

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held  
on Monday 21 June 2021 at 7.00 pm  
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)
Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. H. Firth	Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr. D. Ward
Cllr. G. Johnson	Emily McHale (Youth Member)

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

Holly Goring            Town Clerk  
Sarah D'Alessio        Assistant Town Clerk & RFO

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.

No interests were declared.

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

Councillor Chris Dowling advised that he had been in a meeting earlier that day with UKPN and the Town Council. All parties had expressed quite clearly their

dissatisfaction with the changes to the works – temporary traffic lights, then road closures etc. It was understood that all plans were being thoroughly reviewed and their intentions would be communicated the next day. He was therefore waiting on the latest information to understand their proposals going forward. The overall goal was to get the works completed and finalised in the most accurate but also safe manner, but with minimal disruption to the town. It was UKPN's project and for them to manage with their contractors and sub contractors.

Councillor H. Firth advised that meetings at Wealden DC were starting to get back to normal. A meeting had recently taken place with the Leader of Wealden DC with three local MPs regarding the overdevelopment of Wealden District. Councillor Firth expressed the need to do something during this meeting. All three MPs – MP Maria Caulfield, MP Nusrat Ghani and MP Huw Merriman understood the challenges facing the more rural districts within the South East and it was hoped that they would have constructive meetings with ministers about this subject.

Councillor G. Johnson advised that he had attended the same meeting. The MPs were very supportive, and currently looking at the planning bill coming through. They wished to propose some changes. Discussions also centred around sites where planning permission had been granted but no development was visible. Councillor G. Johnson advised that since the annual statutory meeting of the Council, Planning Committee North had seen a bit of a reshuffle in appointed members, some of Uckfield's allies were no longer on the committee, and some had resigned from their position. Councillor G. Johnson updated members to explain that he had now been appointed as Vice Chair of Planning Committee North. He stressed that committee members always viewed each application with an open mind and each application was considered on its own merits. Councillor G. Johnson also advised that he had previously been a Board member of Sussex Weald Homes. He has since resigned after learning that the site with approved planning permission on Eastbourne Road, Uckfield was now up for sale and Sussex Weald Homes were one of a number of interested parties, in the land. Therefore it could pose a conflict of interest.

Councillor P. Sparks attended a Covid response grants payment meeting. Wealden DC had paid out £78,500 in test and trace payments and in the region of 9,500 businesses had been issued with a total of £61.5million pounds over the course of the 12-15 months with covid grant funding. Wealden DC had also instigated the additional £50 payment for claimants, as part of the council tax hardship fund. Wealden DC was one of the only local authorities doing this within the South East. They recognised the importance of helping people in financial difficulty. Wealden DC's council tax team were also managing council tax arrears more sensitively at present – sending texts, emails or making contact by telephone, as they understood the greater pressure households were under as a result of the pandemic.

**FC.20.06.21** 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 Councillors J. Beesley, C. Snelgrove and Youth Member Miss Ikeson. Apologies were also received from County and

District Councillor Claire Dowling.

## **5.0 MINUTES**

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council on 24 May 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**FC.21.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Statutory meeting of the Council be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

5.2 Action List

Members requested that the following actions be removed:  
FC18.05.21 – Review options for installing Covid memorial bench  
Members subsequently noted the action list.

## **6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

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

(a) Plans Committee of the 7 June 2021

**FC.22.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 7 June 2021.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 14 June 2021

**FC.23.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committees of the 14 June 2021.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 1 June 2021

**FC.24.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 1 June 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 – Events Working Group

Members noted the report.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Councillor P. Sparks advised that much of the update was within the report, and reminded members that the Uckfield Dementia Forum would be having a stand at the Uckfield Festival, so encouraged members to drop by and support the stand by helping to share information. Members noted the report.

**9.0 TO RECEIVE, CONSIDER AND NOTE THE INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021**

Members were directed to the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 as contained within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and the contents of this paper.

The Internal Auditor had carried out their full year end review and advised staff within written correspondence that there were no issues to report. The full detailed Internal Audit report undertaken by Auditing Solutions Ltd for 2020/21 would be circulated to members in due course.

Members received, considered and noted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 within the AGAR, and wished to thank officers for all of their hard work.

**10.0 TO RECEIVE, CONSIDER AND APPROVE SECTION 1 – THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021**

Members reviewed the Annual Governance Statement for the period 2020/21 which formed part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) on page four of six.

**FC.25.06.21** Members reviewed the contents of Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2020/21) and **RESOLVED** to receive, consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21, and authorised the Town Mayor as Chairman of the meeting and the Town Clerk to sign and date this statement on behalf of the Town Council.

**11.0 TO RECEIVE, CONSIDER AND APPROVE SECTION 2 – THE TOWN COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021**

Members reviewed a summary of the Town Council's accounting statements, as presented on page five of six, in the draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return ending 31 March 2021, and financial statements prepared by the Town Council's accountants at the end of March 2021.

The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO advised that it was important to ensure it was noted that we were working in a pandemic and when setting the budget for last year no-one could have predicted this would be the case.

The accounts reflected this with little income received for room hire, restaurant, events or the hiring of sports facilities. However, cemetery income did increase. Expenditure continued as predicted and the time of lockdown was used to bring forward a number of projects which were included within the year's priority projects and earmarked within the council's reserves.

Due to the pandemic, there were a number of grants available through Wealden DC which the council was fortunate to be successful with, so with this and claims through the Furlough scheme the council was able to help boost income.

When working with the accountant to finalise the year-end financial statements, the Town Council made sure that the pandemic was reflected and a detailed breakdown was included to show the additional income of Furlough and Grants

received. Also an explanation of variances between budget and actual would be recorded for the external auditor.

The Assistant Town Clerk and RFO hoped that the accounts demonstrated that despite the difficulties of last year the Town Council had finished the year better than anticipated.

Councillor D. Ward wished to offer her thanks to the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO and Town Clerk, and their team, to get the accounts to this position. Next year's budget setting would be challenging.

Councillor. B. Cox wished to echo this point – events might have to be smaller than usual this autumn/winter if covid restrictions continued.

**FC.26.06.21** Members **RESOLVED** to receive, consider and approve the draft annual governance and accountability return, and financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2021, and authorised for the Town Mayor as Chairman of the meeting to sign and date this return, on behalf of the Town Council.

**12.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL THE LEASE AGREEMENT FOR THE SOURCE BETWEEN UCKFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH AND UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**

Members were provided with a draft copy of the lease agreement and advised that an amendment was currently being made to the Trustees listed on the agreement for the Uckfield Baptist Church. The Town Clerk requested that if members were happy with the contents of the draft lease agreement, could two members be nominated to digest the contents of the final version and sign and seal the lease, once received.

**FC.27.06.21** Members **RESOLVED** to provide authority for two members to review the documentation and execute the final deed of dedication between Uckfield Town Council and Uckfield Baptist Church for the Source, once ready.

**13.0 TO CONSIDER IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE USE OF THE TRADITIONAL RED TELEPHONE BOX**

Members were presented with a report which reminded them of the need to restore and relocate the red traditional telephone box. Previous suggestions in past years had included relocating the telephone box to the High Street and looking at options from elsewhere such as a defibrillator, tourist information office, library etc to name a few.

Councillor K. Bedwell expressed that she liked the idea of the children's library but was not sure about the location. She referred to the lovely oak tree which had been felled at the entrance to the Persimmons Homes development off Mallard Drive, and whether the wood could be used to build the bench for Harlands Primary School, to sit next to the community library initiative. Councillor K. Bedwell also questioned whether the traditional telephone box could be relocated to Harlands Playing fields.

Councillor H. Firth thought the idea suggested by Harlands Primary School was an excellent idea, and it was incredibly important to encourage reading.

Councillor J. Edwards spoke in support of the idea put forward by Harlands

Primary School. The suggested location of Harlands Playing fields would be lovely and such a project would be a good idea, to help cultivate further relationships with schools in the town.

Miss McHale advised that near to where she lived, a traditional telephone box had been converted into defibrillator and it was fantastic to see the transformation of the box previously left redundant to now being of great use within the community.

Councillor B. Cox suggested a more hybrid approach. He referred to the damage that some of the books obtained in Framfield Road, and also thought that more than one use could be obtained from the telephone box – perhaps also with an information centre type service or defibrillator.

Councillor D. Bennett also supported the potential for hybrid use with books in the lower section to help children reach them easily, and the defib placed higher up perhaps.

Councillor K. Bedwell stated that there was no defibrillator on the Harlands estate and now Harlands Playing fields were being used more for football training etc, it would be particularly helpful. The primary school had stated that if it were located near the school that they would help with looking after the children's library.

Councillor D. French advised that she had always envisaged the centre of the town being the new location for the telephone box but the idea from Harlands school had made them rethink. Consideration needed to be given towards payment for the defibrillator, and perhaps the primary school would know parents or volunteers who would be keen to help restore and repaint the telephone box.

Councillor B. Cox thought that if the telephone box was located on the football pitch, that the Sussex FA may help with funding for the defibrillator etc.

Councillor J. Edwards put forward a proposal which was carried to a full resolution:

**FC.28.06.21** Members **RESOLVED** to pursue a collaboration with Harlands Primary School to restore and relocate the traditional red telephone box to Harlands Playing field, with hybrid use of a community children's library and defibrillator. Members also wished for the developers (Persimmon Homes) to be contacted to see if the oak from the oak tree that had recently been felled at the entrance to the site, could be used to create the bench adjacent to the telephone box.

#### **14.0 TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO THE CIVIC CENTRE WORKING GROUP**

Members considered a report previously circulated which provided background to the working group and advised that a minimum of three members and maximum of five would need to be appointed to the working group for 2021/22.

**FC.29.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** that the following members be appointed to the Civic Centre Working Group:-  
Councillors. D. Bennett, H. Firth, D. French, S. Mayhew, and D. Ward.

#### **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**

Two deed of grants had been received:

Mr Barney Robert Crook

Kim Cuthbert

**FC.30.06.21** 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**

The only item the Town Clerk wished to raise was the recent correspondence received to advise that the Town Council had been successful in its application for grant funding as part of the discretionary ARG (restart grant funding) for the council's hospitality businesses. Only one application could be made for the Civic Centre building, but this funding would provide excellent support for the first three months of the financial year.

**19.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love hoped that the town's events during the summer months could go ahead within covid restrictions and UK government guidance and hoped that such events would start bringing people back together.

The meeting closed at 7.31pm.