

MINUTES of the ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING held in the Conference Room, Epping Hall on Tuesday 14th January 2025 at 8pm.

PRESENT:

Cllr C McCredie	(Town Mayor & Chair)	
Cllr Janet Whitehouse	(Deputy Town Mayor)	
Cllr N Avey	Cllr C Burgess	Cllr J Duffell
Cllr H Pegrum	Cllr G Scruton	Cllr R Sharif
Cllr Jon Whitehouse	Cllr M Wright	

OFFICER: Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE: 1 member of the press and 1 member of the public, plus the Air Cadets.

340 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr L Burrows and Cllr H Whitbread, and Cllrs Jon Whitehouse and R Sharif for lateness.

341 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

342 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations.

343 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTION TIME

The welcome to the new Mayor's Cadet, Flight Sgt Holly Edwards and the Air Cadets would take place under agenda item 7 (iv).

344 CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 10th December 2024 be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council, subject to the following amendment/addition:

Minute 313 from December minutes:

Town Mayor also attended: Informal market meeting 28th November 2024

345 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was **RESOLVED** that the signed Minutes of the following Committee meetings be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council.

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

346 COMMUNICATIONS TO NOTE/REQUIRING DECISION

(i) **EPPING PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION**

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

The Town Clerk formally thanked 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.

(ii) EPPING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Council **NOTED** that 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.

(iii) BLUE PLAQUE REQUEST: JOHN HALLIDAY GRACEY

Council considered the resident request for a blue plaque for former Bletchley Park Codebreaker John Halliday Gracey, as per **Attachment C**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The blue plaque for John Halliday Gracey relating to 3 Woodberry Down, Epping was agreed in principle and would be pursued once the outcome of the planning application/s had been determined and an appropriate location could be confirmed for the blue plaque.

(iv) MAYOR'S CADET SCHEME

Council **NOTED** that 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, was delighted to progress this and welcome Flight Sgt Holly Edwards, who will be the Mayor's Cadet.

Council welcomed Flight Sgt Holly Edwards and the Air Cadets.

347 TOWN MAYOR & DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR'S DUTIES

The duties undertaken by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor since the Ordinary Council meeting on 10th December 2024 were **NOTED**.

348 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Reports from members were received on meetings or visits since the Ordinary Council meeting on 10th December 2024:

Cllr C Burgess	Asset of Community Value meeting Mill Mound Fields	11 th Dec 24
	ETC grounds team Christmas thank you	18 th Dec 24
	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 24

Cllr H Pegrum	Removal of Christmas tree	10 th Dec 24
	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 24
Cllr G Scruton	Budget meeting with Town Clerk	10 th Dec 24
Cllr N Avey	Asset of Community Value meeting Mill Mound Fields	11 th Dec 24
	Carols on the Green	24 th Dec 24
	Lighting of Menorah	29 th Dec 24

349 **REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK AND COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS**

The Town Clerk highlighted the financial position of the market, which was encouraging given repeated bad weather.

The Town Clerk formally thanked Weald Hall Care Home for sponsoring the Christmas Market despite the Christmas Market having to be cancelled due to the extremely high winds and highlighted the very positive working relationship.

Cllr Janet Whitehouse (Deputy Town Mayor) reported on a previous matter; the vegetation at Bell Common, as per **Appendix 1**.

Members **NOTED** the report of the Town Clerk.

350 **REPORTS FROM EPPING FOREST DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Epping Forest District Council

Cllr Janet Whitehouse: mentioned fewer meetings.

Cllr Jon Whitehouse: mentioned EFDC budget still being worked on. Cabinet meeting: Discussions over EFDC taking over Cottis Yard car park from Qualis. Fees. Waste and recycling being considered. Testing of blue lidded bins and its rollout from recycling sacks. Discussions ongoing while budget ongoing. Overview and scrutiny. Then budget meeting in February.

351 **FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

Cllr R Sharif entered the meeting during this item.

Council considered the summary financial report for December 2024, presented by Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (ii) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and **APPROVED**;
- (iii) No further action was required at the current time.

352 **ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton presented the payment schedules for December 2024 totalling £60,184.94. (The Co-operative online total: £79,06, Barclays £72.47 & The Co-operative £60,030.41).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- (ii) The list of payments for December 2024 were **APPROVED** as presented in the schedule.

353 BUDGET 2025/26 SECOND ESTIMATES

Cllr Jon Whitehouse entered the meeting during this item.

Epping Town Council's first draft budget was 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** showed 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 had been drafted by the Town Clerk/RFO & Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton. The draft charges 2025 showed a 2% increase towards inflationary/running costs.

Council's auditor had 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.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Audit Commission Act 1998 s44; Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- (ii) The 2025/26 budget (second estimates) was **APPROVED**, with the Town Mayor **AUTHORISED** to sign the precept demand for the 2025/26 financial year of

£645,791 (£2.37 per annum increase per band D equivalent) on behalf of the Town Council (**Attachment H2**);

- (iii) The draft charges were **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H3** (2% increase across all services except the market which is 0% increase);
- (iv) The budget with funds transfers was **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H2**.

354 **BANK BALANCES AT 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

Council **NOTED** and **APPROVED** 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.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

355 **CODE OF CONDUCT AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

The Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer, as Council's Proper Officer, reminded members of the importance of Council's Code of Conduct and Social Media Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act, s111.

356 **PURCHASE OF NODDY**

Council considered the purchase of Noddy and his potential new home.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government 1972, s111;
- (ii) Cllr R Sharif and the Town Clerk would work together to find potentially suitable locations for Noddy. The Town Clerk would invite expressions of interest from local businesses/firms wanting to host/manage Noddy and would bring these back to Council for a decision.

357 **EPHING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2024**

Council considered the Christmas Lights 2024 and what would be the next steps on making plans for the Christmas Lights 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act 1972, s144;
- (ii) As Christmas had multiple variables (Christmas lights, Market, etc) a Christmas working party would be established to replace the Christmas Lights working party to work on and assist with both elements of Christmas;
- (iii) The Christmas working party would be: Cllr C Burgess, Cllr H Pegrum, Cllr G Scruton and Cllr R Sharif.

CLOSURE

The Town Mayor, Cllr C McCredie, closed the meeting at **9.45pm**.

Signature of Chairman

Date