

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 and Governance Committee Meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on 27 January 2025 in Rickards Hall.

Members of the public are welcome to observe this meeting

Lorraine Ganney RFO
23 January 2025

Agenda

1	Apologies for Absence	3
2	Declaration of Interests or Predetermination	3
3	Public Questions and Statements	3
4	To confirm the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 18 November 074/01-5	3
5	Matters arising from the minutes for report and not covered elsewhere (for Information Only)	3
	5.1 Business Stream dispute re billing for Blossoms Park toilets: to receive an update	3
6	Financial Statement and Analysis of Receipts and Payments (financial Report Pack)	3
	6.1 To ratify the expenditure up to 31 December 2024	3
	6.2 To approve the list of expenditure for payment	3
	6.3 To review expenditure over £500 up to 31 December 2024	3
	6.4 To receive the income up to 31 December 2024	4
	6.5 To receive the Financial I&E Budget Comparisons report	4
	6.6 To confirm the I&E Accounts summary	4
	6.7 To receive and confirm the Consolidated Balance Sheet	4
	6.8 To receive and confirm the Financial Summary Cashbook	4
	6.9 To confirm the Bank reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for October, November and December 2024	4
	6.10 To approve and accept the transfers into, out of and between bank accounts	4
	6.11 To note and advise on invoices outstanding over 3 months	5
7	Other Financial Business	5
	7.1 Charities Accounts	5
	7.2 Lloyds Bank: to receive an update on issues with closing and transferring the funds	5
	7.3 To note: The Precept 2025/26 submitted to SDC following full Council resolution (January) confirming and approving the budget	5
	7.4 To note: Projects in the current budget year to move in to Earmarked Reserves	5
	7.5 To review the consolidated budget and predicted year-end (31 March 2025)	5
8	Governance	5
	8.1 To receive new and updated policies and strategies and consider recommendation to council for adoption	6
	8.1.1 Digital Communications and Social Media Policy	6
	8.1.2 Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy	6

8.1.3	Communications and Community Engagement Strategy	6
8.1.4	Recording and Filming of Council and Committee Meetings Policy	6
8.1.5	Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy	6
8.1.6	Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy	6
8.1.7	Market Gazebos and Structures including in Adverse Weather Policy	6
8.2	To confirm a council written style guide	7
8.3	Leases	7
8.3.1	To receive and confirm the renewal draft lease for the Eden Valley Museum	7
8.3.2	To receive update on the Forge Musical Theatre (formally Forge Singers) draft lease	7
8.4	Health and Safety Audit Report	7
8.5	Internal auditor: To confirm and recommend to council to continue with the current auditor Keith Robinson for the next 3-years	8

Meeting Papers & Report

1 **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 confirm the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 18 November 074/01-5**

 Finance and Governance | 18 November 2024 v.1 - Minutes (Pages 2023-074/1-5)

5 **Matters arising from the minutes for report and not covered elsewhere (for Information Only)**

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


The RFO has contacted the Cricket Club, who are now in the process of completing the forms with SES Water to arrange the transfer of the meters for the water and waste.

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

To approve the third quarter of the financial year 01 October - 31 December 2024.

6.1 **To ratify the expenditure up to 31 December 2024**

Do Members ratify the expenditure report?

 Annex 1: 6.1 Expenditure transactions 31 12 24.pdf

6.2 **To approve the list of expenditure for payment**

Payments have been made up to the end of December 2024 which are to ratify (item 6.1). Next payments are due at the end of January.


6.3 **To review expenditure over £500 up to 31 December 2024**

Expenditure over £500 is published on the website under Financial & Transparency. Link Below.

Do Members accept the expenditure over £500 report?

6.4 **To receive the income up to 31 December 2024**

Do Members receive the the income report?

 Annex 2: 6.4 Accepted income transactions 31 12 24.pdf

6.5 **To receive the Financial I&E Budget Comparisons report**

Do Members have any questions about the Budget Comparison Report?


Do Members receive the Budget Comparison report?

 Annex 3: Financial Comparison 31 12 24.pdf

6.6 **To confirm the I&E Accounts summary**

Do Members have any questions about the I&E Accounts?

Do Members confirm the I&E Accounts summary?


 Annex 4: 6.6 i and e account period 30 12 24.pdf

6.7 **To receive and confirm the Consolidated Balance Sheet**

To Note: The Audit return for the Football Foundation Grant has been approved, so the funds in the Earmarked Reserves of £2644.00 will be moved back to General Reserves in the next quarter.

Do Members have any questions about the Consolidated Balance sheet?

Do Members receive and confirm the above report?

 Annex 5: 6.7 Consolidated Balance Sheet Period 31 12 24.pdf

6.8 **To receive and confirm the Financial Summary Cashbook**

Do Members have any questions about the Financial Summary Cashbook?

Do Members receive and confirm the Financial Summary Cashbook?

 Annex 6: Cashbook Summary 31 12 24.pdf

6.9 **To confirm the Bank reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for October, November and December 2024**

The Bank Statements and procurement card reconciliations for October, November and December have been checked by Cllr Layland. They are available for Members to view anytime.

Do Members have any questions about the Bank reconciliations and Procurement Card reconciliations?


Do Members confirm and accept the Bank reconciliations and Procurement Card reconciliations?

 Annex 7: 6.9 Bank Rec 31 12 24.pdf

 Annex 8: 6.9 Barclaycard 31 12 24.pdf

6.10 **To approve and accept the transfers into, out of and between bank accounts**

Do Members approve and accept the transfers to and from bank accounts?

 Annex 9: 6.10 Account transfers 31 12 24 b.pdf

6.11 **To note and advise on invoices outstanding over 3 months**

Nothing to report.

7 **Other Financial Business**

7.1 **Charities Accounts**

To Note all the Charities Accounts have been submitted to the Charities Commission Website.

7.2 **Lloyds Bank: to receive an update on issues with closing and transferring the funds**

A full update will be given at the meeting.

7.3 **To note: The Precept 2025/26 submitted to SDC following full Council resolution (January) confirming and approving the budget**

The Precept request for 2025-26 for £804,054.00, as presented to and supported by Council at its December meeting and after publication over December formally resolved at its Council meeting 20 January 2025. With the tax base figures provided in December, this is a 7.9% increase on a Band D equivalent increase to £12.76 annually. The Precept has been submitted to SDC.

It was noted on the Council Minutes 078/05 item 10.3, that the Finance Committee had considered and increase of 6.75% but there was actually a calculation error and the actual increase should have shown 7.9%. The actual Band D increase is slightly lower than the original prediction of £13.95 per annually.

The Draft Budget press release link is below.

Do members have any questions or comments?

<https://www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk/councils-budget-will-maintain-high-standard-of-services-and-facilities-for-edenbridge/>

7.4 **To note: Projects in the current budget year to move in to Earmarked Reserves**

Some projects budgeted for may not have been completed and require the funds to be moved on to the earmarked reserves to ensure they can be completed. A report will be presented at meeting.

Members to note the projects and potential funds from budgets to Earmarked Reserves at the end of the financial year.

7.5 **To review the consolidated budget and predicted year-end (31 March 2025)**

Presented at meeting, a report showing the I&E from the budget comparisons report, a predicted year-end view and the budget for 2025-26.

Do Members have any comments?

8 **Governance**

8.1 **To receive new and updated policies and strategies and consider recommendation to**

council for adoption

It has been on the agenda for a few years to review and update the communications policies (2018). Working with the communications officer we have been working through the documents to reflect current practice, procedures and to meet Accessibility. When looking at the existing social media and electronic communications policy it was felt there was some confusion as to what is policy (set of rules and procedures) and strategy (what we are trying to achieve) hence why there are now separate documents. When looking at the communications, it was felt there should also be a style guide which would sit with the council's branding guide, as well as having separate IT and cyber security policy and strategy.

In some cases the documents presented are first drafts so may need some further tweaking. Committee is asked to confirm the documents in principle with any changes to be made with final documents present to council March meeting for adoption.

- 8.1.1 **Digital Communications and Social Media Policy**
Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council the Digital Communications and Social Media Policy?
🔒 Confidential Annex 10 (omitted from public documents):
- 8.1.2 **Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy**
Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council the Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy?
🔒 Confidential Annex 11 (omitted from public documents):
- 8.1.3 **Communications and Community Engagement Strategy**
Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council the Communications and Community Engagement Strategy?
🔒 Confidential Annex 12 (omitted from public documents):
- 8.1.4 **Recording and Filming of Council and Committee Meetings Policy**
Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council the Recording and Filming of Council and Committee Meetings Policy?
🔒 Confidential Annex 13 (omitted from public documents):
- 8.1.5 **Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy**
Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy? It is noted that there may be some amendments to the draft to be presented to council March meeting.
🔒 Confidential Annex 14 (omitted from public documents):
- 8.1.6 **Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy**
Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council Digital IT and Cyber Security Security? It is noted that there may be some amendments to the draft to be presented to council March meeting.
🔒 Confidential Annex 15 (omitted from public documents):
- 8.1.7 **Market Gazebos and Structures including in Adverse Weather Policy**
A copy of this is to be forwarded separately to members. The market Ricks Assessment already identifies and has procedures for adverse weather and gazebos. However, it is felt that a policy setting council procedures would provide better guidance and

procedures.

Members are asked to confirm recommendation to council for the Market Gazebos and Structures including in Adverse Weather Policy?

8.2 **To confirm a council written style guide**

Members are asked to confirm the recommendation to council of a written style guide, with any amendments to the first draft to be suggested to the town clerk with a final draft present to council at its March meeting?

 Confidential Annex 16 (omitted from public documents):

8.3 **Leases**

8.3.1 **To receive and confirm the renewal draft lease for the Eden Valley Museum**

The lease renewal for Eden Valley Museum as tenants of Church House has been being reported to council. The lease negotiation group and the town clerk has reviewed the draft lease renewal and liaised with the council's solicitor over some of the points in the lease.

Council has raised the question of considering a peppercorn rent. As far as establishing best rental value, the advice received back from the solicitor is that provided Council can show that it has considered all aspects of the letting and not just monetary income (things such as added community value, etc.) then it can show a peppercorn rent and would be considered suitable in this instance. If this was to be considered the Service Level Agreement amount would need to be reduced commensurate. For now, the draft lease has assumed an annual rent based on current rental charges.

Members are asked:

To confirm issuing the draft lease (a clean version of the attached) in its current form so that the EVM trustees can view and consider, and then report back to the Lease Negotiating Group?

To consider proposing a peppercorn rent and to ask the Museum if they would prefer this or to maintain an annual rent?

To confirm if a peppercorn rent is considered, that the SLA agreement grant to be reduced commensurately?

 Confidential Annex 17 (omitted from public documents):

8.3.2 **To receive update on the Forge Musical Theatre (formally Forge Singers) draft lease**

Details of the Forge Musical Theatre (FMT) lease arrangements has been being reported to council since May 2023. A meeting took place with members from the FMT, Cllr Baker and the town clerk recently and it was agreed to revisit the draft lease to address some of its language and terms, with a new draft to be issued and a follow-up meeting to discuss any questions that may arise. Members of the lease negotiation group will review the versions of the lease from the solicitor. The final draft will be presented to governance committee to confirm.

Do members have any questions?

8.4 **Health and Safety Audit Report**

WorkNest attended on 17 January for another Health and Safety (H&S) audit. The July audit

focused on the council's buildings and sites with several recommendations which are working through including legionella assessments for five of the council's buildings. Overall the July audit had no urgent actions and was pleased to see that the H&S standards were good, and that there was a good understanding for H&S requirements. Last week's audit, the clerk had asked for this audit to focus on the council's administration and record keeping which had slipped following new online systems and staff changes. All open spaces monitoring is well maintained with appropriate weekly, monthly and quarterly checks; it is the office monitoring records which has slipped and council buildings monitoring. During the audit time was spent on updating the monitoring forms with more pertinent questions. There is still work to be done on this area and developing monitoring forms for other areas (for example, community warden and market recording moving to online). At the time of this meeting the full audit report is yet to be received.

Familiarisation and training has been given to all staff over the past week. Some new monitoring forms are being prepared including for the buildings. We will now work to ensuring more consistent use of the system. In addition the E-learning portal has several. This is quite a considerable project which requires specific time allocated to it.

Do members have any questions?

8.5

Internal auditor: To confirm and recommend to council to continue with the current auditor Keith Robinson for the next 3-years

February 2020 Keith Robertson was appointed as the internal auditor, initially for one year with a further 3-years if satisfied. Full council confirms the appointment annually as part of its annual contracts confirmation. Both the town clerk and deputy clerk have found Keith to be extremely helpful and has helped to developed improved controls and governance, and recommend the council continue with the current auditor. It is good practice for council to review its internal audit arrangements as a minimum 3-yearly.

Do Members confirm to continue with Keith Robertson as internal auditor for a further 3-years, and recommend to council?