

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held as a
REMOTE meeting via ZOOM,
on Monday 18th January 2021 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. H. Firth	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. French	Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

2 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
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. None received.

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

FC.58.01.21 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 items on the agenda but their audio was not working. The resident was given a second chance after agenda item 3.0, but advised that they had sent the Town Clerk an email.

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 Claire Dowling provided an update from the Public Health Director at ESCC of the weekly figures for Covid-19. Up to 12 December 2020, there had been a total of 165 cases in Uckfield North and 138 in Uckfield South. In comparison up to 12 January 2021, there had been 35 cases in Uckfield North and 30 cases in Uckfield South. With the national lockdown it was hoped that figures would now start to fall.

A meeting had been held between ESCC and the three Clinical Commissioning Groups. The main challenge was keeping all services in primary care, mental health etc underway whilst running the vaccination programme. It was hoped all vaccinations would be complete in care homes by the end of January, and the clinically vulnerable and health and social care workers by early February.

Councillor Claire Dowling wished to record her thanks to the Adult Social Care department who were working hard to assist in all areas. They were looking to make Firwood House in Hampden Park available to the NHS. Adult Social Care staff had been arranging meals for care homes where kitchen staff were self-isolating, as well as offering support with deep cleans and finding agency staff to cover shifts.

In Downsview Crescent, work was planned for completion to protect the verges near to the schools. This was now scheduled for February half term.

Councillor Dowling referenced a spring water issue in Brown's Lane and the drainage works planned in Hempstead Lane/Spring Meadow would be carried next financial year, to address some of the drainage issues there.

Everyone would be keeping a close watch on the UKPN works which had just begun. It was very pleasing to see a local company obtaining the contract – C. J. Thorne.

Councillor Chris Dowling referred to another two issues relating to drainage – a leak on Lewes Road and a sunken drain. He had been working with Uckfield Town Council and previous Community Speedwatch scheme volunteers to re-commence the scheme in the south of the town, and recruit volunteers to get this back up and running.

The Chairman asked a question regarding the Uckfield Leisure Centre, and Wealden DC handing back the Leisure Centre to ESCC in March 2022. Uckfield Town Council were keen to be involved in any discussions regarding the leisure centre and the future of the site. It was advised that discussions had commenced behind the scenes between Wealden DC and ESCC, and with the adjacent schools in the case of both Heathfield and Uckfield. They would advise the officer at ESCC to make contact with the Town Clerk.

Councillor B. Cox asked about emergency service response numbers should Storm Christoph hit East Sussex badly, and it was advised that the Emergency Planning department were keeping a close watch on whether the storm would affect East Sussex.

Councillor J. Edwards raised his concerns with regards to the timing between the first and second injection for the Covid-19 vaccination and whether there was any local autonomy to have it sooner. Councillor Claire Dowling advised that this was not in her a remit and a more NHS related question but she had seen that the guidance was advising that to be vaccinated safely, it needed to be within 12 weeks.

A big thank you was given by Town Councillors, District and County Councillors for those carrying out the vaccination programme and doing their bit to help save lives.

Councillor P. Sparks clarified a matter which had previously been raised with regards to planning site notices. Site notices were still being displayed on the property/site of the application for a period of 21 days. The officer who displayed the site notice recorded the location by taking a photograph.

Councillor G. Johnson advised that a planning briefing note had been circulated by Wealden officers which included a revised figure for housing numbers between now and 2038. He was also aware that the application by Gridserve for the electric charging forecourt at Copwood Farm had been pulled from the December Wealden DC Planning North Committee and had since been re-submitted.

Councillor H. Firth raised her concerns with regard to the Gridserve application and pedestrian safety at Copwood roundabout. Councillor Firth was also working with residents in Keld Close over an issue they were having and Overview & Scrutiny Committee at Wealden DC were due to meet with the East Sussex Fire Chief, if Councillors had any questions they wanted incorporating.

FC.59.01.21 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 Councillor C. Snelgrove, and Youth Member Mr Brunsdon.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 7th December 2020 to be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.60.01.21 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 7th December 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:

FC51.12.20, FC52.12.20, FC53.12.20 – Ridgewood Recreation Ground

FC54.12.20 – Sanitisation of play areas

FC55.12.20 – Responding to two Wealden DC consultations

It was also suggested that resolution FC24.05.19 – single use plastic, be

removed as this had become normal procedures within the Town Council now. Members agreed and the Town Clerk, requested that any future work on this be incorporated within the work of the Climate Change Working Group.

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 13th December 2020 and 11th January 2021

FC.61.01.21

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committees of the 13th December 2020 and 11th January 2021.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee

No meetings held since last Full Council.

(c) General Purposes Committee

No meetings held since last Full Council.

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 advised that a recent update meeting had been held on 14th January. The festive dementia packs had been well received, with Councillor Macve giving thanks to the council as a number were distributed to Uckfield Hospital, and they were over the moon with them.

(iii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO NOTE THE URGENT CONSULTATION PANEL'S DECISION ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEALDEN PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL ON TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES FOR 2021/22

Members noted the decision of the Urgent Consultation Panel, which was as follows:

*Members **RESOLVED** to freeze member allowances for 2021/22 and retain member allowances at the 2020-21 rate previously agreed by Uckfield Town Council (£1284.00 basic member allowance and £1773.00 for Chairman's Allowance per annum respectively).*

10.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT BUDGET (2021/22) AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021-26 FOR WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members considered the contents of Wealden DC's draft budget and accompanying consultation questions.

A comment was made with regards to the HRA, and reference to rents going up by CPI plus 1%. This was felt to be an inadequate increase, for a district authority under increasing financial pressure.

A response was provided by a Town/District Councillor who advised that the HRA account was separate from the other funds of Wealden DC, and many social rented tenants were living on Universal Credit. The budget was sufficient to maintain all Wealden DC owned properties, and the district authority did everything to ensure the properties remained well maintained.

Further to discussions, members advised that they did not wish to respond to the consultation and were happy to note the report.

11.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2021/26

Members considered the contents of the Strategic Plan 2021/26, which set out the priorities for the next five years. The report was found to be well written and clear.

FC.62.01.21 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Strategic Plan 2021/26 for Uckfield Town Council.

12.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN 2021/22

Members considered the Annual Plan for 2021/22 which set out the priorities of the Town Council over the next financial year.

FC.63.01.21 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Annual Plan 2021/22 for Uckfield Town Council.

13.0 TO FORMALLY SET THE ANNUAL BUDGET (PRECEPT) FOR 2021/22

The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO introduced the budget papers for 2021/22 to provide a summary of the work undertaken and considerations in the budget setting process.

The Assistant Town Clerk advised that it had been a very difficult to provide a budget which all members would be happy with given the current climate and unpredictability of the income we expected to receive. There were mixed views around the table on whether to increase or not, mainly due to the impact of the pandemic but also to ensure the Town Council's services were still maintained as well as understanding the financial pressures the community faced. Members had already agreed to take no increase in their allowances for the coming year. It was advised that a third of the Town Council's annual expenditure was covered by the Town Council's own income streams so taking everything into account and unfortunately not owning a crystal ball a budget had been set which was both prudent and reflective in the circumstances of the pandemic.

The comments on the right-hand side of the budget sheets explained what had been amended and the reasons why certain lines had or had not been adjusted. For example, room hire income under GP Committee had been

reduced by 15 - 30% to reflect loss of income for possibly the first quarter of the year or reduced income over the full year. Events income had also been adjusted within E&L Committee. Not only looking at income, expenditure had been adjusted as well; taking out some of the priorities we had hoped to deliver and postponing projects where possible to future years. Taking on board all of these factors, the final budget presented an increase of 1.45% which would be a £2.41 equivalent. The Assistant Town Clerk asked members to consider the budget for 2021/22 and to adopt a precept of £955,945. Members thanked the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO for her hard work and for answering all of the members' questions.

Members agreed that it had been a particularly difficult budget setting process and they would have wished to have set a budget with a lower percentage increase, but the Town Council had a large portfolio of assets and open spaces to maintain and this incurred costs. The budget took account of potential reductions in income streams as a result of Covid-19 in 2021/22 and there was also a risk that further services would be devolved in future years by county and district authorities. It was therefore prudent to prepare a realistic budget.

FC.64.01.21 With 13 votes in favour, out of 14 members present, members **RESOLVED** to adopt the annual budget for 2021/22 and precept of £955,945.

14.0 TO FORMALLY ADOPT THE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2021/26

Members considered the contents of the Asset Management Plan 2021/26 and thought it was a very comprehensive report.

FC.65.01.21 Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Asset Management Plan for 2021/26.

15.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2020/21 (Q3)

Members reviewed the progress that had been made towards the 2020/21 priorities and subsequently noted the report.

16.0 TO CONSIDER SUGGESTIONS FOR STREET NAMING FOR THE MALLARDS DRIVE DEVELOPMENT

Uckfield Town Council had been approached by Wealden DC with a plan for the above development which would require six new street names. In keeping with the surrounding roads, six names had been put forward that referenced birds, similar to the Harlands Estate.

Councillor K. Bedwell wished it to be put on record that the local residents and herself were still very upset that this development was going ahead. There was a very high risk of flooding in that area, and residents in Eagle Close would be particularly affected. There was a lack of infrastructure within the town and all these developments would have a massive impact on the town's road networks, healthcare, schooling and utilities.

Members were not that favourable towards the names put forward and had mixed views on whether they could input or not, taking into the account the street naming policy. There had been no recollection of the local geography or history of that land.

Following some discussion, members agreed to note the suggested road names,

and thank Wealden DC for making them aware of the proposed names in keeping with the Harlands estate.

17.0 TO SIGN UP TO THE WEALDEN DEMENTIA ACTION ALLIANCE CHARTER

Councillor P. Sparks advised that the Town Council and Town Clerk were very supportive of the work of the Wealden Dementia Action Alliance, in particular with the Uckfield Dementia Forum sitting under the Alliance. It was important to sign up to the Charter to demonstrate the Town Council, and in particular the Civic Centre's commitment and lead the way for businesses in Uckfield.

FC.66.01.21 Members **RESOLVED** to sign up to the Wealden Dementia Action Alliance Dementia Charter for businesses.

18.0 TO APPOINT A TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE UCKFIELD FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

The Uckfield Festival Association had been in contact with office staff to request representation at future meetings from Uckfield Town Council. This would become a formal appointment on the Town Council's list of Outside Bodies.

FC.67.01.21 Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor S. Mayhew as the Uckfield Town Council representative on the Uckfield Festival Association Committee. All Outside Body appointments would be reviewed at the Annual Statutory meeting of Full Council in May 2021.

19.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the engagement listed.

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

Two deed of grants had been received:

Mrs Sally Akehurst

Mrs Audrey Epps

FC.68.01.21 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

21.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

22.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk advised that the Deed of Dedication was now prepared with Fields in Trust for Harlands Playing Fields. Fields in Trust had granted Uckfield Town Council up to £5,000 for the set up of Our Parks initiative. The Town Clerk asked for two members to read the documents and sign on behalf of the Town Council. Councillors J. Beesley and J. Love nominated themselves for this task.

23.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No official announcement was made but the Chairman wished to thank everyone for their support during these difficult circumstances.

The meeting closed at 8.12pm.