

Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held in Rickards Hall on 1 July 2024 at 7:30 pm

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

In attendance: Town Clerk, minutes clerk, two members of the public and no press

1 To Receive Apologies for Absence

The Chairman read out information on the procedures applicable for conducting the meeting, and the public participation under agenda item 3 with questions/statements.

Apologies for absence were received, noted, and accepted from Cllr V Parker.

Apologies were received also from Cllr J Morgan SDC.

Cllrs S Sumner and A Read arrived during this item.

2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

None.

The Chairman closed the meeting for public questions.

3 Public Questions and Statements

Two residents addressed the Council regarding the need for strong support for the secondary school element of the revised plan for development of housing and community facilities being proposed for land off Four Elms Road. One stated they were a representative of NEDRA (the New Edenbridge and District Residents Association). Council was asked what was its position on a secondary school for Edenbridge; will it consult with Kent County Council (KCC) for the school; and does it support a new secondary school as part of the draft Local Plan 2040. Cllr Todd as Council Chairman, noted the developer for the site at Four Elms Road already had an application approved for outline planning and which included a new secondary school. However, the developer was now proposing changes to that application and had held a recent public consultation for residents to respond to. Following feedback, the developer would then submit a revised/new planning application to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), at that point, the Town Council would consider the revised proposal and make its representation. County Cllr McArthur advised that KCC knew that the Town Council had already supported the provision of a school, and District Cllr Layland confirmed that he had spoken at SDC some years ago, when the question of a school originally arose, confirming the Town's Council strongly supported this.

The second resident (not a NEDRA member) said he had been in touch with the CEO of a school trust who had advised strong support from the Council would be much appreciated. He pointed out that Kent would save on secondary school pupil transport costs if there was a school in Edenbridge.

PC Maunsell introduced himself as the second dedicated beat officer appointed for Edenbridge, joining PC Kemp already in post. He had previously been based in both Tonbridge and Swanley, and prior to that had a military background. The plan was to move to a more proactive police presence not reactive. He reassured the Council that the police were well aware of the anti-social behaviour which concerned the community. His message to local people was to please continue reporting activity and concerns, which does help and adds to information collated.

19:35 PC Fergus Maunsell joined the meeting during this item, and the Chairman invited him to address the Council.

19:48 The members of the public and the Police officer left the meeting.

19:50 The Chairman re-opened the meeting.

4 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 May 2024 (2023-049/1-20)

Resolved: that the minutes of the Council meeting held 13 May (049/1-20) be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5 To receive County and District Councillor Reports

5.1 County Councillor

Cllr McArthur reported that as of 10 July Operation Brock was being reinstated on the M20, controlling Tunnel freight entry to the port of Dover. There would be a permit system for port access, and if a vehicle had not been through the Tunnel freight system to acquire a permit, there would be no entry to the port. She advised all drivers to consult the KCC Check Before You Travel information.

5.2 District Councillors

Cllr McArthur advised that she was still pursuing the proposal to get a "green" planted bus shelter roof in Edenbridge, along with an air quality monitoring station outside the primary school.

Cllrs Baker and Layland reported that residents had contacted them regarding the District's development on Spitals Cross estate, not pleased at its effect on trees and wildlife on the green space.

6 To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings

6.1 Planning Committee 20 May 050/1-3; and 10 June 052/1-3

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held 20 May 050/1-3 and 10 June 052/1-3.

6.2 Open Spaces Committee 03 June 051/1-8

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting held 03 June 051/1-8.

7 Personnel - Open Spaces Officer recruitment update

The Town Clerk reported that three applicants were interviewed, selected with assistance from a recruitment agency. Two were short listed for second interview but both applicants withdrew. Recruitment would be considered at the next Personnel Committee. Until then, recruitment was on hold until early September.

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

8.1 Town Clerk's Report

Members noted the report, including the following:

AGAR – end of year return:The Notice of appointment of date for the exercise of public rights

was published on 06 June/announcement date 7 June, for period commencing 10 June to 19 July (30 working days). It was on the website and in the main Council's noticeboard with a copy of the AGAR.

Cemeteries: Continuing with work to ensure the standards of the cemeteries and consistency with the rule book and the memorials. I have carried out a further audit of the memorials and had a long conversation with the Council's solicitor to discuss memorials that have not been rectified to meet the guidelines – letters are currently being drafted. New signage for the cemeteries will progress over the summer. The Open Spaces Committee will continue to receive updates on cemetery matters.

Insurance claim: settlement had been received £5,44.27 (this is after the Council's excess of £250) for the damaged street light on Mill Hill, December 2022,.

Insurance renewal: Council's insurance had been renewed, total cost £16,741 (May Council resolutions approved £16,800). It was the last of the 3-year agreement, to be reviewed again for July 2025.

Planning – Land South of Four Elms Road: The developer and their agent had met with the Council to present changes to the previously approved application (340 dwelling, secondary school and scout hut). The changes were to move the school to the front of the site off Four Elms Road, provide a new youth facility as well as the scout hut, and extend the site at the rear to allow for a total of 443 dwellings including 40% affordable housing. They were running a public consultation inviting comments from residents (deadline extended to 19 July). Details could be found at <https://www.pro-vision.co.uk/FourElmsRoad/>.

Waste and Garden bags: The office was low on stocks of the SDC black waste and white/clear recycling rolls. Once these had gone, notice would be displayed advising that the Council was no longer selling them. SDC's new 'bag for life' recycling sacks would be distributed to households over the summer period. Garden sacks would continue to be sold via the Council office during office opening hours (Monday to Thursday 9.00 am – 3.30 pm).

8.2 **Communications Officer's 6-monthly report**

Members were impressed by the quantity and variety of topics the Communications Officer had covered, publicising the Council's activities January-June 2024:

- Website updating
- Google Business Profile updating
- Social Media generating regular content
- Noticeboards and Signage renewal
- Edenbridge Magazine (bi-monthly) Council's newsletters content
- Budget/Council Tax communications, including graphics
- Annual Town Meeting, promotion and presentatons
- Annual Report preparing content
- Events/Special Activities, including D-Day 80 and Edenbridge Gardens in Bloom
- Edenbridge Market promotion
- Community Warden and Kent Police, promoting activity and partnership working

8.3 **Community Warden's 6-monthly Report**

Members noted the Warden had now completed eight months in post, and thanked him for all the work he had carried out. His report included:

Volunteer activities: 6 litter picks organised in different areas around the town, which were reasonably well attended and very successful.

Games Club: attending weekly sessions with the group going strong at an average of 12-15 people each week. A couple of new members attended in the past two weeks.

Portable Speed Indicator Device (SID): the SID had been on site five times in the town, going forward this would be on a more regular basis around the five approved sites.

Speedwatch: two monitoring sessions with the volunteers had resulted in reporting 23 out of

208 cars for speeding. A further session on Friday prior to the meeting had reported seven out of 230.

Graffiti, vandalism and fly-tipping: a few issues with graffiti around the town were attended with the help of the groundstaff in a couple of cases. There had been 9 incidents of fly tipping, dealt with very promptly by Sevenoaks District Council, also Southern Water of which 2 instances of tipping were on their land.

Police: having assisted the Police with completing questionnaires with regards to a campaign Violence Against Woman & Girls (VAWG), there was a walk around the town with PC Kemp to engage with the public, and answer any concerns they had.

Volunteers: two highly successful coffee & tea sessions had been taken place as a thank you to all the volunteers, and tied-in with seeking new volunteers resulting in 11 new people signed up.

Events: two D-Day anniversary events were organised with the Admin Officer (also with the help of all the other office staff and the grounds team) which were very successful and well received. The afternoon tea for the older members of the community, was funded thanks to WKH Community Chest grant, along with SDC Chairman's grant from Cllr Layland. Both the tea at Rickards Hall, and the Beacon Lighting national event in Stangrove Park had live music, the latter including the Town Band and help from the Bonfire Society with the Beacon.

9

Draft Local Plan - update

Members were advised that since last Council meeting there had been little heard on SDC progress with the draft Local Plan and the Reg 19 consultation. They were disappointed to learn from SDC that KCC Highways had currently denied the request from the Town Council for a meeting to discuss the highways infrastructure issues, the impact that the potential proposed housing numbers would have on Edenbridge, and the issues with each site. Highways had suggested that this meeting would be better timed once the strategic transport modelling work was completed and could inform the discussion. The modelling work would look at all three options which formed part of the recent consultation, and would identify capacity hotspots, which would then be subject to more detailed junction modelling and mitigation. They also said that they had limited resources and couldn't set aside time for each Parish or Town Council around the county to discuss individual Local Plan issues and this could set a precedent.

The Town Clerk had responded saying that this was very disappointing. The whole point of the meeting was to be able to discuss the actual traffic hotspots and problematic junctions in Edenbridge, so that this could help with any potential future plans and mitigation proposals. Also the comment about setting a precedent was not acceptable when Edenbridge was one of the main areas for development in the Plan, and reminding Highways that Edenbridge is a rural town which is likely to have a growth of 48% against its current housing numbers, and has only one 'B' road which runs through the centre of it. The development proposals in the Local Plan would have a significant impact on the town and would need appropriate infrastructure. The suggestion for a meeting was to discuss the traffic issues that each site (and collectively) will present, and to consider viable solutions. The local knowledge of Members could be helpful with this, and it was frustrating to hear Highways is not willing to take this onboard. The Clerk was currently preparing a response to SDC to request to be forwarded to KCC Highways.

10

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

10.1

D-Day events feedback

The Council had been delighted to host two community events for Edenbridge residents to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-day, and Members were pleased to receive positive feedback from both.

On 5 June, older members of the community, including some from local care homes, enjoyed an afternoon tea, music and dancing at Rickards Hall thanks to funding from West Kent Housing Association and Cllr Alan Layland (from his SDC Chairman's allowance). Around 70 residents attended, and some really lovely "thank you"s had been received.

On 6 June, everyone was invited to attend an evening community event at Stangrove Park for picnic in the park, music, and lighting of the Beacon. There was a chip van, and soft drinks and candy floss stall, music by Steve Conway and the Town Band played for the last hour and through the lighting of the Beacon, lit by the Bonfire Society. Cllr Gemmell Smith provided the sound and set-up. The office had received several positive comments, including one that the Council should put on more of these events.

The office team had worked hard on both events, with everyone involved. The Planning and Administration Officer and Community Warden had led the afternoon tea arrangements including securing funding. On 6 June, the office team oversaw the activities to get the event going, the groundstaff set up the Beacon fencing and Craig (Head Groundman) was on hand for the evening, and clear-up with the office team. Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to all staff involved in both events.

10.2 To receive an update on Rickards Hall building maintenance work

Members noted works on Rickards Hall external maintenance started in mid-June had proceeded well, and the scaffolding was down after two weeks. The both sides of the roof had a full check with more than 280 roof tiles replaced, the dormers had several of the ridge tiles replaced. Other works included lead work replaced and extended to the length of the rear side, with lip to prevent water runoff onto the brick work (additional to quote, which was for only part of the rear side); new upvc gutters and repainting of remaining cast iron gutters; replaced 1 x timber Lintel to window; replaced frost damaged bricks; repaired, raked out and repointed using lime putty mortar approx. 25m² area at rear side; repair and repaint 4no casement window frames, and 2no dormer window frames.

10.2.1 To ratify the additional expenditure for replacement rear window, £1,396 plus vat; and approx. £200 for replacement dormer window ridge tiles

During the works, as expected, there had been some additional works identified: more dormer ridge tiles were damage than expected. The leadworker recommended that the lead be extended to the full length of the rear side of the building, and to have a lip to reduce water runoff on to the bricks (he was surprised that this wasn't already in place) and to upgrade the lead from 4 to 5. The Clerk had approved this work.

During work to repair and paint one of the windows it was found to be rotted through. A replacement new wooden 3 glass panel with obscured glass with hardwood sill cost £1,396 - this was approved in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chair, and Buildings Manager.

Resolved: to ratify the additional expenditure from the buildings reserves of £1,396 for the new window; and additional works in the region of £200.

10.3 To note the Family Summer Fun Days for 2024

Members noted arrangements for summer Family Fun Days, dates being 1, 8, 15 and 22 August, 2.00 - 5.00 pm in Stangrove Park. The four Family Fun Days were delivered by PlayPlace, one session funded by SDC and three funded by the Town Council. Activities ranged from crafts and games to sports and face painting in a friendly, safe environment for children up to 12-years old, who must always be supervised by a parent or guardian. The Town Council funded additional activity, and had invited back Mr Hiccup with his magic and balloon modelling which was very popular with the children.

10.4 To receive an update on unauthorised access onto the Recreation Ground

Members were advised that one resident continued to use the gate they had installed, despite two further letters clarifying that they do not have any rights of way or access onto the Recreation Ground from the rear of their property; and asking they immediately cease any further breaches and interference relating to access from the rear of their property. The resident had not acknowledged, or replaced the gate. In December, having discussed and confirmed with the solicitor, new hedging was planted at the Council's boundary.

In June the Council was advised that the resident(s) was still using the gate as access on the Recreation Ground site. Having checked, it was found that they had actually cut and removed one of the bushes and pushed the others sideways for access. The Clerk had instructed the solicitor to write a further letter, and the Head Groundsman had sourced some new, slightly larger hedging to be planted. Members commented that the Council might consider chainlink fencing, and it should be pointed out that previous incidences of this had been dealt with and resolved at cost to the residents concerned.

10.5 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (via SDC) funding: Update on project for the Market to utilise the access road from the High Street creating an additional space and new archway

At the previous Council meeting, it was resolved to support the proposal for market improvements to include 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 for the funding, with a planning application should it be required.

Members were advised that having met the Blacksmith on site, it had been agreed that the most viable location was where the bollards were currently. This would mean removing the two end bollards to site the archway (and avoid potential underground utilities). The archway would be visible from the High Street, seen looking up towards the car park. The streetlight in the centre would need relocating and could be sited close-by on the grass near the notice board. (see item 10.5.1). One of the bollards could be repurposed in replacement of the streetlight. The other part of the proposal was to install removable bollards along the side where vehicles currently park, preventing use on market days, as well as at times blocking access. A drawing with the full proposal/plan was awaited. Having consulted SDC, it was unclear if the archway could fall under permitted development, dependent on the font size for 'Edenbridge Market'.

10.5.1 To approve the relocation of Market Yard street light 110 (between bollards at the entrance) and to include in the replacement programme for 2024-25

Members noted that the column replacement programme for 2024-25 had an underspend of £6,394 due to other street lights not viable to proceed. The current programme already included replacement of 111 (twin set) and 109 in Market Yard car park. Street light 110 would likely have been proposed for upgrade 2025-26. Members were asked to approve including streetlight 110 in the current year's replacement programme. Based on the streetlight costs for 109 the estimated expenditure £3,896 (though may be higher due to extension of the connection groundworks). It may also be possible to request a power supply from the street light for future feature/event lighting.

Resolved: to support the proposal to replace and relocate streetlight 110, subject to the quotes being within the budget.

10.6 Chairman's Reception

Members noted the Chairman's Reception was booked for Wednesday 4 September, late afternoon/early evening. The caterer and music entertainment had been confirmed. Invitations would be sent in July, All councillors were invited and were asked to please confirm attendance to the Planning and Administration Officer.

11 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

11.1 To approve the expenditure for a replacement hot water heater for the Kitchen (Doggetts Barn) of £1,145

Members noted that the hot water in the kitchen comes from a wall mounted heater. Whilst it did work, the water tap had a constant drip; also if not fully turned off, continued to leak hot water (steaming up the kitchen). The plumber had looked at replacement like for like but it was quite expensive. The style of hot water boiler recently fitted in Rickards Hall would fit in the location, it would also mean there would be no need for a kettle saving space and energy from boiling the kettle. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to support the expenditure of £1,145 for a replacement hot water heater for the kitchen in Doggetts Barn.

11.2 To approve the expenditure to repair the water stopcock at the Forge Croft Allotments - for a replacement gate valve with new fittings and isolation tap, £885

Members noted that Edenbridge Allotment Gardens Association (EAGA) had for a couple of years had problems with the water stopcock at the allotments, and having to turn off when not in actual use – there was a water leak. The water company had said that it was not their responsibility. The plumber had quoted to repair and replace at £885.

Resolved: to confirm the expenditure of £885 to repair the leaking stopcock at Forge Croft allotments.

11.3 To appoint Members to carryout car park audits

Following a meeting with SDC Planning Policy Team to discuss the Town Strategy (reported to previous Council), it was raised that it could be useful for the Town Council to know the patterns of use of the car parks - for example when responding to draft Local Plan consultations, and other planning applications. The idea would be to carry out a number of vehicle counts in the car parks, across different days and times of the day over a week, and to repeat the exercise another week (or two). The data would need to be collated, and could then be presented to the Parking Working Group (Cllrs Aldridge, Baker, Compton, Layland, McGregor, Read).

The office would create the tally sheets but volunteers were needed to do the counts. Car parks to audit: Market Yard; Leathermarket; Blossoms Park; Leisure Centre. After some discussion, during which it was suggested that the on-street parking at Church Street be included, also possibly the Recreation Ground, and that monitoring templates already existed, it was

Resolved: that the Parking Working Group members and other councillors would be asked to take a monitoring slot and location, and Cllr McArthur would contact SDC regarding use of existing monitoring and recording methods.

11.4 Remembrance Sunday 10 November 2024

Members were reminded that last year the Town Council facilitated local groups coming together to ensure the Remembrance parade and service at the War Memorial. A meeting would be organised in July to start the conversation and preparations for this year's event, and submission of the road closure notice. Members were asked who wished to attend the meetings, and it was

Resolved: that Cllrs Cummings, McArthur, Stockdale, and Todd, would attend.

12 Strategic Plan: to receive the draft strategic plan and objectives document

Following the Visioning training last September, which had looked at the role of parish/town councils, the Council's current Forward Plan, and creating a more detailed document in the form of a Strategic Plan, the summary outcome report was presented to the Forward Planning Steering Group (FPSG) in October. Members resolved to support an adaption of the example Strategic Forward Plan, incorporating its own existing Forward Plan. Members received the draft Strategic Plan prepared by the Town Clerk; it was unanimously

Resolved: to adopt the Strategic Plan as a working document which would be reviewed and updated.

13 To resolve delegated powers to Planning and Transportation Committee for July and August

Resolved: to delegate power to Planning and Transportation Committee to consider and decide any urgent Council business during July and August when there is no full Council meeting.

14 Consultations

None.

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

Cllr Stockdale had attended a WI Hall Management Trustees committee meeting, and reported that hall bookings were positive, there was £30k in the reserves, the committee was applying for grant funding for storage/signage, and it appeared a repair would be necessary to the hall floor.

16 To consider any press releases

The new Strategic Plan.

17 Matters for future agendas

None.

18 Date of next meeting - 09 September 2024

Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.