**UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**



Minutes of the **Annual Town Meeting** held in the Ashdown Room,

Uckfield Civic Centre, Tuesday 10th April 2018 at 7.00pm

**PRESENT** Cllr. L. Eastwood Town Mayor

Cllr. D. Bennett Deputy Town Mayor

Cllr. M. Dean Chairman of the Environment and Leisure Committee

Cllr. D. Ward Chairman of the General Purposes Committee

Cllr. S. Mayhew Chairman of the Plans Committee

Councillors:-

K. Everett, D. French, H. Firth, J. Love, C. Macve, P. Meakin, I. Smith and P. Sparks.

Daniel Manvell (Youth Member)

District and County Councillor Claire Dowling
County Councillor Chris Dowling

Chief Inspector Anita Turner (Temporary) (Sussex Police)
Inspector Jonathan Gross (Sussex Police)

2 members of the press

22 residents and organisation representatives

Holly Goring – Town Clerk

Angela Paul – Administrative Officer

Minutes taken by Angela Paul

1. **Welcome and introductions by the Mayor**

Cllr. Louise Eastwood welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that she and the Councillors appreciated residents supporting the meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillors. J. Anderson and J.Beesley, and
 residents Mrs D. Sparks & Mr. A Blackford.

1. **Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of the 11th April 2017**

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on the 11th April 2017 previously circulated were proposed and approved by Councillors. J. Love and K. Everett as a true record.

**4. Matters arising from the minutes**

None**.**

**5. Topics and questions raised by residents in advance**

 **Question from Miss Fane***“Should hard up families, at a time of grief, be forced to pay double for
re-opening an existing cemetery plot to inter their relative, when they are not in any way adding to the pressure on the Council’s cemeteries?
We quite understand the Council’s needs to limit over use of the cemetery facilities by people who have left Uckfield, but Jacqueline’s interment on top of her twin, in the plot (W258) she prepaid for, will not take up any more valuable space and she only briefly left the town after 19 years because of her terminal illness.”*
*As per copy of email to the Mayor, ref: Jacqueline Robinson, resident for 19 years in Uckfield until shortly before her death*

The Town Clerk stated that policies regarding burials and ashes interments are always sensitive matters and the Town Council respect that when you’re grieving for loved ones, to consider the practicalities and costs of any funeral, is the last thing on a person’s mind.

The Town Clerk firstly clarified that the Town Council does not charge double to re-open any existing cemetery plot to inter a relative, but to inter when the person is no longer a resident of Uckfield (classified as a non-parishioner).

Individual circumstances are often complex and this was a specific case which should be considered on its own merits. Further information would be required to clarify the circumstances. The Clerk therefore suggested that conversations continue outside of this meeting with the next of kin.

The Town Clerk advised that if individuals find they are struggling to fund the unexpected costs of a funeral or the burial of a family member, that it may be worth contacting the Citizen’s Advice Bureau or Wealden District Council. Wealden District Council may be able to assist and any costs incurred claimed from the deceased estate.

**Question from Mr & Mrs Woodham**
*(i) Request for Uckfield Town Council to approach East Sussex County Council regarding the potential danger to pedestrians with vehicles passing on the left hand side across the ‘pedestrian footpath’ running along the side of the Cinque Ports Club when stationary vehicles are waiting to turn right into Church Street from the High Street.

This occurrence has been witnessed on several occasions by pedestrians on this footpath and/or at various locations whilst crossing at this junction.*

*(ii) Option for safety improvement
Traffic light filter into Church Street from the High Street to ease flow and safety.*
The Town Clerk advised that last year, Uckfield Town Council collated a list of key issues affecting main access corridors leading into Uckfield town. This included issues relating to junctions, road safety, pedestrian safety and congestion etc. This information would form part of an investigation by Highways engineers to assess what improvements could be made to the main access corridors into the town. The Church Street junction was raised as part of this report and suggestions put forward to filter traffic turning right into Church Street at this junction (lane markings or lights). The importance of safety for pedestrians was also raised at this point.

At review meetings with ESCC, the Town Council has made it very clear that the safety of pedestrians was a high priority and various options had been put forward but it had been considered a very difficult junction with a limited amount of space. The Town Council would however continue to push the need for improvements here. The Town Council were aware that there may be some S106 monies (developer contributions) available as part of a phase four of highway improvements in the town.

Cllr. Bennett advised that over the past two decades the Town Council had been persisting with trying to get something done about the junction and we were now much closer to actually getting something done and progressing to next stage.

Cllr. Macve suggested that if people adopted common courteous to each other and just slowed down slightly whilst driving up the hill drivers would have time to turn into Church Street and the problem would be resolved.

Resident Mr Cox suggested that consideration could be given to have ‘No Right Turn’ at the junction and all traffic continue down to Grange Road and follow road round to come out by the Cinque Ports junction and travel straight across in to Church Street.

Cllr. Eastwood confirmed that this suggestion had been considered in the past together with various phasing options of the traffic lights.

Mr Lawson (President of the Chamber of Commerce) asked if consideration had been given to installing an iron bollard on the corner of the pavement which would restrict vehicles crossing onto pavement.

Cllr Bennett advised that some years ago there had been a road sign on the corner but it had been knocked down by a lorry and not replaced.

Mr Woodham had concerns about the length of time such consideration was taking as this had been raised by residents at the last Annual Town meeting and he had hoped by now to have seen a more pro-active response from ESCC. Mr Woodham hoped that it would not take an accident involving pedestrians to happen before work was carried out at the junction.

**6. Consideration of the Town Council’s Annual Report**

There being no questions regarding the previously circulated Town Council’s Annual Report the report was noted by all attendees.

**7. Questions from the floor** Community Safety

Resident Mr Fennings asked if there was any chance of improvement to policing in the Town. He had lived in the town for 35 years ago and he had not seen a member of the police for sometime and he felt that a town the size of Uckfield should have a police presence in the town all the time. He thought that if there was more of a presence in the town it would deter the current drivers driving irresponsibly “doing donuts in the road and making a lot of noise” on the estate near his house at night.

He wanted to know why there was often so many police cars parked at the Uckfield Police station.

Inspector Gross advised that the lack of obvious policing on the beat was a consistent theme when he attended meetings within Wealden. However, as everybody was aware it was a constant challenge as to the type of policing that can be provided when the budgets for police services were being cut.

Wealden district is a very large spread out district and residents would have seen some significant changes especially to the reduction in numbers of PCSO’s within the district. He was currently looking to see what impact the forced reduction had had on the area. The Police were now putting in place a variety of different methods of policing and were working together with local community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch and Speed Awareness groups e.g. SID.

With regards to the fleet of police cars parked at the Uckfield Police Station he confirmed that the cars were parked there but in fact there was no more than one sergeant and four officers at the station at one time. He confirmed Uckfield Police Station was the only station other than the one at Eastbourne that had a 24/7 presence. He stated that the model of policing had changed.

Cllr. Eastwood stated that there had been a number of incidents within the town including in and around the Civic Centre building involving a small number of youths and the police had responded positively by working with the teenagers, their families and using other various strategies. It had been noted that the incidents had decreased significantly.

Cllr Eastwood also advised that a Community Group had been set up with representatives from the Police, Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce and other interested local businesses, youth community groups and the Uckfield College to explore ways of engaging with local teenagers and provide activities for young people.

Facilities for young people

Resident Mr Rixon advised that he had not lived in the area for long but felt it was a very family friendly town but he had noticed that there was not a lot to do within the town for teenagers and questioned whether the Town Council were investigating how to make it more interesting. However, he did stress that he did not have any sympathy for those youngsters who had damaged property and caused a nuisance to others.

Cllr Bennett stated that the one upside of the recent troubles was that the Town Council had connected with the police and other local agencies to form a productive working relationship. Twenty years ago, a lot of good work was undertaken by the Uckfield Trust working together with teenagers who had expressed a desire for a skatepark at Victoria Recreation Ground, this was achieved and a lot of other good work was done but unfortunately things had evolved and the momentum of the group and some facilities was lost.

Chief Inspector Anita Turner confirmed that Sussex Police were working and exploring initiatives in other local areas to engage with the youth in the community and would continue to do so in Uckfield and explore the various funding opportunities available to provide outlets and facilities within the town for young people.

Cllr Eastwood advised that with the closure of the Uckfield Youth Centre there was no real youth facility and the various agencies were working with the College to see if funding could be found to repair or purchase the building in order that it may be retained as a facility. However, the estimated cost of repairs to the building were very high with it was thought that they may be in the region of £250.000 due to the removal and replacement of the roof and the asbestos that had been found in the building which required expert removal.

Cllr. Eastwood advised that the supermarkets in the town might be able to offer support with their token schemes and the group were exploring other avenues of funding.

Mr Lawson asked if consideration had been given to boxing in the asbestos rather than removal, as it was not always necessary to remove asbestos from a building. Mr. Lawson also requested if the Chamber of Commerce could be involved with the Community Group discussions and updates. He would like to attend future meetings as it might be a project that the Chamber and business organisations could assist with, in terms of services or funding streams.

Mr Woodham advised that in the past he had been involved with building works where asbestos was boxed in rather than removed from a building and it had proved to be very successful and obviously less costly.

Cllr Bennett mentioned that as a result of a new initiative set up by the Town Council with students at Uckfield College, the Town Council now had a youth representative Daniel Manvell as part of council. Mr. Manvell was a shining example for youngsters being involved in the community and raising awareness of the needs of young people.

Cllr Bennett emphasised that it was a very small minority who caused a problem and the majority of young people were a credit to themselves and their families. He advised that he had family who attended Uckfield College and received the weekly newsletter, and you only had to see the newsletter to know all about the great achievements the students have made.

Litter on public highways

Mrs Noble asked who was responsible for collecting the litter around the town, in particular if Wealden District Council was the authority for clearing litter from the bypass which at the present time was looking awful. She was aware of the good work that Brighter Uckfield carried out in the town and that some of their members had recently cleared an area along the bypass.

The Town Clerk advised that on behalf of the Town Council a letter had been was due to be sent to ESCC, WDC and Highways Agency to start a conversation between the authorities to work together to see what could be done about the litter. The Clerk stated that unfortunately litter was a nationwide problem.

The Town Council’s Ground staff sometimes clear litter from land that was not town council land but due to concerns with regard to health and safety along the A22, the Town Council’s Grounds staff were not permitted to clear litter from the by-pass. The recent problem appeared to be that there had been some confusion between authorities and WDC should have litter picked prior to ESCC cutting the grass alongside the bypass.

Mr Cox advised that he felt that the wrong bins were at Victoria Pleasure Ground and if consideration could be given to installing lids on the bins as this would stop animals pulling out the rubbish on to the ground and the wind blowing the rubbish all over the area.

Cllr. Dean advised that the possible provision of alternative bins with lids was currently being discussed by the Environment & Leisure Committee but they were expensive.

Cllr. Eastwood wished to thank Brighter Uckfield for their hard work, without the work of the volunteers the town would look in a worse state but wanted to stress that residents should not be encouraged to access the area along the by-pass as vehicles were driving at speed.

Road signage

Resident Mr Selby asked if there was any further information regarding finding and re-instating the missing Bow Bell Sign from Ridgewood.

Mr Selby raised concerns about the preliminary construction works at Ridgewood on Lewes Road and in particular the speed of the traffic coming off the Isfield roundabout towards the temporary traffic lights as there was no reduction in speed sign and traffic was still travelling at 50 miles per hour. Mr Selby had spoken to Walkers the construction company and they advised that they had put sign up but it now appeared to be missing. Mr Selby asked if ESCC could do something about it before an accident occurred.

Mr Selby also raised concerns about the litter being created from the building site, and that a different type of bin at Ridgewood Recreation Ground would be useful.

Mr Selby stated that the lack of police presence at Ridgewood was a concern and in fact a house adjacent to the recreation ground had been broken into earlier in the week. Also for the past three nights there had been a considerable amount of noise and anti-social behaviour occurring in the Ridgewood car park. This had all been reported to the police.

The Town Clerk advised that the missing signs had been raised with ESCC and Taylor Wimpey (and their contractors) and they were not aware that the signs had been removed by the contractors. Regarding the litter from the building site, she agreed that this was a valid point and she would go back to ESCC to advise about the concerns and ask what would be required from the contractors.

The Town Clerk was pleased to hear that residents were working with the Police and letting them know when incidents happened so the police were made aware of the hot spots in the town.

Mr Fennings asked who was responsible for clearing the Twittens and in particular the path alongside the fire station as the nettles etc. were beginning to grow across the path.

The Town Clerk advised that she would check as there was shared or variations in ownership for the Twittens and would therefore ask for work to be undertaken.

Mr Fennings reported that some rubbish had been dumped at the bottom of Scarletts Close following some building work carried out in adjoining house and the amount of rubbish was increasing.

The Town Clerk advised that she would ask the Ground staff to visit and check the site.

Footways and cycleways

Mr Rixon, as a new resident to the town, noted that as there were only two ways through the town there was often a traffic bottle neck created and asked if long term consideration had been given to providing additional ways of crossing the river and providing more cycle routes within the town. He was aware that the Government did have monies available to give grants to towns for cycle route improvements.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council was keen to promote health and wellbeing in the town but there were restrictions and difficulties with the landscape of the town. The council was keen to see more accessibility to open spaces and to become involved in possibility of providing a longer river walk. It was also hoped that developments such as that at Ridgewood Farm, would create new foot and cycleways to open up access between the south and centre of the town. Within Phase 2 of the development at Ridgewood there was a requirement to put in a footpath from to the new SANGS land adjacent to the bypass to link up to Victoria Pleasure Ground.

Facilities for young people (2)

Mr Manvell advised that there was very little for young people within the town now that they did not have access to the Youth Centre which was now empty following the cuts by ESCC.

Cllr Eastwood re-confirmed that there was discussion about re-opening the building between the various agencies and the college but the building did need a lot of repair work.

Mrs Sweatland asked if parents were also going to be asked to be involved as it was for the benefit of their children.

Mr Sanders advised that it was difficult to encourage youngsters to become involved in youth organisations where they were provided. The Air Cadets headquarters is based on the college campus and the membership for Uckfield ATC was low as there was a shortage of young people joining up. Regrettably if the numbers dropped by too much the funding from the Ministry of Defence may be removed. The activities, experiences and opportunities offered to youngsters were excellent. The subscription was £10.00 per month for eight months of the year and the cadets also had the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Mr Sanders reported that there was also a need for civilian adult helpers. The group have tried advertising for more cadets and helpers but there were cost implications with advertising.

Mr Manvell suggested that perhaps a representative from the ATC could attend one of the assemblies at the College to talk about the organisation.

Cllr. Eastwood mentioned that when joining various organisations sometimes there were cost implications for families who may be struggling but there may be funds available from outside agencies. The 3VA may also be able to assist and were very helpful at finding available funding pots for organisations.

Mr Cox said many people in Year 10 were concerned about their future plans and it would be good to have a Hub were the teenagers could meet and work together with each other and outside agencies to gain some work experience. Mr Cox asked if it was possible for the Town Council to purchase the Youth Centre and rent back.

Cllr. Eastwood advised that it was not an option for the Town Council to buy the Youth Centre as the Town Council was still making payments to ESCC for the purchase of The Hub building.

It was also stated at the meeting that the Uckfield Volunteer Bureau were focusing on a new initiative this year ‘Volunteer with the Youth’.

Cllr. Bennett advised that the project would be taken forward working with the College, Police and Youth teams.

Chief Inspector Anita Turner advised that there were Police Funds from criminal gains which could be used to assist families and managed grant funding but there were certain criteria which had to be fulfilled. The group would look at ways of applying for pots of money for the development of a Youth Centre and youth support.

Cllr. Bennett reminded everybody that this year was the 100th Anniversary of the RAF and the 75th Anniversary for the cadets, and that without the assistance of the Uckfield unit many of the events in the town e.g. Weald on the Field and the Carnival would not be able to function without the cadets’ support as marshals and that it was a great organisation that should be supported.

 Conclusion

As there were no further questions Cllr. Eastwood thanked the police and everybody for attending the meeting.

Cllr. Eastwood took the opportunity to pass on her personal thanks to the Town Clerk and Officers and Town Councillors for all their help and support as she steps down at the end of her three-year term as Town Mayor.

Cllr Eastwood thanked both Inspector Anita Turner and Jonathan Gross for attending the meeting and assisting to answer questions in relation to community safety.

Meeting closed at 7.50pm.

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