



Uckfield Town Council Annual Report

2018-19

**Council Offices
Civic Centre
Uckfield
TN22 1AE**

Our Town Mayor's Annual Review of 2018-19

2018-19 has been a great year which has seen a number of projects delivered and the ideas of this term of Town Councillors come to fruition.

Town Council staff have continued to maintain good working relationships with our key partner agencies and the town's community and voluntary organisations. This has helped to connect people and identify what information and support the various agencies and groups can provide to each other.

The year began with a first for Uckfield; the appointment of a Town Crier. After a recruitment and selection process, an interview which involved the applicants carrying out a test cry in front of an interview panel with one of the longest serving criers in the country - Seaford's very own Mr Peter White, it was agreed to appoint Mr Ian Bedwell to the role. His robes were ready just in time for the town's summer events calendar, and we look forward to seeing Uckfield's Town Crier on the High Street with regular messages of communication throughout 2019.



We were extremely pleased to see the installation of a new CCTV system in the town with six new HD cameras. The process had taken some months to find the right model and modern technology which would provide good quality footage at a reasonable price.

As a result Uckfield joined the Sussex Police i-witness CCTV partnership. This provides a direct feed through from the cameras to the Sussex Police HQ control room and ensures that any footage recorded can be regularly monitored and reviewed by CCTV operators for the purpose of crime prevention and public safety. Uckfield Chamber of Commerce have been a great support to the project by covering the costs of the sixth camera located near to the Bellbrook business park, to support businesses in the west of the town.

We carried out a long overdue refurbishment of Luxfords Restaurant. The restaurant had not received any attention for some years but in October 2018, a full decorative refurbishment was undertaken using local contractors. The project was fully managed in-house, used local tradesmen and materials and the project was not only delivered on schedule but also under budget. The Town Council is looking forward to building the profile of the restaurant over the next financial year, with themed evening events, the opportunity to book the space out for business meetings or functions, and will be hosting the next Chamber of Commerce meeting in May.

The Town Council has ensured that it has remained involved in discussions regarding highway improvements and footway provision. The schemes put forward to introduce traffic calming measures in Lewes Road near to the entrances of the Ridgewood Place development have not been considered appropriate to date and it has taken some time to find the right balance. Having been part of partnership meetings with Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire & Rescue, Brighton & Hove Buses and East Sussex Highways, a design has now been produced which will assist with reducing the speed of traffic in this

area and improve both vehicular and pedestrian safety. This will be communicated to residents shortly.

Discussions are underway with East Sussex Highways to clarify the details of the proposed design for the bus station improvements (phase 3 of the town's highway improvement scheme). The materials used and design put together are important to ensure that the proposals meet the needs of Uckfield residents and in particular, all users of public transport. It is hoped that the facilities provided will provide a more comfortable environment in which members of the public can wait for bus services, and support the increasing number of bus services and traffic flow through this area. The Town Council also instigated a meeting with the owner of the full Ridgewood Farm site (Welbeck Strategic Land) to discuss their original proposals for footways and access points. Wealden District Council and East Sussex Rights of Way team were present and by working together, it is hoped that pedestrian access becomes an important part of this large-scale development.

The Town Council has been involved in a number of new initiatives in the town over the past year which has included working with other key event organisers, to see how we can communicate more collectively about the town's events calendar. We have worked with Tesco, Uckfield Chamber of Commerce, Uckfield Volunteer Centre, East Sussex County Council and Sussex Police to get the youth club back up and running at the Youth Centre in Downsview Crescent. Preparations are underway to launch this, which will initially be open to year 7s, at the end of April 2019. We have provided a financial contribution towards the new parkrun being set up by Uckfield College, Uckfield Runners and Buxted Park Hotel. This will be a fantastic opportunity for Uckfield residents to take part in both a healthy and sociable event on a weekly basis; continuing to promote good health and wellbeing in Uckfield's attractive surroundings.

The Mayor's Charity Ball raised a fantastic £1,800 towards the Uckfield & District Lion's Club, who play a key role in supporting individuals and local groups within the community of Uckfield and the surrounding villages. Organisations such as the Lions are integral to our communities particularly in the rural areas, and with the on-going pressure on public services to do more with less, it is often the community and voluntary organisations who meet the gaps in service provision.

So on that note, I would like to say a big thank you to all of our residents, local businesses, community groups and voluntary organisations, for your contribution and most importantly, for making Uckfield such a beautiful and community spirited place to live.

Cllr Spike Mayhew
Town Mayor
(Chairman of) Full Council



General Purposes Committee

The General Purposes Committee has responsibility for looking after the Council's property portfolio, for overseeing the proper operation of financial procedures and spending, and for ensuring that staff employment issues are addressed and resolved.

Now in my third year as Chair of General Purposes, it will be my last in the Chair's seat. It has been a thoroughly rewarding time, and I have learnt a great deal through the process about the council's buildings, finances and procedures. We have delivered a number of projects in the past year to improve our current facilities and strengthen our policies. The following report provides just a few examples.

Property

In 2018-19 it was agreed that more attention needed to be given to the Town Council's buildings and one of the Town Council's annual priorities was to focus on improving the condition and decoration of our buildings, and to consider their use in terms of whether any changes could enable these spaces to be better utilised.

With a new Facilities Manager in place in summer 2018, work got underway to push forward with the decoration of our main building, the Civic Centre. With improvements to lighting, signage and the general condition of the building, alongside project managing a full refurbishment of the Luxfords restaurant and bar area, the Civic Centre offers modern smart facilities. The Civic Centre has seven rooms of varying sizes available to hire for meetings, functions and events with free WI-FI and ground level disabled access. We have also been looking at our equipment and facilities within the Weald Hall to assist with larger events and entertainment productions, to ensure that the quality of the sound, lighting and technical equipment is user friendly.

A review has been undertaken of the Town Council's service contracts. With a portfolio of buildings the Town Council has historically worked with a number of contractors on a variety of contracts and utility/maintenance agreements. These have been reviewed, aligned and the detail of the contracts re-established which has saved the Town Council in the region of £2,500. The Town Council's insurance cover was reviewed in June 2018, which also resulted in a reduction in cost to the Town Council and leaseholders.

All of the Town Council's health and safety risk assessments were reviewed and five yearly electrical inspections have been carried out in the Town Council's main buildings. The British Safety Council were invited in, to undertake an audit of our workplace health and safety. This was a particularly useful exercise and highlighted where we could further strengthen our current processes. Engagement has also been increased with our leaseholders to raise awareness of and routinely assess their compliance with matters such as fire safety.

Along with minor repairs and decoration, the Town Council's annual maintenance programme saw work prioritised on the cemetery wall at Snatts Road, Signal Box, Foresters Hall and Victoria Pavilion. In the past 18 months the Town Council has been considering how we can obtain better value by using a large tendering process for some works and using local contractors for smaller or more specialist projects.

Lease agreements were renewed with existing tenants at the Small Hall (Foresters Hall Chapel), the Signal Box and the Source.

Finance

The Town Council received another excellent report from external auditors which advised that the council's finances and processes were sound, and positive feedback was received from the internal auditors on their routine interim visits.

We provided £41,285 in grant funding to community groups and local organisations through our community grant funding programme in 2018/19. We continued to support the local Saturday 262 bus service with a financial contribution of just over £3,000 to the North Wealden Community Transport Partnership. The service travels between the Ashdown Forest, Uckfield and Heathfield.

Staffing

During the year, we saw a couple of changes in staffing with the recruitment of a new Facilities Manager, and welcomed new members of staff to the organisation in our caretaking, grounds maintenance and restaurant teams.

A new online training system has been introduced to ensure personal learning and development remains important in the workplace; not forgetting the need to keep health and safety at the forefront of our day to day working practices. A number of policies and procedures were updated including staff probation and appraisal policies, to ensure line managers make adequate time to review staff's progress, their personal development and staff make time for in-depth two way conversations. The new procedures will commence shortly.

On a personal level I would like to thank ALL of the staff who work for Uckfield Town Council for all their hard work and dedication. They have been of great support to me in my role as Chairman of General Purposes Committee.

Councillor Diane Ward
Chairman
General Purposes Committee

Environment and Leisure Committee



New to the role of Chairman of Environment and Leisure Committee, I have had a great year delving into the detail of our grounds management, green open spaces, leisure activities and events.

It has been a particularly busy year and a number of projects that had been prioritised, have been achieved. The final touches to Hughes Way play area were made in the spring of 2018, with the support of Churchcoombe Residents' Association and Tesco Bags of Help. The upgraded facilities were a welcome introduction to the play area, and have been well received by local families.

Working with Stavertons Nursery, the Town Council introduced a new allotment competition, which saw prize winners selected for the best kept allotment on each site, the most creative allotment plot, the tallest sunflower for the young person's award entry and an overall winning prize for the best kept allotment in Uckfield. I was honoured to present the awards to the winners at the annual allotment conference, and support the growth of local produce, the benefits that allotments bring to health and wellbeing and promoting self-sufficiency.

Did you know that in the region of 70 litter bins are owned by the Town Council and placed on Town Council land? This is in addition to the bins provided along public highways and rights of way, and collected by Wealden District Council's waste contractor. Despite this, the town continues to see a number of people drop litter or not pick up dog mess, day after day. This is not only unsightly but also a risk to wildlife, and young children in the case of dog fouling. We continue to support Brighter Uckfield and would like to thank them and the individual residents who use their own time voluntarily to keep Uckfield clean and attractive. The Town Council agreed in 2018, to work with a company called Tikspac to provide ten dog bag dispensers in our open spaces to provide bags to dog owners whilst they are out walking. We also launched a campaign to advise that 'any bin will do.' You don't need to use a specific dog litter bin to dispose of dog waste, any general litter bin will do.

Safety on the roads has continued to remain a priority for the Town Council. The past year has seen a working group set up to re-institute the speed indicator device, and with training use this device at key locations around the town to raise awareness of speed restrictions and make drivers think twice whilst travelling through the town. The Town Council agreed to contribute to the purchase of software to be used by local community speedwatch groups and has continued to hold another successful safety day in Luxford Field with children from the local Uckfield primary schools. The event is an excellent way of educating young people about matters of safety whether it be on the highway, pedestrian, cliff edge, railway etc, in an interactive way. Preparations are already underway for this year's 'Children Stay Safe Day' taking place in June 2019.

Further enhancements have been made to some of our green open spaces including a new boundary fence between Ridgewood Recreation Ground and the Millennium Green. New noticeboards have been added to the areas of Elizabeth Gardens and Harlands Farm, to improve communication with residents walking through these areas. A drone code was also established by the Environment and Leisure Committee to be adhered to if members of the public are using drones in our open spaces. In the main, drones are used as a hobby and for fun, but with increasing concerns in the media about how drones can be misused, the Committee were keen to see some guidance established. Work is still continuing with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to create byelaws for the Hempstead Meadows and West Park Nature Reserves. It is hoped that a final draft will be ready this year for publication.

The agreement is now in place with St. Philip's Catholic School to make the pedestrian access between Victoria Pleasure Ground and the school grounds, permanent. The intention of this agreement was to increase safety for school pupils at drop off and collection times. We are working closely with the primary school to monitor how this works and to ensure that there are no difficulties created for users of the pleasure ground, nearby residential properties or businesses.

We must not forget the attractive hanging basket and floral displays within the town during the summer months and the beautiful Christmas lights in the town centre during the festive season. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to bring these to the town and the Town Council works with some excellent local contractors to safely install these. These additions along with improvements to existing spaces such as the walled area in Library Way are important to the Town Council and help to make Uckfield an attractive place to live and work.

Events continue to be an important part of the town's annual calendar, and evidence of the fantastic level of community spirit within the town. The Town Council continues to support the various events that take place in the town, and the communication of these. The Town Council itself held another successful Weald on the Field in August 2018 with the support of Wealden District Council, Uckfield Chamber of Commerce and Food Rocks. Plans are already underway for this year's free event, with stalls selling local produce, streetfood, local crafts, pop up bars and live entertainment, so keep Saturday 3rd August 2019 clear in your diary and if you want to be involved, let us know!

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to our grounds staff who do a brilliant job every day to ensure our town remains clean, green and our open spaces, nature reserves and play parks are well managed. They are always first on the scene and their dedication is much appreciated. I would like to thank the Town Clerk and office staff for all of the amazing support they have provided over the last year.

Well done team!

Councillor Jeremy Beesley
Chairman
Environment and Leisure Committee

Plans Committee

The Town Council is classed as a statutory consultee on all Uckfield-based planning applications and is therefore required by Wealden District Council – the local planning authority – to offer comments on all planning applications.

The Plans Committee of Uckfield Town Council comprises of seven members and has met on 17 occasions throughout the past year. At these meetings, 74 submitted planning applications were considered. In addition, a further 22 planning applications were reviewed, the timing of which fell outside the normal cycle of meetings.



The applications received during the past year comprised of a mixture of domestic, commercial, retail and leisure properties including Listed Building Consent.

One of the most important consultations of 2018-19 was the proposed submission document for the Wealden Local Plan. A full consultation process commenced in September 2018, and required detailed consideration of each section. The Town Council asked for the views of all Town Councillors and then a small working group compiled their feedback into themed responses specific to key paragraphs and sections within the main document. The final submission document was submitted to the Planning Inspector in January 2019, and the first stage of the examination by the appointed Planning Inspector is due to begin in May 2019. In order to consider the Ashdown Forest and mitigate the impact of traffic flows and house building on the natural habitats there (both flora and fauna), there are limited proposals for large scale development within Uckfield's parish boundary, going forward. The development of 1,000 homes in Ridgewood is due to be delivered in stages over the next five to ten years and will have the most impact on the town's infrastructure. Copies of the January 2019 submission document and accompanying appendices are available to view in the Town Council office. Once finalised and adopted, the Local Plan will set clear physical boundaries and planning policies which developers will need to adhere to and meet, to redevelop and build in the Wealden District.

The committee and wider full council have reviewed the plans to redevelop Uckfield College, off Downsview Crescent. Briefings were held at the start of 2018 on the proposals, and as we draw this municipal year to a close, the hoarding is already up and contractor portacabins installed ready for works to begin.

The Town Council reviewed the plans put forward for the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Ridgewood Village Hall.

The Town Council has also supported the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Uckfield. The documents are currently being prepared for a scoping process with key partner agencies before being updated for public consultation. Once the plan has been adopted, future developments in Uckfield will attract a greater proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy funding, which can be used for improving the local infrastructure.

I would like to thank my fellow council members for their considered valuable comments and contributions at all of the meetings.

Councillor Chris Macve
Chairman
Plans Committee

Financial Summary for 2018-19 (DRAFT)

INCOME and EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 2018-19 by COMMITTEE			
Committee	Budget set for 2018/19	Projected outturn at year end	Variation from budget set
	£	£	£
Environment and Leisure			
Expenditure	314,370	258,860	(55,510)
Income	94,480	84,551	9,929 *
<i>Balance total</i>	<i>219,890</i>	<i>174,309</i>	<i>(45,581)</i>
General Purposes			
Expenditure	858,770	826,607	(32,163)
Income	190,611	200,954	10,343
<i>Balance total</i>	<i>668,159</i>	<i>625,653</i>	<i>(42,506)</i>
Luxfords			
Expenditure	176,282	183,534	7,252
Income	176,700	149,955	26,745 *
<i>Balance total</i>	<i>(418.00)</i>	<i>33,579 *</i>	<i>33,997</i>

() = indicates that savings were made
 * = shortfall in income levels

N.B. Year-end financial processes need to be completed before the above figures can be finalised.

ALLOWANCES PAID TO COUNCILLORS IN 2018-19			
	Allowances	Expenses	Notes
	£	£	
Cllr. James Anderson (resigned 13 Apr 2018)	£44.91	-	*Denotes Town Mayor. (An additional allowance is payable to the Mayor in connection with the duties of the position). The allowances are from the financial year 1 st April 2018 – 31 st March 2019.
Cllr. Jeremy Beesley	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Duncan Bennett	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Mick Dean	-	-	
Cllr. Louise Eastwood	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Keith Everett	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Helen Firth	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Donna French	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Jackie Love	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Chris Macve	-	-	
Cllr. Daniel Manvell (joined 13 July 2018)	£906.31	-	
Cllr. Spike Mayhew *	£3,002.00	-	
Cllr. Paul Meakin	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Ian Smith	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Paul Sparks	£1,261.00	-	
Cllr. Diane Ward	-	-	

N.B. Councillors can choose to receive the allowance if they wish.
 Under the current legislation, co-opted Councillors are not eligible to receive an allowance.

Councillor Attendance

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS (27th March 2018 to 26th March 2019)					
Councillors	Full Council (10 meetings)	General Purposes (8 meetings)	Environment and Leisure (8 meetings)	Plans (18 meetings)	Overall Attendance %
J. Beesley	8	-	7	16 out of possible 16	91.2%
D. Bennett	7	-	5	10	61.1%
M. Dean	8	8	7	-	88.5%
L. Eastwood	7	6	-	13	72.2%
K. Everett	7	7	-	1 out of possible 2	75.0%
H. Firth	7	7	6	-	76.9%
D. French	10	-	8	18	100.0%
J. Love (Deputy Mayor)	10	5	-	16	86.1%
D. Manvell	7 out of possible 7	-	-	-	100.0%
S. Mayhew (Town Mayor)	9	-	6	16	86.1%
P. Meakin	10	8	-	-	100.0%
C. Macve	9	-	-	15	85.7%
I. Smith	9	6	8	-	88.5%
P. Sparks	10	8	-	-	100.0%
D. Ward	9	8	8	-	96.2%

N.B. Attendances are from the 27th March 2018 to 26th March 2019.

- Not all Councillors sit on all or the same committees every year.
- The Town Council also has both Finance and Personnel Sub-committees which meet as necessary.
- In addition, Councillors sit on working groups, steering groups and also represent the Town Council on a number of outside bodies.

Our Community Grants Programme for 2019-20

Each year the Town Council sets a budget for the provision of community grants. In September 2018, the Finance Sub-Committee considered applications for grant funding for 2019-20. The following grants were subsequently approved by General Purposes Committee in October 2018:

GRANTS AWARDED BY UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL FOR 2019-20	
Wealden Citizen's Advice	£18,836
Total Section 142 Grants	£18,836
Uckfield & District Twinning Association	450
First Field Responders	1,000
2530 Rafal Air Cadets (Uckfield)	1,000
Uckfield Theatre Guild	800
Maresfield Lawn Tennis Club	1,000
Ditch the Slippers	250
Manor Park and Hempstead Fields Residents' Association	475
Uckfield Festival Association	4,000
Brighter Uckfield Campaign	1,000
Framfield & Blackboys Monday Club	500
Uckfield (Holy Cross) Choral Society	500
Family Support Work	750
Uckfield College Counselling Service	2,000
The Royal British Legion	210
Newtown Action Group	250
Uckfield Millennium Green Trust	450
Uckfield & District Preservation Society	1,996
Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society	4,000
Uckfield Housebound and Friendship Club	500
East Sussex Association of the Blind & Partially Sighted People	200
Age Concern Uckfield & District	500
Tunbridge Wells & District Samaritans	200
Uckfield FM	2,500
Total General Power of Competence Grants	£24,531
Service Level Agreement for Uckfield Volunteer Centre	£8,000



Our Annual Plan 2019-2020 PRIORITIES

PEOPLE

PLACE

1	<p>COMMUNITY GRANTS</p> <p>We will award up to £43,367 of community grant funding to local groups and charitable organisations for the period 2019/20</p>	5	<p>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN</p> <p>We will support the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to prepare a draft Uckfield Neighbourhood Plan ready for submission to the local planning authority.</p>
2	<p>HEALTH AND WELLBEING</p> <p>We will seek to update the maps of the town which highlight our open spaces and footways, and introduce a number of initiatives to increase the use of these spaces and encourage greater physical activity.</p>	6	<p>CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY</p> <p>We will explore the practicalities of starting a blue plaque heritage scheme which would note important people and places in Uckfield's history.</p>
		7	<p>PLASTIC FREE</p> <p>Leading by example, we will work closely with Brighter Uckfield and Uckfield Chamber of Commerce to encourage Uckfield to become a town free of single-use plastic.</p>
3	<p>PUBLIC EVENTS IN THE TOWN</p> <p>We will work alongside the local business community and local community groups to deliver two free public events within the town; Weald on the Field and Uckfield Revival.</p>	8	<p>PAVEMENTS AND HIGHWAYS</p> <p>We will work with partner agencies to push for improvements to accessibility and safety on our pavements and highways.</p>
		9	<p>GRASS VERGE CUTTING</p> <p>We will contribute to the costs of the East Sussex County Council's grass verge cutting contract to retain a good standard of service, and ensure visibility is maintained on pavements and highways.</p>
4	<p>PLAY AREA UPGRADE</p> <p>We will put funds aside towards the upgrade of Luxfords Play Area and explore other opportunities to assist with the funding of this upgrade.</p>	10	<p>TOWN COUNCIL BUILDINGS</p> <p>We will assess whether our buildings could be better utilised and meet the needs of Uckfield's residents and organisations.</p>
		11	<p>TRADITIONAL RED TELEPHONE BOX</p> <p>We will restore the traditional red telephone box, move it to a more prominent location and use the iconic facility to provide a service for residents and visitors to the town.</p>

PROVISION

12	<p>USER FRIENDLY BOOKING</p> <p>We will look to install a new internal booking system to manage room and venue hire, and explore the introduction of an online booking facility on the Civic Centre website for the purchase of event tickets.</p>
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Did you know?

Your County Council looks after:	Your District Council looks after:	Your Town Council looks after:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways maintenance (road repairs, verge cutting, pavements, most street lighting); • Highway emergencies; • Winter gritting; • Rights of Way; • Public transport; • Adult Social Care (<i>carers, services for older people, learning disabilities, physical/sensory impairments</i>); • Children's services (<i>child protection, support for families</i>); • Education; • Leisure and culture; • Libraries; • Trading standards • Registration of births and deaths; • Waste disposal (<i>including household waste recycling centres</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax collection; • Local planning as your local planning authority; • Development control; • Building control; • Waste collection and street cleansing; • Environmental health (<i>including licensing, environmental protection – air quality, noise, food safety, health and safety</i>); • Housing advice; • Homelessness; • Benefits; • Leisure Centres; • Wealden car parks; • Supporting economic development, local businesses and tourism; • Community toilet scheme; • Community and capital grants scheme; • Conserving biodiversity assets, conservation areas and designated sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of Uckfield's green parks and open spaces; • Snatts Road Cemetery; • Upgrades and maintenance of Uckfield play areas, sports pitches and skate park; • Maintenance and management of Allotments; • Conservation of our nature reserves and conservation areas; • Floral displays and hanging baskets; • Christmas lights; • Town Centre CCTV; • Community grants; • Some street lighting; • Hire of rooms and events at the Civic Centre, Foresters Hall and Sport Pavilions; • Events held within the town to educate, mark special occasions, and celebrate Uckfield.