

Town Council precept and budget 2022/23

Edenbridge Town Council approved its draft budget for the coming year, at its meeting on 17 January.

The Town Council is mindful of the financial resources required to maintain the community facilities and assets, which are kept to the high standards that residents have come to expect and deserve. Wherever possible, the Council aims to provide community facilities for all residents to access at no cost, for example the uses of the town's open spaces and play areas. It manages several buildings including Rickards Hall which is available for public hire, provides the public toilets and manages the Thursday Charter Market. It provides 247 of the town's street lights and has a column replacement programme. It also looks after four cemeteries, two allotment sites, 550 trees and the Millennium Wood. The Council encourages Tourism, facilitates community volunteering activities, and provides grants to support local groups who offer valuable services to the community.

As part of its planning process it is important to ensure adequate reserves to enable future development work and maintenance work. The Council has been operating at a deficit for several years, largely a consequence of past decisions to hold back increases in the Precept (local proportion of the Council Tax) either to zero or less than inflation whilst costs have increased to maintain the needs and services of a growing town. This has had an ongoing negative impact on the health of the general reserves and is not sustainable.

Council staff and councillors are constantly looking at its expenditure and procedures to make cost savings where it can. It took three months to prepare the budget for 2022/23. Councillors (who are residents themselves) are very aware of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also have to look to the future to continue to deliver high standards, enhance and ensure protection of community facilities. They made the difficult decision to increase the Precept to ensure the future proofing of the Council's finances for the community. The draft budget was published in December following the Council's December meeting ([here](#)).

The budget for 2022/23

Expenditure £719,366

Income £726,581 (*this made up of a Precept of £653,364 and other forecasted income £73,217*)

What will this cost an Edenbridge taxpayer average Band D household

Band D property £171.84 - this is a 10% increase of £1.30 per month or £15.62 annually.

The Council faced the hard choice of either cutting services, to reduce an anticipated deficit, or to seek an above inflation increase in the Precept to help reduce this. The consensus was to maintain services. It does look to raise income from other sources, but this is not enough to meet the full demands on the budget. On the surface, the Council looks to have strong cash reserves, but the largest part of this is Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is held by the Council to be used to fund infrastructure projects managed by the Town Council or community groups. The Council's general reserves have been drawn on to fund the deficit and cannot continue to do so. It should typically hold between 3 and 12 months expenditure as a general reserve, and depending on the Assets held and running costs; ([Capital and Reserves Policy](#)).

Click [here](#) for a detailed breakdown of the budget 2022/23