

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Monday 23rd October 2017 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. L. Eastwood (Town Mayor)
Cllr. D. Bennett (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. K. Everett
Cllr. D. French
Cllr. J. Love

Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. P. Meakin
Cllr. I. Smith
Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. Ward
Mr D. Manvell (Youth Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

1 member of the Press
4 members of the Public
1 County Councillor – Cllr Chris Dowling

Holly Goring – Town Clerk

Minutes taken by Holly Goring

PRESENTATION FROM THE CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST

The Town Mayor, Councillor Eastwood introduced Mr Richard Stogdon (Chairman) and Mr Tony Reid (Chairman of Finance & General Purposes Committee) of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest. They had attended the meeting to provide Town Councillors with an update on their work and where the Town Council could become more involved.

Mr Reid provided members with an overview of the Forest's history and how the Conservators were first established. In the 1880s Parliament put in place legislation which required an independent body to oversee and manage the activity of the forest day to day. At present, the forest was owned by Ashdown Forest Trust (charity) with elected members of East Sussex County Council as trustees. The day to day management and organisation of the forest remained with the Conservators.

A review had commenced of the governance of the Ashdown Forest with the intention of simplifying the current layers and responsible organisations involved. The Conservators were not a public body, nor were they a charity. They did not have a precept to raise funds and had to pay VAT. This meant they were extremely limited in what they could do. They had been consulting widely with the

public and wished to create a new charitable organisation, separate from Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council; a company focused on the management of the forest.

Their proposed model of governance had been submitted to the Charity Commission, and they were currently awaiting feedback. The Conservators were therefore going through a period of transition, which had involved receiving legal advice and support, and resulted in a review of staffing. Over the past year, the Conservators had talked to all 15 parish councils who border the forest.

Members were also advised that the Conservators held a Parish Liaison Panel which currently involved seven parish councils. The next meeting would take place in December 2017, and Uckfield Town Council would be welcome to attend.

Members informed attendees that Uckfield residents were receiving mixed messages with regard to use of the forest. In planning terms Uckfield residents were being discouraged from using the forest to limit the potential environmental impact, and to use the new SANGS (Owlsbury Park near Little Horsted) instead which would be opening soon. It was explained that the forest was subject to National and European standards, and 60% of the forest was heathland. Members were advised that the forest received funding from central government (Natural England and DEFRA) to help with the recovery of the heathland, and this was agreed through a ten year contract. It was unknown if this funding would continue when the contract is due for renewal.

The board of the Conservators consisted of 10 nominated representatives from East Sussex County Council, two nominated representatives from Wealden District Council and five elected commoners. East Sussex County Council funded 14% of the Conservators budget, but this was due to be reduced by 10% each year over the next couple of years.

Councillor Eastwood thanked both Mr Stogdon and Mr Reid for their time and for explaining the current position of the Conservators during their period of transition.

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

Mrs Frost advised the Mayor that she wished to speak on Item 12 – consultation on library services.

FC.55.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to allow members of the public to speak.

Mrs Frost had completed and returned the consultation questionnaire that had been put forward proposals on library services across the county of East Sussex.

Mrs Frost felt that no libraries should be closed. They provided a community resource that should not be lost. She was appalled at the discussions taking place at the County Council on the same day as a decision was taken to consult on library closures, which involved an increase in member allowances. Mrs Frost hoped that all local representatives at all authority levels would seriously consider before taking an increase in their allowance. In fact these representatives should take a drop in their allowance to support services such as the Police.

Councillor Eastwood thanked Mrs Frost for her comments and advised members that the matter would be discussed further under item 12.0.

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.

Twittens/pavements in Newtown – repairs had been planned along Newtown pavements but Cllr Dowling had since been advised that the works had now been postponed subject to resource issues. Cllr Dowling would wait a few days before chasing and obtain a revised date.

In response to Councillor Dean's request for attention to be given to the twittens in Newtown particularly those in the Keld Avenue area and between Alexandra Road and Mill Lane, representatives from East Sussex Highways Services attended the site and reviewed the condition of these twittens. An update was expected early to mid-November on whether such works could be programmed in and funded.

Ridgewood – there had been ongoing discussions regarding speed in this area, and both Cllr Dowling and Cllr Smith were looking into the possibility of setting up a community speedwatch initiative in Eastbourne Road. They had identified a suitable site and had had a number of volunteers come forward but were awaiting feedback on the suitability of the above.

East Sussex County Council - the County Council had started their budget setting process which would need to be agreed by February 2018. ESCC had to find a further £20million reduction in revenue spending for the next financial year.

Councillor Dowling expressed his concern and personal position in regards to the proposed member allowance increases. The timing was not good when difficult decisions were having to be made. An Independent Committee had been convened who had responsibility for reviewing the allowances and they had noted that at present the County Council demonstrated inequality in terms of the gender balance of county members (43 males and 7 females) and difficulties that the role created for those who worked or had family responsibilities. Members were having their council phone line cut as well as benefits such as photocopying and stationary removed. These changes had been reflected in the increases.

Councillor Dowling advised that both him and Councillor Claire Dowling had asked if they could refuse the increase and if this wasn't possible, would offer the increased amount to charity.

Councillor Eastwood thanked Councillor Dowling for providing clarification and understood that it was currently a difficult situation.

One member noted that another person had fallen in Mill Lane, and the surface still remained of concern. The Town Clerk was asked if she could obtain the details.

FC.56.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies were also received from District and County Councillor Cllr. Claire Dowling.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 11th September be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.57.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council of the 11th September 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.24.06.17 – To consider the Town Council's Draft Annual Return and Financial Statements for the Year ending 31st March 2017

FC.51.08.17 - To review the South East Drought Water Plan for 2018-23

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(a) Plans Committees – 25th September and 16th October 2017

FC.58.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committees of the 25th September and 16th October 2017.

(b) Environment and Leisure Committee – 2nd October 2017

FC.59.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment and Leisure Committee of the 2nd October 2017.

(c) General Purposes Committee – 9th October 2017

FC.60.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General

Purposes Committee of 9th October 2017.

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
Members noted the report of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- (iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Group
Nothing to report at this time.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

- (i) Civic Centre Working Group
Nothing to report at this time.
- (ii) Dementia Friendly Working Group – Uckfield Dementia Forum
Members noted the report of the Uckfield Dementia Forum
- (iii) Uckfield Events Working Group
Councillor French wished to thank everyone involved in the organisation of Uckfield Revival. Despite the weather it was a great event and a big thank you was given to the members who helped marshal the event. Members subsequently noted the report.

9.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2017-18

Members reviewed the report which provided a quarterly progress update on the council's annual priorities for 2017-18.

Members questioned whether we had received any more information on phase 3 of the highway improvements (bus station) and if it would be possible to add a public convenience at this location. The Town Clerk advised that she was hopeful that a meeting of the Highway Project Board would be held before Christmas to discuss the details of phase three. Land ownership had been a particular issue in this area, and this along with factors such as space and layout of the design could affect the outcome of this proposal.

Members wished to thank the officers for their work on progressing these priorities and noted the progress to date.

10.0 TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2016-17

Members reviewed the report of the external auditor which demonstrated that at the year ending 31st March 2017, the Town Council had sound financial and governance procedures.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bennett noted with thanks the hard work involved in achieving such a good audit.

11.0 TO APPOINT A REPRESENTATIVE AND SUBSTITUTE TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR UCKFIELD & DISTRICT HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD.

Members were informed of the recent request received from Uckfield & District Housing Association Ltd, who had responsibility for St. Saviours Flats in Framfield Road. Uckfield Town Council had been invited to nominate a representative and substitute representative to sit on their Management Committee as per their constitution. The Management Committee would meet around six times a year and meetings would take place in the afternoons.

FC.61.10.17 Nominations were put forward to appoint representative(s) to the Management Committee of Uckfield & District Housing Association Ltd. With unanimous support it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Paul Sparks be appointed as the Town Council's representative, with Councillor Paul Meakin being appointed as a substitute.

12.0 TO REVIEW EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S DRAFT STRATEGY 'EAST SUSSEX LIBRARIES – THE WAY FORWARD'

East Sussex County Council had recently placed a review of their Library and Information Service out for consultation. The Library and Information Service had studied in detail, the current need and demand of services and where the services would add most value.

In order to assist the County Council with making further savings, the consultation paper put forward a number of proposed changes to service provision. It was proposed that 17 libraries would be retained across the county, including that of Crowborough, Heathfield and Uckfield, but the County Council were proposing to stop the running of seven libraries and associated financial support. This consisted of Langney, Mayfield, Ore, Pevensey Bay, Polegate, Ringmer and Willingdon.

Members expressed their shock at the proposals and suggestion that the majority of users would only have a journey time of 10-15 minutes. These proposals did not take into consideration the current and decreasing state of rural bus services and not all members of the community were fortunate to have cars. The Library currently supported a range of ages and needs, and was not just a book lending service. It was therefore questioned whether these factors had been fully considered.

It was thought that these proposals were a step too far, and it was suggested that a workable alternative be found which would look to the voluntary sector and the support they might be able to provide to keep these smaller libraries open.

Members noted the proposed loss of mobile library services which had typically supported communities within the more remote and rural areas, as well as opening hours which had already been cut across all libraries in the county. It was also noted that if a number of libraries were closed next year, where would these proposals end and would this become a pattern year on year to make further savings.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Eastwood asked that all Town Councillors respond to the consultation. The Town Clerk would circulate the weblink.

FC.62.10.17 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** to respond to the consultation and show their support for their colleague parish councils. Libraries were recognised as valuable services and it was important that these should be retained at all cost. Members were concerned that if the service started to receive cuts now, the cuts would only become deeper. Therefore East Sussex County Council needed to be cautious before they made any decisions of this nature. It was requested that the Town Clerk put forward this resolution alongside the Town Council's concerns regarding the closure of mobile library services, previous changes to opening hours and ongoing difficulties with rural public transport.

13.0 TO CONSIDER POTENTIAL STREET NAMES FOR STREETS WITHIN PHASE 1A AND 1B OF THE RIDGEWOOD FARM DEVELOPMENT

Members noted the invitation to provide suggestions for street names in the first phase of development at Ridgewood Farm.

Members were concerned that the timescales would not give them much opportunity to review the history of the site and to consider suggestions, and requested that the Town Clerk ask for an extension of time.

In the meantime, members suggested that a theme be identified such as farming terms and links to Ridgewood Farm's past.

Councillor Eastwood asked members to pass their suggestions to the Town Clerk, and members subsequently noted the report.

14.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the Mayor's engagements.

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

Ten grants of deeds of burial had been received:

FC.63.10.17 It was **RESOLVED** to sign the certificates for the following:

William Cowing
Angela Nelsie Novis
Richard Warner
James Westrop
Rosie Watts
Lena Dadswell
Deborah and Julian Hartfield
Diane and Jane Worfolk
Mr Barnie Riches
James Joachin Buglass

16.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

17.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk had received feedback and wished to thank all of those involved in the town who were responsible for looking after the floral displays and arrangements. Uckfield was a beautiful place to live, and the displays were well received. It was not always the work of Brighton Uckfield and Town Council's Grounds staff, individuals were involved as well, and the Town Council wished to thank everyone for their help and support.

18.0 CHAIRMAN'S (TOWN MAYOR'S) ANNOUNCEMENTS

None received.

The meeting finished at 8.11pm.