

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7.00pm

## PRESENT:

Cllr. C. Macve (Chair)	Cllr. H. Firth
Cllr. D. Ward (Vice-Chair)	Cllr. J. Love
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. J. Edwards	

## IN ATTENDANCE:

1 member of the press (recorded the meeting)  
4 members of the public

Holly Goring – Town Clerk  
Mark Francis – Estates & Facilities Manager  
Sarah D'Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk & RFO  
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

### 1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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.

Councillor J. Edwards declared his interest in agenda item 6.2 as a result of being a representative for the Town Council on the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee.

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

#### GP38.03.20

It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable one member of the public to speak in relation to agenda item 6.2.

Local resident Mr Noble explained to committee members that he had been a resident of Ridgewood for 25 years and had become Vice Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee in recent months. He reminded the committee of the fantastic hard work that had been achieved by local people voluntarily to bring the procedures and running of the Village Hall in line with current guidance and best practice.

He requested that members consider the recommendations within the report, compassionately, to enable the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee to allow the refurbishment to go ahead. It was important for the hall to be upgraded to reflect modern usage and standards.

Cllr. Ben Cox arrived at 7.03pm

#### GP39.03.20

It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

### 3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors A. Smith and C. Snelgrove.

### 4.0 MINUTES

#### 4.1 Minutes of the meetings of the General Purposes Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020

#### GP40.03.20

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4.2 Action list

One member asked whether the action relating to the community speedwatch group was still relevant, following the update provided at the Environment & Leisure Committee.

The Town Clerk advised that there were two groups in town – the Speed Indicator Device working group (SID) which had been set up by the Town Council working alongside volunteers and a Community Speedwatch group which had set itself up independently in the Ridgewood area. The Town Clerk advised that she would re-contact the Community Speedwatch group to understand the current situation.

Members noted the action list.

#### 4.3 Project list

Members noted the project list.

### 5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

#### 5.1 To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

#### 5.2 To note the income and expenditure reports for 2019/20

Members noted the reports.

#### 5.3. Bad Debts

Members noted the current bad debts recorded and reasons for this.

#### 5.4 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Members agreed to note and receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

#### 5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Members considered the full details of the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and proposals with regards to changing payment methods for suppliers and approving the allocation of a community grant for 2020/21 subject to an update provided.

The Chairman of Finance Sub-committee provided a summary of the discussions at the meeting; explaining that sub-committee members were in unanimous agreement to change the current method for supplier payments. There were a variety of reasons. Many organisations no longer accepted cheques as a method of payment. The change to BACS would also be far more efficient and cost effective. However sub-committee members did debate to what extent councillors should become involved in the process. It felt sensible to give a trial period of three months (April to June 2020) with two councillors being tasked with making sure the correct amounts were being made to the correct suppliers. The Finance Sub-Committee would then review after three months. They had also considered whether the monthly member audit could incorporate an extension of its current checks to review the new process in more detail.

One member asked whether they will still be required to check various papers (i.e. payments against what was placed on the finance system). The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO clarified, explaining that yes, the Town Councillors would be required to check the SAGE report against the BACS listing for payment in order to authorise payment.

**GP41.03.20** Members voted unanimously and **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation of the Finance Sub-Committee to authorise for:

(i) the BACS system to be trialled for a three-month period; to be introduced from April 2020, with two Councillors to check, sign and authorise payments being made through the system, and;

(ii) the Uckfield Community Orchestra to still receive the community grant that had been allocated to them for 2020/21, subject to the updated information received.

#### 5.6 To note the report of the Internal Auditor

Members reviewed the report of the Internal Auditor from his two day visit at the beginning of February 2020. Members were very pleased to see that the Internal Auditor continued to have no cause for concern.

Members wished to say a special thank you to the new Assistant Town Clerk & RFO for the successful transition recognised within the report.

The Chairman, extended his thanks and passed congratulations onto the office in what they knew, had been a trying time.

Members subsequently noted the report.

### **6.0 BUILDINGS**

#### 6.1 To note the current position with the Council's buildings

Members reviewed the regular update on works and repairs within the Town Council's buildings.

One member raised their continued concerns with regard to car parking in Foresters Hall car park and neighbouring roads. A person had parked across a driveway in Harcourt Road recently and caused an obstruction. It was felt that the matter really did need addressing.

The Town Clerk clarified that if a member of the public parks across a driveway and causes an unnecessary obstruction, that it is a matter for Sussex Police and can be reported, and acted upon.

In regards to Foresters Hall Car Park, the Estates & Facilities Manager had prepared information for the committee to consider around 10-12 months ago, specifically looking at a barrier entry system to manage car parking within the hall car park. At the time, members did not wish to take any action.

One member advised that they had recently been placing letters/notices on vehicles parking inconsiderately, or larger vehicles to advise them of alternative locations where they could park more safely.

Members subsequently noted the report.

#### 6.2 To consider an update from the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee

Members considered the detailed report on a number of issues related to the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee (*current running costs, phasing the works to the car park, transfer of funds to be held as a fall back during the weeks that work is taking place and the committee's view of the future of the Village Hall Committee and suggestion to hold off on extending the lease agreement at this time*).

One member expressed that they were perfectly happy to support the recommendations but felt having two UTC Councillors appointed as representatives could cause confusion, and suggested that it would be better to have one appointed representative and one substitute.

A second member agreed with the above suggestion. They expressed the frustration of the Village Hall Committee in not receiving the grant funding to carry out the proposed extension and hoped that the internal refurbishment and improvements to the car park would improve the current facilities available. By improving the car park, the Town Council could again review access into the car park and aspects around security.

#### **GP42.03.20**

With five votes in favour and one member abstaining on recommendation (iii) in particular, members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the contents of the above report;
- (ii) agree to the upgrade of the car park being carried out in two stages;
- (iii) allocate one UTC representative plus a substitute to the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee at the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council in May 2020;
- (iv) agree to the temporary transfer of up to £11,000 to be made to the RVH Committee during the refurbishment period from earmarked reserves allocated for Ridgewood Village Hall Improvements;
- (v) agree to hold off on the extension of the lease agreement until after the October AGM meeting of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee.

## 7.0 POLICY

### 7.1 To consider a review of the Risk Management Policy – No. 29

Members reviewed the revised Policy which reflected the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee.

### **GP43.03.20**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the revised version of the Risk Management Policy – No. 29.

### 7.2 To review proposed amendments to the Town Council's financial regulations

The Town Clerk talked through the proposed amendments within the financial regulations and updates that they had received from NALC (National Association of Local Councils).

No comments were received and members subsequently noted the report.

## 8.0 ADMINISTRATION

### 8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council

Members reviewed the report circulated and noted the contents.

### 8.2 To receive Members' audit reports

Members noted the reports received.

## 9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

### 9.1 To consider reports from:-

#### (i) Citizens Advice Bureau

One member highlighted the information provided within the report which advised that the Meals on Wheels service was being cut. It was felt that this could have a significant impact on households. They were not quite sure that Foodbank vouchers replaced the service that Meals on Wheels provided. The contact and social interaction of the Meals on Wheels service was just as important as the hot meals provided.

Members noted the report.

#### (ii) East Sussex Association of Local Councils AGM

Nothing to report at this time.

#### (iii) Ridgewood Village Hall Management Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

#### (iv) Uckfield & District Housing Association Ltd Management Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

#### (v) Uckfield & District Preservation Society

Nothing to report at this time.

#### (vi) Uckfield Volunteer Centre

Nothing to report at this time.

#### (vii) Wealden Works

Nothing to report at this time.

(viii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Management Committee  
Nothing to report at this time.

(ix) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel  
Nothing to report at this time.

#### **10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

#### **11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

#### **12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

##### **GP44.03.20**

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.

12.1 Action list (confidential business)  
Noted.

12.2 Update report on the Town Council's lease agreements  
**GP45.03.20** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to arrange an extraordinary meeting of General Purposes Committee if details required further consideration before the next meeting.

12.3 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant  
Members discussed the Town Council's ongoing risk assessments and considerations regarding the Coronavirus.

Members subsequently noted the report.

The meeting closed at 8.02pm