

MINUTES of the Council Meeting of EDENBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL, held via ZOOM at 6.17 pm on Monday 13 July 2020

Present: Cllrs J Aldridge, A Baker, A Damodaran, V Jennings, A Layland (Chairman), N Lloyd, M McArthur (Vice-Chairman), S McGregor, A Read, Z Roberts-Smith, J Scholey, P Smith, S Sumner and B Todd

In attendance: Town Clerk; Administration and Planning Assistant; Community Warden. There were three members of the public and no members of the press; County Councillor Lake and District Councillor Barnett.

The Chairman read an advisory statement on the guidelines for conducting remote meetings due to the Government changes to holding and attending meetings under the Coronavirus Act 2020 S78. Town Council Standing Orders continue to apply.

- 1. FOLLOWING THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLANDS AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020 Regulation 4 – provides that where an appointment would otherwise be made or is required to be made at an annual meeting, the appointment continues until the next annual meeting of the authority or such time that the authority may determine. This applies to the election of the Chairman, the first business at the annual council meeting. Therefore, the current chairman will remain in place until an annual meeting is held, unless the council decide to elect a replacement earlier**

Members had no objections, and agreed to continue with the current Council and Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen until the next annual meeting of the Town Council.

- 2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
None.

- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS OR PREDETERMINATION**
None.

18:25 Meeting was adjourned for agenda item 3.

- 4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS**

Dave White, representing the Grace Community Church in Edenbridge and the Food Bank on behalf of Julie Barry (Parish Nurse), said Julie was stepping down from her role in 2021 and was looking at a sustainable route for the future of the Food Bank. The Food Bank had been supporting between 10-25 families per week, but with the recent coronavirus crisis, this had increased significantly. The view was that there would be a continued growing demand. Julie had investigated the Trussell Trust who provided a franchise model with training resources, financial advice and resources to be able to provide a sign posting element to help people. In its 23 years it had supported 227 Food Banks. The Food Bank was currently run by a collective agreement with the local churches, but with the Parish Nurse retiring, Grace Church was looking to take over the management with the agreement of the local churches. However, it also needed new premises and to provide a holistic and joined-up approach it would like to work with the Town Council and other established partners.

18:34 Steve Taylor joined the meeting.

Steve Taylor said that he would like to be considered for the councillor vacancy and provided a resume. He had been an Edenbridge resident for 12-years and a fire fighter for 30-years including having served as a retained fire fighter at Edenbridge Station. He was currently stationed at Biggin Hill Airfield. He was also with the London Air Ambulance service. In November last year he was co-opted on to the Town Council's Emergency Planning Committee. He was interested in helping his local community, emergency planning and aviation matters.

18:36 Meeting was reconvened.

5. TO RECEIVE, ADOPT AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON [09 March 2020](#) (9341-9345)

Resolved: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday 09 March be duly signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting; pages 9341-9345.

6. TO RECEIVE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

6.1 County Councillor

County Councillor Lake said that the COVID-19 pandemic had been challenging for all. There was some concern with the infection rates in Ashford and Folkstone, and it was hoped that this was under control and would not be necessary to go in to localised lockdown. Moving to education, he was pleased to report that this was the first time children had been allocated the school of their first choice. However, there were still issues with Edenbridge pupils getting their choice of secondary school, and in some cases he had heard how parents had moved out of Edenbridge to secure places at schools in Tonbridge. This was not acceptable and supported the case that Edenbridge needed its own secondary school.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Cllr Lake had donated £5k to the Friends of Holcot to help children with computer equipment and fresh food for families. Referring to Highways matters, he said he and Tom Tugendhat MP had written to Kent County Council (KCC) Highways to request a traffic survey at the junction of Main Road, Hilders Lane and Hillcrest Road following the accident on 25 June.

Finally, Cllr Lake announced that he would be stepping down as a councillor in May 2021 after 24-years serving as a district and county councillor.

6.2 District Councillors

Cllr McArthur provided an update on the impact COVID-19 had had for Sevenoaks District Council (SDC). There were three main areas that SDC had been managing: keeping the essential SDC services going; providing emergency assistance for residents and businesses; protecting employees. Working with the central Government shielding lists, SDC had provided emergency food parcels for residents. It had collated the lists of residents needing help; and carried out volunteers' checks and issued lanyards. It had provided temporary accommodation for the homeless – only two of the district's homeless people refused help, both of these were in Edenbridge. Waste collections continued, this was a challenge as the volume of waste had increased, and the fire at the Dunbrick site meant teams were travelling much further to the nearest alternative site. SDC had overseen the help to businesses and had made payments of £23m in relief and grants.

SDC had significant income losses from the loss of rates and council tax income, car parking charges and other costs which had been incurred during these challenging times. There had also been an increase with anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping across the district.

Cllr McGregor thanked the Town Clerk and volunteers for the efforts of the Town Council during the current coronavirus crisis. He informed members that the SDC challenge to request a judicial review against the Planning Inspector's decision to reject the draft Local Plan had been granted on all four grounds argued by SDC. He also mentioned that the planning application of the new Medical Centre had now been approved.

Cllr Barnett said that he would like to thank Cllr Lake for everything he had done in representing Edenbridge.

18:49 Cllr Barnett left the meeting.

The Chairman, Cllr Layland, proposed to bring forward agenda item 19, Co-option for Councillor. Members,
Resolved: to bring forward agenda 19, Co-option for Councillor, and to discuss before proceeding with other items on the agenda.

19. CO-OPTION FOR COUNCILLOR

19.1 To receive co-option applications and vote to fill the vacancy

Cllr Layland said there had been two candidates, but one had withdrawn. Cllr Layland proposed Steve Taylor be co-opted on to the Council, Members voted, and unanimously
Resolved: the vacancy be filled by Steve Taylor for the South and West Ward.

19.2 To receive the Councillor Declaration of Acceptance of Office (this needs to be an actual signature and will have to be after the meeting)

Declaration would be signed at the office and received within 28-days of co-option.

18:52 Cllr Taylor left the meeting.

7. TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING REPORTS/MINUTES OF MEETINGS

7.1 Planning and Transportation Committee – [16 March](#) (9346-9349)

Resolved: the minutes numbered 9346-9349 to be adopted.

7.2 Open Spaces Committee - 25 June (for noting only - *minutes yet to be published*)

Noted; these would be received at the next meeting.

7.3 Finance and Governance Committee – 07 July (for noting only - *minutes yet to be published*)

Noted; these would be received at the next meeting.

7.4 Complaints Committee – 17 June

Resolved: the minutes of the Complaints Committee to be adopted.

8. COVID-19 (Coronavirus)/EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE: to receive a report on the Council's response and activities following the announcement of Lockdown

Cllr McArthur referred to the Town Clerk's report: Following the Government's lockdown on 23 March the Town Council's Emergency Planning Committee and Town Clerk established daily briefings, and within days had established a team to work with SDC's Care for our Community ensuring there was a cohesive joined-up response with the appropriate agencies. During the coming weeks, the team worked with 80 SDC registered local volunteers and helped over 230 residents with shopping, running errands or being phone buddies. The Community Warden established a medications collections register; and Cllr Baker co-ordinated the volunteers' activities and arranged a weekly food delivery to approximately 40 households.

The office staff, adapted to home working and at its peak was managing about 200 calls a day, and higher than average email correspondence. A monthly newsletter was created to keep residents informed on what help was available and other initiatives in the town. The end-of-year accounts were completed. The groundstaff maintained the Town Council's open spaces to a high standard and the emptying of the bins on town council land.

The Council campaigned to SDC for better high street signage, which they did agree to fund. Unfortunately, the Town Council as precepting authority was not eligible for the furlough scheme, grants, or business rate relief. Overall, this had been a busy and intense period for the Council staff who worked hard to maintain services to the town and its residents.

The Town Council was fortunate to have elected members representing the town's interests at District Council level. This enabled a holistic and informed approach and the Council continued to work within the guidance from SDC and the Government.

There had also been a severe weather warning; in preparation the Town Council's supply of sandbags had been partially replenished.

9. TO RATIFY THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS MADE DURING THE LOCKDOWN

9.1 Street light supplier contract renewal – 3-year contract with E-on

9.2 Street light repairs – expenditure of £1,250

9.3 New VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone system for the Council offices: £585 new phones and installation; and the monthly expenditure of £105 per month (7 phones)

9.4 The Edenbridge Magazine - July / August 2020 edition - Double Page Centre Pages, expenditure £173

Ratified: all decisions as detailed in 9.1 to 9.4

10. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKING GROUPS; DELEGATED REPORTS; CLERK'S AND OFFICERS' REPORTS:

10.1 Clerk's Report

Received.

11. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FOR REPORT AND NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

11.1 Public Toilets: To receive an update

Noted from the Town Clerk's report: the contractor had completed the works, although there remained an issue with the timer switches and investigations were looking at obtaining the switches direct from the supplier.

11.2 To note: The Town Council's website complies the new Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

Cllr Aldridge said there remained some work including changing the font. A cleanse of the content and updating information had started.

11.3 Market Yard car park/Churchyard boundary wall update

Noted from the Town Clerk's report: Work to the Market Yard car park and Churchyard wall had been delayed as a consequence of the current COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

11.4 Bray Associates Thursday Market update

Noted from the Town Clerk's report: a further one-year extension to the lease and a letter had been sent to Bray Associates. However, with the lockdown restrictions and to encourage the market back in these difficult times it had been agreed to reduce the rent to half of the normal rate until 31st August.

11.5 To receive an update on the land transfers at Stangrove Park from SDC to ETC

Cllr Layland said that SDC had re-drafted the Deed of Surrender of Part and Deed of Variation as the original authorised signatories back in 2007 was too long ago for the Land Registry. Cllrs McArthur and Todd were nominated to be signatories on the new Deed.

12. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR)

12.1 To receive the internal auditor's report

Received. No issues were recorded.

12.2 To receive a copy of the Council Assets

Received.

12.3 To approve the annual governance statement for 2019/20

Cllr Layland read out the full Governance Statement on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Members,

Resolved: the annual governance statement for 2019/20.

12.4 To resolve the accounting statement for 2019/20

Resolved: the annual accounting statement for 2019/20 for the AGAR.

12.5 To sign off the annual accounts for 2019/20

Cllr Lloyd referred to his report and spreadsheets, the end-of-year income and expenditure sheet, and the balance sheet in the meeting papers. He highlighted that the Town Council's reserves were not as healthy as they may appear. The CIL funds are a significant element of the cash and reserves. The perception given by the year-end accounts was that the Council was cash rich with £1.1 million of cash, however, the Council's true cash and reserves position was £539k. The Council holds the CIL funds but it was not Council money; the Town Council and other organisations had to Bid for the funds. The reserves position was similar, with the Council's total reserves £476k. This was made up of £273k specific reserves and a General Fund of £203k. A council should typically hold between three and 12 months expenditure as a general reserve. If the general reserve was too low then it may not be enough to cover unexpected expenditure or emergencies.

Members thanked Cllr Lloyd and.

Resolved to approve and sign-off the end-of-year accounts for 2019/20.

13. FOOD BANK: To consider the Town Council's role in the Food Bank and its future

Cllr Baker said that there had been a recent meeting with Julie Barry (Parish Nurse), and attended by Dave White, some Councillors and the Town Clerk. She said that she had seen how the Food Bank had helped residents in Edenbridge especially, during the current coronavirus pandemic. She added that the need for this facility was on the increase and that a joined-up response as outlined by Dave White would be good for the community. Members unanimously **supported** the Food Bank and proposal for the Town Council to be involved in its future. Cllrs Baker and Todd were nominated as Council representatives and to keep the Council informed.

19:10 two members of the public left the meeting.

14. OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

14.1 Committees vacancies: There are the following vacancies on committees to fill*:

- **Open Spaces (1 vacancy)**
Cllr Taylor was appointed on to the Open Spaces Committee.
- **Planning Committee (2 vacancies)**
Cllrs Read and Sumner were appointed on to the Planning Committee.
- **Lease/ SLA Negotiating Group (1 vacancy)**
Cllr Taylor was appointed on to the Lease/ SLA Negotiating Group.

14.2 Speed Indicator Device (SID) – to consider approving the expenditure of up to £11,000 or to submit CIL Bid

Members noted that any portable Speed Indicator Device (SID) had to be one of the KCC Highways approved models. Members supported the need for a SID for Edenbridge and, to submit a CIL bid to the Edenbridge Town Council CIL Board.

Resolved:

14.3 Electronic Visual Display facilities at meetings: to approve an expenditure budget of up to £5,000

Members discussed the need for providing electronic visual display facilities for Rickards Hall. It was recognised that with the current coronavirus situation such facilities would be beneficial, and for when paper planning applications ceased. However, there was mixed views for the right solution and budget. Members voted on the following proposal: To approve a budget of £5k, but to bring back to Council with a firm quote and details.

There were two votes. In both votes, the majority

Resolved: to support a budget of £5,000 to provide suitable electronic visual display facilities for Rickards Hall, but to be signed off by full Council.

14.4 To consider a publicity strategy for Edenbridge Town Council

- 14.4.1 To include: a regular newsletter to be included in the Edenbridge Magazine to improve public communications; and the expenditure of up to £1,038 for bimonthly editions, or £552 for 3 times a year**

Resolved: the inclusion of a Town Council newsletter in the Edenbridge Magazine three times yearly and the annual expenditure of £519.

14.4.2 To nominate a Councillor to work with the Town Clerk (or nominated officer) to prepare a suitable publicity strategy for its social media platforms

Members supported a communications and publicity strategy. Cllrs Aldridge, Damodaran and McGregor were nominated to help prepare a draft strategy.

14.5 Market Yard car park barrier: to consider if the barrier should remain closed 24/7 to protect against incursions

Members discussed at length whether the new Market Yard car park barrier should remain locked 24/7, or locked in response to possible threat of incursions. After much debate, the Chairman used his casting vote; members,

Resolved: to keep the barrier open and close in response to notifications of potential risk of incursions.

19:49 Cllr Lloyd left the meeting.

14.6 To consider an online booking system for Rickards Hall and the WI Hall; and the expenditure of up to £600 for first year (to include set-up fees), and annual ongoing cost of up to £360

Members discussed and unanimously,

Resolved: to move to an online booking system for the Hall bookings and the expenditure £600 plus the annual costs of up to £400.

14.7 To consider a new till system and card reader for the Council office to allow ease of payments

Cllr Aldridge said that there was more research to be done, but he would help the office to find the right solution. Members agreed that with cash being discouraged and the ease of use for card payments, the Council should be able to provide card payment facilities. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to move to a new till register and card payment system.

The Town Clerk was asked to present the preferred card payment solution to the full Council before committing.

19:49 the Community Warden left the meeting.

15. CONSULTATIONS

15.1 Southern Water Services Limited - Edenbridge Wastewater Treatment Works, Skinners Lane, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6LW Installation of an alkalinity dosing kiosk - Planning Application [KCC/SE/0128/2020](#) – closing date 31 July 2020

Noted.

16. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS WHO HAVE ATTENDED MEETINGS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr McGregor had attended a Zoom meeting of the Eden Valley Museum. It was looking at possibly reopening to the public in August if it could satisfy the guidelines.

Cllr Baker had attended a Zoom PACT meeting; it had been attended by two youth groups, the Police and the Community Warden. Graffiti, anti-social behaviour and use of gas canisters were main topics.

17. TO CONSIDER ANY PRESS RELEASES

Announcement of newly co-opted councillor, Steve Taylor.

18. MATTERS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

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In view of the confidential nature of the following items to be discussed the Chairman moved that the press and public be excluded from the Chamber. Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960

There were no members of the public in attendance.

19. LEGAL MATTERS – update

The Town Clerk provided an update on advice received from the solicitors in respect of resident complaints, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Status Access Request (SAR). Members unanimously,

Resolved: a further expenditure of up to £5,000.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 14 September

Meeting closed at 20:26