

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held as a
REMOTE meeting via ZOOM,
on Monday 1 March 2021 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. J. Love (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. J. Beesley	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. S. Mayhew (Town Mayor)
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. C. Snelgrove
Cllr. H. Firth	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. French	Cllr. D. Ward
	Mr Ashley Brunsdon (Youth Member)

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. None received.

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

FC.69.03.21 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.

The Town Clerk explained that a resident had wished to make a statement in relation to agenda item 3.0 – reports from East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council councillors. The resident was unable to speak over their zoom connection and had asked the Town Clerk to read out their statement on their behalf.

The resident could not understand why the roadworks in the centre of the town were being allowed to take so long. They were causing too many issues, queues, anger and worse. Social media was awash with complaints, blaming the various councils. The resident questioned who agreed to the cable being interred and rolled out to the building estate via the main thoroughfare of the High Street? Surely the best route would have been westwards and along the bypass. It was questioned whether the approach was challenged by County representatives. The delays the works were causing was unacceptable and had provoked similar anger to times in 2016 with the High Street improvements. Trying to get to the Meads Doctors surgery by car was currently important for residents. The route from Rocks Park to deliver her husband there for his vaccination three weeks ago, took 20 minutes on the outgoing journey and 35 minutes to get back home. And that was in lockdown. Something had to be done, and now to alleviate the issues, because otherwise when the roadmap starts to release people back into some sort of normality, shopping in Uckfield would not be an attractive proposition for anyone, either local or visiting the town from nearby. Whoever thought this scheme would be workable and okay to be authorised needed to tender their resignation.

The Town Clerk advised that she had explained to the resident on receiving the statement that unfortunately utility companies had overarching power by UK Government legislation to carry out works when and how they wished. ES Highways had liaised with UK Power Networks and stressed the importance of an alternative route but this had not been taken on board. It was hoped that works would speed up once contractors had passed through the busiest section of the town and had travelled past the Framfield Road junction.

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 East Sussex County Council, who had stressed that we were still in lockdown and members of the public still needed to behave accordingly.

Grasscrete had now been laid along the verges in Downsview Crescent

Councillor Dowling referred to a small flooding issue on the entrance to Snatts Road from London Road – the area still gathered water even after the drains had recently been jetted out. Further investigation would be undertaken in this location.

Councillor Dowling had submitted a representation in response to the Premise Licence application in Butchers Wood, just over the Uckfield parish boundary, for an annual festival accommodating 2,500 in 2022, and up to 5,000 in future years.

Councillor Chris Dowling was still investigating the drainage/water issues in Lewes Road. It was thought that a carrier pipe might be damaged.

Councillor Dowling had been working with the 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. He would very keen to see this up and running in Eastbourne Road and Lewes

Road.

Councillor D. Bennett had been informed by a resident in New Road that the turning mirror had been removed at the time that works commenced at the Ridgewood Farm site, and had not been replaced. It was very difficult for residents in that area, to see traffic travelling down Lewes Road.

Councillor B. Cox thanked Councillors C & C Dowling for their report and raised questions with regards to the 'Reopening High Streets Safely' funding issued by the UK Government to Wealden District Council. It was questioned whether further funding would be available or if the time period would be extended. Councillor Claire Dowling advised that a small group which included herself, Councillor D. French, the Chamber of Commerce, Town Clerk and Uckfield FM were asking that very question, and would be running their own campaign alongside as they had previously, to support the reopening of non-essential retail and personal care.

Councillor D. Ward asked if there was an update on the defibrillator being installed at Grants Hill Court. It was advised that the Retirement Living team were looking at these for all sites across the district and had chased officers for a response.

Councillor D. Ward also asked whether the lights at the Framfield Road junction could be sequenced accordingly to reflect the temporary traffic lights and works taking place in the centre of town.

Councillor P. Sparks provided an update on behalf of Wealden DC – (i) Wealden DC wanted to work with parish and town councils to feed into their investigations into electric car charging points in the district, (ii) they were supporting a government kickstart scheme, which provided funding for 16-24 year olds who were on Universal Credit and at risk of long term unemployment, and (iii) as part of their Disabled Facilities Grant procedures and use of the Better Care funding, they would be utilising funding to speed up the process for people coming out of hospital and needing improvements or adaptations to enable them to live independently at home.

Councillor H. Firth added to the update by Councillor Sparks in regards to electric charging points, and had personally been dealing with resident issues in Keld Close as well as raising her concerns rather strongly towards the works contractors had carried out to the perimeter and ecology of the development site off Mallard Drive, as they had been gaining access through the Hospital which they shouldn't have been and cut a couple of trees back quite harshly.

FC.70.03.21 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. G. Johnson.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 18th January 2021

to be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.71.03.21 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 18th January 2021 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:

FC58.09.19 – Benefits of Community Land Trusts

FC21.08.20 – Sign and seal the deed of dedication between Fields in Trust and Uckfield Town Council for Harlands Farm Playing fields

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 1st and 22nd February 2021

FC.72.03.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committees of the 1st and 22nd February 2021.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 8th February 2021

FC.73.03.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 8th February 2021.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 25th January 2021

FC.74.03.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 25th January 2021.

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

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO REVIEW THE PROVISIONS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (REGULATIONS 2020) AND ASSOCIATED IMPACT ON:

- Annual Town Meeting for electors – 13 April 2021;
- Annual Statutory meeting of the council – 10 May 2021

Members were presented with a report which advised that as no amendments had been made by the UK Government to the above regulations for the period after 7 May 2021, despite covid restrictions still being in place at that point, any meetings held solely online after 7 May, would be considered unlawful. With the recent announcement by the UK Government on their four step plan for easing the current national lockdown, members were also asked to reconsider plans for the Annual Town meeting of electors in April, and Annual Statutory meeting of the Council in May.

First members consider the Annual Town meeting for electors which had been booked for 13 April 2021:

FC.75.03.21 With 13 members in favour, it was **RESOLVED** to postpone the Annual Town Council meeting for electors, and seek to rearrange a face to face meeting in September 2021, perhaps in tandem with the Allotment Conference. It was also added that if covid restrictions were still in place for officers to look at streaming the meeting or providing a hybrid option to involve residents remotely as well.

Secondly members considered the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council which was booked for Monday 10 May 2021:

FC.76.03.21 With 13 members voting in favour, it was **RESOLVED** to move the 2021 Annual Statutory meeting of the Council back by two weeks to Monday 24 May 2021, after Step 3 of the UK Government's four step plan (Spring Covid response) to ease the current national lockdown.

10.0 TO CONSIDER WHAT ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS NEEDED IN UCKFIELD TOWN TO SUPPORT FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH

Members considered the contents of the report which suggested initiating a strategic approach to looking at the needs of members' ward areas, and to set up a working group who would look specifically at leisure, recreation and community.

FC.77.03.21 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the report;
- (ii) agree to the proposed way forward in paragraph 5.2 (members looking at their individual ward areas, and considering the needs of their community in terms of existing infrastructure and identifying any additional infrastructure needs for the area as well as setting up a working group to look specifically at the sports, leisure, recreation and community needs of the town);
- (iii) appoint Councillors K. Bedwell, J. Beesley, B. Cox, J. Edwards, S. Mayhew and A. Smith to the working group.

11.0 TO REVIEW THE PROPOSALS BY PERSIMMON HOMES FOR THE OPEN SPACE (PLAY AREA PROVISION) ON THE "LAND OFF MALLARD DRIVE"

Members considered the contents of a report which provided an update on the open space and play area provision on the development planned by Persimmon Homes for the land off Mallard Drive.

The design of the development had changed a number of times over the years, and the most recent site plan had located the main open space and play area within the centre of the site. Persimmon Homes were updating the S106 agreement and in the process of signing a S106A Deed of Variation for the site due to the number of years that had passed and changes that had occurred to the plans.

Persimmon Homes were also advising that they wished to use the site for play provision for their site compound in the centre of the site, until nearly all 119 properties had been built. Normally the play area would need to be installed before 80% of the private dwellings were occupied.

Members discussed the report at length.

Councillor D. Bennett felt that the Town Council should take on the play area, for a commuted sum but it would very much depend on what that sum would be.

Councillor H. Firth preferred not to take on this added expense to the council, as the report noted that the Town Council would have to install the play area and maintain the site in perpetuity.

Councillor J. Beesley knew that there had been complaints at the Fernley Park development, and the quality and upkeep would be dependent on the management company instructed to carry out the works.

Councillor J. Edwards was not in favour of the play area being privatised but was keen to understand the views of the Estates & Facilities Manager in terms of current resources.

The Estates & Facilities Manager advised that the Grounds team were already stretched. The Town Council currently owned eight play areas within the town, and there were ongoing costs from vandalism and repairs. This was in addition to the installation and upgrade costs (Luxford play area cost in the region of £150k to install for instance), of new and existing play areas.

Councillor D. French was worried with regard to the Town Council's finances. Councillor A. Smith recognised that it would be used by a wider catchment area than just the development, and Councillor B. Cox felt that the Town Council had a lack of resources to take on another play area at the current time.

Councillor K. Bedwell felt frustrated that this was another example of where excess house building meant that the Town Council would have to pick up services and facilities and associated costs for something that they had not planned or budgeted for. Higher tiers of local government should fund such facilities.

Councillor J. Beesley added that the Town Council's already stretched resources would have to be stretched again, and more money would need to be put into the Estate & Facilities Manager's team, to meet service levels.

FC.78.03.21 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the report;
- (ii) with ten members voting in favour, one member voting against (Councillor A. Smith) and one member abstaining (Councillor J. Edwards), members confirmed their satisfaction with Persimmon Homes passing the open spaces and play area provision for the site 'Land off Mallard Drive' to a management company;
- (iii) with twelve votes in favour, it was noted that Persimmon Homes' intended to use the play area as a site compound until the development would be near completion.

12.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the engagement listed.

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

Six deed of grants had been received:

Maira Clarke
Rosie Bone
David Corke
Sarah McLeod
Luisa Maynard
Mrs J Penfold

FC.79.03.21 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

14.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

15.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk reminded members that there was quite a bit to prepare prior to the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council on 24 May 2021. This included members' interest in committee appointments, representation on outside bodies, and any nominations for Town Mayor. The Town Clerk would be circulating the relevant papers to members in April, in order to prepare for the meeting.

16.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman updated members on his recent attendance at the Uckfield Festival meeting where they were making plans for July 2021. Further details would be announced in due course but it was hoped that the events they usually held outside, could go ahead at least.

The meeting closed at 8.14pm.