

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 5 September 2022 at 7.00 pm
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT: Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. D. Bennett
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. J. Edwards
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. G. Johnson
Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)
Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. P. Sparks
Holly Hemming (Youth Member)
Lily Kortenbout-Wright (Youth Member)

IN ATTENDANCE:

2 x members of the public
County Councillor Claire Dowling
County Councillor Chris Dowling

Holly Goring Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 TO CO-OPT TWO YOUTH MEMBERS TO UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

As part of an initiative which began in 2017 with Uckfield College, the Town Council has been inviting students with an interest in politics to become involved in local decision-making by engaging with the Town Council.

The Town Mayor, Cllr. J. Love, welcomed two Year 12 students, Miss Holly Hemming and Miss Lily Kortenbout-Wright to introduce themselves. They were keen to develop their understanding of local democracy through this opportunity.

After Holly and Lily spoke of their interests, the Mayor asked for members to take a vote by show of hands on their co-option.

FC.43.09.22 With unanimous support, it was **RESOLVED** to co-opt Miss Holly Hemming and Miss Lily Kortenbout-Wright onto Uckfield Town Council as Youth Members for 2022-23.

1.1 TO RECEIVE THE DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Newly non-voting co-opted Youth Members Miss Holly Hemming and Miss Lily Kortenbout-Wright signed a declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the Proper Officer (Town Clerk) before having photographs outside with the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

2.0 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 D. Bennett declared an interest during the meeting for agenda item 9.0, as Chair of a local group who had submitted a formal response to the consultation by Transport for South East.

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

FC.44.09.22 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable updates to be provided by the member of the public.

A local resident wished to speak on a matter referenced within the Action List with regard to parking enforcement and without prejudice of 2.4.4 of the Highway Code. The local resident, his colleague and others were becoming increasingly alarmed at the obstructive pavement parking in the High Street and indeed elsewhere in the town. Very recently there was an incident where three vehicles were not only parking on the pavement but also blocking the lane leading up to the traffic lights, which was used by all vehicles including buses. He was fully aware that this was a nationwide problem but in the case of Uckfield some years ago, a very large sum of money was spent on new paving and that was primarily for the benefit of pedestrians. It had primarily been successful but it was distressing to note that it is also becoming an extension of the town centre car park. Without immediate action, the position will only worsen. After the incident occurred, the resident reported the matter to 101 and sent a copy to the Town Clerk. This led his urge for Wealden District Council and Sussex Police to tackle dangerous parking. Many residents would support Councillor French's proposal (referenced in the action list) but all authorities needed to consider this seriously.

On a final point, the resident referred to a question they posed at the Annual Town meeting in April 2022, where the standing orders required only statements to be made on matters on the council/committee agenda, rather than accept questions. The Town Clerk advised that this had since changed with the revision and update of the NALC (National Association of Local Councils) model standing orders, and now questions could be posed.

4.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Councillor Claire Dowling referred to a couple of resident issues and Councillor Dowling would be talking to Grants Hill Court shortly regarding a couple of matters. Councillor Dowling then spoke of the water leak which they thought had been repaired. Councillor Dowling has been assured that East Sussex Highways were chasing South East Water but unfortunately it was not considered top of their priority list.

Councillor Dowling referred to agenda item 15.0 (Burwash Common correspondence). She understood that a letter had gone to all parish and town councils from the residents' association. The report went to East Sussex

Highways two years ago and it was dealt with two years ago. The main points were picked up at that time, but some matters have not been able to be completed. East Sussex Highways have since sent an email to all parish and town councils to explain their perspective which the Town Clerk would circulate after the meeting. Councillor Dowling felt that Uckfield had a very good working relationship with the Highway Steward, Customer Service Manager, SLR meetings and general reporting lines at East Sussex Highways. There was a 'Places' Scrutiny Committee at East Sussex County Council who had undertaken a thorough review of East Sussex Highways and had fed into the review of the contract which would be arranged later that month.

Councillor Chris Dowling attended the New Town Action Group, they discussed speeding in Framfield Road. A matter raised by the Town Mayor relating to a barrier in Old Timbers Lane had now been addressed. Railings were moved and improved. Councillor Bedwell raised blocked drains up near the Highlands Inn. On inspection, East Sussex Highways found six blocked drains and action was being taken the following week. The works by South East Water were progressing under a permit until 21 October. It was hoped the traffic calming works associated with the Ridgewood Farm S106 agreement would be carried out at the same time.

Councillor B. Cox asked a question with regards to schooling, and the cost of energy increasing. He wondered if this was something ESCC had been looking into in terms of their budgets. He also wondered with the cost of living crisis, what ESCC were doing to support communities.

Councillor B. Cox referred to Ukrainian refugees. He had heard of a funding supplement being made available to local authorities to support these households. Had ESCC applied for this funding for the local area from the UK Government?

Councillor B. Cox also asked whether there was a plan being developed for power, if the power in this country were to go down. Would ESCC owned libraries also be used as warm hubs this winter?

Councillor Claire Dowling advised that due to the broad nature of these enquiries it would be helpful to have them in writing prior to the meeting so they could be answered more thoroughly. She referenced the emergency plan work of ESCC and that the officers would be keeping an eye on this issue. Cost of energy, she would ask what the plan was with the schools, but obviously the bills would be paid. Supplements were coming out slowly for the Ukrainian refugees, but it may be that the District authority had more information on this.

Councillor D. Bennett as a functionary of the emergency system locally, he was sure that the Town Council would be made aware if the Town Council's buildings were needed. He wished to praise the work on the blocked gullies in the Hospital Approach road.

Councillor D. French referenced Church Street. Councillor C. Dowling explained that Grants Hill Court Residents' Association had raised a few issues with regards to their access to and from Church Street so this would be discussed further and investigated. Councillor French was also not sure why the road

closure had not happened that day. The Town Clerk would contact East Sussex Highways. It was good to hear that the statutory authorities were working in tandem. Councillor Dowling further added that on a certain percentage of the roads they were working on a policy to introduce daily charging for utilities especially if they went over time, so it would encourage utilities to work together rather than in silo.

Councillor C. Macve referred to the Burwash report. He specifically referred to clearance on the road side, verges and the need to keep signage clean. He mentioned the Classic Car run that he organised every September and explained that he had to cut back vegetation and clean signage before the run, to ensure drivers could easily follow the route. This needed improving with contractors. Councillor C. Dowling agreed road safety was important and mentioned that often these issues in rural roads were not reported.

Councillor D. French referred to verge cutting when the weather was hot, as there was very little to cut, so a waste of fuel. There were conversations being had with the contractors regarding this.

Councillor J. Edwards asked for clarity - when a road sign was obscured by someone's private hedge who would deal with this. It was the owner's responsibility but East Sussex Highways would enforce. Ask, ask again, enforce, cut and bill them.

Councillor P. Sparks referred to Wealden DC's Benefits Day on 21 August at the Council offices in Hailsham. A similar event was due to take place in the north in the district in September/October. Another 290 Ukrainian refugees were thought to have relocated to Wealden District through 77 hosts. There were two Ukrainian families in emergency accommodation where relationships had broken down with the host families. There was a risk that this could increase after the initial six-month sponsorship arrangements. Wealden DC had made excellent progress with the payment of the £150 cost of living rebate.

Councillor G. Johnson updated members on his recent work. The latest he had heard on the draft Local Plan, was that it was hoped that it could be placed out around Christmas, but it was subject still to housing numbers and Wealden DC taking a decision on whether it should move forward with limited information or wait. He had seen that the Town Councillors were due to meet with the Director and Head of Service from Wealden DC early October to discuss planning and infrastructure matters. Any further questions could be emailed to Councillor Johnson.

FC.45.09.22 The Councillors were thanked for their input and updates, and subsequently **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

5.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors K. Bedwell, H. Firth, A. Smith and D. Ward.

6.0 MINUTES

6.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 25 July 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.46.09.22 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

6.2 Action List

Members agreed to remove the following actions and subsequently noted the report:

FC19.05.22 – Letter re: infrastructure

FC31.06.22 and FC38.07.22 – The Dene

7.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

7.1 To note the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings:-

(a) Plans Committee of the 1 and 22 August 2022

FC.47.09.22 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 1 and 22 August 2022.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee

No meeting held.

(c) General Purposes Committee

No meeting held.

8.0 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.

9.0 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 report.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Councillor P. Sparks reminded everyone of the memory walk being led by Rotherfield St. Martin on Saturday 17 September. Members subsequently noted the report.

10.0 TO CONSIDER A PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE TRANSPORT FOR SOUTH EAST'S DRAFT STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

Councillor C. Macve had read the plan in detail and shared his comments with members in a report. Councillor C. Macve felt the plan was very positive for Uckfield, but very notable in terms of the lack of detail of how or when proposals would be achieved. Councillor C. Macve felt that we should write in support of the proposals. Councillor J. Love wished to add that we do request that further detail should be provided as it became available and that we remain updated on matters affecting Uckfield.

FC.48.09.22 With unanimous support, members **RESOLVED** to respond in support of the consultation document but with the caveat that we required further information on Uckfield based projects and to be kept updated on Uckfield related matters.

11.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING A RESPONSE TO WEALDEN DC'S CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27

Members were provided with an opportunity to feed into the Corporate Plan refresh. Councillor C. Macve felt all of the priorities listed were in one way or another, an important item. How you could prioritise would be difficult. He suggested that the council respond and say that all of the items were of equal importance.

Councillor P. Sparks would endorse Cllr Macve's comments and also wondered if the Town Council should reference a review of parking enforcement within the plan, specifically parking obstruction such as parking on pavements. This needed seriously looking at again, as a number of dangerous situations were occurring. Members acknowledged that such a review could bring risks such as the introduction of charges, but parking enforcement of some form was important to ensure safety and movement in and out of the on-street parking bays.

Councillor D. Bennett referred to the recent changes in the UK Parliament and knowing that a number of those priorities were dependent on funding felt it was a difficult time to make such decisions as we were working within a time of uncertainty.

Councillor D. Manvell felt the reference 'affordable housing for local people' within the consultation was too broad a statement and didn't fully reflect the varying needs of affordability of the population. He also felt that more emphasis should be placed on sustainability, encouraging sustainable build and that Wealden DC's property company should be leading the way with this.

Based on the interest in this item, Councillor J. Edwards offered to receive comments from Town Councillors by Sunday 18 September, on what was missing within the corporate plan refresh consultation, and this would then be gathered by the Town Clerk to form a response before the deadline.

12.0 TO CONSIDER IF THE TOWN COUNCIL WISHES TO PUT FORWARD ANY NOMINATIONS FOR THE QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Members acknowledged that this was particularly difficult in Uckfield due to the fantastic work carried out by individuals and groups. Members came to the conclusion to put forward a suggested group for nomination.

FC.49.09.22 Members **RESOLVED** to request for the Town Clerk to put forward a nomination for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service an identified group working in Uckfield before the deadline.

13.0 TO SIGN UP TO THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

Members were provided with a report which explained that a programme of work had been created which sought to address bullying and harassment in the sector of parish and town councils. This had been formed into the Civility and Respect Pledge. By signing the pledge, the Council would be agreeing that the council would treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles.

FC.50.09.22 Members **RESOLVED** to
(i) agree to support and sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge as a mark of holding the Town Council to high standards of behaviour;

- (ii) agree for the Town Clerk to review the Code of Conduct Policy in line with local best practice as well as the Local Government Association Code of Conduct for Members, and;
- (iii) agree for council staff to undertake a review of the Town Council's HR policies through the autumn/winter months in line with ACAS, NALC and Sage HR advice and consider the introduction of a Dignity at Work Policy.

14.0 TO CONSIDER THE RE-ALLOCATION OF FUNDS WITHIN EARMARKED RESERVES FOR WORKS TO ADDRESS ASH DIEBACK

Uckfield had unfortunately been impacted by Ash Dieback, and with commissioned surveys on the town's tree stock throughout the town over the past two years, trees had been identified that required work this year and next. The extent and complexity of the work however would total around £25k for this winter alone. There was suitable funding within reserves which could be re-allocated but not currently available with the Town Council's revenue budget.

Members asked that officers refrained from handing any surplus diseased wood to neighbouring residents as this couldn't be burnt. They felt the work was important, as these diseased trees could pose a risk if they were to fall, but could also spread disease to other trees.

The Town Clerk wished to remind members that the council had planted 630 new trees in the town over the past two winters.

FC.51.09.22 Members RESOLVED to

- (i) give approval for work to be undertaken to safely remove Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback within Nightingale Wood and Boothland Wood as the first year of a programme of works, and;
- (ii) proceed with the re-allocation of £25,000 from earmarked reserves funding 'Consultants – Town Centre' specifically for the use of Ash Dieback Tree Works and for use to cover the costs of these works during the winter of 2022/23.

15.0 TO CONSIDER CORRESPONDENCE FROM BURWASH COMMON AND WEALD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION REGARDING HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Following previous discussions around highway works and working relationships that Uckfield had with East Sussex Highways, members were happy to note the report, as a number of the issues raised were specific to that area.

16.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

A further engagement was added as the Town Mayor had been invited to support the Judging of the Children's Carnival Procession on 3 September 2022. Members noted the report.

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

Three deed of grants had been received:

Mrs Pauline Hill

Mr John Ridley and Mrs Gillian Fay Ridley

Mr John Ridley and Mrs Gillian Fay Ridley

FC.52.09.22 It was RESOLVED for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

18.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

19.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk wished to welcome the Town Council's new members onto the Town Council and hope they enjoyed the variety of subject areas discussed and debate that evening. Secondly, the Town Clerk advised members that Gladmans were consulting the public on development on land north of Eastbourne Road, near Cysleys Farm (up to 210 homes).

20.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor J. Love reiterated the need for Town Councillors to share their questions if detailed with the District and/or County Councillors prior to the meeting, to give them time to obtain a response and the information requested.

21.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

FC.53.09.22

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.

21.1 To review the lease for the Former Cemetery Chapels, Snatts Road Cemetery

FC.54.09.22

It was **RESOLVED** to agree to renew the lease with the existing leaseholder for a term of two years, and obtain a valuation from a commercial estate agent to maintain up to date valuation figures for the Town Council's buildings

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.