

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held  
on Monday 23 January 2023 at 7.00 pm  
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)
Cllr. J. Beesley	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. G. Johnson	Cllr. D. Ward

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Councillor Chris Dowling  
County and District Councillor Claire Dowling  
One member of the public  
Sarah D'Alessio      Assistant Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer  
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 were forthcoming.

## **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.76.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders.  
County Councillor Chris Dowling spoke of the temporary traffic lights in Lewes Road and water leak. It was causing a great deal of frustration for local residents and road users, as for much of the time the temporary traffic lights had been up, no contractors had been onsite. It had appeared that a tree needed removing from the bank, before works could be carried out and then when onsite SGN also needed to be present due to the close proximity of a gas pipe. Councillor Dowling was still waiting to hear dates

but was regularly placing pressure on the East Sussex Highways Network Management Team to place pressure on the utility company.

Newtown Action Group were considering setting up a community speedwatch group to address issues in Framfield Road, and enforce the speed limit. He had also asked if ES Highways could place temporary signage about the speed limit on lamp columns in Framfield Road.

Councillor K. Bedwell referred to the works in Lewes Road, and advised that water was still pouring down the road, and the temporary lights had not been working the day before.

County Councillor Claire Dowling spoke of the current condition of roads in East Sussex which had been impacted by the recent weather. It had been the wettest winter on record but had also seen extremes from minus six temperatures to heavy rain. Over 775 pot holes had been repaired during January to date. There were 21 gangs working, the workforce had been doubled to carry out the repairs and were working long hours during weekdays and weekends. Lots of photographs had also been reported to East Sussex Highways for road repairs in Uckfield including areas such as Manor Park, and Rocks Park. Members and staff were encouraged to keep reporting. Church Street was referred to as a particular problem area, which one section of the road tending to dip.

Councillor Dowling referred to the County Council's strategic and financial planning for the next financial year. The Medium Term Financial Strategy projection saw a £17.5million gap for 2023/24 rising to potentially £31.5million in 2025/26. East Sussex had the highest proportion of over 85 year olds and was known to have an older age profile. This placed pressure on services and it was projected that by 2025, the area would see a further increase of 6.5% of older people in the county. But, at the same time more and more young people were presenting with complex needs. Members were welcomed to view the budget, which was available in the county's committee papers.

Councillor D. Ward referenced roads on her route to work, which were of particular concern including Hindleap Road near Wych Cross, and the roads towards Sharpthorne, and that in some cases, some areas needed full sections of resurfacing not just pot hole repairs. Councillor Dowling confirmed that £2.5million had been put aside this year for patching.

Councillor C. Macve raised his concerns with the quality of the repairs – with observation of a pothole being refilled in Fairwarp High Street, which was filled in, and the following day had broken up again. They had undertaken the work in bad weather, and this was likely to have affected the quality of the repair.

Councillor C. Macve also asked if the highway works for Ridgewood Farm's S106 agreement were due to be carried out soon. The Town Clerk advised that she would contact the relevant officer at East Sussex Highways.

Councillor B. Cox supported the increase in the adult social care funding and precept for the County Council, to support the increasing ageing population. He also referenced once again his concerns with regard to the recent weather and flood risk posed in various areas of the town. The Town Clerk advised that she

would chase East Sussex County Council on their work on the Flood Strategy update for Uckfield. Councillor C. Dowling was also very pleased that the flood gate had been put in.

Councillor J. Love advised that three parishes had asked for Police & Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne not to put the precept up for Sussex Police.

Councillor D. French wished to thank the County Councillors for their help over the Christmas break with potholes/sink hole response.

Councillor P. Sparks provided a District Council update advising that Wealden DC were going to recommend a 3% increase in council tax. He advised members that he had recently heard that the UK Government were seeking to increase rents in local authority housing by 7%. This was of great concern.

Other key facts included the trialling of vegetable oil as a replacement of regular diesel in waste collection vehicles which would hopefully see a 9% reduction on carbon emissions.

Councillor D. Bennett advised that material costs continued to increase, with material costs to suppliers now 25-35% more than they were at the latter part of the previous year.

Councillor G. Johnson added to Councillor Sparks' district update, but advising that he had mainly been concentrating on planning applications within his ward area. This included Ridgewood House – nine homes, which he had requested be taken to Planning Committee North. It was thought it might be placed on the agenda in March 2023.

Horsted Pond Farm was thought to come in, in the earlier part of the year. He had asked directly about Article 4, and was still awaiting a response. He was also aware that there could be activity on the western side of the A22 bypass, but once he heard more, he would keep members informed.

**FC.77.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

#### **4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies had been received. It was thought that Councillor Firth was unwell.

#### **5.0 MINUTES**

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 19 December 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**FC.78.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 19 December 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

#### 5.2 Action List

Members 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 9 January 2023

**FC.79.01.23**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 9 January 2023.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 3 January 2023

**FC.80.01.23**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 3 January 2023.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 16 January 2023

**FC.81.01.23**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 16 January 2023.

## 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 – Events Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Councillor P. Sparks noted that in May, the National Dementia Action Week was due to take place, and this would fall after the Kings Coronation Bank Holiday weekend, where there was a particular focus on community and volunteering. The two would tie in well. Members subsequently noted the report.

## 9.0 TO CONSIDER A RESPONSE FROM BUXTED PARISH COUNCIL REGARDING THE PURCHASE OF THE DENE, UCKFIELD

Members were provided with an update from Buxted Parish Council which confirmed that they were happy to accept the bid for the Dene, Brown's Lane, but wished to incorporate an overage clause, should the Town Council ever wish to sell or develop the land. Buxted Parish Council were keen for Uckfield Town Council to pay all legal fees. Uckfield Town Council were satisfied with the inclusion of the clause, but wondered if Buxted Parish Council could contribute something if not half of the legal fees.

**FC.82.01.23**

Members **RESOLVED** to support the inclusion of an overage clause in the purchase of the land, the Dene, Brown's Lane, Uckfield but requested that the Town Clerk return to Buxted Parish Council to request whether they could contribute towards the legal fees.

## 10.0 TO APPROVE THE RE-ALLOCATION OF EARMARKED RESERVES FOR PRIORITY PROJECTS IN 2023 AND 2024

Members were provided with a report which set out a request to reallocate sums of funding from earmarked reserves to fund certain larger expenditure in the next 12-18 months. These re-allocations would help to fund the

purchase of a rotary mower, attend to ash dieback in winter 2023, and so on.

The Town Clerk noted that there was a typo on the existing earmarked reserves spreadsheet where it said there was an overspend on CCTV costs for Victoria Pavilion. This was incorrect. An invoice had been included twice by mistake.

**FC.83.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to approve the re-allocations of earmarked reserves for priority projects in 2023 and 2024 as per the report.

**11.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2023/28**

Members considered the contents of the Strategic Plan 2023/28, which set out the priorities for the next five years.

**FC.84.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Strategic Plan 2023/28 for Uckfield Town Council.

**12.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN 2023/24**

Members considered the Annual Plan for 2023/24 which set out the priorities of the Town Council over the next financial year.

**FC.85.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Annual Plan 2023/24 for Uckfield Town Council.

**13.0 TO FORMALLY SET THE ANNUAL BUDGET (PRECEPT) FOR 2023-24**

Members were presented with a final copy of the budget papers for 2023/24.

The Town Clerk advised that they had shared the final draft with members of Finance Sub-Committee informally to give time for any questions prior to the meeting. Since then, the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO and Town Clerk had met again, to go through every line, and make some adjustments based on the information at that time. This would result in a 4.9% increase for the average Council Tax Band D household.

Councillor D. Ward confirmed that in the King's Coronation plans, it had now been confirmed that he did not wish the beacons to be lit. Councillor D. Ward questioned whether the funding should be removed, to save £2k. However it was felt by members that some plans should be made for the weekend and it would make more sense to retain the £2k in the budget, and then the funds could always be re-allocated for another purpose if any of the monies remained unspent. Councillor B. Cox also thought something based on King Charles' great history around the environment would be good, such as planting a tree. The Town Clerk advised that an item be added to the Environment & Leisure Committee agenda on 13 February 2023.

Councillor P. Sparks wished to say a big thank you to the whole of the Town Council staff, led by the Town Clerk. They had done an amazing job on this budget, and demonstrated sound spending for the benefit for the town.

**FC.86.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the annual budget for 2023/24, and precept of £1,051,151.

Councillor D. Manvell arrived to the meeting at 7.48pm.

**14.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023/28**

Members considered the contents of the Asset Management Plan 2023/28 and noted the additional comments relating to land of interest or in dispute at present.

**FC.87.01.23** Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Asset Management Plan for 2023/28.

**15.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23 (Q3)**

Councillor P. Sparks said how encouraged he was with the progress being made and how this was reflective of the excellent work the Town Council staff had completed.

His only observation related to the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Clerk advised that work was being undertaken on the documentation behind the scenes, but it was a lengthy task and required a great deal of work.

Members reviewed the progress that had been made towards the 2023/24 priorities and subsequently noted the report.

**16.0 TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO PROVIDE A RESPONSE TO THE LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL: REFORMS TO PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION**

Councillor C. Macve was hopeful that the Wealden Parish Lobby Group would be preparing a response.

The Chair, Councillor J. Love however felt that Uckfield Town Council needed to present its own response.

The Chair of Plans Committee, Councillor K. Bedwell agreed and would place the matter on the agenda for the next Plans Committee. The deadline for comments fell on 2 March 2023.

**17.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

The Chair, Councillor J. Love advised that most of the activities during the previous few weeks had been outside of the parish or clashed with work commitments. Members noted the update.

**18.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT**

One deed of grant had been received:

Mrs Jennifer Hamer

**FC.88.01.23** It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deed of grant.

**19.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

None received in time for the meeting.

**20.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Clerk advised members that a question had been received from a member but this had fallen after the deadline through which you could receive an item for agenda item 19.0.

Members advised of their concerns with regard to the recent auction of land, and confirmed that the Town Council did not wish to be in this same position again.

The Town Clerk advised that their Solicitors had been instructed. The Town Clerk was tasked by Town Councillors with undertaking full land registry searches for two residential estates in town, to understand current ownership. And, would continue to support the legal representatives with the provision of evidence.

#### **21.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair, Councillor J. Love wished to say thank you to the Town Clerk and Council's staff for everything they had done on the paperwork and budget. The hours involved in preparing the documentation, was very much appreciated.

#### **22.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**FC.89.01.23** It was **RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted it was advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

22.1 To consider the tenders for the demolition of the Hub building only (not full site) and professional advice from surveyors

**FC.90.01.23** It was **RESOLVED** to appoint the first contractor listed in the table of tender results on page 4 of the report.

22.2 To consider proposals from Sussex Police for the renewal of the contract for the Town Centre CCTV transmission and equipment changes.

Members were provided with a verbal update from the Town Clerk.

The meeting closed at 8.26pm.