28 as detailed below:

- There is a requirement to move the meeting of Cabinet currently scheduled for Tuesday 6 July 2027 to Monday 5 July 2027 to avoid the LGA Conference. At the time of writing the dates for the Conference have not been announced.
- To avoid diary conflicts the evening before a meeting of Full Council, Tonbridge Community Forum meetings will be rescheduled as follows:
 - 22 February 2027 moved to 8 March 2027
 - 10 May 2027 moved to 21 June 2027
- The meeting of Annual Council in 2027 has been moved to Tuesday 18 May to accommodate Borough and/or Shadow Unitary Council elections.
- Under the current Local Government Reorganisation timetable, a programme of meetings post April 2028 will not be required as Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will cease to exist from 1 April 2028 and a new unitary authority will be established.

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 The use of the Tonbridge Methodist Church Hall during 2025 for the Tonbridge Community Forum has been successful and the venue will continue to be used for 2026/27.

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 2026-2028 as a consequence of elections, local government reorganisation, significant deadlines related to the Local Plan and the replacement of the Angel Leisure Centre and any unforeseen circumstances.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 As outlined in the introduction to the report.

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 this report to Council and by consulting with all Members early in the process any suggested amendment can be considered in advance of adopting the programme at Annual Council.

11 Implementation

- 11.1 If the programmes as drafted are approved they will be presented to Annual Council in May for endorsement. 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 2026/27 Annex 2 – Programme of Meetings 2027/28