

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 2 August 2021 at 7.00 pm
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT: Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. H. Firth
Becky Ikeson (Youth Member)

Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)
Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. P. Sparks
Cllr. D. Ward
Emily McHale (Youth Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

No members of the public
No members of the press
County Councillor Chris Dowling
County & 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.

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

County Councillor Claire Dowling advised that carriageway resurfacing was underway in Nevill Road, off Brown's Lane. They had been able to accommodate events that had taken place each end of the road whilst these works were underway. There was also an ongoing drainage issue in the Dene.

Councillor Claire Dowling had seen the motion put forward by Councillor. B. Cox and thought that the Uckfield Flood Plan (2016) had started to be reviewed but East Sussex CC would be able to confirm.

Councillor Chris Dowling advised that UKPN had reached halfway up Lewes Road, but had to leave site to ensure they undertook and finished works on New Town between Highlands roundabout and Framfield Road before the end of the summer holidays. The leak on Lewes Road would be reviewed at a later stage once contractors were able to review Lewes Road more fully.

Councillor P. Sparks had attended a presentation from the planning department at Wealden DC. The local planning authority (Wealden DC) dealt with on average 3,500 planning applications per annum. It was considered to be in the top five busiest planning authorities nationally. The Planning Enforcement officer covered mostly buildings without consent or that had commenced but not in line with the planning application. It was a very interesting presentation on the work of the department.

Councillor H. Firth advised that she would be sitting on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee working group, focusing on Health and Wellbeing. The working group would be looking at what could be done to improve current practices, overall health in the district and current ways of working.

The Leader and Cabinet members of Wealden DC had met with ministers, and other local authority representatives across East Sussex to discuss overdevelopment and the challenges we faced in the local area due to central government imposed housing numbers. Members questioned whether the meeting was fairly represented by political parties. The meeting itself involved advising ministers that the permissions that had been previously granted could not be added to the 5year housing and land supply which placed pressure on the district, to develop further. Matters such as infrastructure, the planning inspectorate and permission timescales were also discussed. It was a productive meeting

FC.32.08.21 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 D. Bennett, J. Edwards, G. Johnson and C. Snelgrove. Councillor A. Smith was not present at the meeting.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of the full Council on 21 June 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.33.08.21 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of full 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:
FC96.01.20 – Questions by members previously notified.
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 28 June 2021

FC.34.08.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 28 June 2021.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 26 July 2021

FC.35.08.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committees of the 26 July 2021.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 12 July 2021

FC.36.08.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 12 July 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

Deputy Mayor, Councillor D. French wished to give special thanks to the Marketing & Communications Officer Tracy, and the Town Clerk for all their support with the organisation of the Weald on the Field event, planned for Saturday 21 August 2021. If anyone wished to book a stall, please contact Food Rocks (contact details in the report), or if a business wished to advertise on the day, as a key sponsor, to contact the Town Council office. After Weald on the Field, they would be looking to plan ahead for the Uckfield Revival event on Saturday 2 October 2021. Members subsequently noted the update.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING A RESPONSE TO ESCC'S CONSULTATION ON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS TO THE A22 AND A2290

East Sussex County Council were currently seeking comments on proposed improvements to a southern section of the A22 and A2290 road network. With proposed developments in South Wealden and the Eastbourne area, and already heavy traffic, they were keen to put forward a package of improvements along the two routes for consultation.

Councillor C. Macve had studied the consultation document closely and put forward a number of comments:

(i) the lights at Copthall roundabout, adjacent to the Polegate Bypass

Councillor C. Macve was of the understanding that roundabouts were there to allow the integration of traffic and enable it to flow smoothly. To add traffic lights like they had already at Copthall roundabout just bunched traffic up and previously cost in the region of £600k for the replacement lights and changes there.

(ii) There was no mention in the consultation document of any improvements on the A22 north of the Boship roundabout. There was also no mention of the Lower Dicker section, which currently jams up at Blackberry Farm and Golden Cross. It was suggested that any improvements to the Boship roundabout would improve congestion at the Golden Cross end, but he would wait to be convinced on this matter.

(iii) Councillor C. Macve was concerned about the suggestion of the introduction of toucan lights to the exit lanes on some of the roundabouts, as this could block the traffic up at the roundabouts and cause further congestion.

(iv) Without an approved local plan for Wealden District, there were concerns that where land allocations for business or residential still remained uncertain, it could lead to further improvements being required.

(v) Page 9 typo – in reference to Shinewater roundabout on the outskirts of Eastbourne, it referenced a pedestrian underpass in a previous preamble, but there was no mention of this in the proposed works. Was this an omission?

(vi) Page 19 – Golden Jubilee roundabout – there were concerns that although crossings for pedestrians/cyclists may be provided, the uncontrolled crossings, would have no central refuge. This location saw cars accelerating onto the roundabout so could pose a danger.

(vii) The map on page 2 was different to the map illustrated on page 34.

Councillor J. Love thanked Councillor C. Macve for his detailed comments and too raised her concerns with the proposed three lanes in and two lanes out before the Boship roundabout. Members also thought the survey questionnaire had been cleverly worded in that it was quite leading in the response they were looking for.

Members were happy to support Councillor C. Macve and Councillor J. Love's comments and for the Town Clerk to feed back to East Sussex CC.

10.0 TO CONSIDER A DRAFT LETTER TO BE SENT TO QUICKBORN, GERMANY IN RESPONSE TO THE RECENT FLOODING

Members reviewed the draft letter to be sent by the Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love on behalf of Uckfield Town Council, to the Town Mayor in Quickborn following the recent flooding in Germany.

Councillor C. Macve advised that the Uckfield Lions were linked in with the Quickborn Lions, and nationally the Lion's Club International did offer grant funding support from international funding pots, to support residential properties in areas affected by major incidents or emergencies.

Deputy Mayor, Councillor D. French felt it was a heartfelt letter, which had originally been drafted soon after the event and supported this being sent.

FC.37.08.21 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the draft letter to be sent to the Town Mayor of Quickborn.

11.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR B. COX

Councillor B. Cox introduced his motion which reflected on the potential for future growth in Uckfield as a result of new housing developments, and the need to not just raise concerns with regard to infrastructure but also review important plans, such as flood mitigation.

Councillor B. Cox stated that “as it stands our flood defence was more than adequate to defend businesses and homes within Uckfield and especially the south side of the town. However he was keen to ensure that we continued to protect the town, with the anticipated growth in development. The motion put forward should not only be shared with the relevant authorities but also with the Chamber of Commerce and local business community. In light of this, he wished to remind members that words matter and this subject could have commercial ramifications.

Councillor B. Cox reminded members that he had lived in Newtown all his life, and knew many other Newtown councillors also had a long history in the south of Uckfield. He advised that they understood the history of flooding in Uckfield and were grateful for the flood defences the town had to date, however it was disappointing to see that the Flood Plan (2016) had not been reviewed in 2019. He believed the objective of the motion was clear, and felt it was therefore the duty of local councillors to keep the town and residents safe. It was important that the relevant authorities got back to the Town Council as soon as they could on a proposed review”

Members discussed the recent surface water flooding in the bottom of the High Street following a heavy thunderstorm. This had dispersed but most businesses were closed when this incident happened. Councillor D. Ward thought that contact details should be available for businesses in that area (two-way) so communication could be obtained.

Councillor P. Sparks made one correction, that Millington Court was not a care home. He also wished to make an amendment to the motion, asking for the Environment Agency to be included in the list of key agencies that the motion would be shared with; were a key player. Otherwise he would support this motion.

Councillor D. French agreed that flood defences had been adequate, but consideration was required for those in the nearby vicinity of the River Uck, should any future changes be made to the flood defences or improvements.

Councillor K. Bedwell agreed stating that at present, all proposed developments and planning applications were considered on their own merits, which didn't allow for the cumulative impact of water from all the proposed attenuation ponds into the tributaries of the River Uck.

Councillor J. Beesley also noted the tree pits in the High Street, and the need for more consideration for storm water within the town centre area.

FC.38.08.21 Members **RESOLVED** to proceed with the motion including the proposed amendment, adding in the Environment Agency as a key player and agency who should also be approached. The motion was therefore agreed as follows

Background:

With the lack of a Local Plan for Wealden district, Uckfield South is seeing a number of housing/development applications be submitted to the local planning authority (Wealden DC) for early consideration (known as screening proposals) or full outline applications for planning permission.

Planning permission has already been granted for development off Mallard Drive in the field next to Uckfield Community Hospital for 119 homes. This development is east of Uckfield Town Centre and up-stream from the river that runs through the town, and flows adjacent to a business park, town centre businesses, housing and a care home.

To mitigate flood risk, the developers commission drainage expertise to design a system to manage surface run off. This often results in the development of a system based on attenuation ponds. The development off Mallards Drive will utilise this system, filtering into Framfield Road stream – a key tributary of the River Uck.

A recent consultation website was set up by developers seeking to explore ideas for the site known as Bird in Eye South (incorporating Bird in Eye Farm), just off the B2102. The initial proposals for this site seek to develop up to 290 homes and intend to utilise a similar attenuation pond drainage system, which would also filter water off into the Framfield stream.

The development off Mallard Drive was predicted to release water from the attenuation ponds at a rate of 57.7 litres per second into the stream and if both developments were to go ahead, we could see upwards of 115 litres per second if not more. This would be before we take into consideration the effects of surface water and the reduction in vegetation that absorbs water in times of heavy rain.

This is also not without the impact that other proposed developments in the south of the town would have on the Ridgewood stream, which is another key tributary of the River Uck.

Throughout the winter of 2019/20, Uckfield experienced three incidents with regard to flooding, with three very near misses from the River Uck into the High Street, but on each occasion Mill Lane was flooded. In particular, 5 March 2020 saw localised flooding in the Uckfield South area. This resulted in the River Uck reaching its peak at 8:30pm. The flooding impacted businesses in The Roller Mill and also came dangerously close to flooding out Millington Court. Local flood defences stopped the flood being any worse for the town, protecting businesses in the southern end of the High Street and local properties.

Several indicators in the latest State of the UK Climate report show that the UK's climate is becoming wetter. For example the highest rainfall totals over a five day period are 4% higher during the most recent decade (2008-2017) compared to 1961-1990. Furthermore, the amount of rain from extremely wet days has increased by 17% when comparing the same time periods. In addition, there is a slight increase in the longest sequence of consecutive wet days for the UK.

The impact of climate change and concern with regard to flood risk has increased year on year. The town's flood defence was designed before the future growth that the town is anticipating, which has potential to further increase surface water run-off. The recent storms have also highlighted the risks involved, with areas such as Crowborough, Cross in Hand/Blackboys and Mayfield struggling wk beg 19 July. It was reported in the media on 26 July that the rain fall experienced in London and parts of the South East on 25 July was the equivalent of one month's rainfall in 24 hours.

Uckfield's Flood plan Version 5 was designed in 2016 without these anticipated developments taken into consideration. It is also detailed within the front pages of the plan, that a review should be timetabled for 2019.

This council notes that:

Due to anticipated growth within the town, with large scale sites being proposed for development, the effects of flooding in the UK and Uckfield's history of flooding, it would be prudent to review our flood mitigation measures and current flood defence system. This would enable the cumulative impact of these developments to be considered in more detail.

We as a Town Council have to take the safety and livelihoods of our community very seriously and we fear without a flood review and upgrade of our defence, our town and its businesses could be placed at risk as a result of future growth.

We believe it is both a moral duty and a legal duty of the relevant agencies – such as Environment Agency, East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council and relevant emergency services to come back together and review current mitigation measures. We as a Council would like to see all recommendations implemented before building takes place. We believe failing to do so could result in some of the relevant authorities being liable for damage to businesses and residential properties; be that physical damage or commercial.

Motion

- (i) For this motion to be shared with the Environment Agency, East Sussex CC, and Wealden DC for their attention;
- (ii) Call for a full review of Uckfield's Flood Plan (2016- v5) taking into consideration all sites with either initial proposals for development or granted planning permission on the periphery of Uckfield;
- (iii) Request that this review be carried out before construction starts on developments in Uckfield South.

12.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love commented that she loved meeting everyone on her visits. Members subsequently noted the engagements listed.

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

Four deed of grants had been received:

Marie K. Dellar

Linda M. Redford

Emma Carmichael

Mrs Sarah Hogan (amendment to details from first deed signed on 21 June)

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

FC.39.08.21

14.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

15.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The only item the Town Clerk wished to raise was that office staff were looking for more councillors to be set up on the Town Council's online banking to be able to authorise supplier BACs payments. At present the same two to three councillors were doing these. For audit purposes it would also be sensible for there to be variety, so if councillors were Uckfield based during the day, and had some time to spare, could they please contact the Finance Officer.

16.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love wanted to thank everyone involved in the organisation of the latest set of events such as the Uckfield Festival weekend and Blues & Roots Festival. Thank you to everyone who had worked hard to put these events on in difficult circumstances.

The meeting closed at 19:48pm.