

Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held in Rickards Hall on 13 May 2024 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge, Angela Baker (*Vice-Chairwoman*), Bill Cummings, Michael Gemmell Smith, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Stuart McGregor, Vince Parker, Angela Read, Michael Stockdale, Stephen Sumner, Bob Todd (*Chairman*)

In attendance: Town Clerk and minutes clerk

District Cllr J Morgan, two members of the public, and no members of the press.

1 Elections

Cllr Bob Todd opened the meeting as existing Chairman.

1.1 Election of Chairman for the ensuing year

Cllr Todd as existing Chairman called for nominations for the role of Chairman for the ensuing year

Cllr Baker proposed Cllr Todd continue as Chairman, seconded by Cllr Layland. There being no other nominations, members unanimously,

Resolved: that Cllr Bob Todd be elected as Council Chairman for the ensuing year.

1.2 To receive the Chairman's declaration of office

Cllr Todd signed his declaration of office.

1.3 Election of the Vice-Chairman

Cllr Todd proposed Cllr Baker for the role of Vice-Chairman, seconded by Cllr Layland. There being no other nominations members unanimously,

Resolved: that Cllr Angela Baker be elected Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

1.4 To receive the Vice-Chairman's declaration of office

Cllr Baker signed her declaration of office.

2 To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted from Cllrs Compton, McArthur, and Streets.

3 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

Cllr Layland as acting chairman of Eden Valley Museum Trust, and Cllr Baker as a member of the Museum committee (item 31.1).

Cllrs Jacques and Cummings as members of Edenbridge Bonfire Society committee (item 30.5).

4 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 04 March 2024 (2023-041/1-7)

Members received the minutes of Council meeting held on 4 March 2024, and

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the meeting of 04 March 2024, and that they be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record (041/1-7).

5 To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings

5.1 Planning Committee 18 March 043/1-2; 08 April 044/1-3; and 29 April 048/1-7

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committees held on 18 March 043/1-2, 08 April 044/1-3, and 29 April 2024 048/1-7.

5.2 Finance & Governance Committee 18 March 042/1-4

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee held on 18 March 2024, 042/1-4.

5.3 Open Spaces Committee 15 April 045/1-7

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee held on 15 April 2024 045/1-7.

5.4 Emergency Planning Committee 22 April 046/1-3

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Emergency Planning Committee held on 22 April 2024 046/1-3.

5.5 Personnel Committee 29 April 047/1-3

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Emergency Planning Committee held on 29 April 2024 047/1-3.

6 To receive recommendations from Committees

6.1 Personnel Committee Recommendations

6.1.1 To confirm the expenditure for following training:

Personnel Committee considered training proposals for the Town Clerk, Head Groundsman and RFO/Deputy Clerk. Subject to the dates and actual costs being within budget and not excessive, for the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM), the Clerk was given approval to book, subject to Council receiving and approving the following recommendations (6.1.1-6.1.3):

6.1.1.1 ILM Level 3 Award for the Head Groundsman and Level 5 for the Town Clerk

Resolved: to approve the level 3 and level 5 ILM training/certificate for the the Head Groundsman and Town Clerk, respectively, the Clerk to approve reasonable costs within the training budget allowance.

6.1.1.2 To approve the expenditure of £288 for the Town Clerk and RFO to do the SLCC Principles of Internal Auditing Local Councils (PIALC) qualification

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £288 for the Town Clerk and RFO to do the SLCC Principles of Internal Auditing Local Councils (PIALC) qualification.

6.1.2 To continue sick pay for one employee

Resolved: to support the continuation of full sick pay for one employee; this decision to be reviewed in June if phased return to work had not started as expected.

6.1.3 To confirm the recommendation of an additional pay scale increment for one employee; additional annual budget cost £373

Resolved: to confirm an additional pay scale increment for one employee, at an additional annual budget cost of £373.

6.1.4 Open Spaces Officer vacancy, to confirm:

Members noted that Personnel Committee considered recruitment options and pay scales for the replacement Open Spaces Officer. Last year the vacancy was advertised twice locally. It was agreed to recommend the position should be placed with a recruitment agency this time, aiming for a wider geographical area across the southeast. An agency was selected to advertise the position, help with suitability matching, and ID and qualifications checks. The salary was agreed at LC2 level

(with recognition considered on experience/sector qualifications). Added to this was the outer London fringe allowance and other standard employment benefits.

6.1.4.1 The engagement of a recruitment agency to assist with the Open Spaces Officer vacancy, and the expenditure as per terms of the agency paid on a commission basis for a positive outcome

After confirming the level of commission to be charged, members

Resolved: to engage a recruitment agency to assist with the Open Spaces Officer vacancy, and to approve the expenditure as per terms of the agency, paid on a commission basis for a positive outcome.

6.1.4.2 To confirm the scale and spinal point range for the Open Spaces Officer of LC2 (18-23), starting salary £29,269 plus benefits

Resolved: to confirm the scale and spinal point range for the Open Spaces Officer of LC2 (18-23), starting salary £29,269 (subject to experience/qualifications), plus other standard benefits.

6.1.5 To confirm the continuation of the medical insurance scheme

Members were reminded that the Council currently supported medical insurance for its employees following 2-years continuous service, as of 1 April. Medical insurance annual costs had been increasing each year, with this year seeing a 31% increase on premiums. This was partly due to staff claims, including work-related. Personnel Committee considered the value of the scheme and benefit to the employer, and had agreed the scheme should remain supported, with the same qualifying period. The broker had looked at other providers but advised to stay with current provider. Medical insurance was in employee contracts and budgeted for in staff salary costs.

Resolved: to confirm the recommendation to continue supporting the medical insurance scheme.

6.2 To confirm continuation of the Employee Assistance Programme/Health Assured App

Since July 2021 Council had supported Health Assured provision as part of its Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), on a 3-year agreement at £600 per year for all Council employees and councillors. Health Assured was the largest provider of employee assistance programmes supporting over 70,000 businesses and 13 million employees across the UK and Ireland, providing a range of mental health and wellbeing support services 24/7 with its in-house confidential helpline, and including an App providing other advice on lifestyle improvements, mindfulness and virtual wellbeing workshops, bereavement advice, stress management, and legal advice. The facility had been used by some over the past 3-years.

Renewal costs were expected to be similar, Personnel Committee agreed this was a valid facility for both employees and councillors and to recommend Council should continue supporting it.

Resolved: to confirm continuation with Health Assured and Wisdom App, on a new 3-year agreement.

6.3 Emergency Planning Committee: To support an amendment in the Terms of Reference for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to be voted in for four-year duration (Council term)

The Emergency Planning Committee (EPC) Chairman was usually appointed for a Council year (May to April), it was proposed that as the EPC meets once or twice yearly, to appoint a Chairman for the Council term (4-years) for continuity. Council would need to approve amendment to the Committee Terms of Reference (TOR).

Resolved: to support amendment of the Emergency Planning Committee TOR to read - The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are to be elected by the Committee at the first Committee meeting following the first meeting of the newly elected Council, in accordance with Standing Orders, and be in post for four-years (Council term). Should the Chairman/Vice-Chairman resign from post, their replacement will be elected at the next meeting of the Committee and will hold the post for the remainder of that Council term.

7 To review the delegated arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff (as detailed in the Terms of Reference) and appointment of any new committees

The Terms of Reference confirm committee membership and delegated responsibilities. This was a working document, and from time to time may be amended to reflect operational changes and procedures. Usually, reviewed by the Governance Committee with recommendations to Council. Below are the current committees, sub-committee and working groups to confirm 7.1 to 7.11:

Resolved: to confirm the existing Committees as per items 7.1-7.5, to confirm the existing sub-committees and steering group as per items 7.6-7.8, and to confirm the delegated arrangements and procurement procedures for items 7.9-7.11

7.1 Finance and Governance Committee (10)

Confirmed.

7.2 Planning and Transportation Committee (12)

Confirmed.

7.3 Open Spaces Committee (10)

Confirmed.

7.4 Emergency Planning Committee (8)

Confirmed.

7.5 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Board (15)

Confirmed.

7.6 Personnel Committee (7)

Confirmed.

7.7 Charities and Grants (15)

Confirmed.

7.8 Forward Planning Steering Group (15)

Confirmed.

7.9 Working Groups

Confirmed.

7.10 Delegated powers to the Town Clerk and Officers

Confirmed.

7.11 Delegation for procurement procedures

Confirmed.

7.12 To consider any additional committees/sub-committees

No additional committees or sub-committees were proposed.

8 To confirm the Terms of Reference (last reviewed by Finance Committee 15 February 2021)

One amendment had been proposed by the Emergency Planning Committee (item 6.3), and was

approved. Delegated arrangements under the TOR for each committee/sub-committee/Town Clerk and Officers confirmed under item 7.

Resolved: to continue with and adopt the Terms of Reference.

9 To appoint/confirm members for each committee

It was noted that at the new term of the Council (May 2023), Members were appointed to Committees, but there had been some changes during the year. Members were asked to confirm membership to each committee (a member may step down) and appointment of any new Members, up to the capacity of that committee. All councillors could attend any committee/sub-committee meeting, but if they were not a named member they were not necessarily expected to attend, and do not have any voting rights (though they could speak and make representation).

9.1 Finance and Governance Committee (10)

Resolved: current membership to continue - Cllrs Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McGregor, Read, and Sumner - with the addition of Cllrs Jacques and Stockdale, leaving one vacancy remaining.

9.2 Planning and Transportation Committee (12)

Resolved: current membership to continue - Cllrs Aldridge (SW), Baker (NE), Gemmell Smith (SW), Layland (NE), McArthur (SW), McGregor (NE), Parker (NE), Read (NE), Streets (SW), Todd (NE) - with the addition of Cllrs Cummings (SW) and Stockdale (SW).

9.3 Open Spaces Committee (10)

Resolved: eight of the current membership to continue - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McGregor, Streets, Sumner - with the addition of Cllrs Cummings and Jacques.

9.4 Personnel Committee (7)

Resolved: to confirm the current members appointed by Finance Committee - Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McArthur, McGregor, Todd - with the addition of Cllr Stockdale (and as representative from the Finance Committee).

9.5 Emergency Planning Committee (8)

Resolved: to confirm current members - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Gemmell Smith, McArthur, McGregor, Streets - with the addition of Cllr Jacques.

9.6 If there are any new committees to appoint members (item 12)

No new committees were proposed (item 7.12).

10 To appoint/confirm the members of the working groups

10.1 Internal Audit / Council Risk Group (4)

Resolved: to confirm continuation of the current membership - Cllrs Gemmell Smith, Layland, Sumner, and Todd.

10.2 Lease / SLA negotiation Group (4)

Resolved: to confirm continuation of the current membership - Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, McGregor and Sumner.

10.3 Open Spaces Task and Finish group to explore viability for new concrete skate park (6)

Resolved: to confirm continuation of the current membership - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, McArthur and Sumner.

10.4 Open Spaces - Market Yard car park / Parking Group (6)

Resolved: to confirm continuation of current members - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Layland, McGregor - with the addition of Cllr Read.

10.5 Aviation Consultation Group (4)

Resolved: to confirm continuation of current members - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, McArthur - with the addition of Cllr Jacques.

10.6 High Street/Market Project Group - funding through the SDC/UKSPF

Resolved: to confirm continuation of current membership - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, and Gemmell Smith.

10.7 Local Plan Group

Resolved: to confirm continuation of current membership - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Gemmell Smith, McGregor, Parker, Read, Streets, Todd - with the addition of Cllr Stockdale.

10.8 Local Plan - Town Strategy Group

Resolved: to confirm continuation of current membership - Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, Streets, and Todd - with the addition of Cllr Cummings.

10.9 Annual Events Group

Resolved: to confirm continuation of current membership - Cllrs Baker, Gemmell Smith, Layland, Streets and Todd.

11 To confirm and adopt the following:

11.1 Standing Orders (last reviewed & amended 14 July 2022)

Resolved: to confirm and and re-adopt the Standing Orders, last amended 14 July 2022

11.2 Financial Regulations

Members noted that NALC had been reviewing the model financial regulations. The Council's Financial Regulations would be reviewed in line with the new Model Regulations (April 2024) and presented to Governance Committee later in the year.

Resolved: to confirm and and re-adopt the current Financial Regulations.

12 To review the arrangements with other local authorities, not-for-profit and businesses

12.1 Arrangements carried out by Edenbridge Town Council on behalf of:

Resolved: to confirm the chargeable arrangements and services carried out by Edenbridge Town Council on behalf of organisations as listed in items 12.1.1 to 12.1.6 below:

12.1.1 Citizens Advice Bureau: Payroll (£231)

Confirmed.

12.1.2 Freshwater Properties Group: some maintenance and waste clearance for Leather Market (£3,503)

Confirmed.

12.1.3 Great Stone Bridge Trust: Grass cutting and Water Meadow management services (various works includes cutting, vegetation clearance etc)

Confirmed.

12.1.4 Sevenoaks District Council: Ground maintenance services, Town Field, playground inspection, weed spraying on residential estate (£1,701)

Confirmed.

12.1.5 War Graves Commission: Maintenance of War Graves (£300)

Confirmed.

12.1.6 Involve Kent (£3,000)

Confirmed.

12.2 Professional services engaged (* last years charges, 2024 tbc):

Resolved: to confirm continuation with the current professional service providers engaged by the Council shown at 12.2.1 to 12.2.18 as follows (*charges shown for 2023, those for 2024 to be confirmed):

12.2.1 Business Stream - water (£1011*)

Confirmed.

12.2.2 Canon UK (photocopier) (£605.40* plus copying costs est. £380)

Confirmed.

12.2.3 EDGE IT - software packages: Finance (£869), Assets register (£269), Epitaph (£307), Rickards Hall hire (£249), additional costs £16.35

Confirmed.

12.2.4 Fusion4/Besure/Continental (facilities security management, key holding and fire alarms -£3,700*; with approx. £1,750 recharged to EVM; plus call out costs)

Confirmed.

12.2.5 Gallaghers (Hiscox) Insurance (Council insurance item 15)

Confirmed.

12.2.6 Health Assured (employee assistance/wellbeing mental health programmes) reviewed item 6.3 (£639.52)

Confirmed.

12.2.7 Mazars (external auditor) (£2,100*)

Confirmed.

12.2.8 PS Technology (IT support and Licences) (£12,011 variable)

Confirmed.

12.2.9 NFU Mutual Insurance (vehicles) (£2,287.89)

Confirmed.

12.2.10 Keith Robertson (internal auditor) (£600 est)

Confirmed.

- 12.2.11 Npower – Street Lighting Energy (£18,412*)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.12 SAGE payroll & P11 software services (£857; NB some cost recharged to CAB)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.13 Streetlight Maintenance – Streetlights (£8524.70)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.14 Summer Fun Days – Play Place (£2,892*)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.15 Total Gas (utilities energy all buildings - current contract to 31 January 2025; renewal was agreed August 2023 up to 2027) (£4,837*)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.16 Vatrix – Lone Working Alarms (3-year agreement, up for review) (£523*)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.17 Wilkin Chapman Solicitors (legal advice of FOIs, contracts and agreements and other matters) (varies on use)**
Confirmed.
- 12.2.18 Worknest (HR and H&S support) (£2815* plus £657 eLearning)**
Confirmed.
- 13 To appoint representatives on to/work with external bodies and arrangements for report back**
It was noted the list of members as appointed at the new Council meeting in May 2023 was published on the website, and members
- Resolved:** to confirm the Councillor representatives to local organisations, with Cllr Stockdale added for the Edenbridge Town Village Hall (WI Hall) Management Committee and for the Campaign to Protect Rural England, and Cllr Baker added for the local community rail groups (Uckfield Line parishes, Tonbridge and Redhill line steering group, and the Uckfield and East Grinstead lines steering group).
Addendum 1.
- 14 To review the inventory of land and other fixed assets including buildings and office equipment - Fixed Assets Register**
Members noted the assets registers as of 31 March 2024 was published on the Council's website, and
- Resolved:** to confirm the Council's Assets, and the closing balance for year-end 2023/24 of £4,300,245.42
- 15 Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks and the annual expenditure of £16,800 (this is year 3 of 3)**
Members noted the policy was still under a Long Term Agreement, so the only increase in premium would be due to the index linking of the sums insured and at the current time Hiscox was using 9% on Buildings and 6% on Contents.
Each year a pre-renewal form was completed, as any changes to contents of buildings may affect the premium. The 2023 premium was £15,646.92 and it was expected the insurance would be in

the region of £16,745; renewal date 20 July.

Resolved: to confirm the insurance premium for 2024-25 in the region of £16,800.

16 To review and confirm the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies

Members reviewed the current list of subscriptions, and

Resolved: to confirm the annual subscriptions listed as follows at items 16.1-16.13.

16.1 Campaign to Protect Rural England £36

Confirmed.

16.2 Edenbridge Allotment Gardens – Affiliation fees from Swan Lane Members £105

Confirmed.

16.3 Edenbridge Magazine (6 editions) (£1,093.50)

Confirmed.

16.4 Grounds Management Association £157.50

Confirmed.

16.5 Information Commissioner Office £55

Confirmed.

16.6 Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management £100 (24/25)

Confirmed.

16.7 Kent Association of Local Council (KALC) £1,765 (24/25)

Confirmed.

16.8 Kent County Playing Fields Association £20

Confirmed.

16.9 National Association for British Markets Authorities (NABMA) £500

Confirmed.

16.10 Open Spaces Society £45

Confirmed.

16.11 Rural Market Town Group Membership £115 (24/25)

Confirmed.

16.12 Sevenoaks District Council – Premises Licence (TN8) £1,070*

Confirmed.

16.13 Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Town Clerk's membership £416 (24/25)

Confirmed.

17 To confirm the direct debits and standing orders arrangements

Members reviewed the current list of direct debits and standing orders, and

Resolved: to confirm continuation of the direct debits; and noted there were currently no standing orders.

18 To confirm the Council's bank signatories

It was noted Council Standing Orders and Financial Regulations did not currently specify that signatories need to be Finance Committee members. Members reviewed the list of the Council's signatories, and noted each account required two signatories, plus the RFO or Town Clerk to raise the payment/s. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the Council's bank account signatories.

Members noted Lloyds Bank had proved very difficult to communicate with or to close the account. This had been put on hold due to other work commitments, but hoped to have success to close the account soon with the funds transferred to the Council's Barclays account.

19 To review the Council's complaints procedures (reviewed and amended December 2021)

Resolved: to confirm and re-adopt the Complaints Procedure.

20 To review the Council's policies, procedures and practices in respect of its obligations under Freedom of Information and Data Protection Legislation (reviewed November 2019): Retention and Disposal Policy, the FOI publication Scheme, Information and Data Policy, and the Privacy Policy

Resolved: to confirm the policies, procedures and practices in respect of Council's obligations under Freedom of Information and Data Protection Legislation (reviewed November 2019): Retention and Disposal Policy, the FOI Publication Scheme, Information and Data Policy, and the Privacy Policy.

21 Communications Policy

Resolved: to confirm the Council's Communications Policy.

22 General Power of Competence: to note the Town Council continues to meet the conditions as resolved at its meeting 15 May 2023

Members were advised it was good practice for Council to confirm each year that it continues to meet the conditions of General Power of Competence, as per the eligibility conditions under the Localism Act 2011, chapter 1 S8. This allows eligible Councils to have more choice and flexibility to carry out their powers and duties (within the law). To use the GPC, the Council must resolve that it meets the eligibility criteria at the first annual meeting of the new council after the ordinary elections (4-yearly).

Resolved: that the Town Council continues to meet the GPC conditions as resolved at its meeting 15 May 2023.

23 To receive the calendar of Council and Committee meetings for 2024

Members received the calendar of Council and committee meetings for 2024; they had no questions.

24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 31 March 2024

24.1 To receive the internal auditor's report

Members received the Internal Auditor's report, and noted the the end-of-year review took place on 23 April. He had carried out an extensive review of the accounts up to 31 March 2024, Council's financial procedures and other administrations procedures. There were no issues; it was noted , he was pleased with budgeting reporting and reserves reporting improvements. Members had no questions.

Members wished to formally minute their appreciation and thanks to the Town Clerk for the work in completing all the Year-End reports during a period of staff shortages.

24.2 To receive the end-of-year financial statements

Members received the end-of-year finance reports and noted the figures matched the relevant boxes on the AGAR report form:

- The Consolidated balance sheets confirmed the total net assets (box 7 on AGAR): £953,946.12
- The Income & Expenditure (I&E) Account confirmed total actual Income £845,115.71 (boxes 2&3 on AGAR), Expenditure £873,187.65
- Budget Comparisons confirm the budgeted I&E including creditors and debtors, and CIL I&E

The budget comparisons report included all CIL I&E. Without CIL I&E, the budgeted surplus was £99,728.50. Of which £72,578 was moved to Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for projects not completed in 2023-24. This leaves £27,150.50 surplus to move to General Reserves (GR); budget had forecasted £23,149 movement.

Members had no questions.

Resolved: to confirm the end-of-year financial position: Total net assets £953,946.12, made up of General Reserve £320,058.08; Earmarked Reserves £477,794.49; CIL funds (allocated and unallocated) £156,093.55.

24.3 To approve the annual governance statement for 2023/24

The Chairman read out each statement under the Annual Governance Statement in turn, of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Members unanimously agreed each statement as read, and,

Resolved: to approve the Annual Governance Statement 1-9 for 2023-24 AGAR.

24.4 To resolve the accounting statement for 2023/24

Members received the end-of-year accounting figures for 2023-24 AGAR. The balances carried forwarded (box 7) concurred with item 24.2, £953,946; and the cash and investments balances of £936,593 matching the bank reconciliation. The Chairman read out each figure on the Annual Accounting Statement in turn. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the end-of-year figures as recorded on the Accounting Statement in the AGAR boxes 1-10 and boxes 11a&b for 2023-24.

25 Public Questions and Statements

20:31 The Chairman closed the meeting.

One member of the public questioned the D-Day arrangements for June 6, and was advised that the Town Council had arranged an event in Stangrove Park in line with the national programme of celebration for that evening, to include lighting of the Beacon at 9.15 pm. The resident felt that there should be a service at the War Memorial, and asked what was the situation of the Memorial, as the hospital site was closed and now fenced off. The second member of the public also sought clarification of the status of the War Memorial, and exactly what physically constituted the Memorial, in light of their own investigations. The Council was reminded that surrounding villages had an interest in the Memorial, as they also had residents commemorated there.

District Councillor J Morgan asked whether the Town Council's asset register was available to the public, and he was advised that it was available on the Council's website or from the Council office.

20:40 The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

26 To receive County and District Councillor Reports

26.1 County Councillor

Not present.

26.2 District Councillors

Cllr Layland advised that his term as Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) Chairman would end the following day, and that he and his wife had attended a royal garden party the previous week.

Cllr Baker and Cllr Morgan both stated there was not much to report at this quiet time of the year.

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

27.1 Clerk's Report

Members received the Town Clerk's report, which included: updates on car parking issues in Council car parks and the plan to carry out a parking audit of town car parks later this year, to assess current parking patterns, issues and needs; publicity and arrangements for the Edenbridge Gardens in Bloom gardening competition, closing date 12 July, and the awards presentation early September, by Neil Miller Head Gardener, Hever Castle; KCC notice that the town's four Electric Vehicle Chargers (EVCs) are the 4th best performers across Kent; non-working of the new streetlights at Four Elms Road which were installed as part of the new Medical Centre works, should be resolved imminently; the Community Warden's 'cuppa and cake' outreach to attract new volunteers on 8 May with eight signing up to join Speedwatch and litter picks.

The update on the War Memorial (WM) included a meeting with NHS Properties in April to discuss the future of the site. The site remained vacant and secured, there was CCTV, bollards and security on site, which would remain until all assets removed. The intention was to sell the site and it had been included in the emerging Local Plan as a potential housing development site. The location of the WM remained a matter for consideration. NHS Properties had experience of similar with other sites and were in touch with the War Memorials Trust. The intention was to include the WM in the tender document inviting potential developers to consider leaving on site and include as part of new plans, or to fund the possible relocation to an agreed suitable alternative location. The Town Council and RBL would be included in these discussions. For now, the WM remained at the hospital. Access would be given for the Remembrance Sunday Service with the site made safe for public attendance. The bollards would remain in place.

The Chairman offered to meet the the resident who raised the issue of the definition of the WM, along with the Clerk, and Cllr Layland.

NABMA (The National Association of British Market Authorities) and SLCC (The Society of Local Council Clerks) had arranged a Market Event on Thursday 27 June, as more and more local councils were becoming involved in markets activity. It would be an opportunity to learn and share knowledge, and members of the NABMA team would be available throughout to answer questions. This event at South Molton Pannier Market, Devon 10.00 am – 2.30 pm, was free to attend for NAMBA and SLCC members. The Clerk would like to consider sending at least one person to this event, ideally the Market Officer. Cost to Council would be train tickets (or fuel allowance) and hotel accommodation for 26 June. Members

Resolved: to support expenditure (reasonable budget hotel costs and travel) for at least one person to attend this Market Event.

20:47 Cllr Morgan and the two members of the public left the meeting at this point.

28 Draft Local Plan - update

Since the March Council, with the help of the consultant, Council had written to SDC regarding Pedham Place with some comments/observations asking for consideration to be given when considering the site allocations for the Reg 19 Plan.

The letter said: *As you know there is great concern with the proposed housing numbers to be imposed on Edenbridge. Whilst we appreciated there is currently no firm decision on the sites to go forward in the Reg 19 Plan, the Town Council would like to express its real concern about the proposals. We have looked at the numbers that the District Council is expected to provide for, and question if Pedham Place is to be included in the Reg 19 Plan, then surely the release of Green Belt around Edenbridge is not justifiable at all. Each site proposed does have strong Green Belt features.* The letter highlighted that the Plan overall requirement for the district was 10,680, with the possible inclusion of Pedham Place this would take the housing supply to 11,000 with a surplus of 320. If all the sites for Edenbridge were to be removed from the Plan, the shortfall would be 571. Whilst the Town Council does recognise the challenges, it does not feel that there is sufficient justification to keep the Green Belt sites allocated in Edenbridge in the Plan should Pedham Place be included. It was also emphasised that sites put forward in the Reg 19 Plan, that there must be some assurances given that the quoted housing numbers for each site are not exceeded in any subsequent planning application, and that there would be enhancements to secure the amended Green Belt boundary as a result of development.

Separately, proposed amendments to the Town Strategy had been submitted to SDC, which prompted a productive meeting of the Working Group and SDC. They have confirmed they would amend the strategy to reflect a more realistic and achievable vision. The following potential projects and development opportunities have been identified to help realise the future vision for Edenbridge Town Centre:

Redevelopment of the Leathermarket site; shopfront renewal; sensitively enhanced river accessibility; improved footpaths to existing pedestrian crossings on the relief road, to provide better access into the town centre; new and enhanced community and youth/education facilities (e.g. leisure centre, bandstand, skate-park and provision of a secondary school in the town). These projects would be delivered through partnerships between a number of different organisations, including SDC, ETC, and KCC, with potential funding from development in the local vicinity.

The Council remained in touch with the consultant who was monitoring other Local Plan Hearings.

The new residents' association New Edenbridge District Residents Association (NEDRA) had confirmed it would like to work with the Town Council to present a united front, and was hoping it would be given an opportunity as a community group to speak before the Planning Inspector during the Reg 19 Plan hearing.

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

29.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (via SDC) funding: Update on proposed project for Market and to consider a proposal to utilise the access road from the High Street to create an additional space and new signage

SDC had been awarded funding to work with Town Councils, providing £5k each year of the programme (3 years) towards capital projects and items to support the Town Centres and markets. A meeting last year with SDC concluded that investment in the market would help to support the sustainability of the High Street, attracting users to both the market and local businesses, and was the most viable option. Town Council officers had looked at several options including costs, and considered how to make the market more inviting from the High Street, potential for an archway, and utilising the access part to Market Yard car park. The funding deadline was February 2025, though the works did not have to be fully completed by this date.

The Working Group met recently to consider a proposal to Council. It was agreed to ask Council to 'support a proposal to improve and create a usable space between the bollards at Market Yard car park and the High Street, creating an extension/alternative space utilising the access road on market days'. This would require removable bollards, improved signage including a possible archway, and market gazebos.

As the market is in a Conservation Area this would likely require a planning application. Details of the proposal and submission of the planning application would need to be approved before February 2025 to release the funding.

Resolved: to support the proposal for the market improvements including a new archway and bollards to help

utilise the access area, and to authorise the Working Group and Officers to investigate a suitable plan to submit to SDC UKSPF, and a planning application.

29.2 Pavilion replacement windows and new shutters update

Members noted the tender had not included electrical works, nor a fire release bar for the main door. The contract had been drafted and issued, using the long form construction works agreement. All other contractors paperwork has been received; PL insurance valid to December 2024. The contractor had also liaised with the Rugby Club, and aimed to fit around the Club's end of season, end of May/early June. Cllr Baker, the Head Groundsman and the Clerk had also met the contractor on site, and confirmed the colour of the windows and shutters (pine green).

29.2.1 To approve the amendment to the tender, and the additional expenditure for a single fire release bar on main door - additional £377

Resolved: to approve the amendment to the tender, and the additional expenditure to include a single fire release bar on the main door - additional £377, total contract cost now £59,633.

29.2.2 To confirm the expenditure of £1,110 for the electrical works for the shutters (installation of 5amp switched FCU (spur) to be mounted for each window)

Resolved: to confirm the expenditure of £1,110 for the electrical works for the shutters (installation of 5amp switched FCU (spur) to be mounted for each window); this was part of the CIL award funding.

29.2.3 To ratify the expenditure of £325 for electrical works, relocation of the power points above the main entrance to the Pavilion, to allow room for the shutter

For the shutters to fit above the main doors, it had been necessary to move were some electrics used by the Rugby Club. This was authorised, and carried out by the Council's usual electrician.

Ratified: the expenditure of £325 for electrical works, relocation of the power points above the main entrance to the Pavilion, to allow room for the shutter.

29.2.4 To confirm the release of the initial payment (£29,816.50, 50% of tender) to the contractor for the windows and new shutters so the items can be ordered for installation end of May/early June

A contract had been issued to the contractor for the new windows and shutters. As part of the accepted Tender, the Council was to pay 50% of the invoice upfront with the balance payable upon completion. The contractor had done work for the Council before, all contractor paperwork had been completed and received.

Resolved: to confirm release of the initial payment to the contractor for the Pavilion new windows and doors, £29,816.50 plus VAT.

29.3 Annual Community Event - D-Day 80th Anniversary activities

29.3.1 Commemorative community event Thursday 6 June, Stangrove Park

Members noted the Working Group had met to confirm the schedule for the D-Day commemorations on Thursday 6 June in Stangrove Park. This would be a "bring-your-own-picnic" event, with 1940s and 50s music to enjoy, opening from 7.00-7.30 pm (with the church bells ringing from 6.45-7.15 pm, joining the "national ring" marking the anniversary). From 7.30-8.30 pm Swing singer Steve Conway would entertain, and the Town Band would play 8.30-9.00 pm. From 9.00-9.10 pm the Band would play music specified for the commemoration, followed by the Council Chairman delivering the reading, then 9.15 pm lighting the beacon.

29.3.1.1 To confirm expenditure from events budget to cover generator and security costs

Members were reminded the budget for the event allowed £5,000. So far, expenditure included the Swing singer, banners and some memorabilia. Cllr Gemmell Smith was loaning his PA and speakers

but would need to be powered by a generator.

Attempts to get marshals for the event had been unsuccessful. The Working Group supported a proposal to engage professional security, two to three personnel in the event that there may be an issue, and to also help with ensuring no inappropriate activity or vehicles moving. (At the time of preparing the papers quotes were to be obtained.) Noting the budget had the capacity, Members unanimously,

Resolved: to support funding a generator and security for the D-Day Commemoration event using the event budget set.

29.3.2 Commemorative afternoon tea Wednesday 5 June (funded by WKH and SDC Chairman)

Members noted that following the success of last year's 'afternoon tea' funded via a grant (to help with integrating getting older people back to social activities following the pandemic as well as promoting the Games Club), the Planning & Admin Officer and the Community Warden had thought it would be fitting to host a similar event for some of the older residents in the community who had more of a connection the 80th D-Day commemorations, but may not be comfortable attending an evening event at Stangrove Park. Funding had been sourced from West Kent Housing Association (WKHA) who were also inviting their older and vulnerable residents, helping them to also reintegrate in community activities and wellbeing; and Cllr Alan Layland had made a contribution from his SDC Chairman's allowance.

The afternoon tea event on the Wednesday 5 June was by invitation only. The same Swing singer (Steve Conway) would provide entertainment with 19940s/50s songs.

29.4 Rickards Hall maintenance repairs update

Members noted that in July 2023 Council had received a report advising the need for maintenance repairs to the exterior and interior of Rickards Hall. There had been a number of harsh wet winters which had affected the exterior wall at the rear of the building, causing severe weathering and had allowed damp to get inside, so there were also some repairs to the internal walls needed. Members acknowledged the urgency for the work to make the building watertight, but had requested a surveyor's report first. Following another harsh wet winter, the roof had suffered some further slipped tiles, and rain water affected the outer and inner rear wall.

Rickards Hall building maintenance had had very little expenditure over the past few years. The only maintenance works had included repair to the main door; and partial redecoration of the Hall; and floor repairs, re-sanded and varnished about four years ago.

29.4.1 Surveyors report: To receive a summary report

The surveyor's report on Rickards Hall and 10-years maintenance plan had been received December 2023. Members noted recommended works in year one included roof repairs; gutters and downpipes; external walls repointing; external joinery; lead lined parapet gutter; load bearing masonry wall with a mixture of solid brickwork in Flemish bond and cavity brickwork, mixture of brick headers and timber lintels, exposed timber wall plate with mortar and lead capping to north and west sides; painted timber casement windows to north elevation of main hall. Recommendations from the report for the 10-year maintenance plan will be reviewed and feed in to the buildings 10-and 30-year plans for budgeting 2025-26.

29.4.2 To approve the additional expenditure for the maintenance works to the exterior building. Reserves holds £9k, total cost in region of £17k, additional funding to approve up to £8k from the 10/30 year buildings reserves

In September 2023 Council resolved: subject to the surveyor's recommendations for essential external works that needed to be carried out this year, that officers (the Town Clerk and Building Manager) along with Cllr Baker, could obtain revised quotes for these works and then engage with a contractor that was, a) able to attend to these works this autumn and b) offered best value, so as to ensure the necessary works were addressed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Four contractors were contacted, two of which re-quoted for the works in receipt of the surveyor's

report (received late last year). One had previously mostly addressed the issues in the report already and was included in the comparison, and the fourth company was not able to commit until October. Having reviewed the report and quotes, the contractor which best matched the surveyors report and had the range of experience/resources was considered most suitable and cost effective, to make the building water tight, carrying out repointing, brick replacement, new lead work, new window lintel, roofing/tile repairs and felt, dormer window repairs, painting, and including scaffolding. Based on the quote and information provided in the surveyor's report, the initial £9k in reserves was insufficient and additional money was needed to complete the works making the building watertight.

For the internal works, it was proposed to look at this separately, and to seek new quotes, once the works had been confirmed for a new specification. Initial estimated internal costs ranged from £4,000 to £10,000 depending on the amount of redecoration to the Hall including ceiling, and whether existing cupboards are utilised, or replaced.

Member unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm the additional expenditure to enable the needed external maintenance repair works of up to £8k ,using the 10/30 year buildings maintenance reserve for Rickards Hall. Total funding from 10/30 year buildings reserves would be up to £17k.

Resolved: to support Finance Committee to consider in its budgeting for 2025-26 inclusion for a budget allowance specifically to replenish the building reserves.

29.4.3 To approve additional exterior works to include joinery repairs and repainting of the dormer windows whilst scaffolding is up, expenditure of £750 (included in above total)

Members were advised that as the contractor would have scaffolding for the roof and dormer repairs, it made sense to have these painted at the same time. Additional cost for this £750. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to support the additional £750 expenditure for the two dormer windows joinery and repainting.

29.4.4 To confirm the appointment of the Contractor to carry out the external repair works to Rickards Hall

Cllr Baker, the Head Groundsman, and the Town Clerk, had viewed all the quotes received last year, and this year. Having drawn-up a comparison of costs, and considering the recommendations from the surveyor's report, it was agreed that only one contractor had met the criteria and provided a quote suitable to address the external works, as referenced above (items 29.4.1-29.4.3). The contractor was available to start from 14 June, which fitted around Rickards Hall bookings; works expected to be completed within four weeks.

Resolved: to approve the appointment of the recommended contractor, RJH Builders (South East) Ltd for the external maintenance repair works to Rickards Hall.

29.4.5 To approve the expenditure for replacement fire shutter to kitchen/main hall hatch, and expenditure of £3,071.20

The 5-yearly fire safety inspections (February 2023) for Rickards Hall identified the lack of a working fire shutter between the kitchen and hall. This had also been picked up on the annual health and safety monitoring visits previously. Members had received a copy of the Risk Assessment report and quote. In 2023-24 budget £2,500 was moved to the earmarked 10/30 year building reserves towards a new shutter. The balance could be funded from Building general maintenance/repair costs (code 2065), budget allowed £2,500. Any overspend to budget would note this expense.

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £3,071 for a replacement fire shutter to kitchen/main hall hatch, using £2,500 from reserve and the balance from maintenance repairs budget.

29.4.6 To approve the expenditure of £1,145 for a replacement automatic filled water boiler/urn

It was reported the mains-fed hot water boiler/urn in the kitchen had failed and was leaking water.

As an interim measure a portable 8L urn had been purchased, but a mains-fed boiler/urn is safer. Having considered the possible options, Members unanimously,

Resolved: to install an automatic-fill water boiler/urn in Rickards Hall, being directly plumbed into a mains water connection in a static location, providing instant hot water, and the expenditure of £1,145 to be allocated to budget for building maintenance and repair costs (code 2065).

29.5 Chairman's Reception 2024

Members had at their March meeting previously supported a Chairman's Reception for 2024, for which the budget was £1,200. After some discussion it was Unanimously,

Resolved: to hold the Chairman's Reception in the early Autumn (September).

30 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

30.1 Pension Scheme Review: Recommendation from Personnel Committee to continue with the Kent Pension Scheme (re Council December 2019, to investigate alternative schemes on triennial basis)

Members were advised that the Council is part of the Kent Local Government Pension scheme. The employer contribution rate last year and this year was 23.9%, with employee rates ranged from 5.5% to 6.8% (higher contributions dependant on pay level). Research into private schemes as a possibility for new employees had concluded that there was no opportunity for the Town Council to ask to join a scheme designed for employees of commercial organisations. However, it was agreed at Council's December meeting that as pension legislation changes it would be worth reviewing on a triennial basis.

Personnel Committee had considered the subject at its April meeting, and resolved to make recommendation to full Council to continue with the Kent Pension Scheme, but to keep on a triennial review, for each council term to confirm or review. With one abstention, it was

Resolved: to support and confirm the recommendation from Personnel Committee, to continue with Kent Pension Scheme, but to keep on a triennial review for each council term to confirm or review.

30.2 Doggetts Barn lift - to approve the expenditure of of £1,589 to replace defective gear unit

The office lift had for some time had a regular fault on the quarterly service reports (past 3-4 years). Engineers had done what they can to keep it going, but the advice now was the gear unit needed to be replaced, at a cost of £1,589. This would be a further cost under building maintenance and repair (code 2065). (With other expenditure, this would put expenditure to this code over budget by £805.20.) Members unanimously,

Resolved: to approve the expenditure of £1,589 for a replacement gear unit to the lift in Doggetts Barn.

30.3 Health and Safety review of Council policies (as checked and confirmed Worknest April 2024)

Members noted these would normally be attached to the meeting papers as draft (confidential) documents, until approved - and then published on the the websites. However, as these are 72 pages and 69 pages documents respectively, and no changes to the previous version (mentioned on page 3 of the H&S Policy Manual) , these have been uploaded on the website as drafts (to be approved).

30.3.1 Health & Safety Policy Manual - To receive and confirm

Resolved: to confirm the Health and Safety Policy Manual for 2024.

30.3.2 Health and Safety Employee Handbook - To receive and confirm

Resolved: to confirm the Health and Safety Employee Handbook for 2024.

30.3.2.1 To confirm the Health and Safety Policy Statement for 2024/25

Resolved: to confirm the H&S Policy Statement.

30.3.2.2 To confirm the Environmental Policy Statement

Resolved: to confirm the Environmental Policy Statement.

30.4 Pavilion - requests from the Rugby Club:

30.4.1 To approve need for new heating and option for caged unit(s) on outside of Pavilion building

The Rugby Club had said that the current heating system at the Pavilion was not fit for purpose, is expensive, and now no longer worked. They had investigated options and started fundraising for a new heat pump system. The units can be fitted inside or outside, but externally fitted frees up internal space, and their contractor had recommended to have them outside. Members received a copy of the data information sheet for the proposed new system.

The Buildings Manager had met with the Rugby Club to discuss the units. The proposal would be to have caged units fitted one each either side of the Pavilion, or alternatively at the rear of the building. The noise levels were considered low, and would only be operating when the Pavilion was open. There was a question regarding the Lease (covered later under the Lease item 33.1). Council was asked to consider whether members supported the need to replace the heating system, and support the system recommendations from the Rugby Club, or did they prefer to engage its own heating engineer for survey report with recommendations, and the expenditure of between £400-600, prior to any changes to the Club making any changes to the heating. After some discussion, it was

Resolved: to support the need to replace the heating system, and support the recommendations by the Rugby Club.

Resolved: to support the units to be fitted externally on the Pavilion building.

As the members of the public had already left the meeting, the Chairman proposed to discuss the Lease (confidential) item 33.1 at this point, being linked to the above decision. Decision recorded subsequently at item 33.1

30.5 To receive a request from the Bonfire Society for free hire of Rickards Hall for its presentation evening (29 November)

Members were advised the Bonfire Society had previously used Rickards Hall for its annual presentation event. All local organisations and groups are charged for the hire of Rickards Hall, as it is an income source for the Council and the Hall itself does have considerable overheads. The Council does receive several requests each year for free use of its facility, and these are considered on a case by case basis. After some discussion, Members voted, voting six in favour and three against (two councillors not voting), and

Resolved: on this occasion to permit the Bonfire Society to use Rickards Hall free of charge for its annual presentation evening on 29 November.

31 To ratify the annual Service Level Agreement grants for 2024

Members noted the Service Level Agreement (SLA) grants were considered during the budgeting process each year. Each SLA had to produce progress reports, then reported and circulated to Members. Council nominates councillor representation on to each group/organisation also. The expenditure was usually ratified at the July Council meeting, but one organisation has requested if this could be brought forward.

31.1 Eden Valley Museum £6,500

It was reported the Museum had £3,266 of outstanding invoices with the Council since March

2023. Following changes in personnel, the Museum had asked for evidence of the calculation of some of the charges relating to BeSure Security Systems. This had been provided at the time with each invoice; records of these were being prepared to present again. The Museum had not refused to pay these, they were just checking the details. In addition, they were in arrears with one rental payment £1,115 (though 3 of 4 rent payments have been made - Oct/Dec/March). The Museum had requested payment of SLA funds for 2024 as soon as possible. After some discussion regarding the request for early release of the 2024 SLA award £6,500, it was unanimously,

Resolved: the SLA of £6,500 should be used to settle any outstanding accounts/invoices with the Council, before releasing any balance to the Museum.

Members noted the Lease renewal was due March 2025, and would be timely to review together the details of the SLA. A quote for the new draft Lease will be presented to Council at its July meeting.

31.2 HOUSE £9,000

Resolved: to confirm the budgeted SLA agreement for HOUSE and grant of £9,000.

32 Consultations

None.

In view of the confidential nature of agenda items 33 and 34 to be discussed, the agenda proposed the Chairman moved that the press and public be excluded from the Chamber: Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 s100 and 102.

There were no Members of the public.

33 Legal matters updates:

33.1 Pavilion Lease - to consider legal costs for an amendment in view of the proposed new heating system

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm permission for the Rugby Club to install a new heating system, and to support the proposal to refer the legalities of the Lease and a Memorandum of alteration to allow for the heating system to the Council's solicitor, at an estimated cost of £1,500.

33.2 To ratify use of solicitor for cemetery matters

Following on from the 4 March Council meeting, at which Councillors supported the Town Clerk engaging the solicitor to manage correspondence between a Grant of Right holder and the Council, and that the necessary expenditure be monitored, a verbal update on the matter was given at the meeting.

Resolved: to ratify the engagement of the Council's solicitor to write to and manage correspondence between a Grant of Right holder and the Council, liaising with the Town Clerk, expenditure to be monitored.

33.3 Forge Singers Lease

Members noted the Council's solicitor had prepared a new Lease for the Forge Singers hut on Council land, this was sent December 2023, and again in February. The Forge Singers had contacted the solicitor in March, and the Lease was resent. There had been no further update. Councillors had no comments or questions.

33.4 Update on unauthorised access/gates on to Council land

Members noted the matter of the Coomb Field gate closed. The resident contacted in Lingfield Road had not contacted the solicitor, and the signed-for letters had not been received or collected from the Post Office so were returned to the solicitor. The solicitor had confirmed Council was

within its rights to replant the hedging at the rear of the property. This was being monitored, and would be replaced if damaged or removed. Boundaries were being monitored for any other/new unauthorised access, for which letters would be sent to the property owner(s) advising they are not permitted to have access, and to rectify. If they did not, a legal letter will be considered.

34 To give retrospective permission for Ashes which have been interred at Blossoms Park

Members were advised that it had come to Officers' attention that a person's ashes had been interred at Blossoms Park. The family had not realised that the Council needed to give permission and had apologised for not following procedure, but asked for understanding and retrospective permission. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm retrospective permission for the interment of ashes at Blossoms Park.

35 Date of next meeting - 01 July

Noted.

The meeting ended at 10.07pm