



### **3.0 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

These were proposed by Cllr. L. Eastwood and seconded by Mrs. Sheila Charlesworth and agreed by all those who attended the meeting.

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010 were then taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.

(Cllr. J. Hallett arrived at 7.40 pm.)

### **4.0 Matters arising from Minutes of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

Mrs. Frances McGuckin asked if there was any more news regarding the Doctors' Surgery at West Park as last year at the meeting there was a lack of information.

Cllr. Carvey advised that the Town Council had still not received nor was able to gain any further information and there was still no progress to report. He mentioned that as most residents were recently aware there were obviously problems within the Surgery Partnership which were not assisting with any possible move.

Cllr. H. Firth and Mrs. Charlesworth both mentioned that they had heard reports that the NHS now had insufficient funds to pay for two surgeries and the upgrading of the surgery at Buxted had received the funding.

Cllr. Carvey agreed that it was a worrying situation for all involved.

### **5.0 Topics and questions by members of the public previously notified**

Nothing previously notified.

### **6.0 Consideration of the Town Council's Annual Report**

Cllr. Carvey asked if there were any questions arising from the Town Council's Annual Report which had been previously circulated in the publication 'Uckfield Matters' and on the Town Council's website.

As there were no questions raised he asked if there was an acceptance of the Annual Report and this was proposed by Mrs. Charlesworth and seconded by Cllr. J. Molesworth-Edwards.

### **7.0 Questions from the floor**

Mrs. Charlesworth stated that she wished to take the opportunity to pass on compliments and a 'thank you' from herself other residents to everyone involved with the planting of all the baskets, planters and flowers which made the town look very pretty.

Cllr Carvey agreed and thanked Cllrs. D. Sparks, I. Smith and all the volunteers and staff involved, in particular, with the planting of the crocus bulbs on Bell Lane. He reminded residents that more volunteers for BUC Up would always be welcome.

Cllr. P. Sparks asked that, as renewable energy was one of the big issues at the moment had the Town Council explored the possibility of putting PV (Photo Voltaic) Panels on the Civic Centre roof and would it be an option to help climate change and reduce utility bills?

Cllr. D. Sparks, as a member of the Town Council's Energy and Sustainability Working Group, confirmed that the Council was actively looking at various ways of reducing the energy used and the utility costs for all the Councils' buildings.

Cllr. Sparks advised that recently the Council had been awarded a grant towards installing a wind turbine at Victoria Pleasure Ground to help reduce the electricity used within the pavilion. Cllr. Sparks also took the opportunity to thank Cllr. Harker and the Town Council staff for all their hard work in providing the information required for the completion of the large application form necessary to qualify for the grant.

Cllr. Sparks further advised that she was unable to provide or explain all the technical details but the use of PV panels on buildings was currently being explored and quotes were in the region of £35,000. Cllr. Sparks explained what the panels were, that the government would buy back any surplus electricity generated but not used within the building and although she was unable to provide exact figures of savings, advised that it offered an opportunity of reducing electricity bills and generating a useful, guaranteed income over the next twenty five years. Payback for the panels was projected to be achieved in about seven and half years with a return on capital of around 11.9%. However, the proposal had still to go to committee for agreement to progress with the work.

Cllr. Carvey advised that the Council was committed to being a 'green' Council and was continually considering ways of achieving changes and savings.

Mr. Norman Wood stated that although the wind did blow across Victoria Pleasure Grounds, what figures were available confirming that there was sufficient wind at Victoria. He also asked what was the expenditure on installing the panels on Victoria Pavilion and the wind turbine and how had the decisions been arrived at that they would achieve the savings mentioned.

Cllr. Sparks advised that she did not have exact figures to hand but that the Town Council had received a grant of £20,000 and had earmarked another £34,500 for the projects. The Town Council had sought and taken expert advice and it made very good business sense for the projects to progress. Cllr. Sparks added that together with the installation of push buttons in the showers to conserve water etc., savings would be made. She advised residents that they could be assured that the Council would not waste their money.

Mr. Mel Saunders stated that he had been a resident living by Victoria Pleasure Ground for a number of years and questioned the viability of installing a wind turbine. He asked how high the turbine would be, suggesting that it may be 50-60 ft. high and also asked where it would be sited?

He further suggested that there would not be sufficient wind for the majority of the year and questioned the return on the investment. He also thought it would be a good target for the vandals bearing in mind the amount of vandalism that is happening within the ground at the present time. He stated that over the recent weekend the skatepark had been vandalised and burnt and fires started in the football dugouts. He added that the Police had been called but did not attend.

Cllr. Carvey advised that the turbine was not going to be very tall and would be reliable and that the returns for a smaller property were good. However the reports were still being studied.

Cllr. Whittaker wished to re-iterate the point that the Town Council had sought professional advice from the industry before the initial idea had been agreed.

Mr. Geoffrey Crease a resident of Church Street asked if there was any feedback regarding the request of introducing traffic calming in Church Street?

Cllr. Carvey asked Cllr. P. Sparks to answer on behalf of East Sussex County Council. (ESCC) Cllr. Sparks advised that following the meeting last year the ESCC engineers had made site visits and had discussions with residents, Town, District and County Councillors and had been investigating possible traffic calming methods. They had already advised that as Church Street is very narrow and in the conservation area there is not the space/width to put in one-way calming as has been installed in Maresfield. Speed controls had been used to record the speed of the traffic and the average speed was 30mph. Cllr. Sparks advised that there would be further meetings with the engineers and Church Street would obviously be an ongoing issue until the problem was resolved. He also advised that there were a couple of residents who were determined to find an answer but that the situation was not helped by the lack of funding.

Mr. Crease stated that he hoped ESCC would continue to look for new measures to solve the problem. He advised that when scaffolding had been erected recently to undertake some building work on the house at the very narrow point of the road, a traffic light one-way system had been in place and the system worked very well.

Cllr. Carvey agreed that it was a problem and the Town Council would continue to press for a solution as he was aware of near misses with pedestrians and hoped that there would not be a fatality before something was put in place.

Cllr. Bennett asked Cllr. P. Sparks if ESCC had looked at the possibility of introducing traffic lights in the pinch point similar to the system used in Lewes High Street?

Cllr. Sparks confirmed that something similar had been considered by ESCC but was very expensive.

Mrs. Jennifer Belsham-Revell advised Councillors that some years ago the Christmas lights were shabby and that a levy had been made on residents to pay for better lights. She commented that the lights for the last two years had been very good but were residents still paying a levy and if so how much as she remembered that the levy had not been very popular?

On behalf of the Town Council, Cllr. Carvey asked the Town Clerk to respond.

The Clerk advised that about 10 years ago the levy had been £0. 50p per elector and had in recent years, increased to about £1.00. He reminded also advised that the Council received money from the Chamber of Commerce towards the lights.

Cllr. Carvey agreed that the Christmas lights were something to be proud of and he knew that other towns and in particular the County Town of Lewes were very envious of Uckfield's Christmas lights.

Mr. John McGuckin advised that although he had asked at the beginning of the meeting for the induction loop to be on it had not come on and he had been unable to hear most of the meeting. As he had been advising that there was a problem with the system for years could the problem be sorted as soon as possible?

Mrs. Charlesworth stated that she had heard a presentation on the all-weather pitch at a recent Chamber of Commerce meeting and asked if Cllr. Hallett could provide any more information?

Cllr. Hallett gave a brief review as to why it was proposed to install an all-weather pitch. He advised that there was an increasing problem with providing sports facilities for the growing number of sports clubs and their requirements and the standards required by the sports bodies were getting higher. To enable clubs to train adequately many, at the moment, are travelling to St. Bedes School, and it did not make economic sense for them to travel the long distance. Many families were not able to bear the costs of travel and it would make more sense for them to stay within the local area.

A feasibility study had been undertaken to establish costs and usage and it had been agreed that it would be beneficial and viable to build the all-weather pitch at the Uckfield Community Technology College. The intention was that it be managed by Freedom Leisure as they have the expertise in running such facilities in the same way as they manage their leisure centres. The area would be available for use by the college and the whole community. The pitch would be of a very high standard and specification to last at least twenty years as laid down by the Football Foundation who would be providing some of the funding.

Over the next few months there would be further consultations with clubs and groups to raise further funding and to make sure that the viability is properly assessed before any further money is committed, but the provision of a 'decent' surface would be a big plus for all clubs within the Uckfield area. Cllr. Hallett advised that when a decision to go ahead was made the project would happen quickly.

Mr. David Pryce, Chairman of the Church Coombe Residents Association questioned how much usage residents would be allowed?

Cllr. Hallett advised that 35% of the time must be available for use by the public and it had to be at convenient times. The area had to be well used to ensure its viability but it was expected that there would be a strong demand during school holidays and for general sports activities throughout the whole year.

A resident asked if the Town Council had ever given consideration to installing CCTV at Victoria Pleasure Ground. He stated that some time ago he used to assist with locking the gates at night to try and reduce the anti-social behaviour and vandalism but that it had become too dangerous asking people to leave the area and there was no backing from the Police or Council.

Cllr. Carvey agreed that there was an increasing problem with vandalism and anti-social behaviour within the area, not just at Victoria Pleasure Ground and that it may be necessary for Councillors to consider installing CCTV.

Cllr. Eastwood agreed that anti-social behaviour was bad and will only get worse with the warm evenings but that it also should be remembered that the young people need somewhere to go. She also agreed that it would not hurt to look into the costs of installing cameras.

Cllr. Bennett advised that infra-red cameras had proved to be a good passive way of protecting property and assets and perhaps the Council should also consult with the nearby residents as to what they thought should be provided.

A resident stated that he thought that it would be better to spend money on CCTV rather than on the wind turbine.

Cllr. Whittaker stated that it was the job of the Police not Uckfield Town Council to enforce the law but the Town Council was looking at introducing new byelaws for Victoria Pleasure Ground to assist with law enforcement. He also stated that the Police had never approached the Town Council about the possibility of installing CCTV in other areas.

Cllr. Whittaker also stated that he had been about to raise the possibility of again introducing locking the gates. He also pointed out that it was not necessarily school age children but mostly older and young adults who caused the most problems.

Mr. Wood advised that although the Police had been called three times over the recent weekend they had not attended.

Cllr. Carvey advised residents that if they were not happy with something within the town to report it to Councillors in order that it may be recorded and evidence collected and pressure could then be put on the relevant authority. Residents were also encouraged to attend Council meetings to hear what was happening and the way things work.

Cllr. D. Sparks advised that should anybody have to report anything to the Police to always ask for a crime number in order that the report could be tracked and to log the time and date in a diary when incidents took place which would enable a picture to be built up.

Cllr. Eastwood advised that Councillors were approachable and together with residents' assistance could make a difference. She mentioned that perhaps the Council did not publicise enough the work that is undertaken by Councillors and volunteers in particular the BUC Up campaign, the results of which could be seen around the town.

Cllr. Bennett asked if the Town Council would be revisiting how to publicise the Annual Town Meeting as Councillors would like more people to attend.

Cllr. Carvey agreed that he would also like to see more people taking an interest and attend and he had been trying to think of more visible ways of advertising the meeting within the High Street but it was no longer possible to use the banner across the road.

Cllr. Bennett and Ms. Sam Bryant asked the residents who were attending the meeting if they had any ideas? Sam Bryant also asked those attending how they had found out about the meeting with a show of hands - 1 said a poster in the Civic Centre, 6 from Uckfield Matters, 1 from the Town Council calendar, others said from the Town Council website.

Barry Horsman, representative from Uckfield FM advised that if the Town Council contacted the radio next year about a month before the meeting he was sure that the radio would be able to produce something to advertise the date of the meeting and generate some interest for residents.

Cllr. P. Sparks mentioned that some Councils invite members of the emergency services to their meetings to give a report which sometimes attracted more people to their meetings and that may be something to consider.

Cllr. Eastwood advised that it had been tried before by inviting the Police but it turned into a Police meeting rather than a Town meeting.

Cllr. Carvey advised that more thought would be given to the advertising for future meetings.

Brian Marsh asked about the amount of litter that was in the town and especially in Luxford Field. He wanted to know why action could not be taken against the culprits.

Cllr. Carvey agreed that he also despaired about the amount of people who dropped litter and that it was not only children but adults as well. He advised that it costs the Town and District Councils vast sums of money to collect and dispose of the litter and that the grounds staff cleared the play areas and open spaces every morning. He advised that perhaps education was the answer as when he spoke to 9–10 year olds or received their letters they were equally cross and aware of the dangers that litter caused. He also stated that perhaps if the Police fined a few people then the message would get across to others.

Cllr. D. Sparks advised that it costs Wealden District Council £685,000 per annum to clear litter.

Cllr. Bennett stated that every year at the meeting the problems with litter and parking are raised and the Town Council does everything it can but the question was also what are the residents of the town going to do? Why do residents not ask somebody they see dropping litter why they are doing it and ask them to pick it up? They should not feel intimidated about asking them to put their litter in the many bins around the town.

A resident asked why more use was not made of the community pay-back scheme around the country. Councillors advised that this has been done in the past but did not always work well.

Mr. Wood asked why Councillors did not visit Victoria Park on a Friday/Saturday evening and Sunday morning to see for themselves all the vandalism that happens over a weekend? He advised that fires were lit in the plastic litter bins which the Council replaced with concrete bins with wire baskets but people are now taking these out and setting fire to the baskets and bins.

Cllr. Carvey responded that the Councillors were aware of the problem and were looking at ways of reducing the vandalism and litter but that the Council had to work within the law. Some countries have stronger laws than our own but it had to be a partnership between all organisations. Unfortunately some people's respect for their surroundings seems to have been lost.

Cllr. Carvey also stated the grounds staff were continually clearing up, replacing equipment and also visiting the park in their own time to speak to the young adults but it was only a small number of culprits every time. He pointed out that it was not all young people that there are many good youth organisations within the town which must all be supported.

Mrs. Margaret Foster asked why the police could not be more visible and patrol the open areas on off-road motorcycles or bikes. She had moved from the London Borough of Greenwich where bikes were used to patrol the large open spaces and parks and their visible presence helped stop the vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Cllr. Carvey reminded everybody that Councillors were always available and ready to serve the community. He could not promise that they would do everything right away or be able to sort everything but they would try.

As not further questions were forthcoming, the Town Mayor, Cllr. Carvey, closed the meeting at 8.40 pm.