

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

Notice is hereby given of a Council Meeting of Edenbridge Town Council to be held in Rickards Hall on 20 January 2025 at 7:30 pm, which Councillors are summonsed to attend.

Town Clerk
15 January 2025

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

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

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Meeting Papers & Report

1 **To Receive Apologies for Absence**

2 **Declaration of Interests or Predetermination**

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

3 **Public Questions and Statements**

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

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

4 **To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 09 December 2024 (2023-078/1-9)**

 Full Council | 09 December 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-078/1-9)


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


5.1 **County Councillor**

5.2 **District Councillors**

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

6.1 **Planning Committee 16 December 077/1-3; 13 January 080/1-3**

 Planning and Transport | 16 December 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-079/1-2)

 Planning and Transport | 13 January 2025 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-080/1-3)

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

7.1 **Clerk's report**

Budgeting: Budgets for 2025-26 were presented to council in December and the draft budget and precept statement published. SDC has also been advised of the expected precept (to be confirmed after January council).

Buildings: There has been several areas requiring attention including: Rickards Hall - specifications and quotes for internal repairs and and redecoration; Church House - damp (reported agenda item 10.5); Pavilion - quotes for external repaint , pump issue and also internal heating matter (10.1); Depot - shutter service and repairs; Public Toilets 5-yearly EICR; plus working through fire safety recommendations for all buildings.

Byelaws update: We are still awaiting feedback from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Car parking issues in Council car parks: A meeting of the Parking Working Group to discuss the car parking audits and how to proceed is not forgotten but due to staffing this has been postponed.

Cemeteries: We are currently in process of confirming the order details for the new sign. Signage for dogs on lead have been received are due to go in the cemeteries.

Health & Safety audit: This is booked for 15 January, with the report being presented to Governance Committee on 27 January, and Council 3 March. The last audit in July focused mainly on the Council's sites and buildings. I will be asking WorkNest to look at our recording and record keeping which mainly uses the SafetyNest. With staff changes and other workloads, some attention/improvements here are needed.

Land outside the old Police Station: The Landowner's solicitor has made contact and awaiting details.

Local Council Award Scheme: I have submitted registration for NALCs council accreditation award scheme and will be working through the document to submit.

Market: Now reported to Open Spaces Committee as sits within its budgets. However, Christmas was successful for traders with an extra market held on the Monday before Christmas (23rd). A recent conversation with one of the traders praised the council for everything it has done for the market saying it is the best it has ever been, and said how nice it is to see new people coming into the town and the market. The Communications Officer will pick on this and run some features throughout the year.

PACT meeting: Meetings dates for 2025: Mondays 20 January, 28 April, 21 July, 20 October. These have been promoted on the noticeboards, Facebook and website.

Personnel: Appraisals for all staff are in the process of being done. E-Learning portal webinar training on a range of H&S topics, fire safety, safeguarding and GDPR are uploaded for all employees to work through.

Planning – Land South of Four Elms Road: The already approved outline planning application (340 dwellings, secondary school and scout hut), is being proposed by the developer for some changes to the site layout and to increase the number of dwellings to 443. Following a public consultation and pre-application advice from SDC, the developer has now submitted its planning application 24/02765/OUT. Planning Committee has considered the application and the additional information and submitted its representations. There has been some updates to the supporting documents and the planning committee will continue to keep updated and submit its comments to the planning authority.

SDC Liaison meeting: Councillors and officers meet with SDC Leader, Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer on 21 November. The draft minutes of the meeting were circulated to Members on 16 December. Reminder of matters raised included: updates with enforcement notices, UK Prosperity Fund, Stangrove development, and the impact of the development proposals in the emerging Local Plan.

Spitals Estate Playground update: This is reported and managed through the Open Spaces

Committee. However, for information, since SDC relocated the playground the Council has not been satisfied with the reinstallation and raised a complaint with SDC in August. After some toing and froing SDC confirmed in December that wetpour will be placed under the children's apparatus that currently has grass underneath it. In addition the entrance to the park from the west will also have wetpour. The relocation of one of the benches will be placed on the triangled grass patch and will have concrete plinths. In addition, SDC is suggesting that the remaining strip of grass between the new wetpour and the fence be lined with bushes instead of grass – this will be discussed by the OS Committee and the Head Groundsman before confirming.

Tourism and new walks leaflets and GPS App access: The walks leaflets project continues. A designer has been confirmed and quotes are in the process of being obtained for the printed walks leaflet. (Funded through CIL grant.)

Tourism and train stations: The Planning & Admin officer has submitted an application to Your Station Your Community Fund (criteria was for an art or floral installation) for new planters and flower displays at both stations. This would be a partnership project with GTR and the council's groundstaff; funding was to cover three-years.

Training: ILM Leadership and Management Award courses for the Town Clerk and Head Groundsman were supported by Council at its May 2024 meeting. Costs have since been confirmed by the training provider (level 3 £795 and level 5 £995), but due to other work commitments the next enrolment (February) is not viable. This will go back to Personnel Committee (or Council) should other dates come forward.

Vandalism: Fairly quiet though one noticeboard was damaged, and latest thing seems to be cutting trees (Millennium Wood and Water Meadows).

War Memorial: We maintain to be in touch with NHS Properties.

Website: The Communications Officer is working with the website designer on the new website and content. It is a big project which we are working through, but we now have the main frame and the content is in the process of being reviewed and updated.

7.2

Community Warden

Community Warden's 6-monthly Report (July to January 2025)

Volunteer activities: I have organised seven litter picks and have one upcoming. These have been in different areas around the town which have been very well attended and have been very successful.

Bulb planting: There have been four bulb planting sessions including planting bulbs along the fence line at Stangrove Park (about 2500 bulbs) and Millennium Wood. The Great Stone Bridge Trust (GSBT) provided a grant to fund the spring bulbs; this funded approx.4000 bulbs.

Games Club: I have attended numerous sessions of the Games Club getting to know those that attend and the volunteers, The group is going strong with an average of 12-15 people attending every week. On Monday 6 January, Involve Kent attended the club with regards to the funding cuts to Involve Kent by Kent County Council (KCC), and which will mean the loss of the grant for the club. I am currently in the process of contacting GSBT to see if they would help with some funding, but we do not want to compromise the funding we already receive for the CW role and other small projects. I am also going to try GACT for funding. The club held a Christmas party on the last Monday of December which was a roaring success.

Portable Speed Indicator Device (SID): The SID has been out eight times in the town.

Speedwatch: I have done five speed awareness days with the volunteers with two further sessions cancelled because of the weather conditions.

Graffiti, vandalism and fly-tipping:

- I have had four cases of graffiti around the town, which I have attended with the help of the ground staff in a couple of cases.
- There has been sixteen cases of fly tipping which was dealt with by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) very promptly; two of the fly tipping were on Southern Water land which they dealt with, and one was on Waitrose land and again they dealt with it.
- We have had nine cases of vandalism, four of which have been to the notice boards in Stangrove park.
- There has been two cases of knives and ball bearings being handed in to the office which were then handed into to the police.
- I have reported two cases of abandoned vehicles and also moved on a gentleman in his camper van who was illegally parked in the Recreation Ground/Pavilion car park.

Safeguarding: I had two instances of safe guarding, the first was an elderly gentlemen which was reported to West Kent Housing as a tenant of theirs. I took him home after he had come into the office saying he was hungry etc, when I got him home I made him a microwave dinner and a tea to make sure he had some food. The other instance was a member of the Games Club who was complaining about her neighbours smoking weed and dumping rubbish in the garden, again I reported it to WKH.

Other activities and meetings attended: In September, I was part of the office team which set up for the Chairman's Reception in Rickards Hall; this event was well attended.

I was part of the organising group for the Remembrance Sunday service and parade. This included submitting the road closure, ordering and setting out the street signs for road closures leading up to Remembrance Sunday. On the day I was at the service and co-ordinated the music for the last post and the national anthem.

I have developed positive relations with the two new beat police officers. They pop in to the office regularly as well keeping good email communications. I have been out with them on a couple of walkabouts and they have attended a session of speed awareness before Christmas. Ironically we did not catch one person speeding that day.

I did a talk at the health centre for the dementia group which entailed me explaining what my role is within the town and also attended another meeting with the town's two Police Beat Officers. I attended the opening of Stones at the Leisure Centre with Lucinda from WKH.

I went out on a welfare check with Moat housing, the police, SDC and a few other agencies to do checks around the land that Moat Housing own to make sure everything is up to scratch. I also attended welfare checks with a Moat House Officer at several of its properties to get an idea of what they do.

I have done several online courses with regards to VAWG (violence against woman & girls).

Together with Cllr Jacques, I have over several occasions been through the emergency planning cupboard and equipment. We have created a complete inventory and updated several items in the cupboard. I am also monitoring and charging the radios.

On Sunday 5 January, I was called out for emergency planning where we had to shut Crouch House Road for a while as burst drains was causing flooding on top of what was biblical amounts of rain over that weekend.

Future activity: I will be involved in the planning for the 80th anniversary of VE day in May in

whatever form it takes and also with anything we plan for the 130th anniversary of the council this year. I would imagine that we will do a celebratory tea & cake for the volunteers and older members of the community again this year. I will be looking at ways to recruit new volunteers to several of the activities we do. The Market Archway project I have been involved with the planning and obtaining designs and quotes; we are now awaiting the planning decision from SDC. Assuming the archway is approved, I will be liaising with the blacksmith and grounds work team. I am also signed up for several courses this year including VAWG, Cyber security and flood warden training. I will also be involved at the annual town meeting in March.

8 **Draft Local Plan - update**

There are no current updates.

9 **To approve the Budget and Precept 2025-26**

At the December meeting, Council considered the the draft budget proposals for 2025-26 and Precept together with the recommendations from the Finance Committee (November meeting) and the Forward Planning Steering Group (FPSG), Personnel and Open Spaces Committees.

Members unanimously resolved:

- Draft budget for 2025-26 as presented for each cost centre; total expenditure £904,252.62 and budget income £123,951.12.
- A Precept increase of 7.9% to achieve £804,054 and to be able to maintain services. With the assumed tax base of 3975.11 (0.46% increase on 2024-25), the Band D Council Tax would be £202.27 or £13.95 increase for the year.
- Earmarked Reserves (EMR) levels as presented 01/04/24 opening total £953,946 (General Reserves (GR) £320,058, EMR £477,794 CIL funds £156,094); closing forecasted for 31/03/25 £997,213 (GR £323,058, EMR £497,693 and CIL funds £175,716)

Members noted the tax base may change and would be confirmed at the January meeting. Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) since confirmed the tax base for 2025-26: 3998.66 (1.05% increase on 2024-25: 3957.01). This was reflected in the draft budget statement published on the website 20 December (link below).

Members are asked to confirm the budget for 2025-26 and Precept recommendations:

Do members confirm the budget for 2025-26: total expenditure £904,252.62 and budget income £123,951.12; Precept needed £804,054?

Do members confirm, based on the Band D tax level 3998.66, an increase to a Band D tax level to £201.08, a £12.76 per year increase, or £1.06p per month? (Band D 2024-25 £188.32.)

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/241220-draft-budget-press-release-2025-26.pdf>

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

10.1 **Pavilion: To receive an update on the current position of heaters and boilers**

Council has been receiving ongoing updates since May regarding issues raised by the Rugby Club re the heating and boilers at the Pavilion. Initially, it was agreed to allow a Licence of Alteration and Deed of Variation so that the Club could fund (possibly through a CIL application) and install a new heating system. The Lease was not clear (in that it does not single out the heating or specify) on who's responsibility the heating was, hence the need for the Licence of Alteration and Deed of Variation. However, the Licence of Alteration and Deed

of Variation was not pursued and the cost for the new system presented in a CIL bid was in the region of £98k.

Without the Licence of Alteration and Deed of Variation being completed, the Club did not have the legal right to carry out the works. Having brought the matter back to Council, it was noted that any works carried out under the Council's duties (as Landlord), would have to follow the Council's own procurement procedures. Also, the condition of the existing boiler and plant installation, standard of installation, suitability of application and life expectancy with possible replacement costs was not actually known in full. In December, Members supported an independent professional survey. This took place on 14 January and we await the report which will set out what should have been being doing, statutory servicing and documentation, proposals and recommendations.

Council (December) also received a letter from the Club requesting reimbursement of its costs since March 2023 in respect of the boiler. Members noted the Lease which outlines the tenant and landlord's responsibilities, including the annual inspections and shared costs for common items. Advice on this is awaited from the Council's solicitor. At the time of preparing the meeting papers, a reply had not as yet been received.

As soon as the report on the heating and boilers is received, together with the solicitors feedback, this will be forwarded to the Lease Negotiation Group to receive and consider. A meeting with the Club will then follow.

Do members have any questions or further comment?

In addition to this, following the replacement waste pump in December (previously replaced in November 2023) following a foreign object found to have damaged the pump, the engineer reported that the extended cabling had heavily corroded and has disintegrated, and that there was no earth present. The town clerk and vice-chair approved the expenditure for new switch and cabling, £592 plus vat. We are now waiting for the works to take place.

Do members have any questions?

10.1.1 **To confirm gas boiler inspection and assessment of repair works**

The independent boiler and heating engineers noted that one of the gas boilers was not working. It was recommended that a full gas boiler inspection be carried to ascertain the repairs and costs. He will recommend a gas boiler engineer for this. This will then form part of the final engineer's report.

Do members confirm to proceed with the gas boiler engineer?

10.2 **To receive an update on the project for new Market Archway at Market Yard car park access road**

Details for the proposed new new archway new archway to promote the market in Market Yard car park has been on Council agendas since last year, with updates reported ongoing since May. The projected is being funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (via Sevenoaks District Council (SDC)).

A planning application was submitted in November, but required an architect to be able to produce the necessary scaled drawings for the archway and additional bollards (funding ratified December Council). The planning application 24/03000/FUL was validated 16 December and is awaiting decision.

The second aspect of the application is the wording 'Edenbridge Market' as this needs to meet the advertising regulations. Unfortunately, SDC did not request a separate fee, so the

application 24/03001/ADV was invalidated on 07/01/25. This was immediately paid but is yet to be revalidated. This has now been validated, with a decision advised by 04 March.

The architect made some slight changes to the original archway drawing and the additional bollards reduced to two (from four) but different location. The ironmonger has been asked to check his quote but is not expected to be significantly different and still within the grant. Any surplus grant will be considered for market branded gazebos. A grant for gazebos has also been submitted to the County Councillor.

As previously reported, SDC are keen to release the funding for the project, but I have said to wait until we know if the planning application is successful, but will submit expenditure and revised quotes to SDC to claim the funding by end of February.

Do members have any questions?

10.3 **Leases: to receive updates on the progress of:-**

Leases: Current Leases being updated or have amendments:

10.3.1 **Forge Singers new lease**

Following Council December meeting, a meeting has been arranged with members of the Forge Singers, the Lease Negotiation Group and the Town Clerk. A verbal report will be given at the meeting.

Reminder: The Forge Singers hut on Council land is currently a six point agreement (half A4 page) signed in 1992. Following legal advice, a formal lease should be provided to protect both parties and a draft lease was sent December 2023.

Following the verbal update, **how do Members want to proceed?**

10.3.2 **Eden Valley Museum Lease renewal**

This is due for renewal March 2025. The Lease Negotiation Group and I have met to review the lease drafted by the solicitor. I have submitted the comments and I still awaiting feedback, which I have chased. Once the Lease Negotiation Group has seen the updated draft lease and is satisfied, a copy will be submitted to the Museum. Hopefully, by the time of the meeting there will be an update.

Do Members have any questions?

10.3.3 **Rugby Club licence for alterations and deed of variation**

The Rugby Club has been instructed to halt any proposed work that they may have intended. Update on the current situation with the heaters etc is provided agenda item 10.1.

10.4 **Food Bank: to receive an update on the Food Bank, to confirm Council's ongoing support to the Food Bank and the arrangements to run out of Rickards Hall on Tuesday mornings**

January 2021, Council agreed to allow Food Bank use of Rickards Hall Tuesday mornings free of charge; this was to be reviewed annually and each year (so far) Council has confirmed its arrangements.

An update from the Food Bank will be given at the meeting.

Do Members confirm continued support and current the arrangements with the Food Bank, and free use of Rickards Hall on Tuesday mornings?

10.5 **Church House: to receive update on proposed damp works interventions; and the replacement fire alarm panel**

Council (December) approved the the expenditure of £5,885 for works to address the damp issues in the Museum. Before the works can be commissioned, I have looked at the English Heritage guidance for Grade II* listed buildings maintenance repairs which indicates that where the fabric of the original materials may change a certificate of lawfulness may be required. An request for planning advice has been sought (a fee has had to be paid for this of £73.25).

I am still awaiting the surveyors report for Church House (and other sites) and continue to chase. However, they have been helpful with providing a recommended timber and damp profession for the report (received November 2024).

The instruction to replace the fire alarm panel in the museum was issued to Besure in December following council. Once this has been install, they should be able to link up the fire shutter in the Rickards kitchen.

Do members have any questions?

11 **Events**

11.1 **VE Day 80 - Thursday 8 May**

Following the success of the D-Day 80 commemorations last year, the Royal British Legion (RBL) is working with the government and stakeholders to develop the national plans for VE Day 80. Local councils and others within their community are encouraged to take part in this 'shared moment of celebration' on 8th May with the lighting of Beacons and Lamp Lights of Peace at 9.30pm, the raising of a unique VE Day flag at 9am and, where possible, holding parties of celebration throughout the day in the streets, gardens at home, churches, villages, town halls, pubs, clubs, hotels and all manner of locations throughout 2025. (8 May is not a Bank Holiday day, and currently no indication that this will change.)

The office has registered on the official site (link below), confirming the Beacon lighting. However, usually Stangrove Park is still quite wet early May, day light hours are 05.30-20:30, and the weather (rain) is unpredictable at this stage. (The Coronation event 7 May 2023 had to be moved from Stangrove to the Recreation Ground because of the wetness of the ground.) Also, for the Beacon lighting we will need to consider hiring some proper outdoor event lights (with generator power).

The office could replicate the D-Day 80 event, but there are factors of light and weather to consider. A smaller scale Beacon lighting to mark the occasion could still take place with other activities, for example:

- Themed Thursday market open all day decorated with flags and bunting (open 10.00 am). There could be some activities for school children to join in later in the afternoon. Perhaps the Town Band could consider putting on a performance early evening in the car park including the British patriotic hymn.
- Purchase flag and raise the VE Day 80 flag at 9.00 am 8 May
- The Church could ring out its bells again at 6.30 pm.

The past couple of year's the Council has hosted an afternoon tea for the older members of the community; 2023 was funded through a grant to support reintegration in to the community following the pandemic, and 2024 was part of the D-Day 80 commemorations. Both events were well received. It would be nice to host a similar event to last year for VE

Day 80 afternoon tea.

The Council's events budget for 2025 is £5k.

How do Members want to proceed?


11.2 **Celebrating 130 years of Edenbridge Town Council**

To receive the attached draft paper (*confidential*) setting out suggestions for a programme of celebrating 130 years of the Town Council.

In 1995, a centenary brochure was produced as a celebration of the Council and the Town. we could look back at some of those achievements but also the past 30-years, as well as a look to the future.

The programme has been prepared by the Communications Officer, with some help and suggestions from the Office. Many of the proposals can link into existing events and activities.

How do Members want to proceed?

 Confidential Annex 2 (omitted from public documents):

11.3 **Chairman's Reception**

The Council used to support an annual reception, but since the pandemic this has been a biennial. However, with the 130 years celebrations this could be part of the programme of events to celebrate.

Do Members support a Chairman's Reception for 2025?

11.4 **Edenbridge Gardens in Bloom competition**

Following the pandemic when the Council ran a gardening competition, which has now been supported for the past four years specifically for the residents of Edenbridge. This event is overseen by the Open Spaces Committee, but for information:

Edenbridge Gardens In Bloom competition has about six categories ranging from best allotment, garden, youth/school groups, young gardener, window boxes & hanging baskets, and last year the strangest/unique space to create a colourful display was introduced. A presentation event is organised for the entrants to attend, this year's awards will be presented on Wednesday 06 September 2025 (there are limited dates that the hall is available).

Do Members have any comments?

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

12.1 **Games Club: future of the Club following Involve Kent and KCC funding cuts**

Background: The Games Club is for over 55s and is facilitated by the Town Council providing the hall, staffing and publicity. It started when Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) had access to some funding via a grant from Involve Kent who are a charity funding community led initiatives supporting wellbeing projects. Over the past three years, Involve Kent has continued its support for the Club which has had about 40 members, with a regular 10-15 people attending weekly. The Club has enabled a group of residents who were lonely, low in confidence, and some with mental health issues, all impacted by the pandemic, to have a safe place to come. Many have developed new friendships and support, improved

their mental health and grown in confidence and wellbeing. The club also won an SDC award in 2023 on the older persons group category.

Withdrawal of funding: Involve Kent's funding comes from several sources including Kent County Council (KCC) who provide funding to them of over £1million. As part of KCC's proposed changes to wellbeing services in the community and its finding cuts across the county which will impact also on many other wellbeing services across the district and council resulting from KCC cuts, Involve Kent will no longer be able to provide a grant towards the running costs of the club.

The members of the games club are very upset to learn that this funding is being withdrawn and fear the future for the club. The grant allows for the Council to allocate Rickards Hall specifically for the club without losing potential income; costs towards the Community Warden's time; some refreshments; and provide games and other activities.

Members are asked to consider allowing the club to continue on Mondays out of Rickards Hall, the CW to support the club, provide some refreshments (members do already pay a small contribution towards other refreshments) and ongoing promotion of the club. Without a grant to fund the Hall, there could be a potential hall hire income loss, but officers are looking at other grant opportunities, and should a booking enquiry come forward if for one Monday maybe games club could not run that week or run in the afternoon for example, or if a repeat booking comes forward, then this could be considered at the time accordingly.

Members have been forwarded emails from residents who have raised their worries and expressing how valued this club is to its members and families.

Do members confirm to continue supporting the games club on Monday mornings in Rickards Hall, noting that council will not be receiving any income for its running costs, and to keep the matter under review.

12.2 **Love Edenbridge Day 22 March 2025: Request from Chamber of Commerce to Council for support and to provide free use of Rickards Hall and courtyard**

Representation was received at the December meeting. Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce (EVCC) is seeking Council support for its event on 22 March 2025 "Love Edenbridge" day. The idea is to promote the local businesses in the High Street and build on the existing loyalty card project launched 12 years ago. There is no plan to close the High Street, but use adjacent spaces for stalls and activities, alongside the established businesses. EVCC want to use all of the open spaces in the town to encourage small craft/business and gift stallholders, as well as local organisations, to set up stalls for the day.

EVCC is asking for council permission to use the Market Yard car park access off the High Street, Doggetts Courtyard, and Rickards Hall at no charge on Saturday 22 March. It has also been suggested that council may like to join the event with a councillors stall.

Members are asked to support the event with free hire of Rickards Hall and the courtyard, and use of the access road leading to Market Yard car park. (An enquiry for 22 March for Rickards Hall has not confirmed and the provisional booking released.)

How do members want to proceed and do they confirm free hire for Rickards Hall to EVCC on 22 March?

12.3 **To consider Council CIL bids to submit to the February CIL Board**

12.3.1 **Pavilion gutters and pipes repaint**

Following the installation of the new windows and shutters at the Pavilion in July, it

highlighted the condition of the paintwork of the gutters and downpipes and that they would benefit with a repaint, also to match-in with the new pine green shutters. A specification to clean, rubdown and repaint the red gutters and pipe work to match the new shutters has been sent to four contractors. Whilst we are still waiting for two quotes back, it is expected the total cost to be in the region of £4-5k.

Do Members support to submit a bid to the February CIL Board to cover this work under infrastructure maintenance?

12.3.2 **Pavilion boilers and heating maintenance**

12.3.3 **Rickards Hall floor repairs**

13 **Devolution and local government reorganisation**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has published the government's English Devolution White Paper (16 December 2024). The policy paper, which focusses specifically on devolution and local government arrangements across England, notes key aspects of the government's 'Plan for Change', with devolution 'fundamental to achieving the change the public expect and deserve: growth, more joined-up delivery of public services, and politics being done with communities, not to them.'

Kent and Medway Councils has been considering devolution and local government reorganisation since the Government published its White Paper and on 11 January Kent County Council voted to join the Government's Devolution Priority Programme and, at the same time, commit to both local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway. They also requested the cancellation of the County Council election in May this year. Should Government accept the County Council's request to join the Devolution Priority Programme, it would commit Kent and Medway to elections for a Mayoral Strategic Authority in May 2026 and the implementation of local government reorganisation – most likely from April 2028 at the earliest.

At this stage, it is too early to know exactly how this will effect district level, and to also gauge the impact that this will have on town and parish councils. It will mean a reorganisation of the current 12 district councils in Kent, and how this will look for Sevenoaks is not yet known (but will be a larger region for example the west region merging with Tonbridge, Malling and Tunbridge Wells). SDC has said that they will keep local councils updated as matters progress. The Town Clerks are due to meet in February with SDC and district councillors will also be kept informed. The National Association for Local Councils (NALC) will keep the sector informed; its conference in June Power Shift focuses on this subject (the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk are booked to attend this).

There is concern amongst town councils the future of district and county council assets in the towns. This will be raised with two meetings that the Clerk is attending over the coming weeks and reported back. Other matters to watch will be possible changes to council tax and other services that may be expected to be picked up at local parish and town level. At the moment there is a lot of speculation about how the new mayoral authorities will look, but the government is keen to move forward quickly.

This item will remain an agenda item with updates reported.


Do Members have any comments?

Members are asked to confirm a request be made to Sevenoaks District Council for details of SDC assets in Edenbridge, and to discuss the future and possibilities of transferring land from SDC to the town council as a result of devolution and the cessation of the district council in the future.

14 **Annual Town Meeting - Monday 31 March - to agree the agenda, invited speakers and set a date to review the content**

To confirm proposed agenda, speakers and exhibitors. (See attached confidential draft.)


Do members confirm the agenda so far and are there any other proposals?

 Confidential Annex 3 (omitted from public documents):

15 **Consultations**


15.1 **Kent County Council Proposed changes to wellbeing services in the community - closing date 27 January 2025**

Repeated from from the December agenda: Kent County Council (KCC) are cutting its funding. Kent County Council is proposing to cut its funding provided to wellbeing contracts, cutting Wellbeing Services in the Community and Community Navigation which are funded by KCC's Adult Social Care and Health Directorate and delivered by Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations. This will include funding to Involve who provide a support grants for many VCSEs, and the support the Council receives to facilitate the Games Club.

 <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/wellbeingconsultation>

15.2 **Sevenoaks District Council Big Waste Conversation - closing date 3 February**

Have your say on the future of our waste collection services by taking part in our 'BIG Waste Conversation' survey.

 <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/bigwaste>

15.3 **Strengthening The Standards and Conduct Framework For Local Authorities in England - closing date 26 February 2025.**

The government is seeking views on proposals to introduce measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime for local authorities in England. The proposals being consulted upon include:

- The introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England
- A requirement that all principal authorities convene formal standards committees to make decisions on code of conduct breaches, and publish the outcomes of all formal investigations
- The introduction of the power for all local authorities (including combined authorities) to suspend councillors or mayors found in serious breach of their code of conduct and, as appropriate, interim suspension for the most serious and complex cases that may involve police investigations
- A new category of disqualification for gross misconduct and those subject to a sanction of suspension more than once in a 5-year period
- A role for a national body to deal with appeals

[Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)

15.4 **Transport for the South East: Draft Transport Strategy Consultation - closing date 07 March 2025**

Prepared by Transport for the South East (TfSE), the region's Sub-national Transport Body, the Strategy outlines a Vision for the South East to be recognised globally for achieving sustainable prosperity and the highest quality of life. It builds on the previous Strategy that was published in 2020 and is underpinned by over seven years' extensive technical work.

<https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/our-vision/transport-strategy/>

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

17 **To consider any press releases**

18 **Matters for future agendas**

19 **Date of next meeting - 03 March 2025**

Edenbridge Foodbank: Report to Edenbridge Town Council Jan 2025

Edenbridge foodbank is run as part of the Trussell UK network of foodbanks which all operate independently but Trussell provide advice and guidance and a basic model of operation.

Edenbridge foodbank is supported by all the churches of Edenbridge but is governed under the Grace Community Church, Edenbridge Charity (no 1181051). The trustees of the charity and all the volunteers at the foodbank are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of Edenbridge Town Council especially in providing the use of Rickards Hall on Tuesday mornings for the weekly foodbank centre to open. We also appreciate the land that you have allowed us to use for the placement of our main food storage shed.

The foodbank has had another successful year of operation. We work with a number of local referral agencies, such as Citizens Advice, Crosslight, West Kent Housing and Edenbridge Primary School. Clients must obtain a food voucher from one of these agencies before coming to the foodbank centre. If someone doesn't have a voucher, we *will* help them and will connect them with an agency to provide ongoing support. In this way, it is hoped that all clients can receive appropriate support and be able to move on from their difficult situation. We regularly have representatives from financial advice/money management agencies (eg Crosslight), the Samaritans, Citizens Advice and others on site to give direct support to clients at the centre.

With the help of a grant from Trussell, the foodbank has entered into partnership agreements with Crosslight and Citizens Advice which means those organisations are able to devote specific advisor time to foodbank clients working with them, dealing with debt, benefit problems etc leading to the point when a significant number of clients have now been helped and are no longer needing foodbank type of support.

The number of clients needing help is lower than the previous year (see attached figures) although there has been a noticeable increase again in December which is continuing into January. Over the last 12 months an average of 13 households have been provided with food each week. We also continue to see a number of new to us clients every month.

We are very pleased to report that we have continued to receive plenty of food donations and have never been close to running short. We are very well supported financially, and ongoing running costs are low. We have a full team of dedicated volunteers with a reserve list too. So overall we are in a sound position to continue this important work.

We have been so pleased to hear of former clients who have been helped in part by attendance at the foodbank: one person came to us out of work, with debt and mental health challenges, went on from us to volunteer with another local organisation, (to gain work experience and confidence), then got a job in retail and with their growing confidence is now a personal trainer at a gym. Another person after a long time at the foodbank and with the help of Citizens Advice received debt relief, benefit help, help with addictive problems and is now off benefits, no longer needs the foodbank and has a full-time job. This represents huge

cross agency support and cooperation but shows what can be achieved and the foodbank is privileged to play its part in this.

Again, we are so grateful for the support of the council and of the local community in so many ways.

Dave White: Edenbridge Foodbank Project Manager

Vouchers and Clients

	April 2023 to March 2024			April 2024 to March 2025			
	No. Vouchers Fulfilled	Unique client households each month	Cumulative Unique client households	No. Vouchers Fulfilled	Unique client households each month	Cumulative client households	Unique New clients
April	67	38		58	29	29	5
May	65	32		54	32	41	7
June	58	27		48	26	51	6
July	61	28		54	25	59	3
Aug	66	32		51	26	68	6
Sept	78	40	100	43	26	73	4
Oct	79	33		56	27	80	6
Nov	59	30		53	28	87	1
Dec	47	28		68	37	98	5
Jan	69	32					
Feb	62	29					
March	57	32	146				
	768	N/A		485	N/A	N/A	43

1.7% increase on 2022-23 total

1038 adults, 672 children: Total 1710 persons

Food Stock received/distributed

2023-2024 decrease
On 22-23

New stock received In	12,481kg	6.70%
Food distributed Out	10,909kg	15.90%