

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held remotely via Zoom on Monday 20th April 2020 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

2 members of the press (recorded the meeting)
2 members of the public

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Mark Francis – Estates & Facilities Manager
Sarah D'Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
Rachel Newton – Senior Administrative Officer
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 P. Sparks declared his interest in agenda item 5.5 which related to discussions regarding community grant applicants, as he was the Chair of Manor Park & Hempstead Fields Residents' Association.

Councillor J. Love also declared an interest in agenda item 5.5 as a result of being the Chair of the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society.

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

None received.

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 9th March 2020 will be taken to the next physical meeting held in person

4.2 Action list

Members made reference to a couple of the actions listed, with one suggestion being made to the red telephone box, which could be made into a temporary food store, for emergency food supplies.

It was also noted that the Churchcoombe Residents' Association were still keen to set up a Community speedwatch group.

Members noted the action list and agreed to remove GP29.12.19/GP36.01.20 from the action list relating to Ridgewood Village Hall, as the action had been superseded by GP42.03.20.

4.3 Project list

Members agreed to remove project no. 54 (262 Saturday bus service) as the four quarters of financial contributions had now been paid to support the service during 2019/20 and the project was complete. Members subsequently noted the remainder of 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

One member noted that the reports already highlighted the drop in income in March as a result of closure of the Civic Centre and Luxfords Restaurant and cancelled bookings due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

5.3. Bad Debts

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

5.4 To consider the Town Council's Financial Regulations and Committee Terms of Reference in light of the current circumstances

A brief review had been undertaken and it was not considered necessary now meetings were resuming remotely and the Town Council had the Urgent Consultation Panel in place.

5.5 To review community grant funding allocations for 2020-21 and potential support for community groups.

Members considered a report which provided them with an update in the present circumstances of Covid -19 and the monies already committed for payment in 2020-21 through the community grant funding scheme. The report sought to consider whether subject to some events and activities being postponed or cancelled whether the funding would still be required by recipients. The report also asked whether members wished to explore other ways of supporting the community.

It was thought that the majority of community grant recipients would still need the funds at this time. Although the Uckfield Festival had already cancelled, the timing of other events were uncertain, and organisations may decide to do things differently in the present circumstances.

GP46.04.20 Members therefore **RESOLVED** to approve to request the Town Clerk to write to grant recipients to understand what funds they need from the grant applied for, and the timescales in which they require the funding during 2020-21.

In terms of the second part of the report which related to whether the Town Council should start fundraising to provide additional financial support to the community, members discussed the matter at some length.

Members were concerned due to the amount of uncertainty at that early stage of lockdown - how long social distancing would be in place and the impact of Covid-19. They also questioned who to support. Local businesses and community groups may need support, but so would some individuals and households. It was felt that the principle and idea of crowdfunding was good, but at this moment in time, many households were struggling financially themselves and it would be very difficult to find out how and who were the deserving causes. Members felt that they should come back to this suggestion at a later date.

GP47.04.20 Members **RESOLVED** to revisit this item (*considering the provision of additional financial support to those who need it*) in three months.

5.6 To note the end of year statement for Community Infrastructure Levy
This item was deferred as the Town Council was still awaiting information from Wealden DC.

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 concerns with people using the play areas despite signage being present. It was confirmed that contact had been made with Sussex Police and any areas where members of the public were considered to be flouting the rules and UK Govt guidance, would be regularly patrolled. Particular areas that had been noted by members and staff as hotspots included Ridgewood Recreation Ground, Hempstead Recreation Ground, Hempstead Meadows Nature Reserve and Selby Gardens.

Members subsequently noted the report.

7.0 POLICY

None.

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 and were advised that there were four reports outstanding for 2019-20 that would need completing once lockdown had eased.

9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

9.1 To consider reports from:-

- (i) Citizens Advice Bureau
Nothing to report at this time.
- (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

The Chairman, Councillor C. Macve thanked all in attendance for their patience during the meeting that evening. The remote meetings were working well, but it took a few minutes to scan the screen for any questions or when recording a vote.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP48.04.20

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 To consider the Town Council's lease agreements and the impact of Covid-19 on leaseholders

GP49.04.20

Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to request that the Estates & Facilities Manager seek further advice from the Town Council's solicitors, and agree that any enquiries received from leaseholders should be dealt with on a case by case basis.

12.2 To consider the advice and guidance by HMRC for employers in response to Covid-19

GP50.04.20 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to request that the Town Council attempt to make an application through the Job Retention Scheme for those staff who were unable to work, in particular in the hospitality sector of the business.

12.3 To consider introducing a salary sacrifice scheme (Department for Transport Cycle to Work scheme)

GP51.04.20 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to request that the Assistant Town Clerk investigate this scheme further.

12.4 To note a brief update on Luxfords Restaurant
Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 8.38pm