

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Tuesday 11 April 2023 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

1 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. No declarations of interest were forthcoming.

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

There were no statements from members of the public.

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Edwards and G. Johnson.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 27 February 2023

GP33.04.23 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 27 February 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.

4.3 Project list

Members noted the contents of the project list and agreed to remove:
Project 63 – Replacement back drops – Weald Hall
Project 72 – 262 Saturday Bus Service

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 end of February 2023
Members reviewed the report for Luxfords Restaurant first. Similar feedback was received to the previous meeting whereby 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 noted that the menu choices had been reduced in a number of establishments, and questioned whether we had as well. The Town Clerk confirmed that Luxfords Restaurant had very little wastage and certain items had been removed from the menu as a result of being less popular, to reduce wastage.

Councillor Firth was pleased to see the income levels increasing, but understood that food costs were increasing also. Councillor Ward said how lovely it was to see the restaurant busy on a Saturday. The breakfasts were fantastic.

Members noted the Luxfords income and expenditure report.

Members reviewed the General Purposes Committee report. Councillor P. Sparks noted that it was pleasing to see the income levels for the Civic Centre room hire and the feed in tariff payments. It would be his last opportunity to say a big thank you to all Town Council staff, including the Town Clerk for their hard work and the way they managed the business. They did an excellent job and it was very reassuring to see such good figures

Members subsequently noted both the report.

- 5.3 To note current bad debts
The Town Clerk advised that CGL could be removed from the list of bad debtors as the debt had been cleared that week. In addition to the list of payments outstanding over £100, there were also a number of small amounts outstanding from allotment invoicing. These were being chased and it was intended to get stricter with these as the tenancy agreement stated that there was a 40 day window in which these should be paid.
Members noted the report.

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.

Councillor Smith asked a question regarding the source of the council's biomass pellets as she had recently learnt that it was quite common for them to come from Virgin Forest in Canada, which would be against the ethos of what the council was trying to achieve.

The Town Clerk advised that council staff had just changed the supplier of the wood pellets, as these were previously being delivered from a company in Somerset which also worked against the purpose of reducing emissions. A local company within East Sussex was now supplying the pellets. In terms of the detail of the origin of the materials for the wood pellets, the Town Clerk would find out.

Since this meeting, a check has been made and the company state that almost 100% of their wood fuels are from the UK to keep costs and carbon footprint low.

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward enquired about the meeting with the Festive Light company and claim for damage. Council staff had experienced difficulties making contact with the named officer as they had left the organisation, and the individual who had returned from maternity leave had, since had to take extended leave due to serious personal circumstances. Since this update, a meeting had been booked in for 22 June 2023.

Councillor C. Macve sought clarification on the issues with the existing heating and associated plumbing within Foresters Hall as he thought the heating system had been replaced. The Town Clerk confirmed that the heating system for the front and main hall of Foresters Hall had been replaced, there was still a heating system at the rear of the property running off a gas boiler and very old system of gas heaters in Foresters Chapel.

Councillor C. Macve enquired why we had sought a quotation for a new hot water and heating system at West Park Pavilion, when the building would be soon to be transferred to the Uckfield Grasshoppers Junior Football Club. The Town Clerk reminded members of the leaks that had been experienced in the pavilion. The heating system consisted of electric heaters, they were hardly used and were not adequately heating the building. There was also no insulation to the pipework. Staff were particularly interested in alternative technologies/fuels for West Park Pavilion due to its standalone location and had passed their initial research to the new leaseholder.

Councillor P. Sparks was disappointed to hear of the vandalism at Victoria Pavilion, and questioned whether it was an isolated incident. The Town Clerk advised that unfortunately it was not. The damage caused in the last 4-6 weeks to both Victoria Pavilion and Civic Centre was in the region of £3-4k.

A detailed discussion followed on the concerns currently with anti-social behaviour, the incidents reported, the PCSO had been made aware of the issue, and the Neighbourhood Policing team was made aware of key hotspot areas to be added to their patrols.

Members noted the detailed update provided.

6.2 To consider the detail of works within the Building Maintenance Programme to replace the existing heating and associated plumbing within Victoria Pavilion and Foresters Hall

The Town Clerk explained the difficulties with the boiler at the rear of Foresters Hall and recent leaks from the pipework. The boiler itself was very old now and was not functioning as it should, it was also difficult to access. Repairs could be undertaken to the pipework, but then there was a risk, that the boiler would still need replacing, so it was considered useful to look at the full picture rather than just reacting, by repairing the pipework.

Of more concern was the heating system in Foresters Chapel, as this was of an older age, and an up to date and safe system was required to heat the building.

The Estates & Facilities Manager was looking at whether a solution could be found to address both issues. The Town Clerk recognised that ideally the Town Council would prefer a system which used alternative fuels, or technologies but with the buildings of Foresters Hall and adjacent chapel being of age as well, it

was important at this stage to look at cost and functionality.

In relation to Victoria Pavilion, the Town Clerk explained that they were regularly calling out contractors to repair or improve the plumbing system, and the water pressure in the changing room showers was poor, which were required for the various sports clubs using the facility. This had seen expenditure in the last year increase substantially.

The system over the past year had demonstrated its inability to cope with the current levels of usage in the building and different types of use from the business leasing the first floor, to the sports club changing rooms, and public toilets, and grounds workshop. £30k had been budgeted within the Building Maintenance Programme for 2023/24 and quotations were being obtained from commercial plumbing and heating engineers to design a completely new system which would meet current level of demand.

Victoria Pavilion had been set up on a domestic system and it looked like the improvements over the years had been reactive with additions to the existing system rather than looking the system as a whole. Concerns also centred around the current water tanks in the loft.

Members acknowledged the difficulties with these buildings and in particular Victoria Pavilion. The Town Clerk advised at the meeting that she would circulate the quotations, and information, but further work has been undertaken since the meeting so the information would be presented at the meeting of General Purposes Committee on 19 June 2023.

6.3 To receive an update on the proposed demolition of the Hub (Hub only, not the Source)

The Town Clerk advised that a meeting had taken place with the Surveyors managing the demolition of the Hub building. A contractor had been appointed that specialised in demolition, following the decision of members at a previous Full Council meeting.

To address previous concerns of how the Source would be left. There would be a glazed porch area, which would replace the current foyer area. Council staff were aware of the need to move all of the utilities over. The contractor would be responsible for taking the Hub building down to ground level – with the concrete footings due to remain. The current leaseholders – Uckfield Baptist Church for the Source, and Uckfield Community Fridge would be notified as soon as a date was provided for the works. These timescales were currently dependent on the timing of the utility companies and the arrangements being made for the transfer and disconnections.

Members subsequently noted the detail provided.

7.0 POLICY

7.1 To note information on the East Sussex Wellbeing at Work Programme

Members were presented with a report advising of the work the Assistant Town Clerk was doing to work towards the Bronze Award of this programme and improve the Town Council's response to physical and mental wellbeing. The Chair also reminded members of the WPA (NHS Top-Up) programme which

would be of great support to staff.
Members noted the report.

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

Members noted the audit reports for December 2022 and January 2023.

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.

(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 the council had received some sad news relating to a Town Councillor. Councillor Ward wanted to confirm that the Town Council (councillors and staff) were there for, whatever they or the family needed at this difficult time.

Councillor D. Ward was keen to thank the Vice-Chair Councillor P. Sparks and Councillor H. Firth for their hard work and dedication to the Town Council and long service to the town.

Councillor Ward wished to congratulate those returning to the Council or newly joining the Town Council (*the nominations for Town Council elections had been uncontested, so there would be no election, and three seats remained available for co-option*). Councillor Ward also wished those standing for District Council seats, well in the forthcoming elections. Councillor Ward had thoroughly

enjoyed being Chair of General Purposes Committee.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk wished to thank Paul and to Helen so much. Both councillors had been with the Clerk for the full seven years and been long serving members of the council who had given a lot to the town. During that time, the council had taken some pivotal decisions and she welcomed their experience and expertise from their professions.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP34.04.23

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 note an update on the renewal of the lease agreements for the Quickborn Suite and Source

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update, having spoken with the tenant and advised that a commercial estate agent would be approached to obtain a valuation.

The renewal for the Source could be progressed from April 2023, as a result of a change to the Trustee details and company status.

Members noted this update.

12.2 To note an update on the commencement of the lease agreement for West Park Pavilion

The Town Clerk detailed the works that had been undertaken to ensure the building was ready to handover from a repair, maintenance and safety perspective. A quote for the replacement of the fire doors had been received and it was suggested that perhaps the Town Council and leaseholder share the costs of these, as a landlord responsibility. The leaseholders could look into an alternative heating solution.

It was suggested that the official handover date be 1 May 2023.

12.3 To consider quotations for works to the exterior of Foresters Hall

A detailed report would be shared with members in due course. The Town Clerk provided a verbal update in the interim period.

12.4 To consider an update from Luxfords Restaurant

The Town Clerk talked through the report. Members thanked the Hospitality Manager for their report and their team's excellent support and hard work.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm.