

# Edenbridge



# Town Council

**Annual Report**  
**2019 / 2020**

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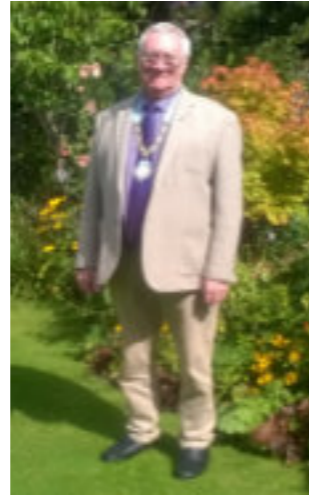
## A message from Cllr Alan Layland, Chairman to Edenbridge Town Council

I am proud and delighted to present my first annual report as the Chairman of Edenbridge Town Council. The municipal year saw a new Council elected in May 2019. The Council consists of 15 Councillors, seven of whom were re-elected and eight new councillors. The Town Council's priority is to maintain the town's open spaces to the high level of standards residents have come to expect and deserve, and it also aims to deliver a wide range of services to meet local needs.

The Council's first year (the Council term is four years) has been busy and has seen several staff changes with the retirement of its Town Clerk, Christine Lane who had been with the Council for 18 years, the past 10-years as Clerk. Lindsey Eaton also retired after 18-years as the Planning and Administration Officer in February. I would like to thank them for their commitment, loyalty and hard work. It has been a pleasure to welcome the new Town Clerk, Caroline Leet, who joined the Council in June. Following the resignation of two Members, two new councillors were co-opted in September (see page 8 for list of your councillors).

There have been several highlights of the year and new projects planned, but unfortunately, it will be mostly remembered for the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown in March. This has been a challenging and difficult time for everyone.

The Town Council swung into action to support the local community setting-up a help-hub to take calls and referrals for help. It worked closely with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and its Care for our Communities scheme, matching registered volunteers to those needing help with shopping, prescription collections or a phone buddy.



Staff and councillors dedicated a lot of their own time to support the residents of Edenbridge during these past few difficult months. I would like to particularly thank Cllr Margot McArthur who was an invaluable link with SDC representing the residents of Edenbridge and made sure that the most vulnerable of our community received help from wider resources available. Cllr Angela Baker who co-ordinated the volunteers, organised a weekly food delivery to about 40 residents, and no matter what day of the week it was she made sure any resident in need of support received it. Cllrs Nick Lloyd, and Bob Todd for their counsel and attending the daily briefings. The Town Clerk and Officers of the Council for keeping the office services going, maintaining communications and 7-days a week phone-hub; including two new members of staff who joined during these challenging times; the Community Warden who worked with some of the more vulnerable people in our community and was overseeing a medications collection system that saw in its peak up to 100 medications being collected a week.

Finally, to the Head Groundsman and his team who worked during lockdown to maintain the town's open spaces.

These difficult times have shown how Edenbridge is fortunate to have so many community spirited people, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the 80 volunteers who we worked with.

Before Covid-19, the Council and its Committees had been progressing and consolidating with a number of projects and initiatives. Highlights from the past year, 2019/20 include:

- New playground at Spitals Cross
- Public Toilet refurbishment programme
- Barrier improvements (preventative action against incursions) – Marsh Green, Blossoms Park, Recreation Ground, Stangrove Park, Mowshurst
- Sport pitches improvements
- Four Summer Play days
- Pilot of bulk refuse collections
- Office refurbishment and IT upgrades
- Draft Local Plan hearing – Consultant representation on behalf of Edenbridge
- Flower and hanging baskets displays in the town
- Rickards Hall – refurbished floor

The Council had 57 Council and committee meetings. The Planning and Transportation Committee responded on 116 planning applications and made planning recommendations to SDC; it reviewed the SDC draft Character Area Assessment document (which originated from the work of the Neighbourhood Plan team); and liaised with Highways over Edenbridge issues. The Open Spaces Committee ensured a high standard was maintained to the town's facilities and cemeteries, commissioned the periodic tree survey, purchased a new vehicle and replaced some of the older items of equipment. The CIL Board considered 10 projects and awarded funding to nine.

The Finance Committee oversaw the income and expenditure balances of the Council, reviewed the Council's reserves position and awarded £21,775 of grants to local organisations. The Council has reviewed and updated a number of its policies.

Councillors also attended in excess of 100 outside organisation meetings representing Edenbridge.

There are some exciting new projects on the horizon which include a new outdoor gym and activity area for Stangrove Park; replacement of 31 street light columns in the coming year as part of an on-going programme; the Sports Pavilion windows and security upgrade; and the Council's website upgraded.

Edenbridge has seen some significant changes to the town: the new Bellway housing estate with over 300 new homes; new retail facilities with the opening of Lidl in November followed by Greggs, and Home Bargains. We look forward to the opening of the new residential care home Edenbridge Manor, and hopefully building work will begin on the new Medical Centre.

I would like to thank all of my fellow councillors who volunteer a huge amount of their time, for giving their expertise, advice and dedication to council work, helping to maintain and improve the facilities and services for Edenbridge.

**Cllr Alan Layland,  
Chairman to Edenbridge Town Council**





## Finance Report Cllr Nick Lloyd, Chairman of the Finance Committee

I am pleased to report that the Town Council has managed its expenditure well this year against budget despite a number of unforeseen changes in staff including the retirement of the previous Town Clerk and the Administration and Planning Officer. The annual audits have been satisfactory with no issues identified.

The large part of expenditure is to maintain the town's open spaces (parks, playing fields, greens and cemeteries) and buildings.



The reserve funds available to the Council total £476,766 split between Specific Reserves (£273,374 - largely 10 and 30 year maintenance plans for buildings and open spaces) and the General Reserve (£203,391) available to cover emergencies, unforeseen events and budget shortfalls. This level of reserves is adequate but on the low side for a council the size of Edenbridge.

As I presented to the Annual Town Meeting (2 March) the Town Council's budget is running at a deficit with the annual precept (part of the Council Tax) and other income not covering expenditure. Edenbridge is unusual in that it owns a lot of the town's open spaces and public buildings, this adds pressure when balancing the high level of standards residents have come to expect and deserve within the budget.

For example, the cost of maintaining its assets, providing the well-maintained open spaces and facilities is about 60% of its budget

In light of our concerns about the level of reserves and budget deficits expected for the next couple of years the Council decided at the beginning of the year to increase the Town Council element of the Council Tax by 4.0%; this means a band D property contribution was £150.10 per year; this was an annual increase of £5.77 or 0.48p per calendar month, (less than a second-class postage stamp).

The Annual Return for the year ending 31st March 2020 has been submitted to the external auditor PKF Littlejohn having been internally audited by Tim Hill and approved by the full Council.

A summary of the Town Council's income and expenditure for 2019/20 is set on page 6.

Every year the Council values its property and other assets. At 31<sup>st</sup> March the total value of its fixed assets was £4,213,938.

Cash and short term investments totalled £1,155,807 of which £616,325 was tied to the CIL fund (more detail below) and £539,482 the true Council cash balance. After taking account of debtors, creditors, pre-payments and accruals the Council's reserves reported were £1,093,091. This comprises the £616,325 CIL fund and £476,766 Council reserves.



I would also like to thank Daphne Slater (Responsible Financial Officer) for all her hard work maintaining the finances and accounts. It was especially challenging during the lockdown period with having to adapt to home working, completing the year-end accounts and Annual Return.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Town Council receives CIL contributions (from the larger developments in and around Edenbridge) paid via the District Council. £308,737 was received during the financial year and after grants given the Council held £616,325 on behalf of the local community. Although this is reported as Council Funds it is not, and is available to any qualifying infrastructure project whether instigated by Council or other local organisations. For instance £100,000 of the balance is already set aside for the new GP Surgery and Medical Centre.

This year CIL money funded £140,164 of Council projects. This includes £34,000 from Sevenoaks District Council's separate CIL fund in addition to the town's own fund. The projects funded were the Spitals Cross playground (£75k), the public toilets (£70k) and Blossoms Park defences (£5k).

Minutes of CIL Board meetings are available on the Town Council's website.

**Cllr Nick Lloyd**

**Chairman of the Finance Committee**

See next page for Summary of  
Council Income and Expenditure for 2019/2020

### Council Assets

- Allotments
- Blossoms Park
- Cemeteries and Depot
- Church House (Eden Valley Museum)
- Doggetts Barn
- Forge Croft
- Market Yard Car Park
- Marsh Green
- Millenium Wood
- Mowshurst
- Public Toilets
- Recreation Ground and Sports Pavilion
- Rickards Hall
- Spitals Cross Playground
- Stangrove Park

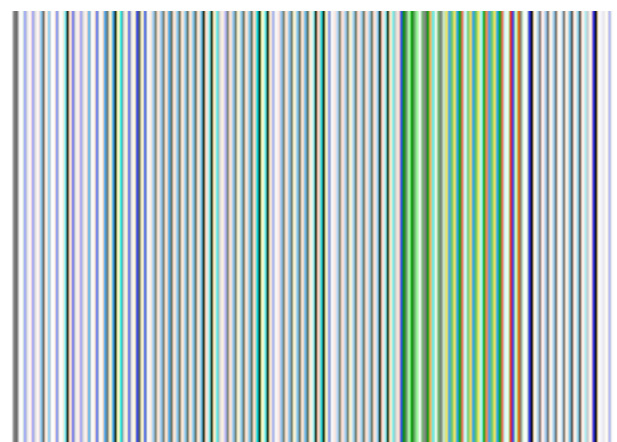


Summary of Council Income and Expenditure for 2019/2020

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
Staff costs (inc. travel, training, PPE, Medical)	328,753	Cemetery fees	16,317
Utilities	21,525	Rents	17,409
Services - office, administration, council	11,984	Maintenance services, solar	5,774
Equipment, tools, materials	35,285	Sundry receipts	17,255
Baskets, buildings, vehicles	49,427	Interest (investments)	4,393
Small projects, contingencies, other	7,779	Other Funders	13,935
Vandalism	2,274	Church House	5,633
Street lighting supply & maintenance	16,265	Rickards Hall Lettings	12,114
10/30 year maintenance programme	105,163	WI Hall Management fees	2,235
Legal (inc. FOIs and SARs) & audit fees	2,905	<b>Sub Total - other income</b>	<b>95,065</b>
Professional fees(draft Local Plan)	9,748		
Service Level Agreements (SLA) - House, Museum, Twinning	14,000	<b>Precept</b>	<b>513,234</b>
Other grants	7,725		
Election Costs	8,676		
Community Warden Management	2,625		
Church House	2,636		
Public Toilets	10,167		
Rickards Hall	11,337		
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>648,274</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>608,299</b>
Charity Acct Transfer / Working Balance	12,323	Charity Acct Transfer / Working Balance	12,323
CIL Expenditure	140,164	CIL Fund	343,675
<b>AGAR Total Expenditure</b>	<b>800,761</b>	<b>AGAR Total Income</b>	<b>964,297</b>



Refurbished toilets at Market Yard car park



The new playground at Spital's Cross opened December 2019



**Emergency Planning Cllr Margot McArthur  
Chairman of the Emergency Planning Committee**

It has been an eventful year for the Edenbridge Emergency Planning Committee (EEPC) with two flooding events and the unprecedented COVID-19 lockdown.

The Town Council's EEPC has been working with the Environment Agency (EA), Kent County Council (KCC) and Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) over the years to ensure that there are resources available to Edenbridge in the event of emergency events.

On Friday 20 December 2019, there was a flooding incident which brought the town to a practical stand still. Heavy field run-off and blocked gullies resulted in severe standing water on Crouch House Road, Lingfield Road – at Edenbridge and Haxted - Hever Road at Delaware and the High Street. In addition, the closure of the M23 diverted a lot of traffic through Edenbridge and once Lingfield Road was closed at Haxted the problems intensified. The EEPC reacted swiftly, before first light radio comms had been set up and contact had been made with EA, KCC and SDC. Volunteers and Town Council grounds staff were at hand directing traffic, issuing sandbags to local businesses and residents who were experiencing flooding; and Doggetts Barn was fully operational with communications and logging section and volunteers were assessing and reporting. Known vulnerable people were contacted by phone or on foot as far as possible to provide reassurance.

Storm Dennis hit Edenbridge on the weekend of 15 and 16 February. On the Saturday, the EA had made contact to advise that rainfall was expected

Across the river Eden's catchment area, with the peak level expected to be on Sunday.

However, the EA was expecting the biggest problems elsewhere in the Medway catchment and so it was unable to be of immediate help in Edenbridge. An initial check of the risk areas in the town was carried out and sandbags distributed. On the Sunday, volunteers joined councillors clearing gullies, checking on residents in the high-risk areas and providing further sandbags as needed. Marsh Green had heavy flooding, KCC Highways did attend with a pump, but after an hour they closed the road.

In March 2020 came a completely new challenge for everyone with the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the Government's lockdown on 23 March, Councillors on the EEPC 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, medication collections, running errands or being phone buddies.

There were also changes to the office operations, moving to remote working. The nature of the work changed and at its peak the office was managing about 200 calls a day responding to the residents needs and enquiries.

The Town council is fortunate to have elected members representing the town's interests at

District Council level. This enabled a holistic and well informed approach and the Council continued to work within the guidance from SDC and the Government.

The EEPCC continues to evaluate emergency events and maintain resources such as radio facilities, 4x4 vehicles, and flood defence supplies so that it can react when needed. It also continues to work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the river bank and gullies are maintained.



Cllr Layland, Cllr McArthur and Richard Rooth helping during the February floods

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, the EEPCC co-opted members and residents of Edenbridge who helped neighbours in need, and especially for the cups of tea and dry clothing provided when I and my colleagues were out in the rain in February.

**Cllr Margot McArthur**

**Chairman of the Emergency Planning Committee;  
Vice-Chairman of Edenbridge Town Council**



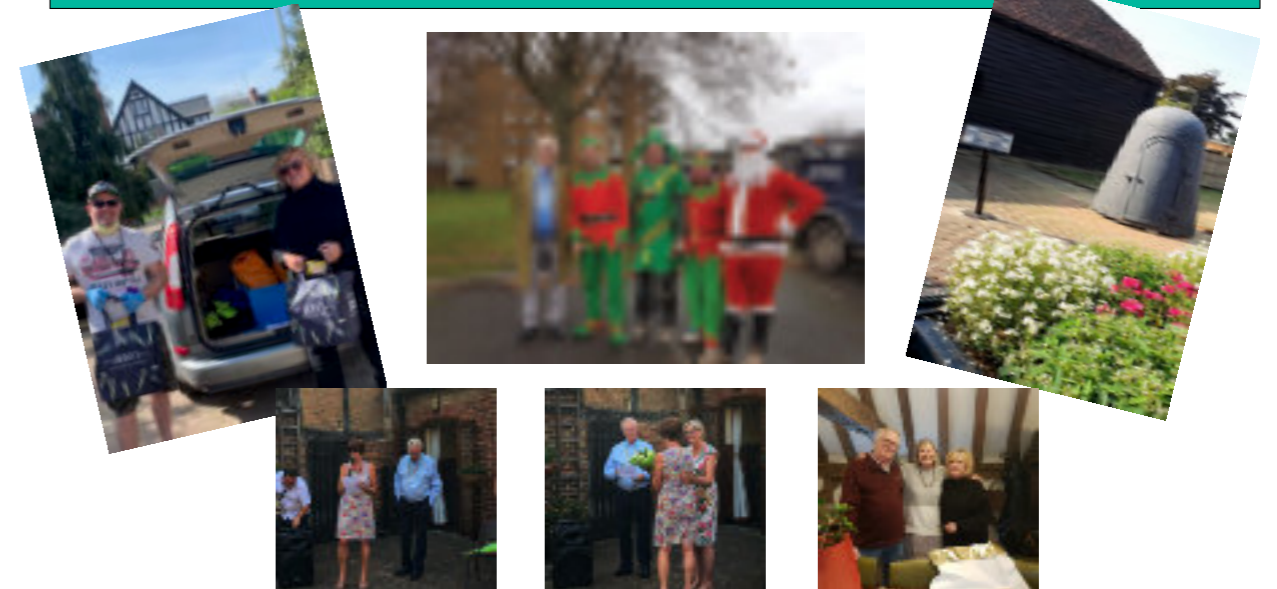
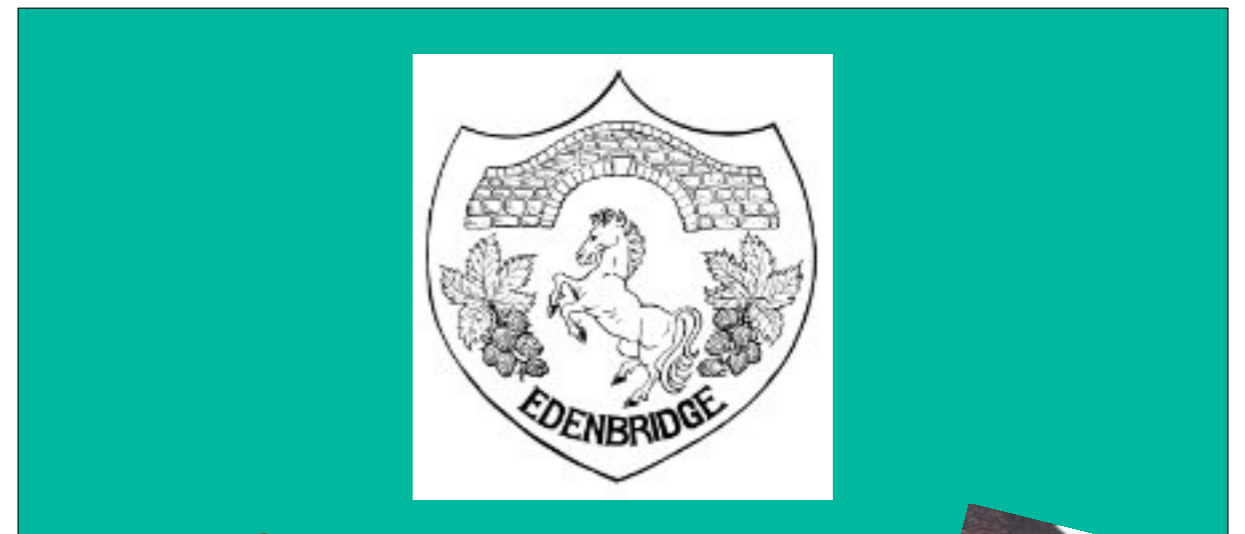
The Elected Council May 2019

## Edenbridge Town Councillors

<b>North &amp; East Ward</b>	
Cllr Alan Damodaran	cllr.damodaran@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Vic Jennings	cllr.jennings@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Alan Layland	cllr.layland@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Stuart McGregor	cllr.mcgregor@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Zoe Roberts Smith	cllr.roberts.smith@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr John Scholey	cllr.scholey@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Stephen Sumner (Co-opted September 2019)	cllr.sumner@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Bob Todd	cllr.todd@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
<b>South &amp; West Ward</b>	
Cllr Jon Aldridge	cllr.aldrige@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Angela Baker	cllr.baker@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Nick Lloyd	cllr.lloyd@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Margot McArthur	cllr.mcarthur@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Angela Read (Co-opted September 2019)	cllr.read@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Steve Taylor (co-opted July 2020)	cllr.taylor@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
	Cllr Oridge, Cllr Barnett and Cllr Smart have since stepped down and have been re-opted by Cllrs Read, Sumner and Taylor



11<sup>th</sup> February 2020  
Topping Out Ceremony at the new Edenbridge Manor Care Home



From left to right: Cllr Baker and A Shipwright during the coronavirus lockdown food deliveries; Chairman Cllr Alan Layland at the opening of the children's playground at Spitals Cross; the Bomb Shelter in Doggetts Barn Courtyard; two long serving members of staff retire - Christine Lane (Town Clerk) and Lindsey Eaton with Cllrs Layland and Cllr McArthur (far right).

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