

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 28 February 2022 at 7.00 pm
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre

PRESENT: Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. J. Edwards
Cllr. D. French (Deputy mayor)

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

Holly Goring Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

Before the meeting started, the Town Mayor, Councillor Jackie Love expressed that the thoughts of Uckfield Town were with Ukraine at this very difficult time.

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 P. Sparks declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 9.0, as a result of being the Chair of the Uckfield Volunteer Centre.

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.86.02.22 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable Council representatives to speak.

Councillor Chris Dowling passed on the apologies of Councillor Claire Dowling

who had been unwell that day.

Councillor Chris Dowling explained that the snagging works due to be undertaken by Kier on behalf of UKPN were in the process of being planned and it was hoped that they would return soon to make good. It was thought that the works were fairly limited and should not be too intrusive on the town.

Contact had been made with East Sussex Highways to understand the current position with regards to the traffic calming works planned for Lewes Road, as part of the S106 agreement for Ridgewood Place. These works were getting closer, but other work was scheduled to take place on Lewes Road first, so it was a case of awaiting road space for this to be carried out safely.

The works to repair the damaged drain at the top of Lewes Road were scheduled in for 4 April 2022. Councillor Dowling was aware that there had been a long wait for these works, but at present this was the date scheduled.

East Sussex County Council had adopted the budget for 2022-23 at their meeting of Full Council on 8 February 2022. This had included funding towards climate change initiatives and a commitment towards highway works over the next three years. This would result in the amount of council tax for a band D property for the year 2022/23 as £1,613.34 and would represent a 4.49% (2.5% of which relates to the Adult Social Care precept) increase on the previous year.

Councillor K. Bedwell was pleased to hear that the drainage works were now scheduled in Lewes Road. Councillor K. Bedwell advised that she had contacted Councillor Dowling during the half term break to enquire about a traffic survey being completed in Framfield Road and on the Mallard roundabout. The Town Council had previously expressed its concerns with traffic monitoring surveys being undertaken in school holidays, and the equipment installed had been clearly marked as East Sussex Highways' equipment but strange that no agency appeared to know why the surveys had been commissioned.

Councillor P. Sparks updated members on district council business, advising that he had recently attended a meeting relating to Freedom Leisure. East Sussex County Council had put out an expression of interest as part of a tender process before Christmas and were continuing their liaison to obtain interest in the Heathfield and Uckfield Leisure Centres.

The Town Clerk clarified that the tender process had previously been discussed at a meeting of the Full Council back in the autumn, and the tender process had included Ringmer Pool as well, as the agreement on this was due to expire this year also.

Councillor S. Mayhew asked what plans were being put in place if no organisation could be found to take on the existing contract. Councillor P. Sparks advised that both leisure centres were extensively used by the adjacent secondary schools and there would be continuation with Freedom Leisure who were currently managing the sites. Councillor J. Edwards also noted that Freedom Leisure owned the equipment within the Uckfield Leisure Centre so this would be an important factor to take into account if any changes occurred. Councillor P. Sparks advised that Wealden DC were holding a further Health & Wellbeing working party meeting where discussions would continue on the

importance of leisure facilities, and the health and wellbeing of Wealden's residents.

Work had slowed on the Local Plan whilst discussions were underway with the Rt Hon Mr Michael Gove and central government with regards to housing numbers. Wealden DC were hopeful that a response would come back with more positive news.

FC.87.02.22 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, H. Firth, C. Macve, G. Johnson, A. Smith and C. Snelgrove, and Youth Member Becky Ikeson.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 17 January 2022 to be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.88.02.22 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on the 17 January 2022 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:

FC57.09.19 – Youth food poverty

FC64.12.21 – Oak Tree, Snatts Road Cemetery

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 24 January and 14 February 2022

FC.89.02.22 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committees of the 24 January and 14 February 2022.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 21 February 2022

FC.90.02.22 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment and Leisure Committee of the 21 February 2022.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 31 January 2022

FC.91.02.22 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 31 January 2022

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 PROPOSED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL AND THE UCKFIELD VOLUNTEER CENTRE AND WEALDEN CITIZEN'S ADVICE FOR 2022-23

Further to the approval of General Purposes Committee in the autumn, and full Council during the budget setting process for 2022-23, members had already supported the need to strengthen existing procedures for the granting of funding under service level agreements to both the Uckfield Volunteer Centre and Wealden Citizen's Advice.

Draft service level agreements had been drawn up between Uckfield Town Council and these organisations for a period of 12 months, and funding had been allocated within the 2022-23 budget for Uckfield Volunteer Centre for £8,000 and £19,000 for Wealden Citizen's Advice.

Members clarified the length of term, with the Town Clerk advising that the strengthened procedures had been put in place for an initial 12 months, with the intention that during the next budget setting process for 2023-24, it was thought that this could be extended to 24 months (2 years).

Members were in support of authorising the sign off of these service level agreements once the information had been agreed and statistics updated by the organisations. Councillor B. Cox offered to be one of the two signatories required.

FC.92.02.22 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the contents of the draft service level agreements, and to authorise for two Town Councillors to sign the service level agreements with Uckfield Volunteer Centre and Wealden Citizen's Advice once both parties were satisfied with the contents.

10.0 TO CONSIDER A RESPONSE FROM UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL TO WEALDEN DC'S INVESTMENT IN HEALTH AND LEISURE FACILITIES

Wealden DC had issued a press release in December 2021, outlining their plans for improved health and leisure facilities in the district, using Community Infrastructure Levy funding. This press release and decision had omitted improvements in the central area of the district – such as Heathfield and Uckfield, and it was felt that more understanding was needed as to how the CIL money held by the local planning authority was allocated for projects within the district.

Members considered a draft letter which had been compiled by Councillor J. Edwards in response to the press release. After introducing the letter, Councillor

J. Edwards listened to feedback from his fellow councillors.

Members supported the response prepared.

One member advised that the CIL funding being spent in Hailsham was just a reward for the incredible number of new homes being built in that area. It therefore seemed only fair that they should receive a large proportion of the funding initially. Wealden DC had expressed a desire to improve sports facilities in Uckfield, but recognised there were difficulties in finding a suitable site. The Town Clerk advised that no correspondence had been received on this matter as of yet.

Members agreed, highlighting that there was lots of potential in Uckfield if Wealden DC were willing to start a dialogue with the Town Council with regards to infrastructure improvements (not just Highways or utility related). Members felt that infrastructure including sports, leisure and community facilities was vital to support the growth of the town.

Uckfield Town Council's Plans Committee had invited the Head of Planning & Environment, to attend a future meeting.

One member felt it would be helpful to push on ahead with the delivery of a Neighbourhood Plan for Uckfield. With a Neighbourhood Plan, the town would receive 25% of CIL funding rather than the current 15%. Members were disheartened that the only way to see improvements in infrastructure for the town in future years, was through development. The Town Council was very unhappy about being placed in this position.

In the main, members approved the contents of the letter, but felt that reference should also be made to the Leisure Centre and need to retain important facilities in the town. It was noted that Councillors Love and Sparks could also raise these points in the next Local Plan Uckfield Cluster meetings.

FC.93.02.22 Subject including an additional reference to the Uckfield Leisure Centre and the importance of retaining important leisure facilities, members **RESOLVED** to approve the response to Wealden DC's press release, on improvements to health and leisure facilities in the Wealden District.

11.0 TO CONSIDER A FURTHER MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BEN COX RELATING TO FOOD POVERTY

Members considered an update from Councillor B. Cox on the work that had been progressed since his first motion in September 2019. A detailed update provided members with a snapshot of the current profile of the town in relation to poverty, using official statistics and information from local services such as the Uckfield Food Bank and Uckfield Community Fridge CIC.

Councillor B. Cox introduced the report by thanking the Town Council for their continued support, in supporting ESCC's need to provide covid payments for free school meals and for the support the Town Council had provided to the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC.

There had been no growth for the lowest earners in Uckfield, and it was likely that

more deprivation would be evident over the next few years, due to there being a lack of strategic planning for the town. Over 25% of the community technically did not earn enough to rent in Uckfield. The homes being built were not matching the needs of the people.

Councillor P. Sparks felt that central government looked at Wealden DC as a wealthy area, and members discussed how many of those who were more affluent and living in the District did not necessarily generate their wealth or spend their money in the district.

FC.94.02.22 Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the motion put forward by Councillor B. Cox to:

What the council still needs to do

- *Report on the results of the schools' questionnaire and review the recommendations;*
- *Be open to any new ways to offer 'out of term' food for young people and where needed, push the higher tiers of local government to back schemes;*
- *Review and offer a final report on food poverty in March 2023 before the end of the term of this Town Council;*

Summary.

Food poverty in Uckfield is an issue that is growing still. However, Uckfield Town Council have done a number of things to help ease the issue. The next year will see some very challenging times and it is important that the Council keep up the work in highlighting and where possible, easing food poverty. A review is needed in 2023 and a final report offered to the Town Council. The attached report within appendix A contains statistics for Uckfield in terms of earnings and age by ward should be offered to our local authorities (District and County) to highlight some local needs.

12.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the engagements listed.

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

None received.

14.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

15.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk followed up a matter which had been previously discussed at Environment & Leisure Centre. The Uckfield & District Lions Club had enquired with the Town Council as to whether they could install two benches in Luxford Field which marked the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. At the meeting of Environment & Leisure Committee on 21 February, members had wished to understand a bit more information, in terms of whether the Lions would be installing the concrete plinths and to discuss the locations a little further. The Uckfield & District Lions had since responded to those queries with the Town Clerk but were keen to place an order for the benches soon in order to receive and install them in time for the Jubilee weekend at the beginning of May.

The Town Clerk confirmed on behalf of the Uckfield & District Lions Club that they anticipated that bases would be needed for the benches and would add this to the installation costs. Their preferred location was to replace the old wooden bench on

the western side of Luxford Field and place a second one between that and the play area on the western side of the field.

The Chair of the Environment & Leisure Committee, Councillor S. Mayhew wished to express his thanks to the Lions for going above and beyond, in doing great things for the town.

FC.95.02.22 Members **RESOLVED** to support the Uckfield & District Lions Club's request to purchase and install two benches marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on the western side of Luxford Field.

The Town Clerk advised members that the Town Council was currently running with staff vacancies in the caretaking, grounds and restaurant staffing teams. She therefore asked for their patience in the coming weeks.

With the issues occurring in Ukraine, discussions had taken place with organisations around the risks with regards to cyber security. The Town Clerk would continue to look out for any updates or issues arising, but contact had been made with one of the Town Council's IT security firms to understand if any adjustments needed to be made.

16.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor Jackie Love wanted to say thank you to Councillor Bennett and Mike Skinner for keeping their local Facebook pages regularly updated through the storms and for keeping the town informed. This had been much appreciated by all residents.

A big thank you was also given to Deputy Mayor, Councillor French and Mike Skinner who picked up that the residents of Barley Mow Park had been without power for five days, and were cold and hungry. Contact was made with UKPN on two occasions and as a result a generator was arranged for the park with the Highlands Pub offering them warmth and support.

Through listening to a local resident who had been on a quest for history and memories shared on an Uckfield Facebook page, some fantastic photographs were found which showed when Queen Elizabeth II stayed with the Nevills and her visit to the original Grants Hill House. She had been an important figure in the town. Due to this it had been suggested that a letter be sent for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Town Mayor advised that if members wished to include anything specific within the letter, to let her or the Town Clerk know.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor French, was working with a few others in town to bring together essential supplies for those in need in Ukraine. Lansdown Health Store would be the hub for distributing essentials – baby formula, nappies etc. It was important that residents kept up to date on what was needed, as items were changing regularly depending on the situation, and what items had been difficult to obtain in Ukraine. A local fundraising initiative had also seen a number of sunflowers being crocheted (which was also the national flower of Ukraine). Six to seven ladies were crocheting and knitting these sunflowers, which was wonderful. A £3-5 donation was welcomed and these could be purchased in Lily's coffee shop, Frenchs Fancy Dress and Lansdown Health Store.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm.