

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 21 November 2022 at 7.00pm

## PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Ward (Chair)

Cllr. P. Sparks (Vice-Chair)

Cllr. H. Firth

Cllr. G. Johnson

Cllr. J. Love

Cllr. C. Macve

## IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public

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, but nothing was 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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B. Cox, J. Edwards and A. Smith. Apologies related to work commitments or annual leave.

### 4.0 MINUTES

#### 4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 3 October 2022

One member wished to clarify an element of the new initiatives around the installation of solar panels, and the associated costs, to which the Town Clerk provided clarification.

**GP18.11.22** Members subsequently **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 3 October 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4.2 Action list

Members reviewed and noted the action list and agreed to remove the following items which had been completed: -

GP37.04.22 – Recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee

#### 4.3 Project list

Members noted the contents of the project list.

## 5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 5.1 To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

### 5.2 To consider the income and expenditure reports to the end of September 2022

Members felt it was encouraging to see the sales above budget for Luxfords Restaurant, but were aware that food costs and utility costs had increased, so this needed to be reflected in the budget setting for 2023/24.

The revenue for General Purposes Committee was also doing well, with sales above budget.

Members subsequently noted the report.

### 5.3 Bad Debts

The Town Clerk provided an update on the debts outstanding, before members noted the report.

### 5.4 To consider the draft fees and charges for room hire at the Civic Centre and Foresters Hall for 2023/24

Members were provided with the current fees and charges for the room hire of rooms in the Civic Centre, Foresters Hall and Victoria Pavilion. Twelve months before, members had agreed to retain the fees and charges for 2022/23 at the previous year's rate.

Members would have liked for this to be the case for 2023/24 but reluctantly with rising energy costs, running costs, and staff costs this meant it would not be possible. No one anticipated the scale of the financial crisis this time last year.

One member proposed that with the current rate of inflation, it would be prudent to increase room hire charges by 10%. Members felt this would be necessary to meet increasing costs.

Members discussed the hire of equipment, noting the Town Clerk's comments within the report of the increased costs to purchase flip chart paper for example.

**GP19.11.22** With all members voting in favour, it was **RESOLVED** to increase meeting room and hire charges by 10%, and for general equipment hire to be priced at cost.

### 5.5 To consider plans for remaining Community Grant funding from 2022/23

Members were reminded that a sum of £13,166.53 still remained unspent within the budget used for Community Grant funding under the General Power of Competence. The Town Council had also received £6,000 for the benefit of the town, as a gesture of goodwill for the congestion caused by upgrade works during 2021. Members were asked by officers to consider how they wished to proceed with this funding, as officers were preparing the draft budget for 2023/24.

**GP20.11.22** Members **RESOLVED** for the amount left remaining from the 2022-23 Community Grant programme to be carried forward for the 2023-24 Community Grant Programme, and for the £6,000 to remain in earmarked reserves for community use.

## **6.0 BUILDINGS**

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

Following a couple of questions which sought clarification on the Civic Centre atrium, members noted the report.

## **7.0 POLICY**

### **7.1 To consider a response to the Boundary Commission Review (Parliamentary boundaries)**

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward introduced the report, explaining that she had already submitted her personal response to the consultation. The Boundary Commission for England were consulting on their revised proposals for new parliamentary constituencies. The final and revised proposals would seek to place Uckfield in a new constituency named 'East Grinstead and Uckfield.' However concerns were raised by the Chair, for the MP for such a constituency as they would have to liaise with two county council areas and three district councils.

One member was curious to understand the number of electors identified for these new constituency areas versus the numbers of the current constituencies. With anticipated growth in the population, it was possible that the Boundary Commission could be faced with another review in a couple of years.

Members did however recognise that the Boundary Commission had now carried out three consultations on the proposed changes, and were likely to have reviewed the numbers on multiple occasions so it was likely that they had altered the boundaries once more to ensure more equality in sizing for each parliamentary constituency. Members were therefore encouraged to log on to the consultation and respond individually if they wished.

### **7.2 To consider a response to the consultation on the ESCC Local Transport Plan**

Members had been informed of a consultation being run by East Sussex County Council to inform the refresh of their plan for local transport in East Sussex. They were keen to hear from residents and stakeholders on themes of most importance, what themes had been missed, up to three barriers or issues to local transport and three opportunities or ways to improve.

One member questioned whether the review of the Local Transport Plan was being undertaken in collaboration with Transport for South East, as the Town Council had only recently been consulted on their strategy. This member noted that there was no mention of the importance of connectivity, particularly between private and public transport provision. There was no mention of access to villages (i.e. rural accessibility), and no mention of digital displays or information to support use of services. Reliability was a particular issue in the Uckfield area, with Southern train services, as if the trains were experiencing issues or delays, they would terminate at Crowborough, leaving rail users with no means of travel back to Uckfield.

A second member agreed with these comments, but also reflected that the current circumstances meant that a larger number of people were working from home. It was felt that the Uckfield to Lewes railway line needed reinstating and the existing road network needed improving to support population growth (as there were only two miles of dual carriageway in the whole of Wealden District).

Members also felt that the statement of common ground being explored between Wealden DC, East Sussex CC and local applicants for development, should also incorporate consideration for local transport, not just the road network.

Members subsequently noted the report, and were happy for the Town Clerk to respond on their behalf with the above feedback.

## **8.0 ADMINISTRATION**

### **8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council**

Members noted the report.

### **8.2 To receive Members' audit reports (July 2022)**

Members noted the audit report.

## **9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

### **9.1 To consider reports from: -**

(i) Wealden Citizen's Advice

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

Members noted the report.

(iv) Uckfield & District Housing Association Ltd Mgt Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

(v) Uckfield and District Preservation Society

Nothing to report at this time.

(vi) Uckfield Volunteer Centre

Nothing to report at this time.

(vii) Wealden Works

Nothing to report at this time.

(viii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Mgt Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

(ix) 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.

**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**GP21.11.22**

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 an update from Luxfords Restaurant  
Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.