

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 23 September 2024 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Ward (Chair)	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. C. Macve (Vice Chair)	Cllr. P. Selby
Cllr. V. Frost	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. J. Love	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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.

No declarations were forthcoming.

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

GP17.09.24 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable a local resident to speak.

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward, offered at her discretion for the local resident to speak, despite there being no specific matter relating to drainage or grounds on the agenda.

The local resident lived on West Park estate, and wished to raise his concerns in relation to surface water drainage. The matter went back to 1987, when the bypass was being built along with Bell Farm Road. At the time, two culverts had to be established, one of which was installed under the road near the Suzuki garage. When the estate was laid out, some of the drainage had to be reorganised, which resulted in a drainage channel at the north side of Ellis Way, and south side of Hart Close, and a second between Calvert Close and Hart Close.

The culvert between Ellis Way and Hart Close, was generally well maintained. However the drainage channel between Calvert Close and Hart Close was now blocked at the entrance. Local people had cleared an exit for the water to go but of more concern, was the culvert near Bell Farm Road, where the riverlet ran into the culvert underneath the road. You couldn't see the culvert now, as it was overgrown. Ownership and responsibility for this was uncertain, and very little had happened to the culvert adjacent to Bell Farm Road. If water built up, it could pose a risk.

GP18.09.24 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors B. Cox and P. Ullmann due to work commitments.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 22 July 2024

GP19.09.24 Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 22 July 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Action list

Members agreed to remove the following actions, which were now completed, before members noted the action list:

GP 12.07.24 – opening of new bank account for investment - Complete

GP 12.07.24 – amendments to the draft Scheme of Delegation – Complete.

Councillor Manvell asked if the bank mandates had been updated with the transfer of the investment funds.

4.3 Project list

A number of projects listed were nearing completion or had recently been completed, which was positive news.

The online event ticket system was nearly ready to launch, with this due to go live mid-October. The new plumbing and heating system had been installed at Victoria Pavilion, and the reconfiguration of the caretaker station was awaiting sign off from East Sussex Building Control Partnership.

Members were concerned that there was no window in the new caretaker's office. The Town Clerk explained that the original proposed design had had to be amended to meet the requirements of Building Control. New signage would be placed up in the foyer and near the caretaker station, to improve signposting for visitors to the Civic Centre, and the Hospitality Manager had suggested placing a sign above the bar of the restaurant, to make the distinction between the restaurant and Civic Centre meeting rooms clearer. The Town Clerk advised that the Caretakers were not a tourist or information office and they currently received a number of enquiries each day. The caretaking and cleaning staff needed to be busy within the building turning rooms around, cleaning and carrying out compliance duties.

It was suggested that a log be kept of the number of interactions at the Town Council office and the subject of their enquiry to understand the types of enquiries the Civic Centre received.

Members were happy to remove the project relating to Victoria Pavilion from the Project List and noted the remainder of the report.

5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

5.1 To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

5.2 To note the income and expenditure reports up to 30 June 2024

Members were pleased to see the income and expenditure figures so close to those budgeted for quarter one for Luxfords Restaurant.

The Town Clerk noted that the expenditure on non-alcoholic purchases was very high for that period. The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO had reminded the Town Clerk of the stock purchased for the Beacon Lighting event, and had since been advised by the Hospitality Manager that soft drinks were also bought in for the end of season Junior football club award evenings in June.

A question was then raised in relation to the expenditure around casual staff in Q1, being higher than anticipated. The Town Clerk explained that a member of the kitchen staff was on long term sick and returned on a phased return in June following an operation, so this accounted for some of the additional costs around casual staffing along with events held in the Civic Centre.

In relation to General Purposes Committee, members made enquiries relating to the room hire and Civic Centre income streams. The Town Clerk provided an update, and also advised members that the office was still waiting for the decision on the National Joint Council pay awards for 1 April 2024. Members subsequently noted both reports.

5.3 To receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee on 12 September 2024

To be dealt with under confidential business.

6.0 BUILDINGS

6.1 To note the current position with the Council's buildings

A discussion commenced on the new meeting room, to which the Town Clerk advised that they were looking for a new name for the room.

Various ideas were put forward, which included honouring the names of notable people who had been important within the town but sadly passed in recent years. The only concern with naming a room after a person, was that it could set a precedent. A number of people had passed, but there were also cases where more than one person had the same name.

Alternative suggestions put forward included Boothland or Nightingale Room, Sussex Room etc.

The Town Clerk advised she would identify four potential names within that theme and ask members and staff to select their top two preferred names from the list to reach a vote on the new name.

The Town Clerk also provided an update on 2A Vernon Road. Members felt that the property should be re-let on a six-month assured shorthold tenancy, whilst scoping work was undertaken to consider how the space could be reconfigured to make the best use of the space, in terms of living and bathroom space.

Members subsequently noted the report.

7.0 POLICY

7.1 To consider the Town Council's Pension Policy – no. 32

The Town Clerk presented the updated Pension Policy following a review by Personnel Sub-Committee on 12 September 2024.

GP20.09.24

Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the revised Pension Policy.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council

Members noted the contents of the report.

8.2 To receive Members' audit report for May 2024

Members noted the completed audit report for May 2024.

9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

9.1 To consider reports from: -

(i) Wealden Citizen's Advice

Nothing to report.

(ii) Wealden Volunteering

Wealden Volunteering were hosting a Volunteer Fair in the Civic Centre on 12 October, and the Manager of the organisation was due to present to members at 6.30pm on 25 September 2024. The Town Clerk advised that this was an important presentation as members would be asked to review both their Service Level Agreement and the Service Level Agreement for Wealden Citizen's Advice, during this budget setting period.

(iii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Mgt Committee

Nothing to report.

(iv) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel

Nothing to report.

10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, Councillor Diane Ward commented on how great it was to see so many people out on Carnival night, taking part in the carnival and supporting the event. Councillor Ward wished to thank the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society for such a great event, it was brilliant.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP21.09.24

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.

12.1 To note bad debts

Members raised concerns with one of the organisations with debts outstanding as they knew that the business was due to shortly close. The Town Clerk would ensure that any outstanding debts were addressed. Members noted the report.

12.2 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members and the Town Clerk discussed the July figures, recent stocktake audits, the earlier start times on Friday and Saturday mornings, and current deals. They

wished to thank the Hospitality Manager for a good report, and noted the contents.

12.3 To receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee

Members received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee which took place on 12 September 2024.

12.4 To consider the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee

Members discussed the conversations that had taken place at Personnel Sub-Committee. It was suggested that where the office received a number of enquiries for town-based matters, which were often outside of the Town Council's remit, that perhaps a more prominent FAQ page be placed on the Town Council website. The current information on what each local authority did was quite hidden amongst the webpages.

It was suggested that a residents' survey take place to support both members and staff in prioritising work in addition to the management of the Town Council's asset portfolio, and committee members wished to see a copy of the presentation shared with Personnel Sub-Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.36pm.