

To Councillors: J Aldridge, A Baker (Vice-Chairwoman), S Compton, M Gemmell Smith, A Layland, 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 March 2024 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
28 February 2024

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 15 January 2024 (2023- 034/01-05)**

 Full Council | 15 January 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-034/1-5)


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 & Transportation Committee meeting 05 February 036/1-4; Planning Committee 26 February 039/1-2**


 Planning and Transport | 05 February 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-036/1-4)

 Planning and Transport | 26 February 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-039/1-2)

6.2 **Finance & Governance Committee 29 January 035/1-3**

 Finance and Governance | 29 January 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-035/1-3)

6.3 **Open Spaces Committee 12 February 035/1-3**

 Open Spaces | 12 February 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-037/1-10)

6.4 **Personnel Committee 26 February 038/1-2**

Personnel | 26 February 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-038/1-2)

7 **To receive recommendations from Committees**

7.1 **Personnel Committee Recommendations**

7.1.1 **To award the annual pay increments for staff**

Do Members ratify the recommendation for the staff annual pay increments (as per the contracts) and budgeted?

7.1.2 **To continue with nominal monthly payment to one officer for additional work hours during current staff shortage**

Do Members ratify the continuation of the discretionary monthly payment in view of additional work and hours during the period of staff shortage?

7.1.3 **To continue sick pay for one employee**

7.1.4 **To receive the recommendation to move staffing surplus 2023-24 to staff reserves (est. £11k) and for Finance Committee to advise and consider actual final amount transfer**

Do Members support the recommendation to move staffing surplus 2023-24 to staff reserves and for Finance Committee to advise and consider actual final amount transfer?

7.1.5 **To confirm the continuation of the Temporary Minutes Secretary**

Do Members confirm the continuation of the Temporary Minutes Secretary for the foreseeable future during the staff shortages?

7.1.6 **To confirm the appointment of temporary finance/office support**

Do Members confirm the appointment of temporary finance/office support person for the foreseeable future during the staff shortages?

7.1.7 **To confirm the drawdown on Staffing Reserves to fund the additional nonbudgeted costs for 7.1.5&6 (as needed)**

Do Members support to drawdown on Staffing Reserves to fund the additional nonbudgeted costs for 7.1.5&6 (as needed)?

8 **Co-options for Councillors (there are three seats vacant)**

Following the resignation of three councillors last year, all three did not receive requests to fill the casual vacancy in the Parish by election. It is the responsibility of your Members, therefore, to co-opt to fill the vacancy "(Rule 8(3) of The Local Elections (Parishes & Communities) Rules 1986)". The person co-opted must, of course, be qualified for holding office (Local Government Act 1972). Members have previously voted the vacancies to be filled by co-option and to advertise the opportunity inviting interested candidates to apply. The Council had nine enquires and six applications received.

Copy of the full co-option procedures is published on the Council's website (link below or

attachment). Section 4 covers the procedure for the meeting. Please read the full section on voting. Below are a few highlights:

(4.1) The person(s) to be co-opted must receive an absolute majority vote of the councillors present and voting (Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12, para 39)...

(4.3) If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes.

(4.6) If a majority of the councillors vote against the sole candidates, then the vacancy fails to be filled.

(4.8) Management of the vote: The Chairman will call for the vote. Members will vote using ballot papers. Applicants will be listed in alphabetical order. Ballot papers will be issued to councillors at each round of voting. Ballot papers will be collected, and the total counted for each applicant.

Results will be read out alphabetically...

Some of the applications received have been supported by a councillor who had been approached by the individual candidate, others may not have know any councillors prior to submitting their expression of interest. All applicants will be asked to speak under agenda item 3 (prior to Members consider their votes item 8), *on why you would like to be a Town Councillor and what you feel you can offer the community.*

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/21-02-co-option-guidance-and-procedure-policy-adopted-15.02.21.pdf>

Annex 1: 21 02 co-option guidance and procedure policy adopted 15.02.21.pdf

8.1 **To receive co-option applications and vote to fill the vacancies**

A reminder of the voting procedure:

- Members will be issued with Ballot forms for each voting round
- Vacancy one, two and three will be filled by separate ballots
- Members have the same number of votes as vacancies, but do not have to use all votes
- **Successful candidate(s) will need to have more than 50% of the eligible votes so that they have been co-opted with a majority**
- The candidate with the least votes will be eliminated from the ballot form and new forms issued
- The votes will be counted and announced in alphabetical order
- Where a candidate has less than 50% of the votes, they will not be co-opted. Where there are several candidates, the candidate with the least number of votes will be deemed not successful, and the remainder must then be put to the vote again
- In the event of a tie for the bottom place i.e 4:2:2:2, those with the least votes collectively, will be determined by another vote
- In the event that the vote is null avoid, then the vacancy fails to be filled.

Refer to section 4 of the co-option procedures for further information.

Management of the vote: The Chairman will call for the vote. Members will vote using ballot papers. Applicants will be listed in alphabetical order. Ballot papers will be issued to councillors at each round of voting. Ballot papers will be collected and the total counted for each applicant. Results will be read out alphabetically. A black marker pen will be used to eliminate on the next round of ballot papers.

Ballot papers will remain confidential.

Confidential Annex 2 (omitted from public documents):

8.2 **To receive the Councillor(s) Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

Co-opted Members to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

To receive reports and recommendations from the Town Clerk and Officers; Working Groups; and Delegated Reports

9.1 **Clerk's Report**

Byelaws update: These have been submitted to the Secretary of State and we are now awaiting approval. Once we have received this, new signage for all sites will be prepared.

Car parking issues in Council car parks: Parking at Blossoms Park restricting park users from parking remains an issue.

Cemeteries: Continuing with work to ensure the standards of the cemeteries and consistency with the rule book and the memorials, a new notice will be displayed advising that artificial flowers and other memorabilia will need to be removed. We will look to implement this from mid-April onwards. The Open Spaces Committee will receive updates on cemetery matters.

Electric Vehicle Chargers (EVCs): Four EVCs are now in operation. The cost per kWh for the end user is 50p and the charge speed is 7kWh per hour. Payment system is through a QR code that can be scanned and will direct the end user to an app.

Finances: An interim meeting with the Chairman and Chairman of the Finance Committee took place recently to review and ensure EDGE reports balanced and look at a forecasted year-end view. It was noted that several of the maintenance plan projects had not been delivered due to staff resources and would be carried over to 2024-25 earmarked reserves. A couple of grants for the Community Warden were outstanding. Legal fees were higher than budgeted due to unauthorised access, new lease agreement.

Forge Singers: The new draft Lease was sent in December. We are currently following this up.

Land outside the old Police Station: Details are with their solicitor who are preparing the necessary transfer paperwork.

Lease meetings: The annual lease meetings with Cricket and Rugby Clubs have taken place, and Nomads will be in April. Nothing specific to report. The Rugby Club does have some plans for internal improvements, and we await details on these. Both Clubs are thriving with membership, tournaments and activities.

Local Plan: We continue to liaise with SDC and the consultant. (agenda item 10).

Market: The Market has been doing okay considering it has been quite wet January and February. Pitch numbers averaging eight. Temporary day signage is now in use to direct to the market, and we have a new banner for display on Main Road (having received permission from a local business). We hope to include the Market in the D-Day 80th Anniversary activities.

Pavilion: Replacement windows and new shutters – the draft contract has been issued to the contractor. The contractor has confirmed they can hold the prices to coincide works with the Rugby Club's own internal works once the season has finished.

Personnel: The Open Spaces Officer has recently resigned. We will be looking to re-advertise the position in April.

Office hours: As a result of staff shortages, and annual leave, the office opening hours to the public may have to change, with some days (or part days) closed to the public. We will of course work to minimise this, but on occasions may be needed to keep up with the administration work, and avoid unnecessary long periods of lone work.

SES Water – Lingfield Road and Stangrove Road Closures: Reminder of the the following three roads:

- Lingfield Road – closed from 19 February 2024 to July 2024
- Springfield Road – closed from 29 April 2024 to October 2024 (dates tbc)
- Stangrove Road – closed from 8 July 2024 to November 2024 (dates tbc)

Each road will need to be closed for the duration of the work for the safety and wellbeing of our staff and other road users.

Streetlights – Four Elms Road: The new streetlights at Four Elms Road which were installed as part of the new Medical Centre works, remain not working. The lighting installed is part of a section 278 agreement, prior to adoption by KCC, the developer is responsible for all maintenance and energy cost prior to the handover to KCC. The developer is currently liaising with UKPN.

Vandalism: the budget allowed for vandalism is usually £3,500. However, there has been excessive vandalism with catapults to streetlight heads, damage bins, playground equipment, noticeboards that the cost so far have reached £7k.

War Memorial: With the closure of the Hospital, I have had some success contacting NHS Properties and hope to have a meeting in the coming weeks to discuss the site and future of the Memorial.

10

Draft Local Plan - update

Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Layland, McArthur, Todd, the Town Clerk and Planning and Admin Officer met with two of the SDC Planning Policy Officers on 31 January to discuss the draft Local Plan and concerns with it, in particular, the site allocations. In short, it was fairly disappointing in that they confirmed for sites to be removed from the Plan, they would need sufficient new evidence that required them to withdraw a site. They are currently working through the consultation responses. Re the housing numbers on sites, it was confirmed these were submitted by the developer (but may not be the limit to any potential application). However, there were some positives in that there may be some scope for the the Town Council to have some input with the Infrastructure Development Plans going forward. The Town Strategy and vision for Edenbridge High Street was discussed and it was agreed that the Council could submit amendments for consideration. The Planning Committee has since appointed a small working group and a meeting has taken place to review the current TS.

Other matters that were raised included education for the Sevenoaks district, Highways, Gypsy and Traveller site allocations as well as concerns with the extent of the proposals for Edenbridge and the pressures this will have on existing facilities and infrastructure, despite new policies, on flooding, drainage and utilities, which would need to be addressed in the planning applications.

The Local Plan Working Group will continue to work with the consultant, and another meeting is hoped for March.

11

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

11.1

Games Club and Involve Kent - contract renewal up to 31 March 2024 £3,000

Involve Kent has confirmed the continuation of the contract for Games Club in the short term (value £3k subject to new attendees and positive outcomes to the Games Club). Looking at 2024-25 KCC wellbeing funding cuts are expected to be 40%. Involve looking to

find ways to continue to offer capacity building support and workshops throughout 24/25, but as yet we will not know if support for the Games Club will continue.

11.2 **Annual Community Event - D-Day 80th Anniversary 6 June update**

The Working Group met recently and were in favour to organise a Beacon Lighting event at Stangrove Park as part of the D-Day 80th Anniversary commemorations on Thursday 6 June. The Queen's Jubilee was a great success and popular with residents so the plan is to host something similar. The official event guide suggests light a beacon, lamp lighting, bell ringing, fish & chips. The plan for Edenbridge is to hold an evening picnic in Stangrove Park with music and the beacon lighting at official time of 9.15 pm. The Church bells will ring as people arrive from 6.45pm. Music at the Stangrove Park will start at 7.15/30 pm. Events will conclude with the lighting of the beacon. Local organisations are being encouraged to be part of the event, and details will be published in due course.

The office has also applied for a grant with a view to enable an event on 5 June for the older members of the community and Games Club members who may not want to be out in the evening, but would like to be involved in the D-Day 80th Anniversary commemorations. This would be similar to the community cohesion event held last year.

11.3 **SDC Annual Liaison Meeting - Thursday 18 January: to receive a report**

Seven Town Councillors and two officers met with Sevenoaks District Council Leader (Cllr Julia Thornton), the CEO (Dr Pav Ramewal) and Chief Officer Finance & Trading (Adrian Rowbotham). Matters discussed included the Local Plan, planning challenges and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, some local planning applications and enforcement matters, budgets, and the Leisure Centre. It was a useful meeting and good to meet face-to-face. Copy of the draft minutes are attached (*confidential*).

 Confidential Annex 3 (omitted from public documents):

11.4 **Annual Town Meeting - Monday 11 March**

The agenda for this year's meeting was published on 27 February (link below). It is a full agenda this year, with the usual Council reports, as well as reports from the Kent County Councillor, Leader of SDC, Police. This year's local groups presenting will focus mostly on youth group and activities provisions, Bridges will talk about its youth and other activities, and the Museum will provide details on what's happening 2024. There are four exhibitors: Bridges, the Cricket Club, Everyone Active, and Rugby Club. Doors open 6.30 pm for registration with presentations starting promptly at 7.00 pm.

The Communications Officer and Town Clerk have been working on the slide presentations.

 https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/mc-events/annual-town-meeting-10/?mc_id=829

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

12.1 **EDGE Year-end support: To ratify the expenditure of £420 for online support with Financial year-end processes**

Personnel Committee agreed at its November meeting to allow a month budget of £1k for external support or locum support. So far, EDGE IT has provided five hours (£410). I have booked them to help with the year-end which will provide webinars and 6-hours support if need.

Do Members ratify the expenditure of £420 for online support with Financial year-end processes?

12.2 **Citizens Advice Edenbridge & Westerham branch: To note recent funding cuts from SDC**
The Council has been made aware of cuts to the SDC budget and thus cuts to the funding to the Edenbridge and Westerham Citizens Advice. They are a much valued free service to residents providing services to help with with any number of problems. The support and advice is invaluable to those seeking help with housing, benefits, debt and family issues. Many people, including the elderly, are unable to cope with, or do not have access to, digital technology. The concern for the Citizens Advice is that they may have to consider reducing its hours and service which it dearly hopes not to.

The Town Council already provides an annual grant (through its grants programme) usually £2k; and it does their payroll each month. The Council has not been asked directly to consider any further financial support.

Some local councils have written to SDC to ask for this to be reconsidered.

Do Members have any comments?

12.3 **To receive requests from Community Groups for funding support:**
The Town Council operates an annual grants programme, usually programmed for November when all grant applications are considered together. However, the Council has received request from organisations outside this window and requesting consideration in advance. The Council's grants budget for 2023-24 was £8k, it has awarded £9290 using £1920 from reserves. The budget for 2024-25 is £8k.

The Twinning Association, who had a longstanding Service Level Agreement, recently returned to the Council £1,300. The SLA used to be for £500 pa. In 2021 Members supported (2022-23 budget) increasing to £1k for the 50th anniversary activities (as a final payment and on the condition any unspent funds would be returned to Council).

12.3.1 **Edenbridge Community Christmas Association: request for funding, staff resources and high street cleaning after community event**
Attached is a letter (*confidential*) from the Edenbridge Community Christmas Association (ECCA). In summary (extract from letter), the ECCA are requesting *support in the areas that we feel we would significantly benefit from the councils support, financially and via manpower. Our aim as you are already aware is to bring back the Edenbridge Community Christmas Extravaganza event to the High Street during November. Unfortunately for a variety of reasons we were not able to proceed with the event last year and we hope you agree this was very much missed by so many. To enable the event itself to take place this year we are hoping to recruit more volunteers to assist with the planning and organising of the event however we would like to request from the council help within some key areas.* The support request includes road closures, high street clear-up, and funding.

The ECCA has also hired Rickards Hall which they have been invoiced for, but request for consideration to waive the hall hire fees.

How do Members want to proceed?

 Confidential Annex 4 (omitted from public documents):

12.3.2 **Eden Twinning: To receive a request for £1,300**
Attached is a letter (**confidential**) from Eden Twinning, a newly formed group looking to continue the work of the Edenbridge Twinning Association. It aim is to *maintain and broaden the community connection between Edenbridge and its surrounding villages and Mont Saint Aignan, our twin town in France..... Eden Twinning's committee has a long list of ideas to provide opportunities for members of the local community to enjoy connection with Mont Saint Aignan for years to come. We wish to broaden the reach to Edenbridge*

and the End Valley community and would love to have the support of the Town Council.

How do Members want to proceed?

 Confidential Annex 5 (omitted from public documents):

12.4 **Cabinet for replacement for IT and electrical equipment: To consider the expenditure of £900 to include new purpose cabinet, removal of old equipment and routers and reconnections.**

As part of the IT and Sharepoint transition project, the oversized/ large cabinet in the office (upstairs) was expected to be removed and replaced with a smaller cabinet housing network equipment only (600x600sq, 720mm tall) and would be lockable). A smaller cabinet would help create some additional space. The cost for the new cabinet, to scrap the old, remove CAT5 cabling panels and re-patch, move BT Fibre box along with routers and reconnection is £900. The project reserves has £500 towards this, and the surplus funds are available in replacement equipment and tools budget (code 1040).

How do Members want to proceed?

12.5 **To confirm Chairman's Reception 2024**


The Chairman's Reception used to be an annual event and is budgeted for each year. The last two were 2019, and 2022.

Do Members support a Reception for 2024?

13 **Consultations**

13.1 **Sevenoaks District Leisure Facilities Survey 2024**

Everyone Active, on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council is reviewing its leisure facilities in the District including Edenbridge, Sevenoaks and White Oak Leisure Centres, as well as Lullingstone Park Golf Course. We would like to know what you think about our leisure facilities now, and what you would like to see in the future.

 https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=A4cSRHUAC0y_1zXzNIWir32NaqrZABhHpkea1xywsUdUM0hFSFAxWVIJT1ITM1NCNjA3TjUyS0hTUC4u

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

15 **To consider any press releases**

16 **Matters for future agendas**

17 **Date of next meeting - Annual Meeting of the Town Council - 13 May 2024**