



EPPING TOWN COUNCIL

EPPING HALL, ST JOHNS RD, EPPING, ESSEX CM16 5JU

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TO THE TOWN MAYOR and ALL MEMBERS of EPPING TOWN COUNCIL:

You are hereby summoned to attend an **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **Epping Town Council** which is to be held in the **Conference Room, Epping Hall, St Johns Road, Epping** on **Tuesday, 14th January 2025** at **8pm** in order to transact the following business:

Beverley Rumsey
Town Clerk
8th January 2025

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies and reasons for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests, along with the nature of those interests, in relation to any item on this agenda.

Cllr L Burrows, Cllr C MCreddie, Cllr R Sharif, Cllr Janet Whitehouse & Cllr Jon Whitehouse declare a non pecuniary interest as Epping Forest District councillors.

Cllr H Whitbread declares a non pecuniary interest as an Epping Forest District Councillor and Cabinet Member and an Essex County Councillor and Deputy Cabinet Member.

3 DISPENSATIONS

To receive requests for dispensations from members concerning any item of business on this agenda.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTION TIME

The Mayor will invite public comments and responses in relation to items on this agenda. *Individuals will be permitted a maximum of three minutes each (total time for this session is limited to ten minutes).*

5 CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

(Attachment A)

To approve as a correct record and sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 10th December 2024.

6 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

To receive the signed Minutes of the following Committee meetings and to adopt any recommendations within the Minutes not previously adopted:

Planning & General Purposes Committee 10th December 2024 **(Attachment B)**

7 COMMUNICATIONS TO NOTE/REQUIRING DECISION

(i) EPPING PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION

Epping Playground Association (EPA) have confirmed that once the musical play panel has been finalised, EPA will close and all trustees will step down.

The Town Clerk would like to formally thank the members of Epping Playground Association for all their hard work on delivering Lower Swaines playground, on behalf of Epping Town Council and the Town.

Council is requested to **NOTE** this information.

(ii) EPPING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Town Clerk has been advised by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) that the inspector has confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan examination can proceed. Documents will be looked at by the inspector in the coming weeks and Epping Town Council will be kept informed of progress. The Town Clerk would like to thank the Planning Policy team at EFDC for their help and support.

Council is requested to **NOTE** this information.

(iii) BLUE PLAQUE REQUEST: JOHN HALLIDAY GRACEY **(Attachment C)**

Epping Town Council have received a request for a blue plaque for former Bletchley Park Codebreaker John Halliday Gracey, as per **Attachment C**.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** whether to issue a blue plaque.

(iv) MAYOR'S CADET SCHEME **(Attachment C1)**

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 11th June 2024 (Minute #70 of 2024/25), Council supported the Mayor's Cadet Scheme as per **Attachment C1**. Former Town Mayor Cllr Christine Burgess led its inception in her Civic Year and this will now be a feature of the Mayor's role.

The current Town Mayor, Cllr Cherry McCredie, is delighted to progress this and welcome Sgt Holly Edwards, who will be the Mayor's Cadet.

Council is requested to welcome the Air Cadets and **DECIDE** if any further action is required at the current time.

8 TOWN MAYOR'S & DEPUTY MAYOR'S DUTIES **(Attachment D)**

Council to receive the duties undertaken by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor since 10th December 2024.

9 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

To receive reports, if any, from Members on meetings or visits made since the Ordinary Council Meeting on 10th December 2024.

10 REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK AND COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS (Attachment E)

A report from the Town Clerk on current activities and matters of interest to Council is attached.

11 REPORTS FROM EPPING FOREST DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

A verbal report from ward councillors who also serve on Epping Forest District Council on any matter that may be of interest to Epping Town Council.

12 FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31st DECEMBER 2024 (Attachment F)

Statutory Basis: Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Key Member: Cllr G Scruton

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** and **APPROVE** the summary financial report to the end of December 2024 and **DECIDE** if any further action is required.

13 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT (Attachment G)

Statutory Basis: Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Key Member: Cllr G Scruton

Council is requested to **APPROVE** the payment of accounts for December 2024 totalling £60,181.94 (Barclays: £72.47, The Co-operative: £60,030.41 & The Co-operative online: £79.06).

14 BUDGET 2025/2026 SECOND ESTIMATES (Attachments H-H3)

Statutory Basis: Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Audit Commission Act 1998 s44, Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

Key Member: Cllr G Scruton

Attachment: Detailed Draft Budget (3 options) **(Attachments H, H1, H2)**

Attachment: Budget with funds transfers (above) **(Attachments H, H1, H2)**

Attachment: Draft charges 2025 **(Attachment H3)**

Epping Town Council's first draft budget has been presented at the Ordinary Council meeting on 10th December 2024 (Minute #319 of 24/25) and this showed predicted expenditure only, as the crucial tax base figure from Epping Forest District Council had not been received. That tax base figure has now been built into the draft budgets presented here. The tax base has increased by 96.7.

The budget (second draft) presented as per **Attachment H** shows three versions; one with nil increase to the precept, one with a 1% increase to the precept and one with a 2% increase to the precept. **Please note:** inflation for 2025 is currently anticipated to be running at approximately 2% and Council's costs will increase

accordingly. This budget has been drafted by the Town Clerk/RFO & Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton. The draft charges 2025 show a 2% increase towards inflationary/running costs.

Council's auditor has advised that Council's reserves are far lower than desired and it was satisfactory, providing this was rectified promptly. The desired reserve range should be approximately £390,000.

An increase of nil to a band D equivalent property through Epping Town Council's share of the precept would require a precept demand to Epping Forest District Council of £633,128 for the 2025/26 financial year. This would result in an overall reserve position of £295,526.

An increase of 1% to a band D equivalent property through Epping Town Council's share of the precept, would be £1.17 per annum. This would require a precept demand to Epping Forest District Council of £639,459 for the 2025/26 financial year. This would result in an overall reserve position of £301,857.

An increase of 2% to a band D equivalent property through Epping Town Council's share of the precept would be £2.37 per annum. This would require a precept demand to Epping Forest District Council of £645,791 for the 2025/26 financial year. This would result in an overall reserve position of £308,109.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Epping Town Council should approve one of the budgets presented as per **Attachment H, H1 or H2** and **AUTHORISE** the Town Mayor to sign the corresponding precept demand of £633,128; £639,459 or £645,791, for the 2025/26 financial year on behalf of Epping Town Council, accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The corresponding budget with fund transfers should be **APPROVED** as per **Attachment Ha, H1a or H2a**.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The draft charges 2025 should be **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H3**.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this matter and **RECOMMENDATIONS** and **DECIDE** what to do.

15 **BANK BALANCES: AT 31st DECEMBER 2024** (Attachment I)

Statutory Basis: Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Key Member: Cllr G Scruton

Council is requested to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the bank balances on 31st December 2024 for all accounts, as per **Attachment I**. This was recommended by the auditor as an end of quarter agenda item.

16 **CODE OF CONDUCT AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY** (Attachments J & J1)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Key Member: Cllr C McCredie

Epping Town Council have a suite of policies that have been agreed by Council and that councillors must abide by. A core policy is the Code of Conduct (**Attachment J**) and this is centred around high standards of behaviour in public life. Council's Social Media policy (**Attachment J1**) reminds us that these high standards of behaviour in public life also apply to social media.

The Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer as Council's Proper Officer, must stress the importance that all Council policies are followed and upheld.

Council is requested to **NOTE** this information.

17 PURCHASE OF NODDY

(Attachment K)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Key Member: Cllr C McCredie/Cllr R Sharif

On behalf of Epping Town Council, Cllr C McCredie, as Town Mayor, presented a certificate and gift of thanks to Piccola marking their 50 years of trading on Epping High Street. During that visit, it was discovered that Noddy, a feature of Epping High Street for many years, was available for sale. Cllr C McCredie and Cllr R Sharif secured Noddy as a piece of equipment that would be beneficial to the community. Noddy was purchased for £500 and this payment was approved by the Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton, supported by Cllr C McCredie as Town Mayor.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** and **DECIDE**:

- (i) Where Noddy's new home in Epping will be;
- (ii) How this will be managed operationally (keys, electricity, coins, etc).

18 EPPING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2024

(Attachment L)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s144

Key Member: Cllr C McCredie

Following a new Christmas lights scheme in 2024, it would be useful to have the Town Councillors' views on the Town's Christmas lights and trees in 2024. The Town Clerk has prepared a summary of operational facts and issues (as per **Attachment L**) and has invited residents to comment through Talk About Epping. Once further information has been collated, the Clerk would suggest Council start preparations for the Christmas lights 2025 as soon as possible.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and provide initial feedback.

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public and press are welcome to attend the meeting. Members of the public will only be permitted to speak at the beginning of the meeting during Public Question Time.