

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 27 February 2023 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Ward (Chair)	Cllr. J. Love
Cllr. P. Sparks (Vice-Chair)	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. G. Johnson	Miss H. Hemming – Youth Member
	Miss L. Kortenbout-Wright – Youth Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Three members of the public.
Sarah D'Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
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.

Councillors C. Macve and P. Sparks declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 5.5 due to their interest in one of the organisations still awaiting consideration for grant funding (the Luxford Centre). The Town Clerk advised that they would need to leave the room for this agenda item.

The Town Clerk advised that dispensations had been granted for all members to discuss the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee from their recent meeting for 2023-24 community grant funding allocations. General Purposes Committee were being asked to ratify the sub-committee's recommendations and take a decision on the final list of grants to be awarded.

Councillor J. Edwards declared a personal interest in agenda item 6.2 in his role as the Town Council representative for Ridgewood Village Hall Committee. The Town Clerk advised that he could speak, but not vote.

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

GP27.02.23 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable members of the public to speak.

A representative of St. Peter & St James Hospice spoke in relation to the Town Council's Community Grant programme, and their application for funding for £1,000 to support their Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) service.

This grant would help ensure that their nurses could continue to be there for people in the Uckfield area; providing 40 hours of nursing care in the community by one community nurse specialist. They were the first point of contact; enabling medication and linkages between district nursing, GP and healthcare services.

The Town Clerk also advised that a written statement had been provided by a representative of the Uckfield College Counselling Service, with regards to the community grant funding programme. They were due to attend the meeting to speak, but due to unforeseen personal circumstances were unable to make the meeting.

The Chair read out the statement, which read...

“I continue to provide regular, individual counselling for 15 students each week in a specific room at the school on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The need has escalated even more in recent years, because, I suspect, of the ongoing psychological fall-out from the extended isolation of the lockdowns and the virtual disappearance of other forms of therapeutic support for young people, given the struggles of CAMHS to respond to this deluge.

Your grant funding continues to provide invaluable, financial support for the school to be able to continue to provide qualified therapy for students in the context of intensifying demands on the school budget in real terms.

In recent years I have worked with over 250 different students and I'm very aware that I am now encountering students with more severe, complex issues than when I began to work at the college, whilst still being able to provide therapy to a significant proportion of students at the school. Thank you very much for all of your understanding and support.”

The Chair of Ridgewood Village Hall Committee spoke, in relation to agenda item 6.2 and the adjacent car park.

The Chair advised that although RVH was a Town Council owned building, it was run by a management committee on a full repairing lease.

She therefore felt best placed to provide input into what was needed to support the car parking for the facilities and to sort drainage to mitigate the current issues being experienced from surface water.

The RVH Management Committee had raised over £100k to date to support the full refurbishment of the building. The car park had been in a shocking state for some years with potholes and loose gravel. Poor drainage from the recreation ground and from the car park caused flooding to the car park and also flooding to the basement of the hall as it returned back up the downpipes which impacted the internal walls of the building. The Chair spoke of an elderly person's fall in the car park in a pothole, she also referenced the promise for the car park to be completed on the completion of the hall refurbishment. A partial job was done without full consideration of what was required. The kerbstones placed around the edge of the car park had made matters much worse and water backed up. This work had been put off, and would now cost the Town Council a lot of money to put right. Uckfield Town Council do have a duty of care. The car park supported walkers, users of Millennium Green, users of the hall, the allotments and play area/recreation ground. The Management Committee urged for this matter to be rectified.

GP28.02.23 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

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 16 January 2023

GP29.02.23 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 16 January 2023 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: -

GP25.01.23 – Town Clerks Announcements – purchase of Rotary Mower

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 Dec 2022

Members reviewed the report for Luxfords Restaurant first. Councillor C. Macve saw the encouraging increase in income over the past year, but the not so encouraging increase in purchase costs in recent months. He questioned whether the increase in sales was due to extra volume or price increase. And likewise with the increase in expenditure.

The Town Clerk advised that it was a bit of both; confirming that the menu prices were due to be increased shortly following feedback in the recent stocktake, but we had also seen an increase in trade which was positive. Saturdays used to be one of the restaurant's quietest days but were now one of the busiest. Fantastic feedback had been received on Facebook, and the Clerk was happy to see the restaurant busy.

A question was also asked with regard to salaries. The Town Clerk advised that an adjustment had to be made to kitchen staff salaries in October which included backpay to April, and all staff received their cost of living increase in November once agreed by the National Joint Council and Unions, and this also included backpay from 1 April 2022.

Members noted the Luxfords income and expenditure report.

Members reviewed the General Purposes Committee report. Councillor P. Sparks noted that overall the figures were good. He wished to highlight the increase in sales for Civic Centre room hire and the feed in tariff payments. He then compared with Foresters Hall and wondered why this wasn't doing so well. The Town Clerk explained the change in some of the regular hirers' bookings and that one had moved their meetings to the Civic Centre, so the Town Council was still

receiving income from this hirer but at a different venue.

Members subsequently noted both the report.

5.3 To note current bad debts

The Town Clerk advised that payments had been made by a couple of the bad debtors since the report had been prepared. Members noted the report.

5.4 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 22 February 2023

Members received and noted the contents of the draft minutes of the recent Finance Sub-Committee held on 22 February 2023.

5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 22 February 2023

(this agenda item would be considered under confidential business)

5.6 To review information and quotations from companies providing Internal Audit Services to appoint a new Internal Auditor

The Town Clerk advised that three quotes had been received. Initial contact had been made with five companies but two were unable to assist. All provided very good quotations and detailed responses. Prices varied, but were within the usual framework for these services. Town Council staff confirmed that the most important factors for them would be the additional support and advice received, a mix of in person and remote visits and the level of detail of the audits. The Town Clerk advised that members did not have to make a decision at this time. A final decision could be made by Full Council on 6 March, once feedback had been received from other local authorities in receipt of their services.

It was suggested that perhaps it would be prudent to sign an agreement with the selected service provider for one year with the opportunity to renew for a further two, to ensure the working relationship worked well.

One member recognised that staff would need to work very closely with an auditor and it therefore made sense for the staff to feel comfortable.

A second member thought the second specification was the most detailed, but queried their insurance cover.

Members noted the feedback and information provided, and proposed to defer the matter to Full Council to give adequate time for feedback to be received from authorities working with these Internal Auditing Service providers.

6.0 **BUILDINGS**

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

Members were presented with a detailed update on the current condition of the Town Council's buildings and the compliance work being undertaken.

One member raised their concerns with the damp and mould that had been picked up in one of the Town Council's buildings. The Town Clerk advised that action had been taken. The Town Clerk and Estates & Facilities Manager attended the property and assessed the situation. A large heavy duty dehumidifier was purchased for the property. It was found on the site visit that the fan in the shower unit which was located in the bedroom, was hardly performing.

Electrical contractors were booked to replace the extractor fan within the shower. The office continued to be in regular communication with the tenant. Longer term the Town Council would need to review that room. The north facing wall felt cold, but the back wall of the property was warm. It was a very old property and that wall was likely to be taking the brunt of the bad winter weather. Matters were in hand, and staff would continue to monitor until larger scale work could be undertaken.

A discussion also focused on the Signal Box and the damage caused by contractors and emergency authorities.

Members noted the detailed update provided.

6.2 To consider proposals for Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park works

The Town Clerk presented to members via powerpoint, to talk through in detail the proposals that had been put forward by WAS Architects and Hazelind Projects for the drainage and car park resurfacing. They were keen for the Town Council to consider the surface for the car park.

This presentation showed the illustrations of the drawings which highlighted the drainage points and the gradient of the site. The dashed orange line to the right of the hall would be a cut off drain that would collect water and would divert it away towards the bottom of the recreation ground. The height of the entrance point from New Road into the car park would be increased to reduce the amount of water entering the car park from New Road at that point and speed of flow. The drainage scheme would be a fixed item of the proposed works. The surface used in the car park was integral. To the left of the line, would discharge into the new drainage system within the car park. A fairly deep granular layer underneath the surface would collect the water and slow the whole drainage process down; cleaning and storing the drainage water leading to a shallow plastic underground tank. The outflow from this would be restricted at a very low rate via a manhole, and then directed to the ditch towards the green. They had also allowed for the roof drainage from the hall to be picked up within the new system. The Town Clerk referenced the guttering and current issues at the hall.

The Town Clerk talked through the four surfacing choices outlined by the contractors, which included options using permeable block paving, grass crete and tarmac.

The Town Clerk advised that the parking bays did not have to be marked out, but it was imperative that the disabled bays by the front of the hall were marked. The sizing of the bays were in accordance with East Sussex County Council guidance and public parking. They felt that the sizing was already minimal. The Town Clerk asked when there was a function on at the hall, for the number of vehicles to be counted and photos taken to understand current usage.

One member felt block paving silted up, and debris that came off cars would soon fill the gaps between the gaps, so would become impermeable. Tarmacadam was similar with debris over time. He didn't feel either would give a long-term solution. They felt the grass crete would be more permeable and agreed the granite sets on the entrance to the car park needed to be raised.

One member referenced bad flooding in Boscastle in 2005, which was caused by a tarmac car park. They made reference to a rubber design which worked in a similar way to grass crete. It was still there now, modular and more permeable.

One member questioned whether an electric charging point could be added during the project.

One member asked a question relating to the underground water tank, which the Town Clerk would follow up on.

It was also discussed that if grass crete was used, a defects liability period should be at least 12 months to ensure that any trip hazards in the grass crete would be rectified immediately.

- GP30.02.23** After much discussion members **RESOLVED** to report back to the engineers/architects with two options to explore:
- (i) entrance area/or first half only in permeable block paving marking out disabled spaces with remainder of the car park in grass-crete (no spaces marked out), and second choice;
 - (ii) all surfacing in permeable block paving – delineating all general parking spaces and disabled parking spaces.

7.0 POLICY

None.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

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

Members noted the report and Town Clerk's update.

8.2 To receive Members' audit reports

Members noted the audit report for November 2022.

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

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward advised that Councillor A. Smith was organising another collection for the Uckfield Food Bank on Saturday 11 March at Tesco. An email would follow seeking volunteers.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk advised members of officers' ideas for reworking the layout of two rooms upstairs in the Civic Centre. At present, the Martlets Room was hired out on a more permanent basis, but being located right in between the other meeting rooms, it was proving quite noisy for the hirer. A suggestion had been made for the Town Clerk to move into the Mayor's Parlour, which would still sit adjacent to the Town Council office, and the longer term hired room to move to the Town Clerk's old office, enabling the Martlets room to be relet for hire as a meeting room. A report would be presented to members at Full Council the following week, but the Clerk was keen to run the idea past members first.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP31.02.23

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.

5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 22 February 2023

Members were asked to review the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee from their meeting on 22 February 2023, whereby they considered 22 applications for grant funding through the Community Grants Programme for 2023-24. Recommendations had been provided for 19 out of the 22 applications, so a decision was required for three organisations, namely St Peter & St James Hospice, the Luxford Centre and Uckfield College Counselling Service.

GP32.02.23

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) provide a sum of £1,000 to St Peter & St James Hospice and a sum of £2,500 to Uckfield College Counselling Service through the Town Council's Community Grants Programme but unfortunately were not able to approve the allocation of funding for the Luxford Centre on this occasion due to the limited amount of funds remaining, and;
- (ii) approve the recommendations for the remaining 19 applications, with a total sum of £27,101.06 being awarded under the General Power of Competence for Uckfield Town Council's Community Grant Programme in 2023-24.

12.1 To approve the instruction of a new maintenance contract for the Town Centre CCTV system

Members noted the update from the Town Clerk.

12.2 To consider an update to the renewal of the lease agreements for the Cemetery Chapels

GP33.02.23 Members **RESOLVED** to recommend the renewal of the lease agreements for the Cemetery Chapels for signing at Full Council, and for the current rental figures to be retained based on the market valuation.

12.3 To consider the lease agreement for the Source

Members discussed the suggested renewal of the existing agreement and were happy for the Town Clerk to explore a renewal based on two years. Further details would be discussed at the next meeting.

12.4 To consider an update from Luxfords Restaurant

Members thanked the Hospitality Manager for their report and their team's hard work.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.