

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Monday 9th December 2019 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. G. Johnson
Cllr. J. Beesley	Cllr. J. Love (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. S. Mayhew (Town Mayor)
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. H. Firth	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. French	Cllr. D. Ward
	Mr. A. Brunsdon
	Mr. L. Westwood Flood

IN ATTENDANCE:

1 member of the public
1 member of the press (recording)
County Councillor Chris Dowling
County/District Councillor Claire Dowling

Holly Goring Town Clerk
Sarah D'Alessio 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 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.

Councillor A. Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 7.3 as a result of a relative working for Gatwick Airport.

Councillor D. Bennett declared a personal interest in agenda item 9.0, as a result of being involved in the Uckfield & Parishes Railway Line Committee. Councillor C. Macve also declared an interest in this item, as the Town Council representative on the Committee.

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

FC.74.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable updates to be provided from the District and County Councillors.

Councillor Claire Dowling advised that with the general election taking place that week, information from central government was limited for the County Council, in terms of the grant settlement they would receive for 2020/21. There was a risk that the information would not be provided until near or after Christmas which could impact on the budget setting process. East Sussex County Council had been informed that there was scope to increase the precept a further 2%, specifically for adult social care services. A Cabinet meeting was due to take place the following day.

The major development planned off Mallards Drive, had required a great deal of work behind the scenes, to investigate the detail and try and get the decision deferred by Wealden District Council's Plans Committee North, to enable more studies to be undertaken. Concerns related to drainage, vegetation clearance, highway safety and proximity to the hospital.

Work was also underway to look at trees elsewhere in the town such as Snatts Road, and to encourage where trees had been removed without permission, that trees be replanted.

Councillor Chris Dowling had been following up on local maintenance issues, issues relating to parking on double yellow lines, water running down driveways, and in New Town, there had been particular issues with gullies and overgrown trees. He had requested commitment from ES Highways to address these issues.

Councillor H. Firth wished to add that she was still working closely with Sussex Police to tackle anti-social behaviour and substance misuse issues in New Town. Councillor H. Firth had also been dealing with enquiries relating to sharps box exchanges. They had been inundated for a period of 2-3 months, but wished to clarify that it was still just a week's notice to arrange collection of these.

Councillor G. Johnson advised that he had worked closely with Councillors Dowling and Firth to raise their concerns in relation to the Mallards Drive development. A criticism was put forward of the planning department in regards to the limited information coming through and timing of this. There was also an application for homes in Ridgewood which local residents had opposed.

Councillor P. Sparks referred to a discussion at a previous Wealden DC meeting in relation to raw sewage from a development. The response received from Southern Water advised that although you cannot stop planning approval, occupation of housing can be stopped until rectified and in place. Southern Water were due to attend an Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting the following month to discuss water supply and drainage with members.

A discussion arose relating to the policy on sandbags. It was clarified that Wealden District Council would only supply sandbags to Wealden DC properties

at risk of flooding. Privately, residents or businesses were expected to purchase their own from local building merchants.

FC.75.12.19 Councillors were thanked for their input and updates, and subsequently **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor C. Snelgrove.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 28th October 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.76.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 28th October 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

5.2 Action List

Members considered the detail and asked that the following actions be removed from the list as a result of these actions being completed or being duplicated in a further action–

FC68.10.19 - Grass verge cutting

FC70.10.19 - Rural Services Network

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(a) Plans Committee of the 11th November and 2nd December 2019

FC.77.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 11th November and 2nd December 2019.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 18th November 2019

FC.78.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 18th November 2019.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 4th November 2019

FC.79.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 4th November 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

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Panel

Councillor G. Johnson had attended a community engagement session, and received information which suggested that the airport were planning to utilise their emergency runway as a second runway in the future.

Members thanked Councillor G. Johnson for a well written report and subsequently noted the contents.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Civic Centre Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Councillor P. Sparks wished to highlight a couple of items within the report. The Men's Shed was now up and running, and was taking place in one of the sheds at the rear of the Alma Arms, Framfield Road on Tuesday and Thursdays.

Councillor Sparks provided an update on festive activities including a pantomime; a dementia friendly event due to take place at Sussex Support Services at Victoria Pavilion on 12th December 2019. Members noted the report.

(iii) Uckfield Events Working Group - Celebrate

Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING A RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH EAST

Members were provided with a link to the draft Transport Strategy for the South East which had been placed out for public consultation. Transport for the South East was set up as a partnership to speak as one voice on the South East's strategic transport issues.

Councillor Macve had read the report in detail and provided a summary for fellow councillors. Some sections of the report were interesting and very relevant. The strategy covered the full expanse of the South East, from Hampshire to Dover, from the Thames to the English Channel and all forms of transport. The draft strategy placed considerable emphasis on the BML1 proposals - upgrading to improve capacity and referenced improvements to the A22. But, this was only a small reference by stating '*needs to be improved.*'

The draft strategy placed a great deal of emphasis on connectivity and the importance of integration between road, rail and ports. The draft strategy spoke of extending the high-speed rail service into Sussex, as a spin off from the existing line in Kent. The draft strategy spoke extensively of the inadequacy of rail services in the South East, and constraints on the rail network to London and international gateways; the need to upgrade existing services whilst reflecting on the need to protect the environment. Locally, there was reference to the Uckfield line and need to look at this to provide services to Brighton. Although there was no mention of BML2.

Reference was given to freight; highlighting the need to expand all of the ports including Newhaven.

It was proposed to write in support of the draft strategy, but in particular to stress the importance of the BML2 scheme, to enable freight services to travel north more easily without travelling through London and relieve current pressures on the BML1 and improve connectivity between the airports.

One member noted that the draft Strategy made some very interesting predictions - by 2050, the South East was estimated to see 500,000 additional

jobs, but how with digitalization? The integration of transport services would be a great challenge but connectivity was important, particularly between bus and rail services.

It was recommended that the Dartford Crossing tolls be removed but other members questioned whether the congestion was due to the volume of traffic rather than payment system, as most people now paid online. It was recommended that railway links north and south could be encouraged, even if to open up the link to Tunbridge Wells, as the existing Gatwick Airport route was poor.

The importance of infrastructure improvements was raised, especially prior to the completion of new housing developments. At a local level, transport links were vital before completion of homes.

One member noted that the biggest pollutant was vehicles, and it was vital that greater investment was placed in public transport, to encourage a change in behaviour. The Ashdown Forest was already damaged, and the town was gridlocked. Members discussed the cost of bus services in the local area, in comparison with London's fixed journey fees.

The Mayor thanked members for their feedback and advised that the Town Clerk would provide a response to the Draft Transport Strategy on behalf of the Town Council.

10.0 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON OUR RESEARCH INTO PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS

Members had been provided with the findings of detailed research into how Public Space Protection Orders had been set up elsewhere, their purpose and what impact they had in reducing anti-social behaviour.

It was highlighted by one member that if the evidence from similar size towns had failed to demonstrate any positive impact, that it was unwise for the Town Council to proceed and utilise its resources on something which had minimal effect.

It was summarised that the main factor in successfully implementing Public Space Protection Orders, was the ability to enforce these zones/orders, and have the resource to do so. It was suggested that the matter be deferred and placed on hold, until Police resources had improved, and feedback had been received from Sussex Police.

One member highlighted the points that had been previously discussed by the Environment & Leisure Committee and emphasised the need for people to report crime and anti-social behaviour.

FC.80.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** to defer any progress in respect of Public Space Protection Orders for the time being, and continue to encourage people to report crime and anti-social behaviour.

11.0 TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO PURCHASE SPECIFIC MEETING/COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION SOFTWARE - IBABS

Members considered information on a new piece of meeting software which would support the administration, preparation and reading of agenda papers and council documents.

Members queried the costs of other similar software, such as mod.gov, and the costs incurred by the Town Council for printing. They also suggested viewing a webinar on how the system would work.

It was acknowledged that the existing process and proposed improvements to place the agenda papers in one PDF on the website would be far more cost effective for the Town Council, but five of the 15 members were still receiving print outs of council papers.

Members suggested that the Town Clerk report back with further information to Full Council or General Purposes in January 2020.

12.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-25

Members reviewed the first draft of objectives which would build the Strategic Plan for 2020/25. The Strategic Plan was a five-year plan setting out the vision, key aims and medium-term priorities for the Town Council during that period. The plan was refreshed on an annual basis alongside the draft annual plan, draft budget and draft asset management plan. It would be placed out for consultation after the Full Council meeting until Monday 13 January 2020.

Members noted the content of the report.

13.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2020/21

Members reviewed the draft annual plan for 2020/21 which set out the list of priorities they wished to achieve in the next financial year.

Members sought clarity on a couple of points, before noting the report.

14.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET 2020/21

Members had been provided with full draft budget papers as part of the agenda pack.

Members discussed the proposal to set aside £5k specifically towards future investigations or infrastructure to support the installation of a charging point within the Town, in detail. The Town Clerk advised that discussions were still in the early stages in many areas with regard to charging points. Wealden DC had been investigating costs as part of a consortium of authorities, so it would be wise to wait until more information was available. It was thought beneficial to start putting funds aside for climate change initiatives.

Members noted the increase in litter collection costs.

One member wished to propose an increase in the budget for community grant funding, an increase in the funds set aside for elections to cover the costs of having poll cards for by-elections, and it was suggested that a higher contribution be requested towards the cost of the festive lights.

Members subsequently noted the contents of the draft budget for 2020/21.

15.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-25
Subject to the need to check and review the figure stated for income received from lease agreements and licences, members noted the report.

16.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS
Members noted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's engagements.

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

Seven deeds of grant had been received:

Sheila Jones and Angela Terry

Frances Chisholm

Gabor Szekely

Clive Cooper

Jacqueline Copas

Kerry Anne Sleet

Lucy Ann Hawkes

FC.81.12.19 It was **RESOLVED** to sign the above deeds of grant.

18.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED
No questions were received by the deadline.

19.0 TOWN CLERKS ANNOUNCEMENTS
The Town Clerk advised members that the full-time administrative officer, Mrs Paul was due to retire at the end of December 2019. Mrs Paul had worked for Uckfield Town Council for over 15 years and been an excellent member of the Town Council office team. Her dedication and hard work would be very much missed and the Town Clerk hoped that the Town Councillors would join her in wishing her best wishes for her retirement.

20.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
The Town Mayor, Councillor S. Mayhew spoke of the excellent Late Night Shopping event that had taken place in the town the previous Friday. He also wished to promote the pantomime, Dick Whittington, with performances on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th December at the Civic Centre.

The meeting closed at 20.45pm.