

To Councillors: A Baker, S Compton (*Vice-Chairwoman*), M Gemmell Smith, C Jacques, A Layland, S McGregor, A Read, M Stockdale, S Sumner (*Chairman*).

A Finance Committee Meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on 15 July 2024 in Rickards Hall.

Notice is hereby given Councillors who are Members of the Finance Committee are summonsed to attend this meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to observe this meeting.

Caroline Leet, Town Clerk
10 July 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.

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Meeting Papers & Report

1 **Elections of Chairman and Vice Chairman for the ensuing year**

1.1 **Election of Chairman**

1.2 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

2 **Apologies for Absence**

3 **Declarations of Interests, or Predeterminations**

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.

4 **To Confirm the Minutes of Finance Committee Held on 18 March, pages 2024-042/01-04**

 Finance and Governance | 18 March 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-042/1-4)

5 **Matters Arising from the Minutes for Report and Not Covered Elsewhere (for Information Only)**

5.1 **To note: Outstanding invoices Eden Valley Museum have been settled**

At the last meeting it was reported that there had been some disputed invoices with the Museum going back to 2023. These have now been resolved, together with some outstanding from 2023-2024 financial year, and the first quarter rent for the new financial year all settled using the SLA for 2024-25, with the balance paid to the museum. (Council May 2024 agreed to pay only the balance of the SLA after all unpaid invoices and been agreed and settled.)

5.2 **Business Stream dispute re billing for Blossoms Park toilets: to receive an update**

At the last Committee meeting, Members received an update on the lengthy and ongoing query with Business Stream over duplication of a waste-water bill at Blossoms Park, yet the Cricket Club had taken over responsibility in 2022 with a different service supplier. Members considered the cost of considerable office staff time already taken up on this matter, and difficulties encountered communicating with the supplier, and resolved to pay the outstanding amount of £43.94 to clear the issue. However, this hasn't closed the matter as Business Stream continue to send bills and has engaged a debt collector (DC). The Clerk has raised a dispute direct with the DC and Business Stream. We await the outcome.

In the meantime, it has also been noticed that there is a similar issue with SES billing for clean water supply. A dispute is in the process of being prepared and raised.

6 **To receive update for year-end 31 March 2024**

6.1 **To receive the end-of-year Comparisons Report confirming Council's net assets including the General and Earmarked Reserves**

Council at its annual meeting 13 May received the reports for the end-of-year 31 March 2024. *End of year figures can be seen on attached report (items 7.5 budget comparisons & Balance sheet).*

The Budget Comparison report records all I&E paid and unpaid for the financial year. 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 to build-up and secure the GR position.

The Consolidated Balance report includes actual income and expenditure (I&E) including creditors and debtors. This confirmed the total net assets of £953,946.12. The breakdown for this:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| General Reserves | £320,058.08 |
| Earmarked Reserves | £477,794.49 |
| CIL unallocated funds | £29,171.59 |
| CIL Earmarked Reserves | £126,921.96 |

6.2 **To receive the Internal Auditor's report April 2024, for year-end**

Presented to Council's May meeting, 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.

Do Members have any further comments?

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/240502-Final-Edenbridge-Internal-Audit-Report-2023-24.pdf>

6.3 **To note: The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been submitted to the External Auditor and the Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Public Rights published**

Council confirmed the end of year accounts (as reported above) and the AGAR. The Consolidated balance sheets confirmed the total net assets (box 7 on AGAR): £953,946.12; Income & Expenditure (I&E) Account confirmed total actual Income £845,115.71 (boxes 2&3 on AGAR) and Expenditure £873,187.65.

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 period commencing 10 June to 19 July (30 working days). This is on the website and in the main Council's noticeboard with a copy of the AGAR. The completed AGAR and supporting documents have been submitted to the external auditor (Mazars). These can viewed on the website, link below.

Do Members have any further comments?

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/annual-audit-and-end-of-year-accounts/>

7 **Financial Statement and Analysis of Receipts and Payments (financial Report Pack)**

This the first quarter of the financial year - 01 April - 30 June 2024.

7.1 **To ratify the expenditure up to 30 June 2024**

- 7.2 **To approve the list of expenditure for payments**
Payments made 12 July added to payments to ratify (item 7.1). Next payments due are end of July, this will include the usual direct debits, salaries, payment for the Pavilion new windows and shutters, and additional electrical works (funded from the CIL award), as well as the on going expenses (as per budgeted).
- 7.3 **To review Expenditure over £500**
Expenditure over £500 is published on the website under Finance & Transparency. Link below.
[🔗 https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Apr-June-24-Accepted-expenditure-transactions-o500.pdf](https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Apr-June-24-Accepted-expenditure-transactions-o500.pdf)
- 7.4 **To receive the income report**
[📎 Annex 2: Received Income to 30 06 24.pdf](#)
- 7.5 **To receive the Financial I&E Budget Comparisons report**
[📎 Annex 3: 2024 3006 correct report Financial Comparison.pdf](#)
- 7.6 **To confirm the I&E Accounts summary**
[📎 Annex 4: Income and Expenditure 30 06 24.pdf](#)
- 7.7 **To receive and confirm the Consolidated Balance Sheet**
[📎 Annex 5: Consolidated Balance Sheet 30 06 24.pdf](#)
[📎 Annex 6: Summary Trial Balance 30 06 24.pdf](#)
- 7.8 **To receive and confirm the Financial Summary Cashbook**
[📎 Annex 7: Cahsbook 30 06 24.pdf](#)
- 7.9 **To confirm the Bank Reconciliation statements and Procurement Card**
Cllr Layland has checked the bank account and procurement card reconciliations for April, May, June. There were no issues. They are available for Members to view anytime.
[📎 Annex 8: Bank Reconciliation 30 06 24.pdf](#)
[📎 Annex 9: Barclaycard Spend to 30 06 24.pdf](#)
- 7.10 **To receive and confirm the transfers into, out of and between bank accounts**
[📎 Annex 10: Account transfers to 300624.pdf](#)
- 7.11 **To note and advise on invoices outstanding over 3 months**
There are two outstanding invoices:

Historical Society 27/03/2023 £28.00 photocopying
S Smith & Son 24/04/2024 £76.52 an additional subscription to an existing memorial

8 **Other Financial Business**

8.1 **To note: Council Insurance renewal 2024-25**

Council's insurance has been renewed, total cost £16,741 (May Council resolutions approved £16,800). This is the last of the 3-year agreement, to be reviewed again for July 2025. Details of the current insurance is published on the Council's website (about us/Finance & Transparency/insurance). Details of the renewal were presented to Council, May 2024.

Do Members have any questions?

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/policies/insurances/>

8.2 **Barclays Current Account: to report for noting, recent fraudulent transactions discovered and have since been resolved and returned**

In May, it was noticed that the Council's Barclay's current account had been scammed. Not excessively, total £1,500 in 6 transactions of £250 each across two different dates in the name of Stripe, with two separate account a names. Stripe (a company that manages payments) took £250 as a direct debit on 15 May by DD. This was questioned with the bank on 20 May when noticed. The DD was cancelled (we never set this up so how was it agreed, no idea). The bank said we needed to contact Stripe direct. This was not straightforward, but we do have email correspondence. On 28 May, they took a further £250 five times. New reference so new DD.

Barclays when contacted for a second time, put a block on the ION number for Stripe so there will be no more withdrawals made. The new DD reference also cancelled. All funds have since been refunded. However, to note, the stop of Stripe only lasts for 13 months so the fraudsters could come back after this, or through another money payment handler anytime. It is nothing we have done, just sign of the times and need to be vigilant.

We have not for a long time held high levels of money in the current account, making transfers to cover payments raised, and to allow each month for the DDs. We will investigate with Barclays about possibilities to change the bank account number.

Do Members have any questions?

8.3 **Lloyds Bank: update on issues with closing and transferring the funds**

The balance in Lloyds bank is £128,667.40. For three years we have been trying to close this account and transfer the funds. The Clerk visited a Lloyds branch last month to request an up to date statement, this could not be provided as statements are only issued when there is a change in the account balance. However, they did print off and post confirmation of the balance and reiterated the process to closing the account and requesting a bank transfer. This is a current account which does not pay interest. The RFO, has now been confirmed as an administrator and is in the process of liaising with Lloyds. We hope to resolve this outstanding issue soon.

8.4 **CCLA Accounts: Propose to transfer some funds from Barclays Council Reserves; and Barclays CIL Reserves, into the two CCLA Accounts, to improve interest returns**

The Council has two CCLA accounts which provide good interest on the investment, considerably more than Barclays Reserve. We currently hold £200k in the CCLA Council account, and £100k in CCLA CIL account. The Barclay's Reserve Council fluctuates between £450-750k; Barclays Reserve CIL £112,706.91. Interest earnings in 2023-24 for the two Council accounts: CCLA £9,775; Barclays £1,948.

The proposal is to move the majority of funds from Barclays Reserve to CCLA leaving £100-150k working balance in Barclays Reserves for ease to transfer in the current account for monthly payments, and top up from CCLA as needed (transfer notice to CCLA is 24 hours). It is proposed to transfer from Barclays CIL the majority of the CIL funds into the

CCLA CIL account (after the payments for the Pavilion windows projects has been made).

CCLA accounts are considered secure and safe investments as the risk is spread across many investments, with any potential losses minimal due to the spread. They are used across charities and local councils sectors.

Do Members support the proposal to utilise the CCLA account better and to keep majority of Council and CIL funds in the two CCLA accounts, and to transfer from CCLA accounts to the Current account as needed?

8.5 **Natwest Recreation Ground: Account to be closed - zero balance, unused account**

There was once a Natwest account for the Recreation Ground, which we believed had been closed. However, we have received a bank statement, which showed a 'zero' balance, followed by a direct debit transaction from Stripe for a www. account for £15 payment. This is clearly a fraud transaction and not sure how it was paid from a 'zero' balance account. The RFO is currently looking into this matter, once resolved will ensure the account is closed.

8.6 **To note: Internal Auditors visit October**

Last year, we had coincided with the IA's October visit some Finance training for Members. Unfortunately, this was cancelled due to illness. **Would Members like to rearrange the training for October this year, again to coincide with the IA.**

9 **Date of next meeting - 07 October 2024**