

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 23 August 2021 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. P. Sparks (Chair)	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. J. Edwards (Vice-Chair)	Cllr. D. Ward
Cllr. H. Firth	Miss Becky Ikeson (Youth Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

4 members of the public
1 member of the press

Mark Francis – Estates & Facilities Manager
Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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. None were received.

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

GP13.08.21 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.

Mr Fletcher, Chair of the Uckfield Grasshoppers wished to speak in relation to agenda item 6.2, regarding the future of West Park Pavilion. He explained that Grasshoppers was a grassroots football club that had been providing football for the community for over 40 years. They had been recognised by the FA in recent years for their continued work, development and for raising standards in football coaching and best practice.

The Town Council had allowed them to consider West Park as their home since construction and they would now like to formally make this happen by taking on the lease. They had checked and created a budget which had been submitted to officers.

Going forward, they were keen to create a more social atmosphere for their players by means of a football hub. At a time when mental health and personal wellbeing were under intense scrutiny he reminded members that everyone should be mindful of the effect of this on their younger players to ensure a sanctuary was provided for them to switch off, relax and play sport.

The Uckfield Grasshoppers had approximately 350 members, making them the biggest provider of sport to young people in the area, not just football. These numbers were continuing to grow with the rapid expansion of Uckfield, yet without any further green space being created, pitch and venue locations were becoming stretched so it was important to protect current facilities, now.

They had 120 girls playing football at present and they predicted this would be closer to 150 this season. All of their mini soccer and the majority of their girls' football was played at West Park. It was a great venue and fulfilled the statutory League requirements that changing and toilet facilities must be available. It was also a central location, and in walking distance from the town centre, reducing un-necessary car journeys and pollution.

The pavilion was well used on match days, but under used during the rest of the week, which they wanted to change. It was a community sports venue and needed to be used and protected as such. They had been in contact with a few local groups along with Sussex County FA to gauge interest in using the building during the week for fitness classes, meetings, their own manager's meetings, CPD events and also FA Courses and disciplinary hearings.

They would intend to develop the kitchen area, to create an informal seating area inside and freshen up the interior area so that it became inviting. They were also looking at installing CCTV to protect the venue.

A landlord override switch could be installed to cut all the power barring the essentials to reduce the utilities costs. Broadband could be installed to ensure the building became more user friendly.

West Park was currently their HQ for the annual sixes tournament; attracting teams throughout the county. This was still one of the biggest football tournaments in Sussex and their main fundraising event throughout the season; providing much needed funds for the club. They were also developing a girls tournament as the demand was there.

Mr Fletcher explained that not having West Park would have a detrimental effect on the Uckfield Grasshoppers. They wanted to protect playing spaces and venues which would allow them to continue to provide opportunities for children to play sport.

Mr Probert, Treasurer for the Uckfield Model Railway Club also wished to speak in relation to agenda item 6.2.

The Uckfield Model Railway Club were coming up to their 50th Anniversary next year. This was an important milestone for the club, but they did have concerns for their future. They were currently looking for a new clubhouse. The premises they were currently renting may cease to be available in the near future, and commercial rents were well above their means, financially.

The question to Uckfield Town Council was therefore, if they were unable to share facilities within the pavilion for example, what could the Town Council do to help find or source accommodation/land within the town.

GP14.08.21 Members of the public were thanked for their statements and members subsequently **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were recorded from Councillors G. Johnson, J. Love and A. Smith.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 12 July 2021

GP15.08.21 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 12 July 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Action list

Members reviewed and noted the updates provided within the action list. They agreed to remove the following actions from the list as this work had now been completed. Members subsequently noted the report.
GP10.07.21 – Finance Summary

4.3 Project list

Councillor D. Ward enquired as to whether the work on the online ticket system had begun, the Town Clerk confirmed it had started.

Councillor C. Macve asked whether there were any latest figures available on usage for the Saturday 262 Bus Service. The Town Clerk advised she would contact North Wealden Community Transport Partnership to find out. Members were happy to note the report.

5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

5.1 To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

5.2 To note the income and expenditure reports up to end July 2021

Members felt that despite the impact of the national lockdowns and covid restrictions, as well as public confidence, the figures for the projected budget deficit was encouraging at present, and this was credit to the hard work of officers.

The Chair, Councillor P. Sparks supported these comments and noted the benefits of the furlough scheme and covid grant funding in helping the Town Council in these difficult financial times. The income and expenditure reports for GP Committee and Luxfords Restaurant were subsequently noted.

5.3. Bad Debts

Members noted the report.

5.4 To receive the draft minutes from the Finance Sub-Committee held on 16 August 2021

Members agreed to note and receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 16 August 2021.

5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 16 August 2021

GP16.08.21 Members **RESOLVED** to confirm that they were content with the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee:

- (i) *To defer the review of the Service Level Agreement with Wealden Citizens Advice, until after the next Finance Sub Committee meeting to be held in September, whilst Uckfield Town Council obtained further information on their accounts, and current income streams;*
- (ii) *The review of the CAB Service Level Agreement would also include a review on the amount allocated each year;*
- (iii) *To defer the review of the Service Level Agreement for Uckfield Volunteer Centre until after the next Finance Sub Committee meeting to be held in September, in order to request further financial information;*
- (iv) *The review of the UVC Service Level Agreement could also include increasing the number of applications they review as part of their evaluation of the Town Council's Community Grant programme;*
- (v) *To amend the timescales of the application process to open on 1 November and close mid-January (in 2022, this would be Sunday 16 January 2022);*
- (vi) *To ensure that all questions on the application form are completed, if not then it would be returned, the design of the form to be improved as per the examples presented, and the need for the wording on the letter and policy criteria be amended to include align, stating:
'Members of the Finance Sub Committee will have read your application, there will be two minutes for you to add any further details at the meeting and then questions may be asked of you'*

6.0 BUILDINGS

6.1 To note the current position with the Council's buildings

Members noted the report.

6.2 To initially receive information on options to increase utilisation of West Park Pavilion

Members were presented with a report outlining potential options to increase the future utilisation of West Park Pavilion. At present the pavilion was underutilised during weekdays and was bringing in very little income.

Councillor D. Ward wished to thank representatives in attendance from the Uckfield Grasshoppers and Uckfield Model Railway Club for their input at the start of the meeting.

The Pavilion was an important asset and every single aspect of its future needed to be considered in detail. Members were not being asked for a decision at this stage but would consider the financial information provided under confidential business (agenda item 12.2).

Members noted the contents of the report.

7.0 POLICY

None.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council
Members reviewed and noted the report circulated.

8.2 To receive Members' audit reports
Members noted the report from May 2021.

9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

9.1 To consider reports from:-

(i) Citizens Advice Bureau
Nothing to report at this time.

(ii) East Sussex Association of Local Councils AGM
Nothing to report at this time.

(iii) Ridgewood Village Hall Management Committee
Nothing to report at this time.

(iv) Uckfield & District Preservation Society
Nothing to report at this time.

(v) Uckfield Volunteer Centre
Members thanked Councillor K. Bedwell for a comprehensive report.

(vi) Wealden Works
Members noted the contents of the report.

(vii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Management Committee
Nothing to report at this time.

(viii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel
Nothing to report at this time.

10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Councillor P. Sparks, thought the Weald on the Field event on Saturday 21 August was a tremendous success. He wished to thank employees and councillors who organised and ran the event. It was great to see everyone enjoying themselves. Thank you to everyone involved.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP17.08.21

It was **RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted it was advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

12.1 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant
Members wished to thank the Hospitality Manager for her very useful reports. It provided all the information they required and incorporated some great ideas. Members subsequently noted the report.

- 12.2 To initially receive information on options to increase utilisation of West Park Pavilion (exempt information – considered commercially sensitive).
Members discussed the contents of the report.
- 12.3 Initial consideration of priorities for 2022/23
Members discussed the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 8.24pm.