

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 17 January 2022 at 7.00 pm
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre

PRESENT:

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. G. Johnson
Cllr. J. Beesley	Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)
Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. D. Ward
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)	Becky Ikeson (Youth Member)
	Emily McHale (Youth Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

No members of the public
1 member of the press (recording)
County Councillor Chris Dowling
County and District Councillor Claire Dowling

Sarah D'Alessio Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
Holly Goring Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda. They were advised that notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration and that the nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest became apparent. None received.

2.0 STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE MAYOR'S DISCRETION

None received.

3.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FC.74.01.22 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.

Councillor Claire Dowling wished everyone a Happy New Year. Works were due to take place in Hempstead road, to remove vegetation following a small landslide and another survey was being undertaken by the drainage team at the

beginning of February.

The works that had been previously planned for Church Street had been postponed. ES Highways were awaiting a revised date from South East Water. Signs were still present on the side of the road, suggesting a diversion route was in place. These needed to be moved until works were rearranged.

Councillor Claire Dowling had attended a meeting at Wealden DC regarding Streatfeild House. It had been advised that they would be making contact with the Town Council to arrange a meeting to discuss their plans for the site.

East Sussex County Council were in the process of preparing for their budget setting process. They were still awaiting the details of some of the grant funding streams from central government but had received notification of the three-year spending review before Christmas along with one year for the central government grant. It was looking like proposals would be put forward for a 1.99% increase on council tax, the second half of the Adult Social Care precept would be taken for 2022-23 and there was the ability to take another 1%. No additional savings were planned for 2022-23. They were intending to add £3million per annum on the capital programme for highways, and money would be allocated specifically for climate change initiatives, with a balanced budget being planned for 2022-23.

Councillor Chris Dowling referred to the drain in Lewes Road. UKPN had left the area, so it was agreed this was the most suitable time to prioritise the work.

Councillor Chris Dowling had attended Newtown Action Group, who were working very hard for the benefit of local residents.

Calls had been put into Kier/UKPN, who were due to return in the New Year to carry out their snagging works. This would include the reinstatement of the paving on the bridge.

Councillor K. Bedwell advised that the surface of the road between Highlands roundabout and Applegate Dental Practice was in a bad state of repair. She asked if there would be any plans to resurface this as part of Kier's snagging programme. It was asked if Councillor Chris Dowling could enquire.

Councillor B. Cox asked whether with the £3million additional highways funding, there would be a long-term strategy for improving the quality of the roads. Councillor Dowling advised that the allocated funding would seek to improve the highway hedge to hedge, and there was a possible opportunity to obtain some one-off funding early in the year. There was currently a £1million budget per annum for the patching lorry, and it was hoped this could be increased.

Councillor B. Cox also reminded attendees that the flood review had been chased having been delayed during the pandemic, but statements in developer reports and those of local authorities continued to claim that there was no risk to flooding. How was this possible if the review had not yet been completed.

Councillor D. French noted that in the bad weather some of the diversion/road work signs along Church Street/Rocks Road had fallen and were causing dangerous trip hazards.

Councillor G. Johnson advised that Wealden District Councillors were waiting on the publication of the SHELAA, and for a response from the Rt Hon Michael Gove, with the draft Local Plan expected to be placed out for consultation in the Spring of 2022.

Councillor P. Sparks advised that he had also attended the meeting at Wealden DC regarding Streatfeild House.

FC.75.01.22 Councillors were thanked for their input and updates, and subsequently **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors H. Firth, S. Mayhew, A. Smith and C. Snelgrove.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 6 December 2021 to be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.76.01.22 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 6 December 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

5.2 Action List

Members reviewed the action list and agreed that the following actions could now be removed:

FC65.12.21 – Wealden Remuneration Panel

FC67.12.21 – ESCC Grass Verge Cutting contract

FC69.12.21 – Removal of flood notification sign

Members subsequently noted the report.

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

6.1 To note the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings:-

(a) Plans Committee of the 13 December 2021 and 4 January 2022

FC.77.01.22 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committees of the 13 December 2021 and 4 January 2022.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee

FC.78.01.22 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment and Leisure Committee of the 10 January 2022.

(c) General Purposes Committee

No meetings held since last Full Council.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

(i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Panel
Nothing to report at present.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Civic Centre Working Group
Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield Dementia Forum
Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield – Events Working Group
Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT BUDGET (2022/23) AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-27 FOR WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members considered the contents of Wealden DC's draft budget and accompanying consultation questions.

Councillor P. Sparks reminded members that this time last year, Wealden DC had set a 0% increase in council tax and staff salaries had been frozen. At that time, a few of the Wealden District Councillors had raised their concerns that this could affect recruitment along with impacting future year increases. This year, Wealden DC were having to increase Council tax by 2.5% (£5.00) and set a 2.5% increase in staff salaries, as a result.

Councillor D. French noted that with the increase in housing in future years, Wealden DC would be seeing an increase in council tax. It was therefore necessary for the Local Plan to be developed and adopted, so developers could be made to build the backlog of properties/sites they had been sitting on, which had previously been given permission but not yet developed.

Councillor D. French also expressed her disappointment that the council tax had not been frozen, and noted that a large number of companies could not afford to increase salaries.

Councillor D. Bennett noted that the current rate of inflation was nearer 5.2%.

Councillor C. Macve felt that although it was a very comprehensive report there was a great deal of information missing, and it was felt that Wealden DC's Cabinet had already made a decision on many of the points covered in the report.

Councillor D. Ward also expressed her disappointment in much of Wealden DC's focus being directed towards Hailsham. In the news there's great talk of levelling up nationally – this should also be the case in Wealden District.

FC.79.01.22 With a seconded proposal by Councillor J. Edwards members **RESOLVED** to express a collective disappointment in Wealden DC's proposed increase in member allowances and council tax.

10.0 TO REVIEW THE PROPOSED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL AND THE UCKFIELD VOLUNTEER CENTRE AND WEALDEN CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU FOR 2022-23

This item was deferred until the next meeting of Full Council.

11.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2022/27

Members considered the contents of the Strategic Plan 2022/27, which set out the priorities for the next five years. Members referenced some of the feedback that had been received from residents. Unfortunately the suggestion for the High Street to be made one-way was not considered practical in implementation, as the link around the town would be too long. It was also noted that usage of the football pitches were high, with increasing demand so the spend was necessary on pitches such as West Park. With multiple MUGAs and indoor provision at the Leisure Centre, there wasn't just football pitches within the town but a variety of sports facilities to support and consider the future improvement of.

Members noted their continued support still for the provision of public conveniences, and for the Uckfield Youth Club, to which they hoped to receive an update soon on reopening plans in 2022-23.

FC.80.01.22 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Strategic Plan 2022/27 for Uckfield Town Council.

12.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN 2022/23

Members considered the Annual Plan for 2022/23 which set out the priorities of the Town Council over the next financial year.

FC.81.01.22 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Annual Plan 2022/23 for Uckfield Town Council.

13.0 TO FORMALLY SET THE ANNUAL BUDGET (PRECEPT) FOR 2022/23

Members were presented with a final copy of the budget papers for 2022/23. Staff were thanked for all of their hard work on preparing the papers.

Councillor C. Macve made a number of detailed enquiries with regards to the figures, in particular the breakdown in utility expenditure, to which the Town Clerk responded. Members were reminded that if they had detailed enquiries, it was often helpful to advise the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk & RFO prior to the meeting so they would be better able to respond.

FC.82.01.22 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the annual budget for 2022/23 and precept of £983,076.

14.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2022/27

Members considered the contents of the Asset Management Plan 2022/27 and thought it was a very comprehensive report. Councillor C. Macve asked if staff could check the terms of the lease agreements for a couple of sites including Victoria Pleasure Ground and Bell Lane allotments and to explore whether the Town Council could purchase the freehold of such sites in the future.

FC.83.01.22 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Asset Management Plan for 2022/27.

15.0 TO REVIEW THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS IN LINE WITH THE NEW MODEL STANDING ORDERS FROM NALC

Members were presented with a detailed report which highlighted a number of changes in the NALC Model standing orders from 2020 which needed to be reflected in the Town Council's current set of orders.

Councillor D. French referenced the section on the management of information and queried the level of access to hard copy personnel records. The Town Clerk agreed and advised that she would amend the standing orders to reflect proposed strengthened arrangements.

Councillor D. Ward advised that the Chair of Wartling Parish Council, Councillor Keith Stevens was now the Chair of NALC.

FC.84.01.22 Members **RESOLVED** to accept and adopt the revised Standing Orders for Uckfield Town Council.

16.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22 (Q3)

Members reviewed the progress that had been made towards the 2021/22 priorities and subsequently noted the report.

17.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THE 20S PLENTY CAMPAIGN

Campaign group '20s Plenty for Us' approached the Town Council alongside all Wealden based parish and town councils in December 2021, requesting the support of parish and town councils in reducing the speed of traffic and "*to set 20mph as the normal speed limit and 30mph as an exception...in residential streets and in town and village centres – in other words in those places where people live, work, learn and play.*"

In general, members supported the campaign, with references to the statistics which evidenced that if a vehicle dropped to 20mph through built up areas, it would only reduce your journey by an average of 54 seconds. It would also ensure the wellbeing of pedestrians, and wildlife.

One member thought that by making 20mph default however it could create a lot of practical problems on the road, particularly on trunk roads, and for the fact that Sussex Police would not be able to regularly enforce these speed limits.

It was also highlighted that the newer electric vehicles were almost silent when moving, and a reduction in speed would help encourage pedestrians to look and listen even more.

One member felt it should incorporate estates like Manor Park, where Brown's Lane often saw speeding vehicles. It should reach as far west as West Park and as far south as Ridgewood. It was also thought to help in reducing the number of road signs and street furniture associated with traffic calming.

It was referenced that 20mph was pretty much the standard limit in London.

FC.85.01.22 Members **RESOLVED** to support the 20s Plenty Campaign and:

- (i) Call upon East Sussex County Council to extend the 20mph zone wider within the town centre of Uckfield;
- (ii) Write to East Sussex County Council to request that the County:
 - a) makes 20mph the default speed limit on streets throughout East Sussex in places where people live, work, shop, play or learn, leaving 30mph as the exception on those roads, where full consideration of the needs of vulnerable road users allows a higher limit; and
 - b) allocate a ring-fenced amount from public health, sustainability and transport budgets to enable 20mph to be implemented county-wide within five years.

18.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the engagements listed.

19.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT

None received.

20.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

21.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk advised that Holy Cross Church were planning a couple of commemorative gatherings at their church in February and March, with a service to remember those who had lost their lives in the pandemic, taking place towards the end of March. The Church had asked if the Civic Centre would consider opening a book of condolence/remembrance during the week or period leading up to the service. The Town Clerk sought feedback from members on this suggestion, to which Town Councillors agreed that such an idea would be supported.

22.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor Jackie Love, requested that all Town Councillors kept up with their email correspondence, let the Chair of the relevant committee and Town Clerk know if they needed to send their apologies. It was important that councillors helped to support the Town Council office whilst staffing levels were under pressure.

The meeting closed at 8.27pm.