

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Monday 20th January 2020 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. 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

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 K. Bedwell declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 15.0 (Asset Management Plan) as a result of being the Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall 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.82.01.20 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable updates to be provided from the District and County Councillors.

Councillor Chris Dowling wished to send apologies for Councillor Claire Dowling

who was unwell.

Councillor Chris Dowling provided an update on East Sussex County Council issues. Councillor Dowling had been dealing with a couple of localised matters, relating to Highview Lane, Ridgewood and traffic management with Taylor Wimpey in terms of traffic calming in Lewes Road. He was also remaining engaged in conversations relating to the forthcoming dual roundabout works on the A22.

The Strengthening Local Relationship Meeting with East Sussex Highways was due to take place that week, whereby the Town Council would discuss outstanding matters which related to East Sussex Highways. One of the matters that was likely to be discussed included the verges in Downsview Crescent, which had been churned up by people dropping off or collecting students. Temporary repair works had been undertaken before the verges were churned up once more. A more permanent solution would be discussed going forward.

East Sussex County Council would be considering their budget papers at Full Council on 11th February 2020. The recent election and Queen's Speech had meant some additional provisions to funding over the next few years to social care, education and transport. The agenda papers were available at: <https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/documents/g3845/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Feb-2020%2010.00%20Full%20Council.pdf?T=10>

One member requested clarification on the traffic calming works in Lewes Road, and S106 agreement for the Ridgewood Farm site (phases 1A and 1B), as they understood that the first house could not be occupied until these measures had been put in place.

A second member wished to highlight their disappointment that Wealden District Council were not going to appeal the decision of the Planning Inspectorate on the Wealden Local Plan. Sevenoaks District Council were challenging the outcome of theirs.

Councillor G. Johnson provided an update on behalf of Wealden District Council, stating that it was best to change a substantial amount of the Local Plan and some of the people presenting the plan. It could take a couple of years to develop a new plan, and there was pressure to build more homes.

FC.83.01.20 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 Councillors H. Firth, C. Snelgrove and P. Sparks.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 9th December 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.84.01.20 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 9th December 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

5.2 Action List
Members noted the action list.

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(a) Plans Committee of the 23rd December 2019 and 13th January 2020

FC.85.01.20 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 23rd December 2019 and 13th January 2020.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 6th January 2020

FC.86.01.20 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 6th January 2020.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 16th December 2019

FC.87.01.20 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 16th December 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

This item was deferred to the next meeting, as a result of the working group meeting being postponed due to sickness and work commitment.

(ii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield Events Working Group - Celebrate

Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEALDEN PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL ON TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES FOR 2020/21

Members considered a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel which recommended an increase for Level (3) Councils in 2020/21 of 2.5% on that recommended in 2019/20. Members were reminded that at the meeting of Full Council on 14th January 2019, Town Councillors voted against taking an increase in their member allowances in 2019/20, and therefore still receive the same allowance as that agreed and recommended in 2018/19.

One member highlighted how the UK was known to have some of the lowest allowances in Europe which did not encourage younger people to join and become elected members. It was also highlighted that as a result of members not taking an increase in 2019/20, the proposed recommendation by the Independent Panel, would actually result in a 4.5% increase for 2020/21 on the rate elected members were currently receiving (2018/19).

One member reminded Town Councillors that they didn't have to take the allowance.

Members asked whether they had to take the recommended rate. The Town Clerk read out a paragraph from the Panel's report which stated:

24. In setting the levels of allowances, Town and Parish Councils must show they have regard to the IRP's recommendations, but it is entirely up to each Town and Parish Council what scheme of allowances is adopted. The Panel has expressed its preference that an allowance scheme is adopted by all Councils, even if not claimed by individual Councillors. When adopting a scheme, Parish and Town Councils must under the Regulations publish its scheme by public notice.

Members therefore discussed whether to look at increasing the allowance in line with the current rate of inflation. This was researched during the meeting and found to be approximately 1.81%.

FC.88.01.20 The matter was taken to a vote. With eight members voting in favour and three members voting to abstain out of 12 members present, it was **RESOLVED** to refuse the recommended 2.5% increase in allowances and set an increase for 2020/21 in line with the current rate of inflation (1.81%) – producing an annual basic allowance of £1284.00 and Chairman's allowance of £1773.00.

10.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT BUDGET (2020/21) AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-25 FOR WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members considered the questions put forward within Wealden District Council's consultation survey and the accompanying draft documents which included the draft budget 2020/21 and medium-term financial strategy (2020-25).

Members did not feel that there was enough context to explain some of the figures presented, and therefore did not wish to comment. Members subsequently noted the report.

11.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSERVATORS OF THE ASHDOWN FOREST

Members considered a report which highlighted that the Town Council had been approached by the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest in December 2019, advising that East Sussex County Council would be withdrawing all grant funding to Ashdown Forest and their core budget over the next two years. The correspondence received, asked if the Town Council could provide a financial contribution to assist with their funding streams.

One member advised that the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest had been informed previously that any requests for funding needed to be submitted through the Uckfield Town Council's Community Grant programme.

A second member advised that they had worked extensively as a volunteer for the Ashdown Forest and were keen to see current services maintained, and as a neighbour of the Forest, should seek to support the Conservators. However they also recognised that any request for funding needed to be made through the appropriate channels.

It was acknowledged that the Ashdown Forest brought a lot to the local economy, and suggested that perhaps a public consultation should be carried out to see whether the rate payers would be happy for the Town Council to contribute. It was questioned whether the Conservators had become a charity yet, as in 2017, they informed Uckfield Town Council that they were planning to commence the process.

It was also questioned, whether there would be an ongoing expectation in future years. It was suggested that perhaps it would be worthwhile writing to Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council, and neighbouring councils to try and look at a package of support for the Conservators.

FC.89.01.20 Members **RESOLVED** to request that a letter be written to the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest, to advise that with regret due to the timing of their request, it was not possible to provide financial support for 2020/21, but Uckfield Town Council did however wish to work with the Conservators to convene a partnership meeting of all the relevant authorities and parishes, to provide a long-term solution to funding the Ashdown Forest Conservators and the work that they do.

The Assistant Town Clerk left the room at this point to make the necessary amendments to the budget papers for 2020/21 following previous discussions around members allowances.

12.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2020/25
Members considered the comments received in relation to the draft Strategic Plan 2020/25, which set out the priorities of the organisation over the next five years.

FC.90.01.20 Members noted the feedback received, and report, and **RESOLVED** to adopt the Strategic Plan 2020/25 for Uckfield Town Council.

13.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN 2020/21
Members considered the Annual Plan for 2020/21 which set out the priorities of the Town Council over the next financial year.

FC.91.01.20 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Annual Plan 2020/21 for Uckfield Town Council.

The Assistant Town Clerk returned to the room in time for agenda item 14.0 to be considered.

14.0 TO FORMALLY SET THE ANNUAL BUDGET (PRECEPT) FOR 2020/21
Members considered the budget papers for 2020/21. Taking on board the resolution to increase member allowances in line with the rate of inflation, the Assistant Town Clerk made amendments to the member allowances budget code for 2020/21 and double checked once more both the figures for 2019/20 and 2020/21 on all budget papers and the covering sheet. These were circulated to members at the meeting.

This created an increase of 2.96% per Council Band D property per annum (increasing the amount by £4.77).

FC.92.01.20 With 11 votes in favour, out of 12 members present, members **RESOLVED** to adopt the annual budget for 2020/21 and precept of £942,405.

15.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2020/21
Members reviewed the refreshed version of the Asset Management Plan for 2020/25.

Councillor K. Bedwell (also Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee) highlighted the comments which had been received in response to the draft Strategic Plan 2020/25 consultation, and request to look at the provision for adult sport facilities and recreation within the town, over the next few years. They felt that it was very important to note the lack of recreational facilities at the south end of Uckfield. Councillor K. Bedwell believed that Ridgewood Recreation Ground should be developed more to support the community.

The Ridgewood Village Hall Committee had run a number of events and had tried hard to source funding to develop the building. Although some grant applications had not been successful, the management committee had obtained £70k to refurbish the hall. The Ridgewood Village Hall was managed on a voluntary basis and it should be noted that it was increasingly difficult to find volunteers. It was now a business and they had struggled at the last AGM (October 2019) to get a management committee together. The Bookings officer was also clocking up around 20 or so hours a week. The Town Council therefore needed to explore options going forward.

FC.93.01.20 Members considered the statement by Councillor K. Bedwell and Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee and **RESOLVED** to request that the statement be presented to the next meeting of General Purposes Committee and adopt the Asset Management Plan for 2020/25.

16.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2019-20 (Q3)
Members reviewed the progress against the annual priorities for 2019-20 and noted the report.

17.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL THE LEASE FOR THE SIGNAL BOX

FC.94.01.20 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the lease agreement for the Signal Box, with R&R Taxis, and two Councillors signed and sealed the lease agreement at the meeting.

18.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL THE TOWN COUNCIL'S BYELAWS FOR HEMPSTEAD MEADOWS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE AND WEST PARK LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

FC.95.01.20 Members **RESOLVED** to:
(i) authorise the affixing of the common seal to the byelaws for both Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve and West Park Local Nature Reserve and signing by two named councillors, and;
(ii) authorise the Town Clerk for Uckfield Town Council to carry out the necessary

procedures and apply to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

19.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's engagements.

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

None received.

21.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

The Town Clerk advised that a question from Councillor C. Macve had been received in the appropriate timescales prior to the meeting, but due to the council's internet connection and emails being down, it was not possible to circulate and advise members.

Councillor C. Macve had been copied into a letter from Mrs Brown on behalf of Uckfield Community Hospital to Wealden District Council's planning department which discussed their concerns with the planning process, lack of engagement and concerns relating to the proposed development off Mallards Drive, Uckfield. Councillor C. Macve requested that the Town Clerk investigate the matters detailed within the letter.

FC.96.01.20 Members **RESOLVED** to request that the Town Clerk investigate the matters detailed in the letter from Uckfield Community Hospital to Wealden District Council.

22.0 TOWN CLERKS ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

23.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Councillor S. Mayhew wished to thank all of those involved in the Emergency Incident Response Group on New Year's Day, when Uckfield Town Council was required to open up the Civic Centre as an Emergency Rest Centre on behalf of Wealden District Council, including Councillors J. Love, D. Bennett, C. Snelgrove, D. French, D. Ward, the Estates & Facilities Manager and Town Clerk. Thanks were also extended to Sussex Support Services who provided transport in the evening to transport the people involved to nearby accommodation in Uckfield and Crowborough, and to Dominoes Pizzas in Uckfield who kindly donated five large pizzas that afternoon. Thanks were also given to the local resident (Yvonne Walter) who donated some biscuits and chocolates. It was an excellent example of team working and response.

24.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

FC97.01.20 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.

24.1 To receive an update from the Civic Centre Working Group

The meeting was postponed due to sickness and work commitments. This item was therefore deferred to the next meeting.

24.2 To consider S.85 of the Local Government Act

FC98.01.20

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept the reasons for the non-attendance of Councillor C. Snelgrove over the past five months and a period of extension be granted of up to six months on the understanding that Councillor C. Snelgrove keeps the Town Clerk updated. The Town Clerk was also asked to investigate alternative methods of participation.

The meeting closed at 8.48pm.

N.B since this meeting, Councillor C. Snelgrove attended the meeting of General Purposes Committee on 27.01.20.