

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 16 January 2023 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

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 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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B. Cox and Councillor H. Firth due to sickness.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 21 November 2022

GP22.01.23 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 21 November 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: -
GP20.11.22 – Plans for remaining Community Grant funding

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 Nov 2022

Vice Chair Councillor P. Sparks thought the figures for General Purposes looked

good, with Civic Centre bookings and feed in tariff income doing well. Rental income was down on budgeted figures for the last period. The Town Clerk explained that some invoices were due to be processed shortly for utility recharges, one of the buildings was not currently bringing in rental income, and one other building's insurance recharge had come in less than normal. It was therefore anticipated that the rental income would balance out by financial year end.

Councillor C. Macve reiterated these points and thought it was encouraging to see some underspend. The Town Clerk agreed but advised members of the large amount of compliance work that was due to be undertaken in four of the Town Council's main buildings between the meeting and financial year end to address updated fire safety, and electrical regulations. The Town Council had also experienced a number of water leaks prior to Christmas as a result of the minus six freezing temperatures and this had highlighted a number of heating/plumbing issues that required work.

Members subsequently noted both reports.

5.3 Bad Debts

The Town Clerk provided an update on the debts outstanding and in particular the payment plan in place with one of the bad debtors listed. Members noted the report.

5.4 To note process to appoint a new Internal Auditor

Members were provided with a verbal update from the Town Clerk with regards to Internal Audit procedures. Unfortunately the Town Council's Internal Auditor had had to reduce their workload and could no longer support town or parish councils in the South East region. The Town Clerk advised members that a two day detailed audit had been undertaken in March 2022 in person at the Civic Centre and a year-end audit had been undertaken in June 2022. The Town Council would normally receive an audit before March 2023, and then again in June 2023, to review financial year end so it was important that the Town Council sought interest from up to three companies to appoint a new Internal Auditor before financial year end.

Members noted the update provided.

6.0 **BUILDINGS**

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

The Town Clerk provided a detailed update on the current condition of the Town Council's buildings, the compliance work being undertaken and the poor luck that had been experienced before Christmas. A number of these leaks were due to the pipework in the less utilised buildings such as the sports pavilions having no lagging. This would need to be addressed before next winter.

One member asked a question with regards to the Hub, to which the Town Clerk advised that a report would be presented to Full Council on 23 January 2023, under confidential business due to the commercially sensitive nature of the tender process. The Hub (only) and not the Source or Community Fridge was in a poor state of repair and due to be demolished, for the safety of the public and users of adjacent premises. This project would however require that utilities supplying the Source should be retained and the entrance foyer made good. Members noted the detailed update provided.

7.0 POLICY

7.1 To review the annual update of the Town Council's Risk Management Policy
Members were presented with a refreshed version of the Town Council's Risk Management Policy and update on the Town Council's key contracts to provide insurance cover, security and compliance.

GP23.01.23 Subject to a typo, members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the revised Risk Management Policy – No. 29.

7.2 To review the annual update of the Town Council's Investment Strategy
Members were presented with a refreshed version of the Town Council's Investment Strategy which reflected the Town Council's financial position at 31 December 2022.

GP24.01.23 Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the revised Investment Strategy – No. 45 for 2023/24.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council
Members discussed the WPA scheme (NHS Top-Up). The Town Clerk advised that those staff who were using it understood the benefits and were using it well. It was thought half to two thirds of staff were using the scheme at present, and the remaining number were being advised of the benefits regularly. Members noted the report and Town Clerk's update.

8.2 To receive Members' audit reports (August, September & October 2022)
Members noted the audit reports.

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
Nothing to report at this time.

(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

The Town Clerk advised members that the owner of R&R Taxis, a previous tenant of the Town Council had sadly passed away at the end of December 2022. Members expressed their sadness at the news and that their thoughts were with the family at this difficult time.

The Town Clerk read through a powerpoint presentation to members which followed on from a presentation to members of Environment & Leisure Committee on 3 January 2023, regarding the purchase of a rotary mower for the Grounds Maintenance team to increase the efficiency and quality of their open space grass cutting. The Head Groundsman had carried out quite a bit of research in the autumn, and provided details of three options, with two different companies. Prices varied between £20k and £25k plus VAT, and a response was provided by the companies to the questions that members had raised at Environment & Leisure Committee. The mower would need to be ordered before the end of the month to ensure it arrived in time for the start of the cutting season mid to end of March 2023. The purchase of the mower would need to be funded using earmarked reserves.

Members reviewed the information provided. They thought that there may be options to hire it out in the longer term, to neighbouring parishes.

Members wished to seek confirmation that parts could be easily obtained, to which this would be checked. They also wished to thank the Grounds staff for their hard work on this.

GP25.01.23 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the purchase of a triple deck tractor mounted rotary mower (Major Contoura) requesting that the Town Clerk place an order, and to fund the purchase using the earmarked reserves identified.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP26.01.23 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 discussed the potential live streaming options of occasions and events before noting the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 8.06pm.