

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 13 September 2021 at 7.00 pm
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT: Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. D. Bennett
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. J. Edwards
Cllr. H. Firth
Becky Ikeson (Youth Member)

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

4 x members of the public
1 x member of the press (recorded)
County Councillor Chris Dowling

Holly Goring Town Clerk
Mark Francis Estates & Facilities Manager
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.

Councillor K. Bedwell declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 9.0. Her son was associated with the Uckfield Grasshoppers due to his Under17s football with the Uckfield AFC.

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

FC.40.09.21 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.

Mr Trevor Probert, Treasurer of the Uckfield Model Railway Club spoke in relation to agenda item 9.0. Having expressed their interest in the reconfiguration of West Park Pavilion and need for space adequate to accommodate their requirements, they realised they may not have a sporting intention but they did run a local interest and were a local organisation. The club were keen to attract younger age groups and to provide another after school interest within the town. They had a

direct connection with Uckfield College, with an active team of youngsters. Although they couldn't house the interest at the College at present, they were able to provide expertise and financial support. Current club rooms were unfortunately not able to accommodate greater member numbers, so they were not in a position to offer them club membership at this stage. For example, two of the youngsters left despite great interest and talent, due to a lack of suitable facilities. The Uckfield Model Railway Club were currently based in Framfield Road. Their interest therefore remained with West Park, to expand that space, and introduce a variety of age groups to this interest. However if the Town Council saw fit to award the tenure of the building to someone else, they would be interested in alternative options such as sharing the facility or exploring space elsewhere in the town.

Mr Paul Fletcher, Chair of Uckfield Grasshoppers reminded members that the club had been in local community for 40 years. The sports club were keen to formulate their longstanding use into an agreement with the Town Council. The building had the correct number of changing rooms for females/males, and currently met requirements stipulated in football management and league rules. The Uckfield Grasshoppers supported a wide range of age groups from Under 7s right up to the Under 18/19s. They were one of the biggest providers of sport in the local area. Pitch and venue locations were currently stretched. The Grasshoppers had the budget and funds to improve existing facilities and had grant applications pending. With funding they would seek to develop a social seating area, decorate the internal fabric of the building, refurbish the shower areas, install CCTV and broadband, and improve the kitchen area for birthday parties etc. They would also seek to install a landlord override switch to cut the power and reduce utility bills.

West Park Pavilion was their HQ for their annual sixes tournament; still one of the biggest tournaments in East Sussex. There was also demand for a Girls only tournament. They wanted to protect existing playing spaces and venues including West Park.

3.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Councillor Chris Dowling attended the meeting. He had responded to a couple of complaints about noise whilst the UKPN works were underway in Lewes Road. Contractors were coming towards the end of the current phase of work and expected the current underground drilling and duct work to be completed week beginning 20 September. The second phase of work would commence on 27 September. This involved joint bay works with 250m intervals to run the cable through the ducting. UKPN contractors would be starting from the new development in Ridgewood and head north into town.

Councillor K. Bedwell asked if the works were going to come to an end in October, if there was any chance that the flooding would get investigated before this winter. This would be the second winter and the two problematic drains were sinking more now.

Councillor P. Sparks spoke in relation to the refugee crisis and Wealden DC's plan of action. One family had been housed in a four-bed home and they were looking to acquire a three-bed. Wealden DC were currently looking for properties

to help support these refugees so it was asked for thought to be given to available properties in the area.

Councillor P. Sparks also explained that within the last few days, a local Housing Needs Assessment had been prepared for use in the Local Plan. This showed that 519 affordable homes per annum to rent were required together with 335 affordable home ownership. The median house price in Wealden District was 11.55 times median earnings which was one of the highest in the country. Since 2011, on average 653 new homes had been built each year but now this had to increase to 1,250pa. This would increase the population of Wealden by 28% (45,200 more people).

Wealden DC ran ward walks with their ward councillors to look at their areas and discuss present issues, and opportunities. Councillor H. Firth advised that her ward walk was due to take place on Friday 17 September 2021.

Councillor J. Beesley raised a question for Councillor Chris Dowling. Councillor Beesley had queried a couple of years back the condition of Southview Drive and Downsview Crescent, and was advised at the time under no uncertain terms that the condition of the roads would be the responsibility of the contractors from the Uckfield College development. However in the news on Friday from a local media outlet, it was suggested that this may not be the case. The roads were dangerous and cars and cyclists swerved the potholes daily. It was likely now it would just get left until Streatfeild House was developed. Councillor J. Beesley wanted clarification from ES Highways.

The Town Clerk agreed, adding that the matter had been raised again at the SLR meeting in July 2021, and in her absence it had been suggested that the Town Clerk should contact Uckfield College. The Town Clerk advised that she had also hit one of the potholes quite badly and had since been filled in Southview Drive.

Councillor J. Beesley also raised the grass verges in Manor Park (Downsview Crescent) with Councillor Chris Dowling. The grass crete was put down around one year ago. The grass had grown and looked better. People still parked on the verges but it was withstanding the vehicles a bit more. His main concern was that some of the grass crete was not flush with the ground and could become a trip hazard if not already. It was particularly noticeable on the corner by Sycamore Court.

FC.41.09.21 Residents and 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. French, G. Johnson, S. Mayhew and C. Snelgrove. Apologies had also been received from County/District Councillor Claire Dowling.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of the full Council on 2 August 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.42.09.21 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of full Council on 2 August 2021 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 as they had now been completed:

FC37.08.21 – draft letter to Quickborn

FC38.08.21 – motion from Councillor B. Cox

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 9 and 31 August 2021

FC.43.09.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 9 and 31 August 2021.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 6 September 2021

FC.44.09.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committees of the 6 September 2021.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 23 August 2021

FC.45.09.21 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 23 August 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

The Town Clerk clarified that the consultation documents for the Gatwick Northern Runway Project were now based at the Civic Centre rather than Uckfield Library. As a result of this members were advised to spread the word, and if they were approached by anyone looking for the information, it was available online (via a simple google search) and copies of the consultation summary document and questionnaire were available to pick up in the Town Council offices.

Members subsequently noted the report.

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 update of the forthcoming event – the Uckfield Revival on Saturday 2 October 2021.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Nothing to report at present.

9.0 TO FORMALLY CONSIDER OPTIONS TO INCREASE UTILISATION OF WEST PARK PAVILION

Members were presented with a report which had already been viewed by General Purposes Committee and Environment & Leisure Committee. As a result members were asked to make a decision in the public domain, despite some of the financial information being made available to members only under confidential business. As previously noted in the above committees, West Park Pavilion had been under utilised for a number of years, and was generating no income other than that incorporated in seasonal football pitch fees. Members had deliberated for some years whether to reconfigure the space or lease out part or all of the building, but no decision had been taken. Officers were now keen to understand how members wished to proceed.

The Chair of General Purposes Committee, Councillor P. Sparks advised that the committee held wide ranging discussions on the topic. Everyone felt that they would like to support both of the organisations but clearly there were some important financial and structural issues to consider. They were aware that any decision taken at West Park, could affect other groups in the town.

Representative of Environment & Leisure Committee, Councillor J. Edwards reported similar thoughts with a desire to support both parties, but Option 2 of leasing the entire building on a full repairing lease had been their preferred next step for a few reasons. Reasons given by General Purposes Committee earlier, in regards to finance and structural matters. But also as mentioned by the Chair of the Uckfield Grasshoppers, the club was a home for so many children in the area and was a fantastic asset to the town. This option was also by far the most financially prudent on the part of the town council. Although there were other groups and organisations looking for space in the town, the pavilion was a sports facility and should be protected as such. Councillor J. Edwards noted that the Estates & Facilities Manager hoped that other prospects would emerge in the town which could provide potential for community space for a number of organisations, to enable the Town Council to help as many people as possible.

Councillor J. Beesley also reminded attendees that local community groups and organisations could apply for support through the Uckfield Town Council's Community Grant Programme. Councillor D. Bennett agreed stating that tenants were also able to apply for grant funding for projects or repairs.

Councillor J. Beesley put forward a proposal for full Council to support Option 2, which was seconded by Councillor D. Bennett.

Councillor J. Love wished to make an addition to the proposal to encourage officers to keep searching for further space which could be utilised by local community groups, to enable the Town Council to support the town.

Councillor K. Bedwell explained that there was such a lack of space in the town and the Town Council would be working hard to try and source more space. It was definitely not a choice between them and us. Councillor Bedwell felt that the Model Railway needed to leave their layouts in situ and space needed to be found appropriate to their needs, whereas West Park Pavilion as a venue, was better suited for the Grasshoppers where it sat adjacent to the recreation ground.

FC.46.09.21 With nine votes in favour, and one member abstaining, members **RESOLVED** to proceed with Option 2 “to lease the entire building on a full repairing lease to a Sports Club for an agreed rental figure per annum”, but for officers to also continue searching for further space which would support local community groups in the town.

10.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL’S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22 (Q1)

The Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love wished to thank everyone in the office and the whole Town Council team who had kept these priorities progressing during difficult times. It was a great achievement.

Councillor P. Sparks wished to endorse these comments. The whole of the Town Council had done remarkably well. Councillor P. Sparks wished to reference one of the priorities relating to the Neighbourhood Plan. He was keen to try and move the development of this on as quickly as possible, particularly as Wealden DC were working on the Local Plan. He felt that the Uckfield Neighbourhood Plan could have significant impact on this.

Members were happy to note the report.

11.0 TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED WAY FORWARD AND PREPARATION OF THE DEDICATION AGREEMENTS FOR THE NEW FOOTWAY LINKS TO THE “LAND OFF MALLARD DRIVE” DEVELOPMENT

Councillor C. Macve first wished to commend officers, for getting the amplification improved within the Weald Hall.

With regard to the footpath links; primarily the one across Harlands Playing fields and the link to Framfield Road, to a lesser extent. Councillor C. Macve asked if the legal costs for preparation of these agreements were being covered by the developer. It was only right that they paid any legal and surveying fees. The Town Clerk advised that she would check with them.

Councillor C. Macve also referenced the footpath to the Uckfield Hospital approach road. He had some reservations about the provision of the footpath extension up to new development. It would run in front of the ambulance station, and although the ambulance station was not in much use at present, presumably at some point that building would be put back into much more extensive use. The traffic would also increase. He therefore had reservations with the location of the footpath but was unable to offer an alternative.

The Town Clerk believed that this access point had already been agreed through the planning process as part of the S106 agreements as they were also due to improve the footways where the bus stops were located near to the Hospital approach road.

Councillor D. Bennett questioned whether adoption of the footway would have any bearing on the drainage in this area. The culverts were full to overflowing with gravel and foliage and he had never been able to identify responsibility. If it were the case that the section of the footway was under new responsibility, increased runoff from the development would need to be accounted for with frequent cleaning of the gullies.

Councillor C. Macve advised that the licence was originally granted to the NHS for providing the road for access to the hospital. Quite clearly it stated that the NHS were responsible for the road and the upkeep but despite reporting issues on a number of occasions he had not been successful.

Councillor D. Bennett also advised that he had helped clear the road for many years during winter snowfall. It was an important route which needed to be kept safe as it was a key access point to Bird in Eye Surgery and minor injuries unit at the Hospital. It needed to be maintained and gritted.

FC.47.09.21 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the proposed legal process being taken with regards to the footway link across Uckfield TC land at Harlands Playing Fields, and;
- (ii) confirmed that the footway link between Framfield Road and Hospital approach should also be placed up for adoption by ESCC at the same time;
- (iii) request that Persimmon Homes cover the costs of any legal fees incurred.

12.0 **TO CONSIDER A RESPONSE TO THE ESCC BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT SURVEY**

Councillor J. Love explained that members of the public, elected members and staff had been invited to respond to the individual survey but this was an opportunity for the Town Council to respond as an organisation.

Councillor C. Macve failed to see the object of their questions. He explained that if you didn't answer yes you were effectively opting for a decrease in the bus service. Of course, everyone wanted a comfortable, clean and easily accessible bus service.

Councillor A. Smith wished to use the survey as an opportunity to lobby for improvements around the bus station, as well as advocate for a better service at weekends. Uckfield was quite well served for bus services at present.

Councillor J. Love explained that meetings were in progress with ES Highways in regards to the updating of the Bus Station. Members were still asking for toilet facilities as well. Improved facilities would include a different layout, larger longer bus shelters etc but there were still a few things to discuss.

Councillor D. Bennett confirmed that the Town Council did want to say yes to everything. There was currently a very good service between Tunbridge Wells and Brighton, but much poorer services between Uckfield and Eastbourne way.

Miss McHale supported this comment as she currently used the Eastbourne bus route daily. It was a very slow service and didn't run regularly enough and worked against the whole aim of trying to reduce congestion. This route in particular was not helpful if you needed to get to work in time. This central government project had allocated £3billion so it would be good for ESCC to use up their allowance.

Councillor B. Cox also used to get the Eastbourne bus to College. When it left, it would take an hour and a half and was really expensive compared to the Brighton bus route. The Eastbourne bus almost was trying to make itself unaffordable; so

irregular and not cost effective. ESCC needed to look at the whole picture for bus services. They needed to reach the main towns, and be cost effective.

The Town Clerk reminded members of the substantial cuts to the Etchingham to Uckfield service (via Heathfield) which had affected workers, shoppers and the younger generation who were just out of college and trying to access work, education or training.

Councillor C. Macve agreed, advising that there was currently a lack of local infrastructure supporting the villages. If people were unable to travel from the villages to the town, it would impact on our economic recovery. There was a need to look for services between the local villages and nearest town, as well as a shuttle type service in the town itself. The town was spreading out further, with developments proposed around the periphery. A shuttle service would therefore be critical to support the local economy.

Councillor J. Love also suggested that East Sussex County Council talk to the Chamber of Commerce to understand business needs. For example, she understood that staff at the East Sussex National were currently experiencing difficulties reaching work.

The Town Clerk thanked members for their input and advised that the comments would be submitted to ESCC through their consultation portal.

13.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Everything was correct but the Town Mayor advised that although her and the Deputy Mayor had attended the Bonfire & Firework display on Carnival weekend, it was not a civic duty.

Noted report.

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

Four deed of grants had been received:

Elayne Scrivens

Mrs Caroline Russell

Kerry Isted

Lesley Flint

FC.48.09.21 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 of Plans Committee that there was an imminent deadline for feedback on a number of Outside Plans, and to date response had been low. Members were advised to respond to the Administrative Officer by the deadline.

16.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, understood following discussions at E&L Committee on 6 September that Councillor Bedwell would be leading a working party for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee to celebrate on the bank holiday weekend in June 2022 (Councillors D. French and Cllr H. Firth had put

themselves forward already). It was acknowledged that there was quite a lot of activity already happening in Uckfield so they would be approaching everyone to find out what had been planned. Councillor K. Bedwell advised that any activities led by the Town Council were likely to be low key as a result of a couple of other larger events taking place so could include lighting the beacon, afternoon tea, and possibly something else to plug the gaps. Members were asked to see Councillor Bedwell at the end of the meeting if they were interested in volunteering.

The Town Mayor, also reminded members to follow formalities and procedures that were followed pre-covid – for example remembering to send the relevant clerk for the meeting their apologies, and reason for their absence. Members were also asked to keep on top of email correspondence as often the office had to chase for responses, in particular for Outside Plans or other local authority/agency consultations. These were key expectations of the role.

The meeting closed at 19:59pm.