



EDENBRIDGE
TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk: Caroline Leet

Strategic Plan and Objectives

2024 – 2027

Adopted by full Council *01 July 2024*

Prepared following Visioning training 2 September 2023; and Forward Planning Steering Group 14 October 2023

Forward Planning Steering Group – to review annually

Each new Council term to complete visioning exercise to confirm 4-yearly vision and strategic plan



EDENBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Strategic Plan and Objectives (Forward Planning)

Mission statement and summary of Edenbridge Town Council

Edenbridge is a small market town, at the head of the Eden Valley, which has a forward thinking Town Council with big ideas and a big heart, being dynamic and proactive in serving its community.

Edenbridge Town Council is served by 15 councillors and employs up to 15 staff (F/T and P/T) working in the office, grounds team, and including a community warden, to ensure services provided for the community including management of its facilities, continue to be of a high standard. It owns and or manages:

- 5 playgrounds
- 9 buildings and outbuildings (own/or maintain) including a community hall
- 8 Open Spaces – parks and greens, Millennium Wood, 2 ponds
- Over 550 trees maintained
- Hanging basket displays
- Manages Thursday Charter Market
- 4 Cemeteries and the Churchyard
- 247 Streetlights owned, plus maintains 2 for SDC
- 2 allotment sites
- Owns and maintains sports pitches
- Provides and maintains street furniture, bins and benches
- Public toilets
- 2 car parks – owns Market Yard; manages Leathermarket
- Council office facility
- Tourism & *visitedenbridge* website, and local walks
- In addition, works with SDC and the GSBT in partnership to manage the Town Field and Water Meadows

The Town Council has developed excellent partnerships with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), and has three dual hatted councillors, one of whom is also a Kent County Council (KCC) councillor. Partnerships include creating a wildflower meadow; selling waste bags; and responding to consultations. It is also proactive making representations to SDC on the emerging Local Plan with a Character Area Assessment document, Town Centre Strategy and potential development sites.

It also set up and runs a Games Social Club for over 55s; provides a space for the Food Bank; provides a grants programme for local organisations, as well as two Service Level Agreements to HOUSE Youth Group and the Eden Valley Museum. For the latter the Council also provides the building it occupies (Church House).

The Town Council has pushed boundaries working with the medical practice and county and district councils, to realise a long-held vision for a new purpose-built medical centre, providing bespoke services for a thriving rural community. It is currently working to help ensure a new secondary school for Edenbridge.

Working with Kent Highways, it continues to campaign for improved road safety measures; it has funded a portable Speed Indicator Device; and a new 40-mph buffer zone at the northern approach to the town

Edenbridge is a rural town, at the head of the Eden Valley, sitting on the River Eden. It has a history of flood issues. The Council has its own Emergency Planning Committee made up of councillors and volunteers, including trained people with radio-licences, and flood wardens. It

works with the Kent Resilience Forum and the Environment Agency ensuring appropriate flood response.

The community has a long history of coming together to help others and has many local organisations run by volunteers, all of whom play a big part in making Edenbridge the community-spirited place it is today. The Council supports and works with many of these local groups and also co-ordinates volunteers for litter picking, bulb planting and Speedwatch.

About this Strategic Plan

The Forward Planning Steering Group (FPSG) has for several years developed a Forward Plan itemising projects and aspirations for the town, some of which the Council was able to deliver, and some needed other authorities to take forward, but for which the Council campaigned.

In September 2023, the Council held a 'visioning training session' for councillors and officers to attend, helping to understand a strategic plan and recognise what the council has done well, what it can influence, and identify achievable and realistic goals. During the session, the group looked at what it does well, what hasn't been so good, and where it can improve. One recommendation from the session was, "that the Council only agrees to objectives that it can determine itself".

The FPSG meeting October 2023, received the visioning summary report, and from the recommendations resolved to develop a Strategic Forward Plan incorporating its existing Forward Plan, and to include:

- Project costs and financial implications
- Reasons/objectives of the project
- Dates for starting and completion
- How to measure its success
- Officers running projects
- To categorise projects into Community Enhancement, Council Operations, and External Influence
- To size the projects – small, medium, large

Core Values

The Council's mission is very much about delivering community facilities to high standards, providing something across all needs of the community, as well as representing community values. To achieve this it seeks to work in collaboration with the local groups to ensure the best representation concerning community needs is made to the larger authorities.

Aims

- To continue delivering community facilities to high standards
- To cater for all age groups of the community
- To provide a pleasant and well maintained local environment
- To collaborate with local groups to ensure best representation to other authorities
- To encourage development of the local economy

The aims of this strategic plan is that the Council:

- Aligns stakeholders around strategic priorities
- Communicates goals, strategies and programs
- Engages, motivates, and retains external and internal audiences (e.g. Councillors, staff, partners, residents etc.)
- Ensures the Council's activities focus on achieving objectives

In addition:

- Everyone can embrace it as they have been involved in the process
- Informs the public, who know at a glance what the Council is trying to achieve
- Ensures officers and the Council focus their energies on the right activities (use staff appraisal targeting)
- Enables the Council to evidence base the finances it requires
- Ensures the Council can plan its finances several years in advance
- Also enables the Council to ensure it puts in place the correct staffing levels to implement its strategy
- Stops "vanity projects" which often harm the reputation of Councils
- Gives this administration a clear focus to demonstrate its effectiveness at the end of its term of office

As with any Plan, for it to be deliverable it requires the resources (funding streams and staff), the organisational structure, management and decision making.

Public Consultation

As part of the 'aims' the Council will engage with the public through its communications channels to inform residents of council and other activities. It will consult on opinion using a range of suitable methods, this may be done through approaching specific groups, social media consultations, pop-up sessions, newsletters and questionnaires.

Monitoring and Measuring

The FPSG meets annually (usually October) and will review and update the Plan looking at progress and constraints.

When determining projects it will consider 'SWOT' (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) to help identify the need for the project. Some will be quite simple to do, but others may have significant constraints such as costs and resources and may require specific research and engagement.

Where there is outside influence or where the Council does not have direct control, a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Based) analysis will help determine how involved the Council can be, and if it should be involved. Projects/objectives for which third parties will ultimately make the decision, should not form part of the Council's targets as this gives the impression to the public that the Council has the power to implement these objectives, when it does not.

It is vitally important if the Council is to deliver on its objectives that it keeps focused on them and specifically those that should be delivered over the coming 12 months. Having too many balls in the air at once often leads to dropping most, if not all, of them. Equally the Council needs to ensure that new non-evaluated objectives, often vanity projects, are not allowed to intrude from outside the Strategy Development and taking priority.

Budgets

The FPSG will make recommendations to the Finance Committee for budget considerations, and how projects could be funded. Council and its committees can consider other funding resources and delivery of projects, with applications for funding to its CIL Board or other outside grants. However, with all grant applications, the Council's own staff resources need to be factored in as part of the overall project proposal.

Delivering

The Council will need the resources to deliver the strategy and projects. The Town Clerk and Council will identify and confirm the projects. As appropriate, a lead councillor or Working Group will be appointed to work with the Town Clerk and/or nominated officer.

- Objectives/projects will have leaders (staff/councillor) identified
- Clear line management for project
- Council objectives/projects will be linked to employee annual performance review
- Actions – be clear on delivery plan and who is doing what
- Good internal communications with time-line and informal meetings
- Good external communications
- Monitoring and evaluating progress, and is it still current
- Evaluate success and delivery

The Council will use its social media and communications resources to engage, report and promote.

See Programme of Projects and Aspirations (pages 7-10)

Council Structure

15 Councillor elected by the electorate every 4-years, representing two wards – South & West, North & East. Councillors are elected to help make a difference to their community, as well as representing the views of residents in their local community (ward) at local council level and with other authorities. They help to develop Council policies and make decisions on helping to manage Council facilities and services.

The Town Council holds regular meetings to consider matters and make decisions. Its meetings are open for members of the public to attend and observe, with an item (usually) set aside for the public to make representations.

Town Council

Committees

Planning & Transportation <i>(min 5 each ward)</i> (12)	Open Spaces (10)	Finance & Governance (10)	Personnel <i>(sub Committee)</i> (7)	Emergency Planning (8)	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (15)	Charities & Grants (15)
---	-----------------------------------	--	---	---	---	--

Forward Planning Steering Group (FPSG) and Working Groups *no delegated powers*

Town Clerk and Officers

[Full Terms of Reference for Council, Committees, Working Groups and Officers.](#) (Link)

Standing Orders and Policies

The Council has Standing Orders setting out its rules for procedural matters and meetings, its internal organisational structure for committees and subcommittees, decision making, administration and procurement procedures. They also confirm the Council's statutory requirements. The Council's Financial Regulation are standing orders to regulate and control the financial activities and accounting procedures.

It also has a suite of policies that sets out the procedures and guidance on how the Council carries out its business and activities. These are overseen by the Finance and Governance Committee and adopted by Council.

Edenbridge Town Council Forward Planning - Programme of Projects and Aspirations

Key - time frame: **S** – short term (approx. 1-year); **M** (approx. 4-year term); **L** (4 years plus / or in long-term maintenance plan)

	Project/Objective	Cost	Time Frame	Start date	Location	Planning permission needed Y/N	Project Ownership ETC or Partnership	Funding sources (Precept/CIL/Grants/other...)	Committee responsible & reporting	ETC 10-30yr Plan project	Comments/progress updates	End date	Measuring Success
COUNCIL OPERATIONS (projects additional to small council works projects)													
1	Street Lighting replacement programme	Budget annual £25k /£45k	S/M	2016 - ongoing	Edenbridge	N	ETC	Council Maintenance Plans - Precept	Open Spaces	30-yr Plan	Ongoing. As of Oct 23: 64, of 249, remaining to be replaced under currently programme	0	
2	Solar lighting - to investigate viability, costs as part of inclusion to Street Lighting replacement programme	<i>tbc</i>	S/M		Edenbridge	N	ETC		OS		To investigate Solar lighting options for Replacement Programme inclusion		
3	Tourist Information updated walks leaflets with GPS routes and integrated third party Apps	Budget tourism £9,890 CIL grant remaining	S	Oct -23	ETC - Edenbridge & surrounding villages	N/A	ETC	CIL	Council		CIL funding approved 02/19. New Tourism Website completed and launched May 2021. <i>Walks App project underway</i>	Autumn 2024	
4	Computer systems - Cyber Compliance improvements (follows 2023 SharePoint transition)	£4,600 est.	S		ETC	N/A	ETC				Council Sept 2023 resolved to carry out an appraisal. To proceed to a fully managed system service est £4,600 to be in budget		

5	Council Website – Accessibility & design review	£2,000 est	S	Mar -24	ETC	N/A	ETC	Budgeted - reserves	Council / TC & Comms		Ongoing improvements – new website design 2024 to include Accessibility statement. Work started 2024, delivery winter 2024	2024/25	
6	Old Police Station – front parcel of land by flagpole	£5,000	S		High Street	Permitted Dev.	ETC	Budgeted - reserves	Council / TC & Grounds		Negotiations for land and refurbishment (supported Council 2022 & budget in reserves 2023-24)		
7	Neighbourhood Plan	£20-30k	M		Edenbridge	N/A	ETC (part of planning policy)	£15k held in reserves. Budget & Grants			Draft consultation document published 10/17. Keep under review - awaiting draft local plan outcome. Nov 22&23 had Reg 18 consultations.		
8	Band Stand for Stangrove Park	<i>tbc</i>	L		Stangrove Park	Permitted Dev. Subject to overall height	ETC	CIL/grants?	OS		Band Stand FPSG 2022 - aspiration. To investigate viable locations, funding options		
9	Concrete Skatepark; and/or Sports Pump Track	<i>tbc</i>	L (M)		<i>tbc</i> - Blossoms or other location <i>tbc</i> - possible part of a new development	Permitted Dev / may need planning if new site	ETC / shared ?	CIL/grants?	Task& Delivery Working Grp - report to Council		Working Group set-up 2023 for exploration to understand the viability and best methods to deliver		
10	Recreation Ground – to create a walkway around the recreation ground/ running path around perimeter	<i>tbc</i>	L		Recreation Ground	Permitted Dev.	ETC	CIL/Grants - outside funding			Hardcore track (not for vehicles for walking). To investigate costs and viability.		

											Consider CIL. To present to OS Committee to consider viability/interest		
11	Market & High Street improvements	£15k	S/M	Apr -24	Market Yard car park - access from high street	Permitted Dev. Subject to overall height & font sizing	ETC	UK Prosperity Fund via SDC	Council / Working Group & TC & CW		High Street Regeneration Fund – working with SDC, there are some enhancements for the Market and the high street being investigated	Mar-25	
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - Projects supported by ETC and action by external bodies							Responsible body						
12	War Memorial – Relocation/Improvements	<i>tbc</i>	S/M		WM Hospital site or other <i>tbc</i>		NHS Trust	Developers funding	Council		Early stages - Liaising with other vested groups. Nov 2023 WM Hospital closed. Conversations with NHS Properties, awaiting tender process for sale of site		
EXTERNAL INFLUENCE (From previous Forward Plan) –Aspirations for the town (supported by ETC and for action by external bodies)													
	Leathermarket Improvements.	n/a	M/L				Private landowner				Preliminary confidential discussions with interested parties has/are taking place as part of a feasibility study. Was included in the Reg 18 draft Local Plan		

Disabled access – Edenbridge Town Station	n/a	L				GTR				Possible funding 4Elms application		
Disable access – Edenbridge Station	n/a	L				GTR				Possible funding 4Elms application		
Leisure Centre - Redevelopment/Improvements. Explore possible development opportunities to improve the Leisure Centre. Proposals for All Weather Pitch and internal improvements. Preliminary confidential discussions with interested parties are taking place as part of a feasibility study	n/a	L				Everyone Active/SDC				To continue campaigning. with SDC & look for potential ways of All Weather Pitch viability		
Secondary School / Free School	n/a	L				KCC				ETC supported (draft Local Plan). Four Elms planning application includes 2ndry school in approved outline planning application		
Riverside Improvements	n/a					Great Stonebridge Trust				Local Plan – Town Strategy		

Supporting documents:

Visioning training report by James Corrigan (September 2023)

Minutes Forward Planning Steering Group (October 2023)



EDENBRIDGE

TOWN COUNCIL