

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 25 April 2022 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. P. Sparks (Chair)	Cllr. J. Love
Cllr. J. Edwards (Vice-Chair)	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. H. Firth	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. G. Johnson	Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

1 member of the public

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 forthcoming.

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

None.

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 14 March 2022

GP36.04.22 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 14 March 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:

GP05.06.21 – Civic Centre hopper

GP06.06.21 – Request from Ridgewood Village Hall Committee

4.3 Project list

Members noted the update.

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 (provisional year-end)

Members of Finance-Sub Committee had reviewed the income and expenditure reports for General Purposes Committee and Luxfords Restaurant in detail at their recent meeting.

Whilst noting the report, members wished to pass on their appreciation to all of the staff, for the excellent way they had managed the finances during an incredibly difficult time. Warm thanks were extended to all staff.

Members subsequently noted the report.

5.3. Bad Debts

The Town Clerk provided a more recent update since the report had been prepared. Members noted the update received.

5.4 To note the report of the Internal Auditor (March 2022)

The Town Clerk advised what action had been taken since the two in-person audits had been carried out in November 2021 and March 2022. Members noted the contents of the report and action taken by staff to address, recent requirements.

5.5 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 20 April 2022

Members received and noted the contents of the draft minutes of the recent Finance Sub-Committee held on 20 April 2022.

5.6 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 20 April 2022

Members were presented with a report which summarised the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee. At the meeting they had reviewed the provisional year-end financial position for the Town Council, the latest statement on the outstanding public works loans, the amended Financial Regulations and how to manage the remaining funds from the Community Grant Programme for 2022-23.

Members agreed with the recommendation of the Finance Sub-Committee to not set a requirement for three-year financial forecasts, as there was still great uncertainty on the impact on income streams as a result of the pandemic and each year there was uncertainty regarding the annual council tax base figure until near the point at which the budget had to be set. Therefore it would be difficult to produce draft forecasts over a medium-term period.

GP37.04.22

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations of Finance Sub- Committee who:

- (i) agreed for the Responsible Financial Officer to continue preparing the Year End accounts in line with the current figures and to also investigate further the calculations involved in the repayment of the Public Works Loans;
- (ii) subject to removing the addition of a 3-year forecast as highlighted in paragraph 2.1 and to include the phrase 'may, if required' in paragraph 8.3, members recommended that the revised Financial Regulations be presented to General Purposes Committee for approval and adoption;
- (iii) (a) recommended that the remaining Community Grant funding under the

General Power of Competence be carried forward, to 2023/24 for the 2023/24 Community Grant Programme, and: (b) for the Responsible Financial Officer and members to explore how other councils managed their community grants programme, including caps on the grant funding awarded. Findings would be presented to the next Finance Sub-Committee in June/July 2022.

6.0 BUILDINGS

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

The Estates & Facilities Manager provided members with an update, explaining that one of the new initiatives for 2022-23 was already underway with scaffolding erected at the rear of the Civic Centre to handle an issue with pigeons and the subsequent mess that had been created.

The Estates & Facilities Manager was also looking at the property that the Town Council privately rented. A couple of issues needed to be resolved before renting the property out again including the showering facilities and undertaking a general refresh of the decor. Before advertising back on the lettings market, the Estates & Facilities Manager questioned whether members would be supportive of further exploratory work being undertaken to see if the property could be utilised to house those fleeing from Ukraine. Members were generally in support of the idea, and finding out more information.

GP38.04.22 Members **RESOLVED** to task the Estates & Facilities Manager with exploring the accommodation requirements for housing families fleeing Ukraine, and to report back to members on the requirements and costs involved.

6.2 Update on the Community Fridge CIC Site

Members reviewed and noted the contents of the update report.

6.3 To receive a proposal to install new LED lighting within Foresters Hall

Members were presented with a report which explained intentions to replace the lighting in Foresters Hall within the communal areas, with LED lighting. This would reduce costs and improve the quality of the lighting for hirers.

One member queried the type of sensors being placed in the building. The Estates & Facilities Manager explained that he would look at the options for timings to ensure that areas like toilets had sufficient lighting.

GP39.04.22 It was **RESOLVED** to install new LED lighting at Foresters Hall, utilising funding from earmarked reserves for Climate Change Initiatives.

6.4 To receive an update on the Hub Site

The Estates & Facilities Manager presented members with a brief report which requested that members of the General Purposes Committee start to look at the Hub site, in order to have consideration for the Hub building which was in a poor state of repair, and longer term, for the future of the site.

Councillors Smith and Sparks had previously put themselves forward for a working group focused on the next steps for the Hub site. Councillor Ward advised that she too had expressed an interest previously. At this meeting, Councillor Macve also expressed his interest in joining the working group.

GP40.04.22 Members **RESOLVED** to set up a working group which would focus on the safety of the existing building and longer term, future of the Hub site. This working group was formed with Councillors C. Macve, A. Smith, P. Sparks and D. Ward.

7.0 POLICY

7.1 To review and approve amendments to the Town Council's Financial Regulations
Members considered the above recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee with regard to the revised Financial Regulations. The Financial Regulations had been reviewed in line with NALC's (National Association of Local Council's) most recent model regulations.

Councillor C. Macve queried the reference to 'cheque' payments in paragraph 1.7. The Town Clerk explained that she felt that despite this legislation being older, it was still best practice for any form of payment regardless of whether it was cheque, BACs or another online form of payment, to be made with dual authorisation. She therefore felt it needed to remain. In order to align with the more up to date and online methods of payment referenced within the regulations, the Town Clerk suggested that the last line of paragraph 1.7 be changed to state "will be retained by the council, for the relevant method of payment." This would then cover all circumstances.

GP41.04.22 It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendment in paragraph 1.7 which reflected the need for dual authorisation, that the amendments to the revised Financial Regulations be approved and adopted accordingly.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council
Members reviewed and noted the report circulated, which highlighted that there had been no staff sickness since the 1 April 2022, but the Town Council's workforce had been impacted substantially by Covid over the winter months.

8.2 To receive Members' audit reports
Members noted the reports from January and February 2022.

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
Nothing to report at this time.

- (vi) Wealden Works
Nothing to report at this time.
- (vii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Management Committee
Members noted the very helpful report submitted by Councillor D. Ward.
- (viii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel
Nothing to report at this time.

10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

The meeting closed at 7.34pm.