



Edenbridge Town Council

Annual Report 2021/2022



Page 4

Message from the Chairman

Page 8

Finance Report

Page 12

Income and Expenditure
Report for 2021/22

Page 14

Emergency Planning Report

Message from the Chairman, Councillor Bob Todd



This is my first Annual Report, having succeeded Councillor Alan Layland as Chairman. I would like to thank Cllr Layland for leading this Council in the first two years of its four-year term, and especially, during the difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Town Council's response to the pandemic over the past two years has ensured residents were looked after, whether it be help with shopping, prescription collections, a phone buddy, or referral to other agencies. This was achieved with the help of 80 Edenbridge residents, and I am delighted that at the Sevenoaks District Council's (SDC) *'Make it*

Happen' Awards, Edenbridge Town Council and all of the amazing volunteers in Edenbridge were awarded *'Volunteer Group of the Year'*. This is a great accolade and is in recognition of how amazing the people of Edenbridge are. I am also delighted that our Community Warden, Rose Briggs, and her litter pickers and bulb-planting volunteers picked up the Highly Commended Award for *'Contribution to the Environment'*.

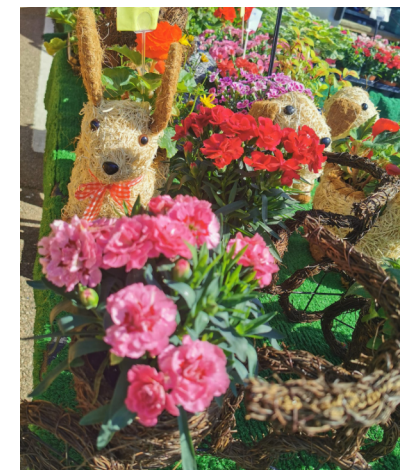
The Council staff adapted to new ways of working, ensuring there was staff cover in the office as well as homeworking so that the Council could continue to serve the community.

Edenbridge is unusual as all its open spaces are owned and maintained by the Town Council. We know how much our residents appreciate well-kept facilities, and we make every effort to ensure that you always have brilliantly looked after open spaces. Our superb groundstaff work very hard to achieve this.

In May 2021, the Council took over the management and day-to-day operation of the Thursday Market. It has been working hard to build the market up. When it first took over the market there were four regular traders and it now has an average of eight to 10 different stalls each week - the bakery, fruit and veg, plants, fine cheeses, candles and melts, pickles and jams, to name just a few, plus bi-weekly Lloyds Mobile Bank. Credit to the office staff and Lorraine Ganney (RFO).

A new Games Club started in March 2022 for the over 55s and is for anyone who enjoys games or is perhaps feeling a bit isolated and would like to meet new people. From puzzles, Tiddlywinks, Chess to card games, there is something for everyone. Thanks to Sevenoaks District Council which has helped to fund this new club through *Involve Kent*.

The Council has supported a proposal from Kent Highways to introduce a 40-mph buffer zone on the approach to Edenbridge, Main Road, in the Marlpit Hill area. This is something that local residents also petitioned for.



Plant stall at the Thursday Market

The CIL Board has supported an award of £10,000 to fund the scheme, and at the time of print, the design was being finalised by Highways, ready for public consultation in summer 2022.

The biggest project for 2021-2022, was the refurbishment and extension to the Recreation Ground Playground. It went out to public tender in summer 2021 and awarded to HAGS in December 2021. Work commenced in May 2022 ready for opening in the early summer. This was an exciting project, providing a range of new equipment for all abilities, inclusivity, and age groups.

The Council had 56 Council and committee meetings in 2021, and the Planning and Transportation Committee responded to in excess of 150 planning applications – it makes recommendations to SDC as the planning authority. Councillors also attended in excess of 100 outside organisation meetings representing Edenbridge.

The Council is from time to time asked about planting more trees. As well as the Millennium Wood, we are proud to manage 550 trees and we also have a replanting programme. In the past, Edenbridge has been highly commended by the organisation *Kent Men of Trees*.

The new Medical Centre, which is to be a health and wellbeing centre, on land to the south of Four Elms Road, Edenbridge, had its planning application approved in June 2020. Kent Community Health NHS Trust then put the project out to tender and an award was made in 2021-22. Work started on the site and the first spade went in in May 2022. We look forward to seeing this project progress and the new purpose-built medical facility for Edenbridge.

In August 2021, we all lost a very dear friend and colleague, John Scholey. I am delighted that the Council recognised more than 20 years' service that John gave to the community of Edenbridge and awarded him, posthumously, its highest honour - a Civic Medallion.

The Council also recognised Julie Barry who has served this community in an extraordinary way for many years as Parish Nurse and establishing the Food Bank. I wish her an enjoyable retirement. She received her Medallion at a special presentation in October 2021.

I would like to welcome two co-opted members – Cllr Sarah Compton and Cllr Michael Gemmell Smith. All the councillors are volunteers and dedicate a huge amount of time to the Council, and I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, for providing expertise and advice to council work. It is an honour to be the Chairman of Edenbridge Town Council.

Cllr Bob Todd
Chairman, Edenbridge Town Council

I am very proud of our key achievements this year. We:

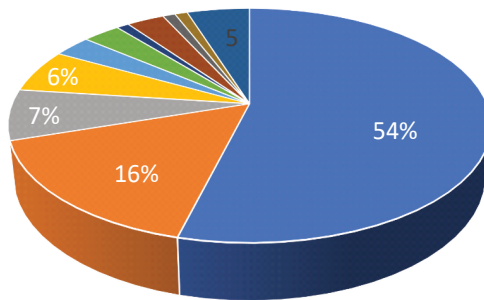
- launched the new *Visitedenbridge* website
- supported the Food Bank in its recent transition - we provide a space at Rickards Hall and storage area at the rear of Doggetts Barn
- adopted the phone box in the High Street to enable the Community First Responders (CFRs) to house a public access defibrillator
- gave a grant to the CFRs to install a public access defibrillator in the middle of Stangrove Park to give good emergency coverage to Stangrove estate as well as park users
- resumed the Bulky Waste Collections which have proved to be very popular with residents
- purchased a portable Speed Indicator Device (SID)
- continued to liaise with Highways over Edenbridge issues including the north end of Main Road (B2026)
- gave £21,880 of grants and SLAs to local organisations
- tendered for the refurbishment of the Recreation Ground playground
- commissioned improvements to the Skate Park
- supported four summer play days at Stangrove Park
- computerised the Cemetery Records and Asset Register
- maintained our four cemeteries and moved into the 4th section in autumn 2021
- were a finalist at the *UK Go Awards* Procurement Awards for the Outdoor Gym and Street Snooker project delivery



New defibrillator at Stangrove Park and Food Bank volunteers

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

The financial year to 31 March 2022 was within budget and made some savings. Just over half the expenditure was for staff costs and nearly 20 per cent was for equipment, vehicles and maintenance of the open spaces and buildings in the town. *This is shown in the chart below.* Council income is mostly its Precept - this is the share of Council Tax given to parish or town councils.



- 54% Staff costs
- 16% 10/30 maintenance plans
- 7% Equipment, maintenance, vehicles
- 6% Utilities & services
- 3% Grants & Service Level Agreements
- 3% Public toilets
- 1% Church House & Rickards Hall
- 3% Street lighting
- 1% Contingency
- 1% Audit & legal fees
- 5% Other

The Town Council has been reducing its expenditure over the past few years. Partly by using the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund a number of projects, partly by planned maintenance being deferred until absolutely essential and, not the least, by the Council and its staff being careful how it spends money. CIL is money from the developers of housing projects (the biggest example being the Bellway Oakley Park Development). There are rules as to how it can be used but as the name implies it should improve the infrastructure of the town to help it cope with a larger population.

For the last couple of years, the Town Council has been operating at a deficit, with expenditure being higher than income. This year the budgeted deficit was just over £73,000, but it made sufficient savings and did not end up having to draw on its General Reserve. However, some of the expenditure has been carried over into the new financial year.

The Council is still recovering from the years of austerity when Council Tax increases were restricted more than our

outgoings and allowance was not given to inflation and rising costs. This Council has had to look at how to recover and ensure a better management to achieve a more balanced budget going forward. The Council has had several long discussions - starting with the Finance Committee and then in full Council - firstly, how, and then whether to find significant cost savings in its services. The conclusion was that cutting either office hours or reducing the work carried out on the town's open spaces was not the right thing to do and would not be appreciated by residents.

The Town Council's aims for the next year are therefore to sustain the services it offers at the moment. The largest element of its spend, as in past years, continues to be managing and maintaining the open spaces of the town.

The town is steadily growing, so its tax base - the number of homes paying Council Tax - is rising. The premise for the last few years has been that this, with slightly over inflation increases in the precept, would close and then reverse this gap.

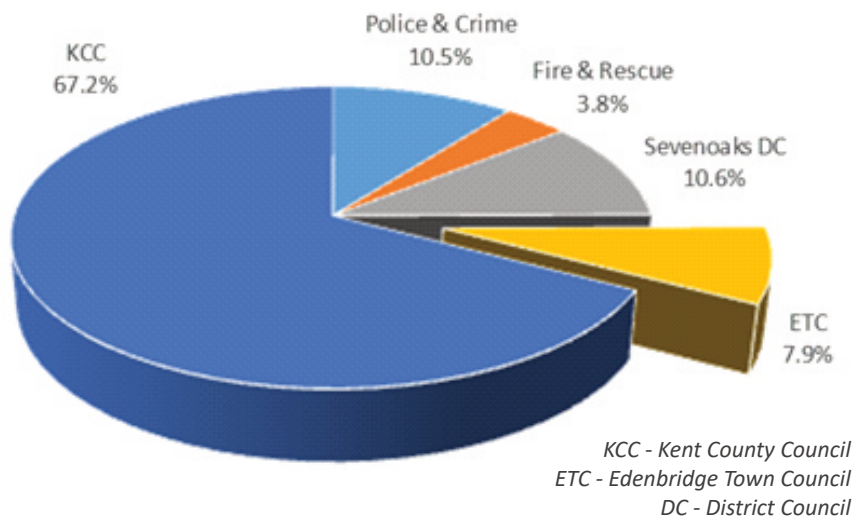
In 2019 the expectation was that the budget would be balanced by this budget year after a couple of years of deficits. The problem is that this has not happened, in part due to the pandemic, as the tax base has not grown as anticipated.

Taking all that into consideration it was decided to balance its budget for next year. i.e. to increase its income via the precept to match its expenditure. The Town Council therefore asked for and has been given, by the District Council, a 10% increase in its share of Council Tax.

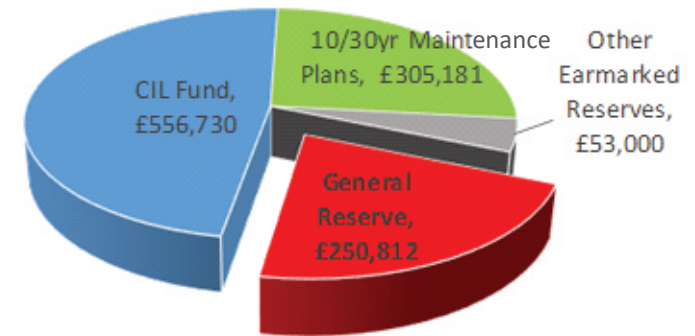
We appreciate that the timing of this is not great with inflation rising and the economy only just recovering from the pandemic. The current forecast for inflation this year is a peak of 10% which will impact the Town Council as much as everyone else.

The precept element of Council Tax for a typical Band D house will rise from £156.22 to £171.84, an increase of £15.62 or £1.30 per month. The Town Council's precept is 7.9% of the total charge, little changed from five years ago and still less than the 8.1% share it had in 2015.

How Council Tax is distributed



Reserves - 31 March 2022



The Council's reserves comprise earmarked funds, CIL and General Reserves. The earmarked reserves' largest part relates to reserves set aside to cover expected maintenance costs for the open spaces and buildings of the town. Other earmarked reserves include the cost of a Neighbourhood Plan, election costs and the community warden.

The largest single part of reported reserves is the Community Infrastructure Levy Funds which are held by the Town Council but available to other organisations with clear rules as to how they are spent. A large part of this Fund is committed, for instance £200,000 for the Medical Centre

and £174,000 to the new playground in the Rec.

This leaves the General Fund to cover emergencies and unforeseen costs, such as a major flood or even a pandemic. Generally, Councils are recommended to hold reserves of 50% of annual expenditure and those with a large asset base, like Edenbridge, more like 75%. However viewed, the Town Council's General Fund is lower than is comfortable and over time we aim to rebuild this. Balancing the budget for next year is a step in the right direction.

Cllr Nick Lloyd
Chairman of the Finance Committee

Income and Expenditure report for 2021-22 as reported for the Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR)

Expenditure		Income	
Salaries	354,094	Cemetery fees	16,188
Staff other costs - PPE, training, HR	10,193	Open Spaces income	20,573
Other expenditure (incs: office, insurance, utilities)	52,876	Market income	6,597
Public Toilets (salary costs inc in salaries)	11,568	Grants	11,712
Open Spaces Expenditure	55,899	Church House	3,480
Street Lighting	18,016	Rickards Hall	8,682
Market	2,393	Waste bag sales	10,961
10/30 year Maintenance projects	28,679	Community Warden support grants	12,500
Church House	3,967	Other income	4,074
Legal (FOIs and SARs), professional & audit fees	1,430	Sub Total - other income	94,767
SLA - House, Museum, Twinning	14,000		
Grants	7,880	Precept	582,722
Waste Bags	8,190		
Rickards Hall	6,274		
Total Expenditure	575,460	Total Income	677,489
CIL Expenditure	25,634	CIL Fund	47,737
AGAR Total Expenditure	601,093	AGAR Total Income	725,226

£76,372 unspent due to creditors and debtors for 2021/22, and budgeted projects not completed – this expenditure has been moved into the earmarked reserves.

£47,761 was moved into general reserves, to help rebuild these back up to a healthy level following several years of austerity and drawing down from the reserves.

BALANCES as at 31 March 2022

General Fund		250,811.88
CIL Funds - General	83,934.46	
CIL Funds - Allocated	472,795.00	
Total CIL Funds		556,729.46
Ear Marked Reserves		
10/30 Year Plan - Buildings	80,117.00	
10/30 Year Plan - Open Spaces	225,064.00	
Total Maintenance Plan Reserves		305,181.00
Cemetery	1,000.00	
Election	11,500.00	
Neighbourhood Plan	15,000.00	
Depreciation Equipment & Tools	1,000.00	
Community Warden	3,771.00	
Staff Reserves	12,000.00	
Grants	772.25	
Projects Carried Over	7,957.00	
Total Other Earmarked Reserves		53,000.25
TOTAL RESERVES		1,165,722.59

Emergency Planning Report Chair Cllr Margot McArthur

Fortunately, 2021-2022 was a quieter year for extreme weather events and we saw minimal flood and damage. There were several storms which brought high winds, causing some fallen trees, including one across the B2026 at Mill Hill. This was attended to quickly and the road was reopened.

The Town Council's Edenbridge Emergency Planning Committee (EEPC) has been working with the Environment Agency, Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council over the years to ensure that there are resources available to Edenbridge for emergency events.

The Town Council is fortunate to have elected members representing the town's interests at district and county level, and this enables a holistic and well-informed approach.



The EEPC is made up of Councillors and volunteers, and I would like to thank all Committee members who willingly stand by and step up to help their neighbours and the residents of Edenbridge.

Cllr Margot McArthur
Chair of the Emergency Planning Committee

Council Staff 2021-22

Town Clerk	Caroline Leet
Deputy Town Clerk	Kathy Staff
Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)	Lorraine Ganney
Planning and Administration Officer	Debbie Bond
Tourism Officer	Lindsey Eaton
Buildings Manager	Martin Leach
Community Warden	Rose Briggs
Head Groundsman	Craig Open
Groundstaff	Lance Thompsett; Tony Saunders; Sean Rose
Cleaner (Public toilets)	Mary Stableford



1



2



3



4

1. Work starts on the new Medical Centre
2. Outdoor gym at Stangrove Park
3. Skate Park at Blossoms Park
4. Portable Speed Indicator Device

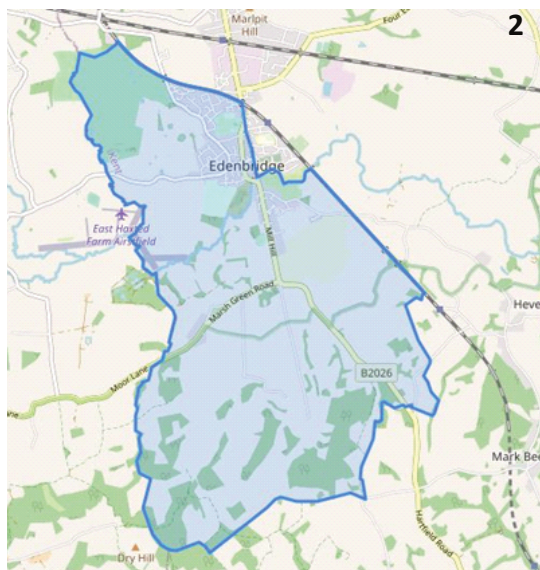
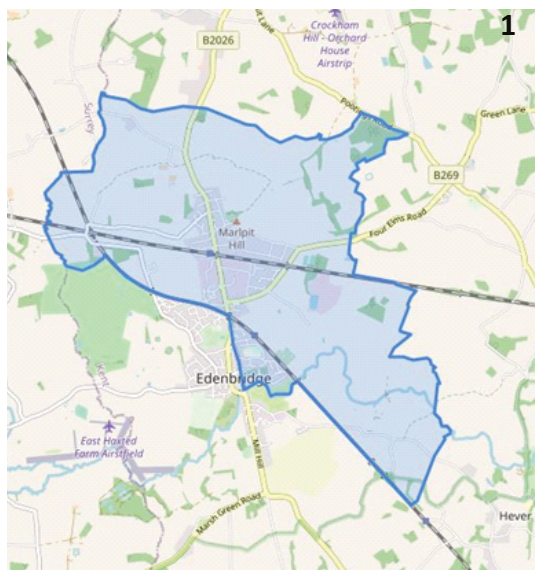
Edenbridge Town Councillors

North & East Ward (Map 1)

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 Sarah Compton	cllr.compton@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Michael Gemmell Smith	cllr.gemmellsmith@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Stephen Sumner	cllr.sumner@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Bob Todd	cllr.todd@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk

South & West Ward (Map 2)

Cllr Jon Aldridge	cllr.aldridge@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	cllr.read@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Steve Taylor	cllr.taylor@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
Cllr Peter Smith	cllr.smith@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk



Edenbridge Town Council
Doggetts Barn
72a High Street
Edenbridge, KENT. TN8 5AR

Contact

E: information@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk
T: 01732 865368
www.edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk