



Our Strategic Plan 2018-2023



Uckfield Town Council

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Uckfield Town Council

The purpose of the Strategic plan is to identify new initiatives and develop a five year plan which describes the steps we will take to deliver these initiatives within the resources available.

The Town Council recently reviewed its five year plan and looked afresh at our vision for the town. Whilst we try to take on board the views of residents, sometimes this can prove difficult especially with the amount of budget cuts being made by local government. However I would like to reassure you that this does not mean that your ideas will be discarded, they are just likely to take a little longer to explore.



Over the next five years the Town Council will continue to do its very best for the town, and work with partner agencies to do so. Councillors work hard to find ways to bring projects to fruition. We hope this Strategic Plan will give you confidence in knowing that our town is being managed to the best of our abilities and within the budget constraints being placed upon us.

				
Cllr James Anderson (North Ward)	Cllr Jeremy Beesley (Ridgewood Ward)	Cllr Duncan Bennett (Deputy Mayor) (New Town Ward)	Cllr Mick Dean (New Town Ward)	Cllr Louise Eastwood (Town Mayor) (North Ward)
				
Cllr Keith Everett (Ridgewood Ward)	Cllr Helen Firth (Central Ward)	Cllr Donna French (North Ward)	Cllr Jackie Love (North Ward)	Cllr Chris Macve (North Ward)
				
Cllr Spike Mayhew (New Town Ward)	Cllr Paul Meakin (Central Ward)	Cllr Ian Smith (Ridgewood Ward)	Cllr Paul Sparks (North Ward)	Cllr Diane Ward (Central Ward)

Uckfield is one of five market towns located within the Wealden District and is located within the heart of the Wealden District. Its facilities serve not only the residents of the town but also the residents of its neighbouring villages.

The attractive setting of Uckfield brings both new residents and visitors to the town. Its location in the heart of Wealden and close proximity to the Ashdown Forest provides plenty of opportunities for leisure and recreation, in addition to the beautiful green open spaces and woodlands located within the town itself.

15,122 residents



Living in just over 6,000 households



Younger age profile is greater than District average

(17.8% aged 0-14 years)
(2011 census)



Older age profile is less than District average

(17.1% aged 65+ years)
(2011 Census)



Good level of education

(81.8% of working age population have qualifications)
(2011 Census)





Higher rate of economic activity than the District average
(over 80% economically active)



Wealden has a high percentage of home ownership
(78.7% owner occupied)
(2011 Census)



Wealden had a lower rate of recorded offences of crime per 1,000 population in 2015/16 than neighbouring districts in East Sussex



15.4% of the population have a limiting long term illness
(less than District average – 17.5% and County average – 20.3%) (2011 census)

~~**Unemployed**~~

Low rate of unemployment
(rate of claiming Job Seekers Allowance is lower or the same as the Wealden average in three out of four wards)



High house prices
(average house prices reached in the region of £300,000 in 2016 and higher than £300,000 in Ridgewood Ward)

Turning Challenges into Opportunities

Challenges

Opportunities

Limited infrastructure to support future development

With an increase in the population and plans for further development within the town boundary, it is important for the key agencies to consider where improvements are required in terms of infrastructure – education, health, transport, sewerage capacity, water supply, broadband coverage and mitigation of flood risk.



Proposals for growth

Plans have been put in place to build a further 1,000 homes in the Ridgewood area of Uckfield Town. This reflects proposals within the Wealden Local Plan for growth and increasing housing stock

Range of facilities

The town has a substantial range of facilities, with its own independent cinema and leisure centre. High performing schools, free parking, a diverse selection of shops and nearby Ashdown Forest are a big draw for residents and visitors.

Retaining our highly educated workforce

Uckfield has high levels of educational attainment but with good and improving transport links to Brighton, East Croydon and London mean much of the town's working age population are attracted to work out of the town.



Central location within South East

Being in the heart of the Wealden District, the town is centrally located within the South East between London and the South Coast. Its close proximity to Gatwick Airport and Newhaven port provides job opportunities and ease of travel.

Flood risk

The River Uck runs through the middle of the town which could place the town at risk of fluvial flooding. Mitigating measures are in place but the town is also susceptible to surface water run-off in heavy bouts of rain as a result of the undulating landscape of the town



Our green spaces

Uckfield is fortunate to have two nature reserves, green open spaces and allotments. We need to encourage greater use of these spaces and continue to maintain them to a high standard.

Addressing traffic congestion

The road network through Uckfield Town and the A22 by-pass are heavily used by traffic. Although recent works in the High Street have improved accessibility for pedestrians and vehicles, there are still a number of pinch points on the corridors to the town, which could benefit from improvements.



Improvements to transport links

The train station platform has been extended, carriages increased and a new station car park created which will support an increase in rail users in the future. The Council also supports any future opportunities to re-establish the rail line between Lewes and Uckfield and build a new rail link between Uckfield and Brighton via Falmer.

Limited financial resources

The Town Council along with other tiers of local government (District and County Councils) are being placed under increasing financial pressure. Despite this, the Council still needs to deliver the services for which it has responsibility and consider taking on services devolved from other tiers of local government under financial restraint. This may require the Town Council to be innovative and/or make difficult decisions.



Partnership working

As with all local authorities, the Town Council is in a strong position to work closely with its partner agencies to retain good quality services for residents. Partnership working can provide good value for money and increase opportunities.

Asset management

The Town Council has responsibility for a number of assets that could assist in generating higher revenues in the future. It would be prudent for the Town Council to develop an Asset Management Plan now, to effectively prepare for the future.

Our Vision

Preserving heritage,
providing for the future

Our Mission

Working with our partner agencies to provide a high standard of service delivery for residents, businesses and visitors to the town.

Our Corporate Priorities

People

- Cultural and Related services
- Luxfords and Civic Centre

Place

- Environmental and Regulatory Services
- Planning and Development Services
- Highways and Transport Services

Provision

- Central Services

Our Strategic Priorities - People

In addition to agreeing a set of specific priorities each year, the Town Council has set out a number of medium term aspirations for the town.

Cultural and related services

By 2023 we will have

- Supported local community and voluntary organisations and sought to assist them with their positive work within the town;
- Replaced or updated at least one playground;
- Explored plans for upgrading and improving the skatepark;
- Explored options for creating further opportunities for residents to enjoy recreational activities (e.g. Parkrun etc);
- Worked with our partner agencies to increase opportunities for residents of all ages to take part in activities which improve their health and wellbeing;
- Organised events which assist in attracting visitors to the town and support local businesses;
- Established a list of special and important dates within the town, taken up opportunities to celebrate the town's history and commemorated this on notable buildings;
- Investigated and sought options for the provision of additional public convenience facilities within the town;
- Retained the traditional red telephone kiosk as a community facility;
- Restored the Cardale monument;
- Explored options for the facilities provided in and the future of Foresters Hall;
- Continued to maintain, improve and protect all of our natural areas to accommodate the demands of future growth of the town; encouraging community involvement;
- Investigated the potential provision of a shelter at Victoria Pleasure Ground subject to a suitable location being found.

Luxfords and Civic Centre

By 2023 we will have

- Undertaken renovations to the Restaurant area, to provide a modern and contemporary space that meets the needs of a variety of customers;
- Developed a marketing plan to assist with the re-launch and branding of the restaurant and on-going communication;
- Made improvements to air conditioning within the Civic Centre building;
- Made improvements to the Civic Centre website and social media accounts;
- Explored the implementation and costs of developing a new booking system for the Civic Centre and associated digital processes for booking which link to the website;
- Developed and implemented a communications and marketing plan for the Civic Centre, in addition to an annual calendar of events;
- Updated room facilities in line with the latest modern technologies and existing
- Wi-Fi connections and networking ports are of good quality;
- Identified options for improved seating and staging within the Weald Hall and side curtains, and considered options for providing a temporary partition within the Green Room.



Our Strategic Priorities - Place

In addition to agreeing a set of specific priorities each year, the Town Council has set out a number of medium term aspirations for the town.

Environmental and regulatory services

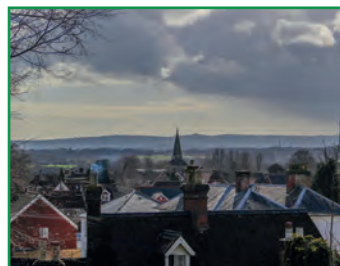
By 2023 we will have

- Continued to provide burial authority services with responsibility for the maintenance of the Cemetery at Snatts Road and Holy Cross churchyard;
- Maintained good quality floral displays within the town centre, to ensure Uckfield town centre remains an attractive place to live, work and visit;
- Maintained a good standard of grounds maintenance within the town to ensure Uckfield remains an attractive place to live;
- Implemented improvements to the operation of the town’s CCTV and continued to monitor provision to ensure the technology remains up to date;
- Continued to work with East Sussex County Council to gradually review street lighting and replace with new columns and LED lighting where necessary;
- Encouraged allotment holders to conserve and collect rainwater for use on their plots and utilising sustainable methods of allotment management;
- Considered whether the Town Council is able to take on services devolved by the District and County Councils, to ensure residents retain a good level of service provision during times of financial restraints.

Planning and development services

By 2023 we will have

- Worked closely with the planning authority, Wealden District Council, to understand the latest legislative updates and guidance;
- Supported the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and worked with Action in Rural Sussex and the local Planning authority to enable this plan to be adopted and utilised alongside the Wealden Local Plan by developers;
- As a member of Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Committee, we will have worked with our partners (Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council) to explore options for regeneration within the centre of the town, and possibility of expanding the retail and business offer;
- Promoted the need for affordable housing within Uckfield Town, to support those in housing need and first time buyers;
- Worked with Wealden District Council to ensure the Town Council is fully engaged in other regulatory matters such as licensing;
- Developed an annual process by which the Town Council reviews its assets and strategic asset management plan and consideration is given to each of the Town Council’s buildings to improve the efficiency and use of these properties
- Delivered a ten year programme of maintenance and decoration to all of the Town Council community buildings through schemes of major and minor works;
- Reviewed the condition of car parks adjacent to Town Council owned buildings and agreed a programme of repairs or resurfacing;
- Arranged an annual display of Christmas lights;
- Worked with the Chamber of Commerce to engage with High Street landlords (commercial and residential) to promote and secure improvements to street frontages.



Our Strategic Priorities - Place

In addition to agreeing a set of specific priorities each year, the Town Council has set out a number of medium term aspirations for the town.

Highways and Transport services

By 2023 we will have

- Organised the annual safety day with partner agencies to educate young people about the importance of safety;
- Identified potential areas within the town which required improvements to pedestrian safety and worked with the relevant agencies to lobby for enhancements;
- Worked with our partner agencies to feed into improvements to the bus station area, to improve accessibility, signage and provide improved facilities such as real time bus information and public convenience(s);
- Worked with our partner agencies to identify highway issues within the access corridors into the town centre and utilised S106 developer contributions to improve the infrastructure and address matters relating to traffic congestion, traffic calming and road safety;
- Worked with the relevant partner agencies to address the danger of speeding vehicles and explored the possibility of extending the 20mph town centre speed limit;
- Introduced speed reduction initiatives including the use of speed indicator devices and behaviour change campaigns;
- Worked with partner agencies to identify and implement solutions for introducing parking controls within the town centre;
- Worked with partners to explore the introduction of residents' permit parking zones in the town centre and Newtown;
- Engaged in discussions to actively promote the re-opening of the Uckfield to Lewes railway line, and a direct route into Brighton;
- Worked with partner agencies to explore whether electric car charging points can be introduced in Uckfield town;
- Worked with partner agencies and landowners to explore the possibility of improving footway links between Ridgewood Farm, Owlsbury Park and the nature reserves which incorporate the industrial estate, town centre and river.



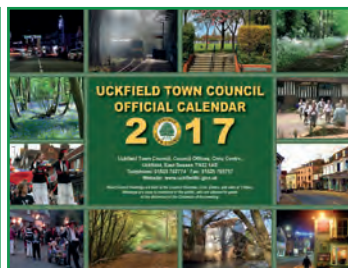
Our Strategic Priorities - Provision

In addition to agreeing a set of specific priorities each year, the Town Council has set out a number of medium term aspirations for the town.

Central Services

By 2023 we will have

- Improved communication with residents, businesses and visitors to the town through enhancements to the Town Council website and social media accounts;
- Located new sites for noticeboards and improved the condition and display of existing noticeboards;
- Simplified financial reporting for the purposes of committee meetings to enable greater clarity;
- Improved accessibility to committee meetings by installing an additional hearing loop in the Council Chamber;
- Encouraged applications from local traders and organisations in the Town Council’s procurement procedures for contractual work within the town;
- Increased promotion of the town’s key facilities;
- Provided training and briefings for the Town Councillors and staff, to support them in their learning and development;
- Published an annual calendar at zero cost which provides the key dates of all standing committees, and promotes businesses within the town;
- Undertaken an annual review of all key policies to ensure they remain up to date with the latest guidance and best practice;
- Supported the town’s local groups and organisations through the provision of an annual community grants programme.



Delivering our Objectives

Overview of the Town Council

The Town Council has 15 Town Councillors, who are elected every four years. The last set of town council elections took place in May 2015. The next set of local elections will therefore take place in May 2019.

The positions of Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are elected by the Town Councillors each year at the start of the annual statutory meeting of Full Council which takes place in May.

All Town Councillors meet in the format of Full Council at least six times a year, and the town council's three main standing committees, are:

- General Purposes Committee (9 members)
- Environment and Leisure Committee (9 members)
- Plans Committee (7 members)

Financial information

General finances

Town Councillors are required to start the process of budget setting within the autumn of each year, for the following financial year. This provides time to review our income and expenditure, the priorities of the Town Council, the priorities within the Town and the costs associated.

The precept is the local tax levied by the Town Council and collected on our behalf by Wealden District Council as the rating authority.

The precept for 2018/19 was agreed by the Town Council on 15th January 2018 at a figure of £873,472.

We also have two sub-committees responsible for dealing with specific matters related to finance and human resources, called Personnel Sub-Committee and Finance Sub-Committee, which report their recommendations back to General Purposes Committee. These sub-committees meet on an ad-hoc basis when further detailed work is required.

All formal committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber of the Civic Centre, Uckfield. Residents are welcome to attend these public meetings and make statements in relation to items on the agenda of that committee, subject to the Chairman's discretion. Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, members of the public are able to film and record during a committee meeting to report on the meeting.

Capital expenditure

The Council adopts a balanced approach to its capital expenditure in respect of the procurement of new assets and the maintenance of its existing assets. The first priority should however focus on developing and maintaining existing assets for the benefit of the community. Additional income may also be generated, where appropriate, through renting or leasing of these assets.

Reserves

The Council adopts a risk based approach to its level of reserves which will be reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary. Currently the minimum level of general reserves will be set at approximately three months gross operating costs. Reserves will only be held above the minimum level for specific, earmarked purposes.

Delivering our Objectives

Organisational structure

Delivery of the Town Council’s functions is overseen and managed by the Town Clerk, who is the Town Council’s proper officer and required to support and advise members in their role and issue any statutory notifications.

The Town Clerk is supported by a team of nearly 30 members of staff who are responsible for maintaining the town’s grounds and open spaces, buildings, facilities, and providing services to our customers within Luxfords Restaurant and the Civic Centre.

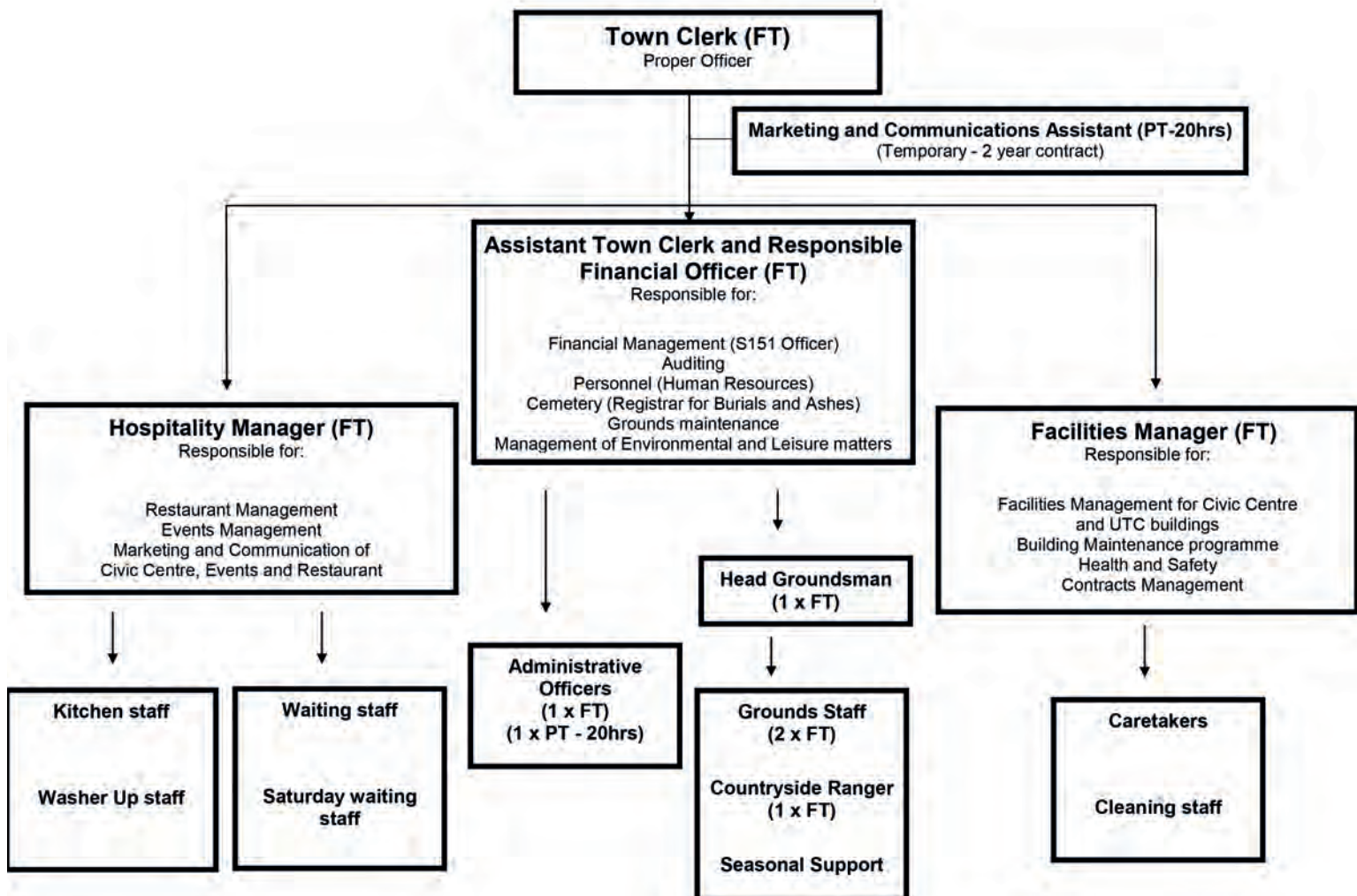
The Assistant Town Clerk and Responsible

Financial Officer is responsible for managing the Council’s finances, human resources, grounds and open spaces and Council administration.

The Hospitality Manager is responsible for managing the restaurant, Civic Centre room hire and hospitality, and Civic Centre events programme.

The Facilities Manager is responsible for managing the maintenance and repair of the Town Council’s key buildings, liaising with external contractors, managing health and safety and our caretaking staff.

The following organisational chart presents the staff structure in December 2017:





Uckfield Town Council Offices
Civic Centre, Uckfield, TN22 1AE