

Edenbridge Town Council agrees 2026–27 Precept to set a balanced budget

Edenbridge Town Council has agreed its Precept for the 2026-27 financial year following consideration at Full Council on Monday 08 December.

Council supported the Finance Committee's recommendation to set a budget of:

Expenditure: £965,056.37

Income: £115,569.00

Deficit / Precept required: £849,487.37

Council approved a 5.7% increase in the Town Council element of Council Tax, setting a final Precept of £849,885 (which reflects the percentage increase rounded in line with standard Council Tax calculations). This will enable the Council to deliver a balanced budget while continuing to protect services, facilities and long-term assets for the town.

What this means for residents

Following confirmation of the final tax base, which is slightly lower than initially estimated, the impact on households is as follows:

- Band D charge: £212.64 per year
- Increase from 2025-26: £11.56 per year
- Monthly increase: approximately 96 pence
- Overall increase: 5.75%

At the time of the Finance Committee's recommendation in November, calculations were based on a tax base of 3,998.66, which would have resulted in a Band D charge of £212.54. The revised tax base of 3,996.77 means the annual Band D charge is 10 pence higher than originally anticipated.

Why an increase is needed

The 2026-27 budget has been prepared against a backdrop of continued cost pressures affecting town and parish councils nationally, including:

- Inflationary increases across contracts and services.
- Staffing costs and national pay awards.
- Ongoing maintenance of buildings, open spaces and community assets.
- Funding of professional services and the emerging Local Plan.

Officers and councillors have undertaken detailed, line-by-line scrutiny of budgets, reserves, and buildings and open spaces maintenance plans to identify savings where possible, without reducing service quality or drawing down General Reserves.

Protecting services and planning ahead

The agreed Precept allows the Council to:

- Maintain high standards across parks, open spaces and buildings.
- Continue to invest in long-term maintenance through planned reserves.
- Support community services and local initiatives.
- Avoid using General Reserves to fund day-to-day spending.

Council considered alternative options, including reducing the Precept, drawing on reserves or reducing some of its services, but agreed that setting a balanced budget was the most responsible and sustainable approach.

Council noted that the employer's pension contribution rate is reducing, which will generate savings within the staffing budget. However, in light of significant upcoming pressures — including the Local Plan Regulation 19 stage and Examination Hearing, potential reorganisation of local government and the move towards unitary authorities, and the Council's forward plan to continue strengthening its earmarked reserves, members agreed it was prudent to maintain the Precept at the level recommended.

Transparency and next steps

Detailed budget papers and supporting information are available on the Council's website for residents who wish to see how the Precept is allocated across services and projects.

A copy of the Council's reserves and forecasted position at the end of the current financial year is also published. This includes the Community Infrastructure Levy funds which are separated out from Council as custodian of these funds and the rules around spending of them. The recommended level of General Reserves is between 50–75% of annual expenditure, although this can vary between councils depending on size and assets.

The Council recognises that any increase in Council Tax is unwelcome and remains committed to delivering value for money while safeguarding services that contribute to the quality of life in Edenbridge.

Full Council will again review the new budget at its meeting on 12 January, before ratifying the budget and submitting the Precept recommendation to Sevenoaks District Council.

Meeting agendas, papers and minutes are published on the Council's website:
<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/councilpapers/meetings>