

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held as a  
REMOTE meeting via ZOOM,  
on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. J. Beesley	Cllr. J. Love (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. S. Mayhew (Town Mayor)
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. H. Firth (arrived 7.12pm)	Cllr. C. Snelgrove
Cllr. D. French (arrived 7.12pm)	Cllr. P. Sparks
	Cllr. D. Ward

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

Sarah D'Alessio      Assistant Town Clerk & RFO  
Mark Francis        Estates & Facilities Manager  
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.

Cllr A. Smith wished to advise members that she was part of a group called WASP (Wealden Alliance for Sustainable Planning). They were formulating a response to the Local Plan Direction of Travel consultation which was referenced in agenda item 16.0.

Cllr K. Bedwell declared an interest in agenda item 9.0 as a result of being the Chair of Ridgewood Village Hall Management Committee.

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

**FC.45.12.20** It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.

A resident from Ridgewood wished to speak in regards to agenda item 9.0. They were interested to read the summary of issues that had been raised previously. Recently residents living opposite the shelter had suggested that the hedge adjacent to the shelter be lowered, as it would make those sitting in the shelter more exposed. The resident wasn't sure removing the hedge at the entrance would have much impact.

Generally, the resident felt that the bollard in the entrance to Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park would be a good idea and mostly agreed that CCTV was not that productive. Anti-social behaviour had reduced in that area during 2020. Most incidents in the past year were Covid-19 related and well recorded in terms of breaches of play area use. There had been a spike in anti-social behaviour in the past three to four days with a group smoking cannabis in the allotment. Further information would be sent to the Town Clerk.

Vice Chair, Mr Noble, of Ridgewood Village Hall Management Committee wished to speak on agenda item 9.0 in regards to the suggestion of installing a bollard. The RVH Management Committee discussed this some months ago, and were against the idea. The car park was part of the community space and should not be restricted. People walking dogs parked their cars there at varying times of day, it was not just used by those letting the hall. The current circumstances had been that way for many years. It was felt that if issues were occurring in the car park regarding substance misuse, that intelligence should be passed to Sussex Police.

Members were happy to keep standing orders suspended for the next item.

### **3.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Councillor Chris Dowling advised that he had picked up the discussions regarding speed and traffic related matters in Ridgewood. A meeting had since been arranged with Sussex Police, Cllr K. Bedwell, the Town Clerk and former councillor I. Smith who had been involved in setting up the Eastbourne Road Community Speedwatch Group. If the newly established group were to look at Lewes Road as well, risk assessments would need to be prepared for potential positioning of the speedwatch activity.

Night closures were planned on the A22 by-pass from 9pm until 5am to enable the contractors to catch up with their work schedule following the recent bad weather. These were planned on 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> December, and Monday 14<sup>th</sup> to Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December.

The works planned for the Ridgewood Farm development by UK Power Networks were due to commence on 11th January, and likely to take until May to complete. It would be one set of works at a time, utilising 2 to 3 way temporary traffic lights, from 7am to 7pm weekdays, 8am to 5pm on Saturdays and 9am until 1pm on Sundays.

Uckfield Library's refurbishment was now complete and included LED lighting which had reduced their carbon footprint. New tenants had also joined the library – Wealden CAB and the NHS Immunisation Team.

Councillor Claire Dowling referred to the latest update from the Public Health Director at ESCC. Cases in Wealden District were starting to reduce, with some time lag behind the country. In the 7 days prior to 2<sup>nd</sup> December, Uckfield North recorded 7 cases and Uckfield South recorded 4 cases. The mobile testing unit would be in Uckfield on 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

In response to a motion put forward by Councillors B. Cox and K. Bedwell (agenda item 18.0), Councillor Dowling had sought to find the necessary information. It had been confirmed by ESCC that all children currently receiving free school meals would be provided with food vouchers for the Christmas break (£15 per child per week – distributed by the schools). ESCC had also worked hard with voluntary organisations across the county over the past year to ensure that support was provided and, adequate Covid response. An example was the support that had been provided to 15 foodbanks across East Sussex and fuel vouchers had been given to the CABs. Further information was available in a Q2 Monitoring report being presented to ESCC Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> December: <https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=4367&Ver=4>

A campaign was currently underway to remind residents of ways they could recycle their unwanted electrics at Christmas. Anything with a plug etc could be collected via the kerbside collection service – residents would be advised to leave the item in a bag on top of their bin with batteries removed and it would be collected.

Councillor C. Macve enquired about the works that were still to be scheduled to the two roundabouts – Copwood and Little Horsted on the A22 by-pass and timing of this as per the S106 agreement. A question was also asked with regards to the commercial entrance onto the A22 from the Welbeck site.

Councillor C. Macve could not understand why a different route had not been proposed by UK Power Networks which would have had less impact. Members agreed but understood that despite ESCC licensing setting out the key considerations for UKPN, a utility company has overall power in legislation to undertake the works where they wish. It was asked that correspondence be maintained with the owners of Ridgewood Village Post Office and the Highlands Inn whilst all these plans were underway.

Councillor B. Cox thanked Cllr Claire Dowling for her detailed response re: food vouchers and also wished to understand what the criteria currently was for free school meals. A number of households had been impacted by Covid-19 and residents lost their jobs this year and they may not come into the system at the present time, and so at risk of being just under the radar.

Councillor P. Sparks noted that at that last Full Council meeting at Wealden DC, a question was raised regarding the Ashdown Forest Conservators needing funding. The Leader of Wealden DC was seriously looking into the issue and whether any support could be provided. A Cabinet meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December would include recommendations for Wealden DC's budget setting process – with proposals to halt any increase in council tax, introduce a wage freeze for all staff earning £24k or more, and members' allowances being frozen for 2021/22.

Councillor H. Firth said that an increased number of planning applications had been received by Planning Committee North at Wealden DC, for the northern area of the district.

**FC.46.12.20** 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 D. Bennett and G. Johnson, and Youth Member Mr Brunsdon.

#### **5.0 MINUTES**

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meetings of Full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020 to be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**FC.47.12.20** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 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 actions could now be removed:

FC.27.09.20 – Remembrance Parades and Services

FC.28.09.20 – Town Council calendar

FC.38.10.20 – Pavement parking consultation

FC.39.10.20 – Grass cutting contribution

FC.40.10.20 - Recommendation of Finance Sub-Committee

FC.41.10.20 – Asset of Community Value

FC.42.10.20 – Planning White Paper consultation

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 of the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**FC.48.12.20** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**FC.49.12.20** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**FC.50.12.20** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 9<sup>th</sup> November 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 Dementia Forum

Councillor P. Sparks added that the Uckfield Dementia Forum had had another successful year, despite many of the organisations involved being up against it with the challenges of the pandemic. It had been a particularly useful forum for organisations and groups to share information and provide support to each other. They had established a number of key action points for the following year. Members subsequently noted the report.

(iii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

**9.0 TO CONSIDER PREVIOUS REPORTS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN RIDGEWOOD RECREATION GROUND/CAR PARK AND PROPOSED NEXT STEPS**

The Chairman requested that the Chair of Environment & Leisure Committee, Councillor J. Beesley to lead on this agenda item. It was suggested that each of the three issues (sheltered seating and hedgerow, CCTV and bollard/gate) be discussed separately to help manage the conversation.

**Sheltered seating**

The proposal was to remove the lower hedge to the eastern side of the entrance of Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park (play area side) to improve visibility of the shelter from the road and assist Police patrols etc.

Cllr J. Edwards explained that there had also been a suggestion from a resident to lower the hedge behind the shelter but this would require a strawpoll of residents' views from those properties directly opposite. There was a 2-3ft section of hedge line up to the tree between the section behind the shelter and at the entrance to the car park. It was felt that this may assist as well with making the shelter less of a hiding place and this should be discussed with the Head Groundsman.

Councillor D. Ward requested that the safety of children using the play area be considered and the fenceline be reviewed.

**FC.51.12.20** All members voted in favour (*except Councillor K. Bedwell who abstained due to her role in the RVH Management Committee*) to **RESOLVE**, to remove the section of hedge on the eastern side of the entrance to Ridgewood Village Hall car park (play area side) and to review the section up to the tree between the car park and shelter, with safety of play area users being considered.

**CCTV**

It was suggested that it would be beneficial for members to review a report on

level of crime and anti-social behaviour across the town, to understand whether any areas (open spaces) could benefit from CCTV.

Councillor H. Firth advised that there were major costs involved in installing high quality CCTV and although devices had been installed at Selby Meadow, someone had still located the device and broken it. It did not deter the anti-social behaviour in the first instance and more should be done by Sussex Police to tackle the behaviour.

Councillor B. Cox felt it was important for the Town Council to decide what they wanted the cameras to do. They would be void of use if no one was watching the footage regularly. Any CCTV would need to be of high quality.

Councillor J. Edwards reminded members that we should not be overly critical of our public sector partners. They were under pressure due to the restrictions on the funding of their sector, not their personal abilities.

Councillor D. Ward did not agree with installing CCTV in Ridgewood at present, as other areas of the town were recording higher levels of reported crime and anti-social behaviour.

Councillor B. Cox also added that the installation of devices such as CCTV would only move the problem somewhere else.

**FC.52.12.20** Members **RESOLVED** to halt on the idea of installing CCTV in the town's open spaces at present, due to the costs involved and need to review levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in more detail across the town.

#### **Installation of a gate or bollard at the entrance of RVH Car Park**

Councillor J. Beesley referred to previous feedback from residents living opposite the car park who stated that they did not wish the height of the dense leylandii hedge to be reduced, as the lights from vehicles in the car park shone into the front of their properties. Councillor J. Beesley had visited the site with the Head Groundsman and Town Clerk and they agreed that even at a reduced height, vehicles could still stay obscured behind the hedge due to the density of the vegetation.

Councillor K. Bedwell advised that there was not a great deal of Police evidence to suggest that incidents were occurring in the car park, with the main reports of anti-social behaviour being around the seating area. The RVH Management Committee had concerns regarding this proposal, as it was not fair on their hall hirers to be responsible for locking the car park at night. They didn't even lock the building. If a car remained in the car park, they might receive backlash from the vehicle owner and questioned whether RVH's insurance would cover any matters that could occur. Also, who would be responsible for opening up in the morning. It was also a concern, should an emergency arise and emergency vehicles needed access to the building or car park.

Councillor H. Firth agreed with the points made by Councillor K. Bedwell and confirmed that there would have to be evidence of substance misuse before the Town Council would spend funds on this. The safety of hall hirers and access to

the building was a concern.

**FC.53.12.20** With 11 votes in favour and two members abstaining (Councillor K. Bedwell and Councillor J. Edwards), members **RESOLVED** to not install a gate or bollard at the entrance to Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park.

**10.0 TO REVIEW THE CONTRACT FOR THE SANITISATION OF PLAY AREAS**

Councillor P. Sparks felt that the current contract the Town Council had in place to sanitise the play areas was working well and it was great to see families using the open spaces and play areas. These remained well used.

**FC.54.12.20** Members **RESOLVED** to extend the contract for the sanitisation of the play areas for a further three months (end of March) at the current reduced rate of £525 plus VAT.

**11.0 TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2019/20**

The Town Mayor and Councillor D. Ward commended the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO for the excellent outcome of the audit in her first year at Uckfield Town Council – reporting no issues with the accounts of the Town Council in 2019/20 and good sound governance. Members noted the report.

**12.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021/26**

The report was felt to incorporate the many issues and initiatives that Town Councillors and local residents had discussed in the previous 12 months.

Councillor H. Firth wished to note that there was a need to review the cemetery in the next few years, and consider a further extension. The Estates & Facilities Manager reminded members of the Town Council's Tree policy and if any trees were felled or removed, trees would need to be replanted elsewhere. It would therefore be helpful to consider a broader range of options such as woodland burial areas or greener alternatives.

Members were satisfied with the draft Strategic Plan 2021/26 at this stage and wished to note the report.

**13.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2021/22**

Members felt that the Draft Annual Plan 2021/22 was very comprehensive and were satisfied with the current draft at this stage. Members noted the report.

**14.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2021/22**

Members reviewed the first draft of the Annual Budget for 2021/22. The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO advised that staff had looked closely at all codes and budget lines, to consider where increases may arise (utility costs etc), where savings could be made and also reminded members that the council tax base had not yet been agreed, so this was only a guide. The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO welcomed ideas and feedback from members, before the final draft papers would be presented to Full Council on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 for adoption.

Chair of the Finance Sub-Committee, Councillor P. Sparks thought the draft budget provided a very good grounding of the financial situation, he also noted that we anticipated some loss in income. The Town Council needed to take a

steer on the precept for 2021/22 to support officers with preparing the final draft of the budget for January Full Council. It was questioned whether members wished to increase or freeze.

Councillor C. Macve explained that he would like to dearly say that the Town Council could freeze the budget but the Town Council was under greater pressure as years went by, by the devolvement of services from higher levels of local government (district and county). Services should be maintained for residents so would suggest a nominal increase, and one that reflected CPI rates not RPI.

Councillor A. Smith ideally would like to freeze the precept but understood the challenges.

Members noted the challenges involved and it was advised that staff would await the updated council tax base figure and then review early in the New Year with the Finance Sub-Committee.

**15.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2021/26**  
Members were satisfied with the draft report at this stage and subsequently noted the contents.

**16.0 TO CONSIDER PROPOSED METHOD FOR RESPONDING TO TWO CONSULTATIONS BY WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL:**  
- **PLANNING VALIDATION GUIDE (Deadline 4<sup>th</sup> January)**  
- **LOCAL PLAN DIRECTION OF TRAVEL (Deadline 18<sup>th</sup> January)**  
It was suggested that in order to meet the deadlines but still review these documents in detail, that a maximum of three Town Councillors be nominated to work with the Town Clerk to compile a response on behalf of Uckfield Town Council.

**FC.55.12.20** Members **RESOLVED** to nominate Councillors J. Love, C. Macve and A. Smith to work with the Town Clerk to compile responses on behalf of Uckfield Town Council.

**17.0 TO CONSIDER A PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE EAST SUSSEX LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN CONSULTATION**  
Members were asked to review the contents of the draft response prepared by the Town Clerk and feed back to her by end of play on Thursday 10th December to enable her to meet the deadline set by ESCC.

Members noted the contents of the report and requirement to respond.

**18.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLORS B. COX AND K. BEDWELL**  
As a response had been provided to the question asked within the motion, by Councillor Claire Dowling earlier in the meeting, the matter had been addressed. Members subsequently noted the contents of the motion.



**19.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL THE LICENCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL AND NEW TOWN ACTION GROUP FOR THE LAND AT SELBY ROAD**

**FC.56.12.20** Members **RESOLVED** to approve the licence agreement between Uckfield Town Council and the New Town Action Group for the land at Selby Road, and agreed for two councillors to sign and seal the licence agreement.

**20.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Members noted the engagements listed.

**21.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT**

Three deed of grants had been received:

Mrs Orlow Clementene Giles

Ms Nicola Eastwood

Margaret Jean Miller and Nicola Ann Slaughter

**FC.57.12.20** It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

**22.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

None received.

**23.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Clerk advised members that the Estates & Facilities Manager had been obtaining quotations for a new heating system in Foresters Hall and displayed these on the screen for attendees to view. It was a heatpump/air con model. The Estates & Facilities Manager advised members that he was still awaiting electrical quotes on Wednesday but the first quotation did incorporate electrical works which would help as it would be managed by the one contractor. There was a 2-3 week lead in time for ordering the system, and it was therefore hoped that it could be installed in January. At present, many of the hall hirers at Foresters Hall were using facilities in the Civic Centre.

Members felt that the first quotation with inclusion of the electrical works seemed more sensible and to have a greater number of cassettes within the room, but would await the further information being circulated on Thursday 10th December to the Urgent Consultation Panel, for decision.

The Town Clerk also advised members that the outcome of the Independent Remuneration Panel on member allowances had been sent in, and it proposed a 2% increase in member allowances in 2021/22. Uckfield Town Council only took a 1.81% increase for 2020/21 so had already taken an alternative decision to the increases proposed by the Panel previously. It was also noted that members at Wealden DC were proposing to freeze their member allowances in 2021/22. Due to the importance of this decision on the Town Council's budget for 2021/22, the Town Clerk would be emailing all 15 councillors and requested that they respond to one of three options (i) remain as is, (ii) take a 2% increase or (iii) alternative option. Members were not to respond with (reply all) and to respond to the Town Clerk directly. The feedback received would be circulated to the Urgent Consultation Panel for decision.

#### **24.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman, Councillor S. Mayhew acknowledged that this was the last meeting of the calendar year, and it was coming up to Christmas. What a year it had been! He wished to thank everyone for their perseverance with the virtual meetings via zoom. It had been very different to what everyone was used to, for press and public too and he appreciated everyone's support. The Mayor was due to make a speech on Uckfield FM on Christmas Day at 1.00pm.

The meeting closed at 8.54 pm.