

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 14 March 2022 at 7.00pm

## PRESENT:

Cllr. P. Sparks (Chair)  
Cllr. J. Love  
Cllr. C. Macve

Cllr. A. Smith  
Cllr. D. Ward

## IN ATTENDANCE:

1 member of the press  
1 member of the public  
Councillor K. Bedwell (*attended as a member of the public representing Ridgewood Village Hall Committee as a grant applicant*)

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.

Councillor J. Love declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 5.5/12.1 due to holding the role of the Chair of the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society. This organisation had applied for grant funding through the Community Grants Programme for 2022-23 and Councillor Love would not be participating in detailed discussions.

All declarations of interest and dispensations authorised by the Town Clerk for the purpose of the Finance Sub-Committee on 23 February 2022 would be transferred to this meeting, whilst members of the General Purposes Committee considered the recommendations of the sub-committee for the awarding of grant funding in 2022-23.

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

**GP.31.03.22** It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.

The Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee wished to speak on agenda items 5.5/12.1. The Chair, apologised for there not being any representation for their committee at the Finance-Sub Committee meeting on 23 February 2022. Her mother had been taken into hospital and her Vice-Chair had another commitment that evening, so in this difficult personal situation she was unable to make any other arrangements in time.

Ridgewood Village Hall was the only community building serving the south side of Uckfield. It was a thriving community hub and most of the building was hired throughout the week. They had set up a baby and toddler group which was serving local families and they had also set up a very successful community lunch club for the elderly or isolated, which provided them with a hot meal and social interaction once a month. At some stage they were hoping to bring the two together for an intergenerational event. They also had fundraising events planned for Easter and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

For 30 years, Ridgewood Village Hall did not have a maintenance programme in place, and this had meant in the last 3-4 years raising 90k for a full internal refurbishment, and with support from Uckfield Town Council's community grants programme, starting to refurbish and replace the windows, doors and guttering around the Village Hall. These were currently causing leaks internally. RVH Committee were asking for support for replacement windows, and also reminded members of the £11,000 which they still held (loaned to Ridgewood Village Hall during the refit). This was Uckfield Town Council's funding and to be set aside for the drainage works to the car park so should not be considered as part of their accounting.

**GP32.03.22** Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

### **3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were recorded from Councillors J. Edwards, H. Firth, G. Johnson and C. Snelgrove.

### **4.0 MINUTES**

#### **4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 31 January 2022**

**GP33.03.22** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 31 January 2022 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. Members agreed to remove the following actions, and subsequently noted the report: GP16.08.21 – Recommendations of Finance Sub-Committee  
GP19.10.21 – Recommendations of Finance Sub-Committee  
GP27.01.22 – Consider enquiry from Brighter Uckfield

#### **4.3 Project list**

Councillor C. Macve had raised a query with regards to the presentation of the expenditure of the Building Maintenance Fund for 2021-22. The Town Clerk advised that she would make minor alterations for the next update.

The Chair, Councillor P. Sparks asked for an update on the repairs at Foresters Hall that had not yet been undertaken. The Town Clerk advised that the Estates & Facilities Manager had previously provided an explanation with regard to this. The works that had been identified were not of great priority and the costs of other works in the 2021-22 Building Maintenance Programme had exceeded those anticipated, due to increase in material costs, so it was thought that any outstanding works could be picked up in future maintenance programmes.

Members noted 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 for 2021/22 (end of February 2022)**

Members reviewed the income and expenditure reports for General Purposes Committee and Luxfords Restaurant.

The Chair, Councillor P. Sparks felt reassured by the figures presented under General Purposes Committee despite the challenges of the past 12 months. He raised a query with regards to the Feed-in Tariff payments, which the Town Clerk answered, explaining that funding was outstanding from the previous year so greater income in this financial year was expected.

Councillor C. Macve supported these views, advising that with the additional funding from the furlough scheme, income exceeded that anticipated at this point in the year. He provided his congratulations to everyone involved.

In terms of Luxfords Restaurant, members thought that the finances were being managed well. Councillor C. Macve noted that although income levels were down, with the additional grant aid received earlier in the year, the overall position was steady.

Members of General Purposes Committee wished to record their thanks to Wealden District Council and the UK Government for the grant aid that had been available during the pandemic to support businesses such as the Civic Centre and Luxfords Restaurant. It made a very difficult position more tolerable.

Members subsequently noted the report.

### **5.3. Bad Debts**

Members noted the update received.

### **5.4 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 23 February 2022**

Members received and noted the contents of the draft minutes of the recent Finance Sub-Committee held on 23 February 2022.

### **5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 23 February 2022 (this agenda item would be considered under confidential business – agenda item 12.1)**

## **6.0 BUILDINGS**

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

Members considered and noted the contents of the report, with one comment made. Councillor C. Macve noted that whilst on the station platform the previous week, he noticed that the new staircase adjoining the Signal Box needed to be looked at. The strings looked like they were pulling where the staircase turned. The Town Clerk advised that she would inform the Town Council's surveyors who oversaw the project, the next day.

## **7.0 POLICY**

### **7.1 To consider an update on GDPR procedures and information security**

Members were advised that the Town Clerk was currently undertaking refresher

training in GDPR, which had highlighted the need to review existing policies, procedures and practices. This would involve reminding not just staff but also elected members of their responsibilities with regard to the handling of information.

The Chair, Councillor P. Sparks supported this point and advised that Wealden District Council also provided regular updates to members on the importance of utilising council-based email accounts for council business and the need to handle information carefully, particularly anything with personal data included. Members noted the update.

## **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 reports from November and December 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 noted the report.

(vi) Wealden Works

Nothing to report at this time.

(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 Chair, Councillor P. Sparks wished to record the Town Council's sincere appreciation and thanks for the way in which the town was responding to the Ukraine crisis. It was really good to see such a positive response.

Councillor P. Sparks also wished to pass on the committee's warm congratulations to Mark, the Town Council's Estates & Facilities Manager on the birth of their new baby daughter.

## 11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

## 12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

### GP34.03.22

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 the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 23 February 2022

Members were asked to review the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee from their meeting on 23 February 2022, whereby they considered 12 applications for grant funding through the Community Grants Programme for 2022-23. Recommendations had been provided for 10 out of the 12 applications, so a decision was required for two organisations, namely Ridgewood Village Hall Committee and Sunflowers Mental Health & Wellbeing.

### GP35.03.22

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) provide a sum of £1,505.72 to Ridgewood Village Hall Committee through the Town Council's Community Grants Programme but did not approve the allocation of funding for Sunflowers Mental Health & Wellbeing on this occasion, and;
- (ii) approve the recommendations for the remaining ten applications, with a total sum of £14,333.47 being awarded under the General Power of Competence for Uckfield Town Council's Community Grant Programme in 2022-23.

### 12.2 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members discussed staffing levels with the Town Clerk and advised that if the Town Council continued to struggle with the recruitment of staff in the hospitality sectors of the business, to start approaching local agencies to seek agency staff. Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 7.57pm.