

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Monday 15th January 2018 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

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| Cllr. L Eastwood (Town Mayor) | Cllr. S. Mayhew |
| Cllr. J. Beesley | Cllr. P. Meakin |
| Cllr. K. Everett | Cllr. I. Smith |
| Cllr. D. French | Cllr. P. Sparks |
| Cllr. J. Love | Cllr. D. Ward |
| Cllr. C. Macve | Mr D. Manvell (Youth Member) |

IN ATTENDANCE:

2 members of the Press
1 member of the Public
2 County Councillors – Councillor Chris and Claire Dowling

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Christine Wheatley – Assistant Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda. None were received.

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

FC.76.01.18

It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to allow members of the audience to speak.

Mr Selby attended the meeting and wished to speak on agenda item 9.0 – community safety.

Mr Selby noted his disappointment that there was no specific item on the agenda which related to the anti-social behaviour occurring in Ridgewood but did note that an item was being discussed more widely on community safety within the town.

He noted that the crime statistics for Uckfield Ridgewood ward fluctuated throughout the year and questioned whether this was related to weather. Life saving equipment (the defibrillator) had recently been damaged and a group of

individuals had also broken into the disabled toilet at Ridgewood Village Hall. There had been a spate of incidents which had been reported to '101' at Sussex Police. Sussex Police advised the Village Hall Committee that their presence would increase but this would generally be through Operation Blitz at the weekends, which led residents to question what presence there would be during weeknights.

Mr Selby advised that the Bow Bell Marker post (no. 44) which was located on the eastern verge of Lewes Road near to New Road, was now missing.

He also noted that certain highway road signs were missing on Lewes Road in the area leading south to Little Horsted roundabout. In particular the deceleration sign markers had disappeared.

The Town Clerk advised Mr Selby that she was fully aware of the incidents taking place in Ridgewood and across the town, and was liaising with Sussex Police to understand what action was being taken and what agencies were involved. Unfortunately a small group of individuals were responsible for these incidents and it was hoped that a number of agencies were involved to provide support and intervene.

The Town Clerk had already made contact with both East Sussex Highways and Taylor Wimpey (developers at Ridgewood Farm) to see if any of their grounds staff had moved the Bow Bell Marker or seen anything. When asked before Christmas neither party had seen the marker post. The Clerk would chase these organisations again and requested support from the local media to see if members of the public had seen anything.

The Town Clerk would also contact East Sussex Highways regarding the missing road signs.

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

Councillor Chris Dowling provided an update on matters within his constituency.

Signage – the blue signs which had been removed had now been reinstated.

Community speedwatch – plans to get the Ridgewood community speedwatch group up and running, were underway.

Twittens/pavements in Newtown – Works to resurface and repair two twittens in the Newtown area were now complete.

College Place – water was travelling across the road from the development site. Conversations were ongoing with the developer.

Streetlighting – a streetlight between Selby Rise and New Road had been reported. Cllr Ward advised that a streetlight between Regency Close and Pudding Cake Lane had been reported on a couple of occasions by the Town Council to East Sussex Highways and were advised that it had been rectified.

This was not the case and the darkness in this stretch posed a safety risk to pedestrians.

Budget setting - the County Council were under intense financial pressure and would be meeting to review their budget next week.

Councillor Love temporarily left the meeting at 7.17pm.

Councillor Claire Dowling provided an update on matters relating to the District Council.

Budget setting - Wealden District Council would also be reviewing their budget for 2018-19 and Medium Term Financial Strategy in February 2018. Cllr Dowling requested that the Town Council provide feedback to the consultation to ensure their views were incorporated.

Anti-social behaviour – Cllr Dowling advised that she was also fully aware of incidents of ASB and criminal damage taking place in the town. Crowborough was also experiencing similar issues. Crime was on the increase despite Wealden District being known as a low crime area. The most prevalent crime included theft, burglary and domestic abuse. District Commander Emma Brice was currently on secondment and the role was being undertaken by Anita Turner. It was recommended that the Town Council invite Inspector Turner to a meeting.

Damaged verges – temporary bollards had now been erected along the verges in Oaklea Way following damage to the verges by works vehicles. A meeting was due to take place with the contractors on Monday.

Members raised their concerns that taxi fares had increased substantially in the area. Cllr Dowling advised that she would ask the Licensing team at Wealden DC to investigate.

Cllr Love returned to the meeting at 7.26pm.

FC.77.01.18 It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Anderson, D. Bennett, M. Dean and H. Firth.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 4th December 2017 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.78.01.18 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council of the 4th December 2017 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

5.2 Action list

Members considered the action list and requested that the following actions be removed from the table as no further action was required at this time:

FC 70.12.17 – Uckfield Events Working Group
FC. 12.17 - (Item 13.0) Standing Orders

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

FC.79.01.18

- (a) Plans Committees – 18th December 2017 and 8th January 2018
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committees of the 18th December 2017 and 8th January 2018.

FC.80.01.18

- (b) Environment and Leisure Committee – 2nd January 2018
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment and Leisure Committee of the 2nd January 2018.

- (c) General Purposes Committee – N/A
Nothing to report.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

- (i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee
Nothing to report at this time.
- (ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Nothing to report at this time.
- (iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Group
Members noted the report.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

- (i) Civic Centre Working Group
A report is due to be considered under confidential business.
- (ii) Uckfield Events Working Group (Celebrate Uckfield)
Nothing to report.
- (iii) Dementia Friendly Working Group – Uckfield Dementia Forum
Members noted the report.

9.0 TO REVIEW COMMUNITY SAFETY WITHIN UCKFIELD AND UPDATES FROM COMMUNITY WARDEN SCHEMES ELSEWHERE

Members reviewed the report which explained the changes to the policing model for Sussex Police, a snapshot of crime statistics over the past 12 months and updates on the community warden scheme being delivered in the areas of Forest Row and Crowborough.

One member questioned how the Police could state on their website that they had retained much valued areas of policing when there was little police presence in the area.

A second member questioned the increase in the Police & Crime Commissioner precept and requested more detail on what the increased funds had been spent on during the past year, and what the newly recruited armed officers had been working on.

Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of employing a community warden. At present it was still uncertain what powers a warden could have, and with limited powers, the role could have limited impact. However it was acknowledged that things could change, so members wished to keep exploring this option.

Members were concerned to see residents paying more in their council tax for Policing but yet seeing very little presence or activity by the Police.

FC.81.01.18

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) ask how the increase of the PCC precept would be used;
- (ii) invite the Interim District Commander for Wealden to meet with Uckfield Town Council, and;
- (iii) request that the Town Clerk investigate the powers that a community warden would have if they became accredited.

10.0 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEALDEN PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL ON TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES FOR 2018-19

Members considered the report. It was noted that the amounts were relatively small. Within the report, the panel had recommended that parish and town councils keep up with the small annual increases, as otherwise it could result in larger sums having to be considered at a later date.

A proposal was put forward to accept the recommended 2% increase in allowances.

FC.82.01.18

The matter was taken to a vote. With four members voting in favour of the proposal out of 11 members present and no members voting against, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the 2% increase in allowances which would bring the basic allowance to £1,261 and the Chairman's allowance to £1,741 for 2018/19.

11.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2018/23) AND BUDGET (2018/19) FOR WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members considered the questions put forward within Wealden District Council's consultation survey and the accompanying draft documents.

Comments from members included:

- It was very difficult for the Town Council to give a detailed response and support the increase in the District Council's council tax with sight of only the high level figures provided within the reports;
- They would like more money spent on local authority housing and litter control;

- In terms of where less funding could be spent - the cost of the Uckfield SANG seemed excessively high. Members noted the budget set aside for members' ICT equipment (£22.5k) in 2019 following the all-out district council elections. Members noted that Uckfield TC Councillors had to provide their own devices and ICT equipment, and questioned whether Wealden DC could use a similar policy. One member also felt that there was little indication of whether further budget savings would be made to staffing levels at the higher level;
- Members noted that Wealden DC typically held a very good debt collection rate and were known for their success in their area, but concerns were raised with the introduction of Universal Credit and the impact this would have on Wealden DC. There was a risk that residents could get rapidly into debt and collection rates could be badly affected. Members were aware that Wealden DC would have limited flexibility in supporting struggling residents as many of the processes would be centralised;
- Members queried the reduction in funding allocated for the leisure centres. They also noted that no increase or projected figures had been included for their property portfolio, including the property recently acquired. The report highlighted a reduction in public convenience funding over the next few years – did this relate to the community toilet scheme or existing facilities in the district?

FC.83.01.18 Members noted the feedback provided and **RESOLVED** to ask the Town Clerk to pass on these comments to Wealden District Council as part of their consultation exercise.

12.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2018/23
Members considered the comments provided and amendments made to the draft Strategic Plan 2018/23, which set out the priorities of the organisation over the next five years.

One member noted that on page 6 of the draft strategic plan, reference was made to the Cardale monument. This work had now been completed and the action should therefore be removed.

FC.84.01.18 Subject to the removal of the above item, members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Strategic Plan 2018/23 for Uckfield Town Council.

13.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN 2018/19
Members considered the draft Annual Plan for 2018/19 which set out the priorities of the Town Council over the next financial year.

FC.85.01.18 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Annual Plan 2018/19 for Uckfield Town Council.

14.0 TO FORMALLY SET THE ANNUAL BUDGET (PRECEPT) FOR 2018/19

Members considered the draft budget papers for 2018/19.

At present the draft papers proposed an increase of 2.15% per Council Band D property per annum, (increasing the amount by £3.30). This would equate to 27.5p a month.

One member felt that this figure should be rounded down to a £3.00 increase per annum and suggested reducing the building maintenance budget.

Members expressed mixed views and felt that the budget papers had been considered for some time. One member added that it was important for the Town Council to preserve its building portfolio.

FC.86.01.18 Members subsequently took the matter to a vote. With 10 votes in favour out of 11 members present, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the annual budget for 2018/19 and precept of £873,472.

15.0 TO UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS

In response to a request at Full Council on 4th December 2017, the Town Clerk undertook research to understand whether neighbouring authorities restricted the term or length of time that councillors could consecutively carry out the role of Chairman at their council's committees.

Members reviewed the information provided. Mixed views were expressed by but they understood that it was a democratic process and the role was elected by members at the Annual Statutory meeting of Full Council each May.

It was proposed that the Town Council do not adopt any changes and retain the standing orders as currently worded.

FC.87.01.18 Members took the proposal to a vote. With 7 votes in favour out of 11 members present, and one against, it was **RESOLVED** to make no changes and retain the existing standing orders.

16.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2017-18 (Q3)

Members reviewed the progress that had been made and discussed the priority which had seen no progress – no. 7 *“to work with our partner agencies to lobby for a reduction in the amount of litter on public highways.”* Members noted that verges along the main highways were in a bad state and often littered.

Members felt it was important to lobby the relevant authorities and look at how the Town Council could work with partner agencies to try and change behaviour.

FC.88.01.18 Members **RESOLVED** to ask the Town Clerk to make contact with the local authorities and Highways Agency and request that they invest more in the clearance of litter from highway verges. The Town Clerk was also asked to see how all parties could work together to change behaviour.

17.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the Mayor's engagements.

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

One grant of deed of burial had been received:

FC.89.01.18 It was **RESOLVED** to sign the certificate for the following:
Mr Derek Tourle

19.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

20.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

21.0 CHAIRMAN'S (TOWN MAYOR'S) ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

22.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

FC90.01.18 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 Action List (confidential business)

Members noted the actions on the list provided.

22.2 Update on CCTV Installation

Members noted the update provided.

22.3 Report of the Civic Centre Working Group

Members noted the update provided.

The meeting finished at 8.56pm.