

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held as a
REMOTE meeting via ZOOM,
on Monday 26th October at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. J. Edwards
Cllr. H. Firth
Cllr. D. French
Cllr. J. Love (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. S. Mayhew (Town Mayor)
Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. Ward
Mr. A. Brunsdon

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

Holly Goring Town Clerk
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 J. Love declared an interest in agenda item 12.0 as a result of being Chair of the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society.

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.33.10.20 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable updates to be provided by County and District Councillors.

Councillor Claire Dowling advised that they had been keeping a close watch on the local situation in Uckfield. The Public Health Director at ESCC had been providing regular updates on county statistics. Uckfield was split into two (Uckfield Town & North and Uckfield South). There had been 115 confirmed

cases up to and including 23rd October. 53 so far had been in the town. Across the rest of the country, an increase had been seen in the student age groups, but it prevalent in all age groups in Wealden district. Councillor Dowling was also aware that Environmental Health officers were now visiting businesses in Uckfield and Crowborough.

There were still issues with congestion up by Uckfield College and Manor Primary School – parents, staff and others parking along Downsview Crescent. The Town Clerk was going to speak with Uckfield College about issues relating to staff parking, and a follow up meeting would take place regarding the whole issue. ESCC were aware of the situation.

Councillor Chris Dowling referred to Lewes Road and the Uckfield By-pass – residents had recently been in touch regarding a variety of issues (i) the building of the traffic calming measures, (ii) speeding traffic, (iii) positioning of the white line where the pavement had been constructed and (iv) a leak that had been running down Lewes Road. He would be looking into all of these issues and believed the works on the by-pass were on schedule.

Councillor Claire Dowling further added that ESCC had recently submitted their response to the Planning White Paper consultation. There was unanimous feeling that the Planning White paper was flawed – no democratic accountability, proposed changes to levy monies etc, and this had been the general view across all local authorities.

In response councillors referenced Uckfield College and Uckfield Leisure Centre and the recent Covid-19 cases. It was recognised that the transmission of cases might not be work related, and it was thought that of the five cases that had originally been recorded via the College, only two lived in Uckfield. Members also noted the temporary traffic lights on Lewes Road and the fact they were changing quickly from green to red, plus where they had been sited was too close to parked vehicles etc. Further details were provided regarding the water down Lewes Road and it was noted that a section of tarmac had previously caused issues with drivers on the Uckfield bypass - flat tyres etc. This had now been covered over but would need keeping an eye on.

Councillor H. Firth referenced the support that Wealden DC had provided to businesses with grant funding and noted her concerns regarding any forthcoming developments particularly if applications were submitted for Bird in Eye.

Councillor P. Sparks, had attended Wealden DC's Cabinet, where they discussed the redevelopment of Streatfeild House for general needs and affordable rented. A proportion would be shared ownership and 20% of households would be accessible. There were currently 93 household on the housing register who needed accommodation in the town. This would provide 20-25 one to three bed units. There were extensive grounds to Streatfeild House so hopefully space for trees and sensory planting and perhaps a children's play area.

Councillor Sparks also referred to the Freedom Leisure site (Uckfield Leisure Centre). The current licence was due to expire in March 2022, and Wealden DC would be handing back responsibility to East Sussex County Council at that point.

Members wanted to ensure that residents at Grants Hill Court who had moved from Streatfeild House had been spoken to, and questioned whether the Town Council could have any input on the design and scope of the redevelopment. It was the main entrance to one of the town's long-established estates (Manor Park) and the character of the redevelopment was important.

FC.34.10.20 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 J. Beesley, D. Bennett and G. Johnson.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meetings of Full Council on 14th September 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.35.10.20 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of Full Council on the 14th September 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

5.2 Action List

Members reviewed the action list and agreed that the following action could now be removed:

FC29.09.20 – to review the current contract for cleaning the Town's play areas

Following on from FC57.09.19 – Cllr B. Cox' previous motion in regards to food poverty, Councillor K. Bedwell advised that the outreach box scheme would be reinstated with immediate effect due to the second lockdown priced at £9.00 per box of key basic food supplies. There would be two deliveries a week – Sunday and Wednesday. They were also seeking to extend the lunchbox scheme to give supplies for £5.00 to provide five lunches through half term for those households who would normally receive support with school meals. These would be delivered daily through half term.

Councillor K. Bedwell expressed her worry with regards to procedures across secondary schools for students being sent home when the schools had been notified of any covid cases. If parents were at work, there could be a period of time between the student leaving the school gates and the parent knowing that they had been sent home. Councillor J. Edwards wished to commend the Outreach box scheme and all of the volunteers involved for their hard work, and was also interested to understand the safeguarding practices when sending students home.

Members subsequently noted the report.

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(a) Plans Committee

No meetings had taken place.

FC.36.10.20 (b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 19th October 2020
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 19th October 2020.

FC.37.10.20 (c) General Purposes Committee of the 5th October 2020
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 5th October 2020.

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
Nothing to report at present.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Civic Centre Working Group
Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield – Events Working Group
Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum
Councillor P. Sparks was pleased with the success of the sunflower lanyard scheme (supporting those with Hidden Disabilities) and members subsequently noted the report.

**9.0 DEFERRED ITEM FROM PREVIOUS MEETING –
TO CONSIDER THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT’S CONSULTATION
‘PAVEMENT PARKING – OPTIONS FOR CHANGE’**

Members were provided with details of how to access the online consultation on pavement parking and full details on the three options being proposed by the Department for Transport for areas outside London.

Members recognised the importance of accessibility on pavements and noted that there were a number of areas in Uckfield which were affected by pavement parking due to the size of the roads and number of vehicles per household. The High Street also struggled due to a number of the shops not having rear loading bays and loading vehicles having to park up on the pavement to avoid creating traffic congestion. The difficulty was that all options proposed by the Department for Transport relied upon enforcement, which was difficult in Wealden District as on-street parking enforcement was still under the remit of Sussex Police.

It was proposed by Councillor A. Smith that a response be provided on behalf of Uckfield Town Council which explained that none of the three options being proposed were relevant to Wealden District.

FC.38.10.20 Members **RESOLVED** to submit a response to the pavement parking consultation on behalf of Uckfield Town Council which explained that none of the three options being proposed were relevant to Wealden District.

10.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR Q2 (JUL – SEPT 2020)

Members reviewed a summary of progress towards the 10 priorities identified for delivery in 2020/21.

Councillor D. Ward thanked the Town Clerk and all of her team for what they had achieved. The team were achieving things that were not expected during these difficult times. Everyone was working really hard and she was proud of them. Councillor C. Macve agreed and all members noted the report.

11.0 TO REVIEW THE 2021/22 PROPOSAL FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ON THEIR GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT

Members were presented with a brief report which provided three options for parish/town councils to choose from for the next financial year. East Sussex County Council took a decision back in 2018 to reduce urban grass verge cutting along the public highway to twice a year. This meant the verges would be cut less, if no further contribution was made, the Town Council could pay a contribution to retain five to six cuts per annum or take over the contract entirely for a very small fee. The latter option however would require a great deal of extra work, to plan, obtain machinery, consider staffing levels and take on liability alongside the public highway.

FC.39.10.20 After some discussion, with 10 votes in favour and one member abstaining it was **RESOLVED** to advise East Sussex County Council that Uckfield Town Council would be selecting Option 2 for 2021/22:

Option 2 – Extra cuts: Parish/Town Councils may fund an additional four cuts to be carried out by ESCC, totalling six cuts (two standard and four extra) over the course of the year.

This would cost the Parish/Town Council a total of £4,271 for the year.

12.0 TO CONSIDER A RECOMMENDATION MADE BY FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE REGARDING AN AWARD OF COMMUNITY GRANT FUNDING IN 2020/21

Members were asked to consider a recommendation of the Finance Sub-Committee and take a decision on the award of grant funding. Members felt that the Uckfield Festival Association and Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society did fantastic work for the town and it would make it easier for the next round of grant applications to treat them the same.

FC.40.10.20 With 10 votes in favour, members **RESOLVED** to pay the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society a total of £1,500 from their awarded grant funding of £3k for 2020/21.

13.0 TO CONSIDER RE-REGISTERING SELBY MEADOW AS AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE WITH WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Town Council as owner of the land has recently received a letter from Wealden District Council advising that the five year period from when Selby Meadow was registered as an Asset of Community Value by the local New Town Action Group was now up. This report asked the Town Council whether they

wished to re-register the land as the Town Council was able to apply through this process as well.

FC.41.10.20 Members **RESOLVED** to proceed with re-registering the land as an Asset of Community Value with Wealden District Council.

14.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING A RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR REFORM OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM IN ENGLAND – ‘PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE’

Members were provided with the weblink to the full consultation document as well as a summary of the key changes being proposed.

Councillor C. Macve felt that as an end user there were definitely areas of the current planning system which could be dramatically improved, however that wasn't to say that the contents of the consultation document were agreeable. It removed local consideration, and there was a presumption in favour of planning permissions going forward. It also placed more pressure on the planning authority. There appeared to be a lack of ability to consider design which could result in poor design standards across the country, and any increase in charges would ultimately increase property prices.

Councillor K. Bedwell was surprised there wasn't more consideration given for ageing populations and regional issues. For example, over a quarter of the population would be aged over 65 by 2025 in East Sussex. The proposal to move to a straight development land tax to fund infrastructure and affordable housing meant the tax would be paid at the point of occupation and linked to development value, which would remove the ability to negotiate from the system completely. It would also place all elements of infrastructure delivery on local authorities and not the developers. There was also the added risk of losing geographical identity by not encouraging local engagement.

Councillor A. Smith felt that this was a blatant attempt by the national government to take away influence of the local area. Parish councils were mentioned once in the whole White Paper. Shelter had advised that 40% of houses that get to the planning stage are not built. There also seemed to be the assumption that affordability could be equated with an increase in house building, which was very unlikely. Infrastructure levy proposals would mean that funds would only be available after the homes were occupied and this could therefore delay infrastructure being built.

Councillor D. French agreed and felt the consultation document was not inclusive for all members of society, particularly as the consultation itself was only available online.

Mr Brunsdon agreed that some form of standardisation was needed in the planning system but the proposals within the consultation document were a joke. There was a lack of accountability.

Members were interested in the responses being provided by Wealden DC and East Sussex CC.

FC.42.10.20 Members **RESOLVED** to respond to the Planning White Paper consultation with the comments put forward by all members.

15.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the engagements listed.

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

Five deed of grants had been received:

Mr Gary Nicholls

Colin Frederick and Jean Evelyn Matthews

John Jenkins

Margaret Ward and Hayley Stevenson

Cedric Kaal

FC.43.10.20 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

17.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

18.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

19.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Councillor S. Mayhew gave a big thank you to the Uckfield Food Outreach Box scheme and all the volunteers for their support, but also wanted to thank all the pubs, restaurants, churches doing their bit, which reaffirmed why Uckfield was such a great town. Thank you very much!

20.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

FC.44.10.20 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.

20.1 To consider any updates received from leaseholders

Members advised the Town Clerk accordingly.

The meeting closed at 8:50pm.