

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Monday 24th June 2019 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT: Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. J. Edwards
Cllr. H. Firth
Cllr. D. French
Cllr. G. Johnson
Cllr. J. Love
Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. P. Sparks
Mr. A. Brunsdon
Mr. L. Westwood Flood

IN ATTENDANCE:

2 members of the public
1 member of the press (recording)

Holly Goring Town Clerk

Minutes taken by Holly Goring

It was agreed to bring forward agenda item 11.0 Internal Audit report, before considering agenda items 9.0 (Annual Governance Statement) and 10.0 (Annual Governance and Accountability Return).

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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. They were advised that notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration and that the nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest became apparent.

None were forthcoming.

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

None received.

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

Councillor P. Sparks, District Councillor for Uckfield East advised that he had attended his first meeting of Wealden District Council, where Councillor Pam Doodles was elected as Chairman of Wealden District Council and Councillor Robert Standley was elected the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Sparks had already received several enquiries relating to the District Council, of which the main concern related to the new £50 garden waste charge. He had come across a number of individuals, with limited income who were finding it difficult to pay the full £50 charge. Councillor Sparks had raised the matter with Wealden District Council and asked whether an instalment plan could be put in place, but this was not possible for this year. Councillor Sparks would raise the matter again in the setting of fees and charges for 2020/21.

Councillor H. Firth advised members that the Chief Executive, Mr Trevor Scott would be making visits to different wards across the district of Wealden, to find out more about each area and introduce himself.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Town Councillors D. Bennett, B. Cox, S. Mayhew, C. Snelgrove and D. Ward.

Apologies had also been received from District Councillor P. Waldock, and County Councillor Chris Dowling and County/District Councillor Claire Dowling.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council on the 13th May be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.26.06.19 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Statutory meeting of the Full Council on the 13th May 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Mayor (in the absence of the Town Mayor).

5.2 Action List

Members considered the detail and asked that the following actions be removed from the list, as they were now complete:

FC107.02.19: To receive an update on Uckfield's plastic free campaign

FC106.02.19: To consider information provided by Wealden Works

5.3 To consider the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee on 18th June 2019 (to be dealt with under confidential business)

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(a) Plans Committee of the 28th May and 17th June 2019

FC.27.06.19 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 28th May and 17th June 2019.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 3rd June 2019

FC.28.06.19 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 3rd June 2019.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 20th May 2019

FC.29.06.19 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 20th May 2019.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

(i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Members noted the report.

(iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Panel

Nothing to report at present.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Civic Centre Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Members noted the report.

(iii) Uckfield Events Working Group - Celebrate

Councillor D. French advised that preparations were going well, for this year's Weald on the Field, and the line up of live music had been confirmed for the event. Members were asked to help promote and share details of the event in the next few weeks.

Members subsequently noted the report.

11.0 TO CONSIDER THE INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2019

Members were reminded that there were two documents which related to this agenda item, (i) the 'Annual Internal Audit Report 2018/19' as contained within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and (ii) the detailed Internal Audit report undertaken by Auditing Solutions Ltd for 2018/19.

Members wished to give their thanks to the officers, for an outstandingly good report and continuing sound financial management.

Members noted and received the two parts of the Internal Audit report for the year ending 31st March 2019 (i) Annual Internal Audit Report 2018/19 within the AGAR and (ii) the detailed Internal Audit report undertaken by Auditing Solutions Ltd 2018/19.

9.0 TO CONSIDER THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2019

Members reviewed the Annual Governance Statement for the period 2018/19, which formed part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), on page four of six. This section questioned whether the Town Council had sufficient policies and procedures in place, compliance, risk management and audit processes.

One element of this section was marked 'No' due to receiving a comment by the External Auditor for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return ending 31st March 2018 – an 'other matter not affecting their opinion' – where it stated that the local authority had failed to make proper provision during the year 2018/19 for the exercise of public rights, since the approval date was after the start of the period for the exercise of public rights.

It was therefore recommended by the External Auditors that we mark 'No' against row four (4) in this year's return ending 31st March 2019, regarding the exercise of public rights.

Close attention has been given to the timescales specified in 2019 for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 31st March 2019, so this matter should now be correctly rectified.

FC.30.06.19 Members reviewed the content of Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2018/19) and **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19, and authorised the Deputy Mayor as Chairman of the meeting and the Town Clerk to sign and date this statement on behalf of the Town Council.

10.0 TO CONSIDER THE TOWN COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2019

Members reviewed a summary of the Town Council's accounting statements, as presented on page five of six, in the draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return ending 31st March 2019 and financial statements at the end of 31st March 2019.

FC.31.06.19 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the draft annual governance and accountability return and financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2019, and authorised for the Deputy Mayor as Chairman of the meeting to sign and date this return on behalf of the Town Council.

12.0 TO REVIEW THE TOWN COUNCIL'S CO-OPTION POLICY

The Town Clerk advised members that the Co-option policy and associated procedures referred to at the recent co-option at the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council on 13th May 2019, had been brought to Full Council for review. The policy had previously been revised back in 2015, and having been through the process, elected members may have views on how the process could be improved.

Feedback included:

- (i) an individual that had been co-opted felt it was an uncomfortable experience, and would have preferred to have been asked to leave the room, whilst the vote was underway;
- (ii) opportunity should be given for elected members to ask questions to prospective candidates;
- (iii) para. 2.1.6 – in the past a tie had occurred between two candidates. It was suggested that perhaps the Mayor/Chairman should have a casting vote in this situation;
- (iv) para. 3.1.2 – add a line to request that time be given to ask questions of the prospective candidates and opportunity for cross examination
- (v) members also wondered if the current process was too rushed, particularly after an election, as it did not give the successful candidates, time to digest the agenda papers for the meeting or an opportunity to select seats on the Town Council's standing committees.

The Town Clerk advised that she would review the legislation and the procedures used elsewhere, with plans to revise the policy for the next meeting.

13.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR SPIKE MAYHEW

Members considered a motion that had been put forward by Councillor Spike Mayhew, at the end of May 2019. This motion asked members to consider whether the Council should explore

- (i) public space protection orders;
- (ii) security patrols

Members raised a number of concerns with exploring the security patrols:

- the cost to taxpayers/Town Council;
- if the Town Council became involved in managing such a contract, the Town Council could then be seen as the imposing force for handling crime and anti-social behaviour rather than continue with its role in the community;
- what powers would these security officers have – if only information gathering to pass evidence to the Police, it would not have the desired impact;
- who would these security officers be accountable to and would there be effective information sharing between them and Sussex Police;
- at what point would the contract end?
- their presence could create a reduction in reporting by residents of issues, as they could feel the matter would have been seen/fixed;
- the importance of managing residents' expectations.

Members expressed an interest in Public Space Protection Orders, but questioned how effective they were as they were civil orders. They also noted that such orders would need enforcing. One member did however note that these orders can take up to two years to put in place, so it might not assist with reducing the current issues experienced in the town with crime and anti-social behaviour.

Members acknowledged that the Police force were under enormous pressure and the pool of PCSO's had been centralised. It was questioned whether more Specials could be recruited to assist with prevention and provide a community presence. Members recognised that Sussex Police had increased patrols in Uckfield Town and had carried out an incredible amount of work to assist the town. Members wondered whether a previously considered role such as a Community Warden would be more appropriate within Uckfield to reduce the fear of crime.

FC32.06.19 Members unanimously **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) ask the Town Clerk to look into civil orders such as Public Space Protection Orders, and;
- (ii) for the Town Council to reconsider the role of a Community Warden.

14.0 TO CONSIDER INITIAL QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE REFRESH OF EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Members were advised that East Sussex County Council were currently carrying out a review of their Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and in the early stages of the process, they were keen to hear the views of Uckfield Town Council as a key stakeholder.

Members provided their feedback on existing Rights of Way and the management of these.

Specific comments included:

- (i) the need to make footpaths accessible for dog walkers – a number of the dog traps adjacent to the stiles were often closed up, damaged or difficult to get dogs through. Repairs and accessibility needed to be provided;
- (ii) it was suggested that Wealden District Council ensure good linkages between their Wealden Way Project and the ESCC's plans for rights of way and give assurance that they were working closely, and there was no overlapping or duplication of resources;
- (iii) a number of stiles needed repairing or replacing, could this be reviewed as part of their plan;
- (iv) to do everything they can to widely promote the countryside, the rights of way and footways available for walking;
- (v) it was also noted that the ESCC Rights of Way Team should also consider how they can make the rights of way as accessible as possible for people with reduced mobility or even pushchairs. The surfaces used should be considered on this basis.

15.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor wished to add that they also attended:

- 27th April - 2530 (Uckfield) Squadron Awards Dinner
- 28th April - 4th Uckfield Scouts – St George's Parade
- 2nd June - Uckfield Lions Fun Day

Members subsequently noted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's engagements.

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

Two grants of deeds of burial had been received:
Ronald Edward Scott and Caryl Rose
Anne Giliberti

FC.33.06.19 It was **RESOLVED** to sign the two certificates.

17.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

No questions were received by the deadline.

18.0 TOWN CLERKS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk firstly thanked the new Youth Members for their excellent input in the meeting and valuable comments.

The Town Clerk wished to advise members of the Uckfield Volunteer Centre's Celebration of Youth event which was taking place at Uckfield College on 11th July 2019. There was also an opportunity for people to nominate a young person who was making a difference in the town. The deadline for nominations was Monday 1st July 2019

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had recently heard of the East Sussex County Council's Cabinet proposal to consult on the potential closure of Fletching and Broad Oak Primary Schools. Although these primary schools were outside the parish boundary of Uckfield, a number of residents travelled further out to these village schools, so it could have an impact. Members were asked to keep a watching brief on this matter.

19.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor J. Love expressed her extreme honour in attending paramedic and fire fighter, Mr Bruce Davy's funeral last week. The service was incredible and amazing to see such a turnout for a much loved man and colleague.

20.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

FC34.06.19

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.

20.1 To consider the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee on 18th June 2019

FC35.06.19

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee on 18th June 2019 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 20.23pm.