

To Councillors: J Aldridge, A Baker (*Vice-Chairwoman*), S Compton, M Gemmell Smith, A Layland, N Martindale, M McArthur, S McGregor, V Parker, A Read, J Streets, S Sumner, B Todd (*Chairman*).

Notice is hereby given of a Council Meeting of Edenbridge Town Council to be held in Rickards Hall on 4 December 2023 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
29 November 2023

To assist in the speedy and efficient dispatch of business members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the Town Clerk prior to the day of the meeting. Council Meetings may be recorded.

Any person intending to make recordings is advised to notify the Clerk in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Meeting Papers & Report

1 **To Receive Apologies for Absence**

2 **Declaration of Interests or Predetermination**


The disclosure must include the nature of the interest. If an interest becomes apparent to a member during the course of a meeting that has not been disclosed under this item, the member must immediately disclose it.

3 **Public Questions and Statements**

Members of the public, and members with prejudicial interests on items on the Agenda, may make representations, answer, ask questions and give evidence at this meeting in respect of items on the Agenda. (This is the only opportunity for members of the public to make a contribution during the meeting.)

Both public and members are limited to three minutes per person to speak and the total time designated for public questions shall not exceed fifteen minutes unless directed by the Chairman of the meeting.

4 **To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 30 October 2023-024/01-07**

 Full Council | 30 October 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-024/1-6)

5 **To receive County and District Councillor Reports**


5.1 **County Councillor**

5.2 **District Councillors**


6 **To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings**

6.1 **Planning Committee meetings 06 November 2023-025/1-3; Planning & Transportation 27 November 2023-030/1-3**

 Planning and Transport | 06 November 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-025/1-3)

 Planning and Transport | 27 November 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-030/1-3)

6.2 **Finance & Governance Committee 09 October 2023-020/1-3; Finance Committee 20 November 2023-028/1-3**

 Finance and Governance | 09 October 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-020/1-3)

 Finance and Governance | 20 November 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-028/1-5)

6.3 **Personnel Committee meetings 19 October 2023-022/01-02; 27 November 2023-29/01**

6.4 **Open Spaces Committee meetings 18 September 2023-18/1-4; 06 November 2023-026/1-5**

Open Spaces | 18 September 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-018/1-5)
Open Spaces | 06 November 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-026/1-5)

6.5 **Forward Planning Steering Group 23 October 2023-023/01-06**

Forward Planning | 23 October 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-023/1-5)

6.6 **Grants & Charities 13 November 2023-027/1-3**

Charities & Grants | 13 November 2023 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-027/1-3)

7 **To receive recommendations from Committees**

7.1 **To receive recommendations from Personnel Committee 27 November 2023**

Confidential Annex 1 (omitted from public documents):

7.1.1 **To ratify the appointment of the Open Spaces Officer - Maria Marto**

7.1.2 **To increase the staff budget for 2024-25 to £469,607.**

The October Committee meeting recommended to the Finance Committee a staffing budget of £464,096. However, in the meantime the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services had reached an agreement on rates of pay from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the impact on the 2024-25 budget was an additional £5,511. Members had considered, and agreed it would be better to amend the staffing budget to allow for what was known/expected. This did not allow for any potential contribution rate increases to Kent Pensions or Employer NI.

Do Members support increasing the staffing budget to £469,607?

7.1.3 **To confirm a one-off remuneration pay to the Town Clerk in view of the additional work load and hours during recent staff shortages period**

Do Members support the recommendation from the Personnel Committee, as per the minutes?

7.2 **To receive recommendations from the Finance Committee 20 November**

Finance Committee considered the draft budget proposals for 2024-25. These will be received and considered by Council under agenda item 9.

7.2.1 **To increase the fees and charges, including the cemeteries charges, for 2024 in line with the RPI rate 6.1% (as published October)**

The fees and charges increase each year are usually in line with inflation measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI), and the RPI rate for September is the rate that coincides with meetings and the taken rate. The RPI for September 2023 was 8.9%, but as October's rate was known at the time of the meeting, and lower than the September rate, at 6.1% Members agreed the October rate should be used noting everyone was feeling the impact

from the past year's higher inflation rates.

Do Members support the October RPI rate of 6.1% across its fees and charges?

Confidential Annex 2 (omitted from public documents):

Confidential Annex 3 (omitted from public documents):

7.2.2

To confirm the Service Level Agreements for HOUSE (was £8k, budgeted £9k); and Museum £6,500

This year, Council has two SLAs. Finance committee supported the SLAs as budgeted: Eden Valley Museum £6,500 and HOUSE £9,000. HOUSE has been hit with funding cuts and has previously requested an increase from £8,000. A meeting with HOUSE is arranged for 8 January.

Do Members support an increase to the SLA agreement for HOUSE in the new budget from £8,000 to £9,000K?

Do Members confirm the continuation of the two SLAs in the budget for 2024-25?

7.2.3

To confirm the Lease rents for 2024

Leases for each Club differ slightly. Actual invoicing changes are effective from 1 April due to the invoicing dates in two equal payments:

Cricket – annually on review date (1 January) by RPI at the rent review date

Nomads – two yearly review February (month agreement made) by RPI published in the month preceding the review date – last increase was 2023, so no increase 2024.

Rugby – increase annually by RPI at the rent review date

Do Members confirm the rent increases by 6.1 % (RPI as of October).

8

To receive reports and any recommendations from working groups; delegated reports; clerk's and officers' reports

8.1

Clerk's Report

Bonfire Society's annual parade & litter clean-up: The street clear-up following this year's bonfire parade through the High Street, was carried out by SDC on the Sunday morning and funded by ETC. There were several comments of praise and appreciation.

Byelaws update: The next stage is for a letter this month to be submitted to the Secretary of State to confirming the public notice period and Council resolution.

Car parking issues in Council car parks: Both Market Yard car park and Blossoms car park have abandoned vehicles. We have been liaising with the Police but ultimately it is for the Council to resolve as is its land. Blossoms Park particularly has issues with residents using the full area for parking particularly in the evenings and early morning thus making it difficult for park users to park. The abandoned vehicle in MYCP is preventing a streetlight repair. A meeting with the Parking Working Group will be arranged for January to receive feedback and suggestions following a car parking management company assessment of the sites.

Cemeteries: 18 burial plots in cemeteries three and four, have had letters sent to them as the plots are not compliant with the cemetery regulations, and have expanded the space permitted for Memorials, as well as putting their own additional memorials, memorabilia and artificial flowers. A further five are due to receive letters. Some residents have rectified the issues, others will be receiving a second letter. After this, those that have not complied, we will make the necessary arrangements remove the additional items, kerbing and/or loose stones. Over the years, the regulations have been upheld with requests for grander

memorials, photos, badges, artificial flowers/plant all declined. The Open Spaces Committee will receive an update at its next meeting.

Christmas Office closing dates: The office closes Thursday 21 December, 3.30 pm and reopens Tuesday 2 January, 9.00 am. A notice is on the website; emergency contacts are under 'what we do & contacts' tab.

Edenbridge Community Christmas Association: The ECCA has again this year provided a great display of Christmas lights for the High Street.

Electric Vehicle Chargers (EVCs): The installation works for four EVCs at Market Yard car park was completed 16 November. We are now awaiting the chargers and connection which is expected quite soon.

Forge Singers: The new Lease has been drafted by the Council's solicitor but had not been sent to Forge Singers as initial thought. I have yet to go through an amended version and it should be sent imminently.

Land outside the old Police Station: The current land owner has been in touch to confirm the intention is still to gift this land to the Council, but has been delayed due to outstanding utilities work. Details are with their solicitor who are preparing the necessary transfer paperwork.

Local Plan: SDC has published its second phase Reg 18 consultation on the Local Plan. Members have met to consider a response and will be working with a consultant to ensure the best representation made for Edenbridge. SDC is hosting a session to 'come and find out more' on Wednesday 6 December, 4.30 – 7.30 pm at the Eden Centre. The Council will also host a couple of sessions where residents can view the Plan and proposed site allocations. Dates tbc and will be published on the website, Facebook and noticeboards.

Market: The market is doing well with traders. November peaked with 16 traders one week. A newsletter to all traders was issued mid-November advising what the Council is doing to support the traders, Christmas activities and to encourage traders to have some promotions. Christmas this year has a table to 'write your letter to Santa, with a post box to the North Pole', this is available for three weeks, and in week four – 21 December – Santa and his elves will be at the market to give a gift to those who sent letters.

Meeting dates 2024: Reminder the annual meeting dates are published on the website under meetings (there may be some changes/additions to this throughout the year).

Pavilion: To receive update on recent mould issue at Football Changing room area: Following some issues within the building, these have now been rectified following the Council's insurance experts' assessment, and the Council's insurance covered the costs for the ceiling repair. The Club has been advised that the black marks/mould around the football changing area and corridor were not considered a direct consequence of the issue in the loft area. However, it has been noted that ventilation around the shower area is an issue. We will look at options to improve ventilation, and will present to Council and the Club for consideration.

Pavilion replacement windows and new electric shutters: The successful tenderer has been notified. The contract is being drafted. Once this has been agreed we will meet on site to discuss and to confirm an installation date. The Rugby Club has asked if this could be delayed to coincide with its end of season when they will also be looking at some work done.

Post Office: It is a great shame the Post Office at Paydens closed on 2 November. Tom Tugendhat MP and the Council has both expressed to the Post Offices that this is a great loss and hopes that it can find a solution soon.

Recreation Ground unauthorised access gates: The matter remains to be managed by the

Council's solicitor. There are two cases the solicitor is still following up. One we have reinstated the chain-link fence and planting, as well as other measures; the other the resident has yet to remove the gate and reinstate the fence. A further letter was sent early November, as yet we are still awaiting a response. The resident continues to use the gate. We are looking at reinstating the hedging at this section. Advice is being taken, and the solicitors instructed accordingly.


War Memorial: With the closure of the Hospital, I have been given a new contact for NHS Properties and have written to them regarding the future of the Memorial and also access to the whilst it is at the current location.

9

Budget 2024-25

Finance Committee consider the draft budget proposals for 2024-25. This included recommendations from the Forward Planning Steering Group, Personnel Committee and Open Spaces Committee, and approved by Council also 3 October.

Finance Committee considered the current reserves position and view at the end of the financial year, as well as the proposed budget and impact. The conclusion and recommendation from Committee was to support a balancing budget, not to draw down on the reserves which had taken several years to strengthen and bring back to a stable level, and to Precept for the deficit on expenditure and anticipated income. *Confidential report attached.*

 Confidential Annex 4 (omitted from public documents):

9.1

To receive an update on the Council's Earmarked Reserves and General Reserves

A copy of the Consolidated Balance Sheet up to 30 September 2023 (period end) is attached for information; this provides a summary of the financial assets, 5-months into the financial year spend, and the current Earmarked Reserves position (EMR).

Attached separately as would not upload.

9.2

To consider the full draft budget for 2024-25

Confidential Report on budget proposals attached.

The draft budget for 2024-25 will be published on the Council's website following Council's recommendation and resolution on the draft budget. This will be presented to the January Council to confirm the Precept and Band D payment.

Do Members confirm the draft budget for 2024-25 as presented for each cost centre?

9.3

To consider the Precept for 2024-25

At the time of preparing the budget the tax base is not know, SDC do not issue this until December. Therefore, Council can only make its best estimated calculations when considering the Precept and Band D calculation. This is then presented to January Council following a period of publication of the budget and proposed Precept. *See attached confidential report.* Having received the Finance Committee's recommendation, considered the draft budget and the impact on the Precept and Band D,

How do Members want to proceed?

9.4

To confirm the recommendation for the Earmarked Reserves for 2024-25

Members are asked to confirm ear-marked reserve levels for 2024-25 having considered the budget. These may change with projects not completed in 2023-24 and the spend carried over in to the following year and added to the EMRs. *Refer to attached confidential report.*

Do Members confirmed the EMR levels as presented or are then any proposed adjustments?

10 **Draft Local Plan - Regulation 18 consultation (23 November 2023 to 11 January 2024).**
January 2023 Council worked with a planning consultant to respond to the initial draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation. (Council's response can be viewed on our website www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/have-your-say-on-local-plan-that-will-shape-edenbridges-future-2). SDC's Development and Conservation Advisory Committee meeting 31 October confirmed the second phase Reg 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan which now also includes the development numbers and locations. Council supported engaging a consultation to help ensure the best possible response, as well as further support throughout the full Plan consultation period.

A meeting with the consultant to discuss the initial view on the sites took place on 3 December, and meeting with just councillors and the Town Clerk on 29 November to take a first look at the draft Plan 2040. A further meeting with the consultant will be arranged for week 4 December.

SDC are holding a A 'Pop-up' session, for residents and councillors to find out more about the latest version of the Plan on: **Wednesday 6 December 2023, 4.30pm to 7.30pm** at the **Eden Centre**.

10.1 **To appoint a Working Group to work with the Town Clerk and Consultant with preparing and confirming the Council's response to the second Reg 18 consultation**
Members are asked to appoint a Working Group and give delegated authority to prepare and confirm Council's representation on the draft Local Pan Regulation 18 consultation.

To appoint Members.

11 **Matters arising from the minutes for report and not elsewhere on the agenda**

11.1 **To receive an update on maintenance work for Rickards Hall**
We are still awaiting the surveyor's report. This has been delayed due to other commitments, unfortunately. Once we have this, we will be able to prioritise the building maintenance with some being commissioned by the Town Clerk, Buildings Manager and Cllr Baker as previously agreed by Council, to get the urgent works carried-out. The recommendations from the surveyor will be reported to Council and Finance Committee for the maintenance plans.

The Fire Risk Assessment carried out earlier this year, identified a new shutter, automated, is needed between the kitchen and hall. We have received a quote for £3,072. A 13amp fused spur will also need to installed within one metre of the motor, by an electrician. Once we have the surveyor's report and are able to prioritise works, we can consider if this is funded though the funds transferred to EMR or contingencies.

11.2 **Edenbridge Remembrance Sunday 12th November 2023**
This year's Remembrance wreath laying service at the War Memorial was very well attended, the parade from Leathermarket car park to the hospital, and back again, went well. A big thank you to the Bonfire Society for organising the road closure marshals and barriers, Cllr Layland for submitting the road closure, the Scouts for providing the lead bus, the Girl Guides and everyone who was involved with the parade. Thank you to Barry Batchelor for organising the RBL and wreaths, and to Terri Scanes for ensuing the Church service continued, and the Town Band.

11.3 **SDC Annual Liaison Meeting - amended date - Thursday 18 January**

Unfortunately, the annual liaison meeting which should have been 2 November has been rescheduled to Thursday 18 January, 10.00 am. This is a meeting with SDC and ETC officers, the Leader of SDC and ETC Councillors to raise any issues and discuss Edenbridge matters.

11.4 **To receive an update on Train Station noticeboard tourism poster and reconsider the station waiting room project possibly redirecting the £1,500 budget**

December 2022, Members received details of a project to create a large board/poster promoting aspects of Edenbridge heritage including the graveyard trail, the town trail, the museum and including some interesting "did you know?" stuff as the hooks to showcase Edenbridge with a tourism angle. Members noted that the quote provided varied depending on the level of interaction. This project was something initiated with Southeast Communities Rail Partnership (SCRP) who have worked with other parishes to create artwork for station waiting rooms. A budget of £1,500 was approved, and has since been moved to EMR.

Separately, there was a Noticeboard poster project SCRPs had been working on with the Tourism Officer. Unfortunately, this has just hit several stalling blocks and has not happened, and now looks like this is fully falling to the Town Council. We had also been waiting for the new Council branding/identity to be finalised so that any artwork produced was not immediately dated.

However, having had a rethink and possibly combining both projects, the concept perhaps needs to be simpler but still promoting Edenbridge, its history and what there is to see in the town. Having discussed again with the designer, this is the following feedback:

"In general, production of a map board is not too complex or time consuming. What is, is drawing all the graphical elements from scratch. therefore I've suggested costs below for options with and without the graphics (if without its using images instead).

Option A using graphics:

1. Base Map design and creation: £480
2. Graphic design and layout (titles, call out boxes etc): £360
3. Create 12 x graphics of places of interest: £960
4. Amends and file production for print: £80

Total: £1880

(Note: I've factored in 2 hours per graphic, however that's an average, some like the church will probably take longer but a park will take less)

Option B If using images rather than graphics:

1. Base Map design and creation: £480
2. Graphic design and layout (titles, call out boxes etc): £360
3. Amends and file production for print: £80

Total: £920

(Note both the above do not include copywriting or sourcing images etc I would assume you are providing all images and text etc.)"

The cost of producing the posters also needs to be factored in.

Doing nothing, means there will be no tourism poster in the noticeboard, and if there is one it does need to be something that covers what it is the town, look attractive and professionally produced, and have a reasonable shelf/display life. The station waiting rooms, several in the district have had artwork displayed promoting the local areas and they look good. Whilst

Edenbridge's waiting room is for departing, those that use it may not be aware what is in the town to visit or its history. We also note, that more recently this seems to be locked.

Proposal: to redirect the £1,500 to produce a poster for the station notice board, but can be edited and displayed at both stations, and with the potential of a version in waiting room.

How do Members want to proceed?

12 **OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision**

12.1 **Neighbourhood Plan: To consider if Council would like to establish a Working Group to investigate the cost and outline draft and Plan for producing an Edenbridge Neighbourhood Plan**

The Town Council has considered resurrecting its Plan a few times: November 2019, but agreed to keep on hold until more was known on the position of the suspended draft Local Plan. In April 2021, a meeting was held (online) with the SDC Planning Policy Team Leader to discuss the validity of NHPs and the viability of the Council looking at its Plan. Extract from an email following that meeting:

'Whilst you don't have to provide a neighbourhood plan, as there is no statutory requirement, it will enable you and the community to play a greater role in determining the future of your area. It can help identify priorities for your area, allocate land and also help create partnerships which will help take some of these ideas and priorities forward.... it will involve a lot of work and the Town Council will need to be specific in their policies and what they want to achieve. You would also need to think how your neighbourhood plan would complement/work with the new character area assessment'.

Council October 2022, Members agreed, in view that there was still no adopted Local Plan, to hold off for the time being and to allow the new elected council (May 2023) to consider what a Neighbourhood Plan could do for Edenbridge.

The Planning Committee June 2023 and Council July 2023, have considered this again, asking the Forward Planning Steering Group to consider and possibly recommend to the budget. However, it concluded that more detail was needed and to put this as a medium project.

Developing a NHP is a tremendous amount of work and commitment. There is technical advice support available from SDC, and there is grant funding which can be applied for from government funded bodies to help towards consultant fees, printing and consultation costs. Typical grants are around £10k for a basic grant and an additional technical support grant of up to £8k. The Council's NHP reserves has £15k currently.

Examples of Neighbourhood Plan costs: Sevenoaks District Council £100,000 (adopted May 2023); Swanley Town Council £50,000 (up to its Reg 14 March 2023, and is currently consulting on its Reg 16); Lingfield Parish Council £20,000 (getting up to Reg.14).

In view of the current Draft Local Reg 18 consultation, Members are asked if they are still content to keep this on hold until the Local Plan has confirmed its sites or if it would like to investigate developing a Plan. Members should note that if it was to consider, it could end up doing a lot of work which the Local Plan would supersede, and that perhaps it should wait and develop policies that can then influence the type of development and infrastructure.

How do Members want to proceed?


12.2 **Rickards Hall: To approve the expenditure of up to £500 for a replacement dishwasher**

Do Members support the expenditure of up to £500 for a replacement dishwasher?

13 **Health & Safety Audit: To receive a report and note actions following recent audit by Worknest**


Worknest carried out its H&S and RAs audit on 15 November. It was a positive meeting with several helpful pointers and advice. Overall, the report is fair and identifies a number of actions but there are no actions requiring immediate attention. The assessor visited the open spaces, depot, stores, Rickards Hall, and the Office. We will be working through the advice over the coming months.

A copy of the report is attached as a confidential document.


 Confidential Annex 5 (omitted from public documents):

14 **Consultations**

14.1 **Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18 consultation (Part 2) - opened 23 November 2023 closes Thursday 11 January 2024.**

 https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069131/plan_2040/753/local_plan_2040_regulation_18_consultation_part_2

14.2 **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-34 - closes 30 January 2023**

 <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/local-flood-risk>

15 **To receive reports from councillors who have attended meetings of outside bodies**

16 **To consider any press releases**

17 **Matters for future agendas**

18 **Date of next meeting - 15 January 2024**