

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, 4th March, 2026

Present: Cllr S A Hudson (Chair), Cllr K S Tunstall (Vice-Chair), Cllr A G Bennison, Cllr S Crisp, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr S Pilgrim, Cllr M R Rhodes and Cllr Mrs M Tatton

In attendance: Councillors R P Betts, M D Boughton, P M Hickmott, M A J Hood and D Keers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs T Dean and W E Palmer*.

(*apologies submitted for in-person attendance and participated via MS Teams)

CE 26/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

CE 26/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CE 26/3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee held on 5 November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CE 26/4 SOUTH WEST KENT WASTE SERVICES CONTRACT RETENDER

A comprehensive update was provided on the Borough Council's procurement process for the South West Kent Waste Services Contract. Members were reminded that the current contract for refuse, recycling and street cleansing was due to expire at the end of March 2027 and was being retendered on a partnership basis with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The joint report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services and the Head of Finance provided details of the tender process and an assessment of the tenders received. As previously approved by Members, the tender was for a new contract of 12 years with an option to extend by up to two years subject to mutual agreement of all parties.

The outcome of the evaluation process, including the quality and price scores of the submissions and the overall tender scores, was attached in a restricted Annex 2 due to the inclusion of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information.

In light of the partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in the procurement for the future delivery of the waste services across both boroughs, due regard had been given to aligning the decision-making processes as closely as possible by both local authorities, seeking to ensure synchronised Council approvals to enable final appointment of the successful contractor.

Additionally, Members were advised that a further report would be presented for consideration of the potential options for financing of vehicles under the new contract and for other discretionary works, such as the cleansing of high speed roads.

Taking into consideration the final tender scores detailed in the restricted Annex 2, Cllr S Hudson (Chair) proposed, Cllr M Rhodes seconded and it was

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) Contractor A, identified in the restricted Annex 2 to the report, be awarded the South West Kent Waste Services Contract as detailed in the report; and
- (2) a further report setting out proposals relating to the options for the financing of vehicles deployed on the Contract, costs relating to the cleansing of High Speed Roads, and costs associated with the cleansing of a number of Public Open Spaces, be presented to the next meeting of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee for consideration.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 26/5 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER

Public Spaces Protection Orders were intended to address particular nuisances or problems in particular areas detrimental to the local community's quality of life by imposing conditions on the use of the area to ensure the law-abiding majority could use and enjoy public spaces,

safe from anti-social behaviour. The Borough Council's current Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was due to end in April 2026 and could be extended for a further three years.

The report of the Chief Executive provided feedback on the responses received on the PSPO consultation and sought approval for the PSPO attached at Annex 1.

A summary of the responses received to the consultation, undertaken between 15 September and 2 November 2025, was set out at Annex 2. The majority of those who had responded were in favour of retaining existing restrictions and supported implementing the new restrictions around the use of catapults and unauthorised camping in Tonbridge Memorial Garden.

The Police and Crime Commissioner had also responded to the consultation and given provisional support to the proposed order across the Borough. Additionally, Kent Police had been consulted and supported the restrictions as proposed in the PSPO.

Furthermore, requests arising from the consultation regarding further restrictions, such as the use of bikes or electric bikes/scooters, possession or misuse of spray paint, and unauthorised use of drones on Parish Council open spaces, were noted. While certain activities were already prohibited under existing laws, Members were reminded that any additional restrictions must satisfy the PSPO threshold test with appropriate evidence support. The challenges associated with enforcing these restrictions were highlighted, with particular reference made to driving or parking vehicles on public open spaces, as a concern shared by Members.

Cllr S Hudson (Chair) proposed, Cllr K Tunstall seconded and it was

RECOMMENDED*: That the proposed Public Space Protection Order, as presented at Annex 1, be approved.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 26/6 BIODIVERSITY DUTY

(Decision Notice: D260036MEM)

The report of the Chief Executive presented a Biodiversity Duty Report (attached at Annex 1) which set out the Borough Council's progress in delivering its statutory duty to conserve, enhance and protect biodiversity (habitats and species).

Members were asked to endorse the contents of the Biodiversity Duty Report and note the progress being made by the Borough Council in

delivering its statutory biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021 and the amended Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The proposed future actions detailed in Section 6 of the Biodiversity Duty Report and the continuation of practical steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity across parks, open spaces and other land were summarised and noted by Members.

Cllr S Hudson (Chair) proposed, Cllr J Lark seconded and it was

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the Biodiversity Duty Report attached at Annex 1 be endorsed; and
- (2) the proposed future actions set out in Section 6 of the Biodiversity Duty Report, be approved.

***Decision taken by Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Economy**

CE 26/7 REVIEW OF ROADSIDE NATURE RESERVES

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services provided a review of the Borough Council's Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) following ecological monitoring undertaken by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership between April and September 2025.

Members were advised that Roadside Nature Reserves were introduced in 2022 and that the monitoring work had identified a wide range of plant species and invertebrates across the sites. It was reported that the RNRs were functioning as wildlife corridors, contributing positively to biodiversity and climate resilience.

A number of management recommendations were proposed with the aim of further enhancing biodiversity, including changes to mowing regimes, the sowing of seed mixes at selected locations, the provision of signage, the expansion of certain existing RNRs and the creation of new sites. It was noted that, subject to approval, the proposals would be implemented through a variation to the Grounds Maintenance contract.

During discussion, Members supported the principle of Roadside Nature Reserves and the wider objectives of enhancing biodiversity across the Borough. However, specific concerns were raised in relation to River Lawn in Tonbridge, with Members highlighting its established use as an amenity space by local residents and its status as the subject of an ongoing Village Green application. An amendment was therefore

proposed by Cllr S Pilgrim and seconded by Cllr F Hoskins that River Lawn be removed from the Roadside Nature Reserves programme and returned to a normal mowing regime. The motion was supported by the Committee.

The Committee then considered the remaining recommendations within the report and agreed to support them as set out. Cllr S Hudson (Chair) proposed, Cllr M Rhodes seconded and it was

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) Priority 1 and 2 recommendations within the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership report, attached in Annex 1, be progressed;
- (2) Existing Roadside Nature Reserves, shown in Annex 2, be expanded, subject to the exclusion of River Lawn in Tonbridge from the Roadside Nature Reserves programme; and
- (3) New Roadside Nature Reserves, as shown in Annex 3, be created.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CE 26/8 CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO UPDATE

The report of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Waste and Technical Services provided an overview of the activities undertaken over the past 12 months in respect of waste, recycling, street scene, enforcement, parking, engineering and emergency planning within the Borough Council. Headline initiatives for the coming year were also outlined.

Discussion focused on the operation and review of parking arrangements across the Borough, including on-street and Sunday parking, the provision of free parking, and differences in parking approaches between areas. While recognising the benefits of introducing the new parking arrangements to support improved parking turnover, better availability of short-stay parking, and the role of parking management in enhancing town centre vitality, Members also noted the importance of monitoring the impact of the arrangements on residential areas, including displacement and enforcement issues.

Additionally, the supermarket parking refund schemes and their relationship to the wider town centre activity, alongside the need to review parking arrangements within the context of the Borough Council's overall financial position and service priorities, were also considered. The importance of continuing engagement with local stakeholders as

part of any future review process was acknowledged, and it was noted that a number of the issues raised would be considered further through future reviews with reports to Members in due course.

Overall positive progress being made within the Waste and Technical Services were noted and well received by the Committee.

CE 26/9 WORK PROGRAMME 2026

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during the next year was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

CE 26/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.48 pm