

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 19 June 2023 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Ward (Chair)
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. J. Love

Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. P. Selby
Cllr. A. Smith

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah D'Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
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.

Councillor J. Love referred to agenda item 6.2 and explained that she had a personal interest as she worked for a business which leased out space at Victoria Pavilion. The Town Clerk advised that Councillor J. Love could speak but not vote.

Members noted this declaration of interest.

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

No apologies were received.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 11 April 2023

GP03.06.23 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 11 April 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Action list

Members noted that Uckfield Leisure Centre had also been requested to be registered as an asset of community value, and subsequently noted the update.

4.3 Project list

Councillor P. Selby enquired about the monies relating to Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park, and the money that had been passed to Ridgewood Village Hall Committee during their refurbishment in the pandemic. The Town Clerk clarified

the use of the funds and explained that an amount had been returned as required.

Members noted the project list.

- 4.4 To receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 30 June 2023
(to be considered under confidential business)

5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 5.1 To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

- 5.2 To review the draft financial position for the financial year ending 31 March 2023
Members were provided with the income and expenditure reports for the full financial year ending 31 March 2023, a copy of an update for the earmarked reserves and a draft copy of the Town Council's financial statements, which were prepared each year by external accountants.

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward wanted to thank all staff, for doing such a fantastic job. She recognised the challenges faced by the organisation in terms of rising costs, and thought the staff had done well in these difficult circumstances.

Councillor B. Cox wished to second that and referred to the rate of inflation in food costs, and how food businesses had no choice but to pay these prices, as all food costs were increasing. He mentioned once again that the restaurant was a community asset as much as a profit earner. He saw the venue as a place where people could come and spend time with family and friends. It was a safe place.

Councillor C. Macve thought that the income streams for the restaurant looked excellent and asked for clarity on a couple of areas of expenditure around salary costs, to which the Town Clerk responded.

Members discussed with the Town Clerk the difference in cemetery income compared with the previous two years.

Councillor A. Smith, felt that the initial budget setting had been carried out well, as the main disparities were reflective of the current state of the economy. Councillor Smith noted the large and unforeseen expenditure through the financial year which included ash dieback, building repairs and the new mower. The ability to weather these large costs, demonstrated that the Town Council was financially quite prudent.

It was hoped that 2023-24 would be a little more positive.

Councillor D. Manvell sought clarity on the public works loan board costs.

Members sought clarity on a couple more points relating to lease arrangements and works required, before members noted the content of these reports.

Members were satisfied with the position of the council's finances at financial year end, and did not require the Clerk to take any further action.

5.3 Bad debts

The Assistant Town Clerk updated members on the report, to advise that debts had since been paid by Ridgewood Village Hall Committee and Uck-uele, and that the other outstanding debts were being chased.

The Town Clerk explained the background with a couple of the bad debts and it was suggested by a committee member, that it might be helpful to pursue the matter through the County small claims court.
Members noted the report.

5.4 To consider carry forwards of unspent revenue budget from 2022/23

Members were provided with a list of funds which had been set aside in 2022/23 for activities but funding was left over after completion of the project, or funding had yet to be spent.

GP04.06.23 Members **RESOLVED** that the following unspent sums be carried forward from the 2022/23 financial year to 2023/24:

3.0 **Specific Budget Request for the Environment & Leisure Committee**

3.1 Revenue budget 2022/23 – funds unspent

Project	Amount	Reason
HMLNR & WPLNR	£500.00	This funding remains unspent, and would be useful to contribute to the cost of updating the interpretation boards in the reserves in 2023/24. We would therefore recommend that the funding is transferred to 'HMLNR & WPLNR Supporters Group donation' earmarked reserves.

3.2 New initiatives 2022/23 – projects not yet complete

Project	Amount	Reason
Speed reduction initiatives	£2,000.00	The project has yet to be completed. We would therefore recommend that the funding is transferred to 'Speed Reduction' earmarked reserves.
Purchase of more animal friendly bins	£1,500.00	This funding remains unspent. We would therefore recommend that the funding is transferred to 'Litter bins/Policy' earmarked reserves.

Revenue budget 2022/23 – funds unspent

Project	Amount	Reason
Grants – Power of Competence	£13,166.53	Only £14,333.47 was spent on Community Grant funding in 2022-23. Therefore it was agreed to carry forward the remaining £13,166.53 to earmarked reserves to be utilised for the community grants programme in 2023-24 under 'General Power of Competence.'

New initiatives 2022/23 – projects not yet complete

Project	Amount	Reason
Civic Centre signage	£2,000.00	These funds were set aside to replace the main sign above the front entrance of the Civic Centre. The project has yet to be completed. We would therefore recommend the funds be transferred to 'Renewal/upgrading noticeboards.'

- 5.5 To write off small under and over payments on the Town Council's accounts (part of this item is to be considered under confidential business due to discussing sensitive personal information)

The Assistant Town Clerk explained that under and over payments often occurred when a customer/person had left a company or they hadn't returned as a hirer of the facilities for some time, so it was difficult to attach a credit to any future invoices. There were varying circumstances and it was noted by one member that the office had made quite lengthy attempts to contact the customers.

- GP05.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and write off the amounts detailed (six overpayments and one underpayment).

- 5.6 To note the end of year statement of Community Infrastructure Levy funding for 2022/23

Members were provided with a report which detailed the funds received through community infrastructure levy funding in the financial year 2022/23, as well as the funds spent. As the report identified, CIL funding had been utilised for streetlighting repairs or replacements within the past financial year.

One member noted that an amendment needed to be made to the figure listed on page 4 of this report, which detailed the 'CIL receipts for the previous year's kept at the end of the reported year.'

The Town Clerk agreed, and subject to the amendment identified, members noted the report.

- 5.7 To consider the revised proposals for the routing of the 262 Saturday bus service from the end of July 2023 and associated costs

Members were advised within a report that East Sussex County Council were working on a Bus Improvement Plan, in response to the receipt of central government grant funding. ESCC were seeking to improve Saturday bus services and as a result the 262 Saturday bus service which the Town Council contributed to, could duplicate expanded services by the county council. The North Wealden Community Transport Partnership who ran the existing 262 Saturday bus service had proposed a different route so as not to duplicate the improvements between Heathfield and Uckfield. This would see the 262 Saturday service travelling between Ashdown Forest and Uckfield and the villages en route.

Members saw the benefits of the service, and felt that further work could be undertaken to promote the benefits offered by the bus service for forest walking, tourism and supporting improvements to wellbeing.

GP06.06.23 Members **RESOLVED** to accept the changes proposed from the end of July 2023, to continue to support the 262 Saturday bus service, and assist with promoting the service.

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.

Members noted the detailed update provided.

6.2 To consider the quotations for the upgrade to the plumbing and heating system at Victoria Pavilion

For ease of explanation, the Town Clerk talked through a powerpoint presentation which set out the current challenges with the plumbing and heating system at Victoria Pavilion and the breakdown of the quotations and proposals received to date to address the issue.

Members discussed the importance of upgrading the system to ensure that the building could meet the needs of its leaseholders, hirers and customers, as well as sport requirements.

Members also discussed greener options and renewable energies, and the advantages and disadvantages of these systems. Attendees were reminded that organisations needed to meet the EPC Level B by 2030.

GP07.06.23 After a detailed discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to task staff with:

- (i) looking at the whole building within the review and to obtain quotations for the whole system (i.e. new system as well as radiators and associated pipework) and
- (ii) obtain three separate quotations, one of which would consider the installation of renewable energy (green project).

6.3 To consider a proposal for upgrading the plumbing and heating system in Foresters Hall and adjacent Foresters Chapel

The Town Clerk presented to members on the current challenges with the plumbing and heating system at Foresters Hall and adjacent Foresters Chapel. Funding was available in the 2023/24 building maintenance fund as well as earmarked reserves.

Members recognised that it was a very old Victorian building and to remove the pipework from under the floor and expose it, would be prudent. It sounded like the boiler was at the end of its life. Once again members saw the benefits of looking at the chapel and the hall at the same time.

GP08.06.23 After a detailed discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to task staff with:

- (i) looking at the whole building within the review and to obtain quotations for the whole system (i.e. new system as well as pipework exposure);
- (ii) obtain three separate quotations, one of which would consider the installation of a greener option, and;
- (iii) consider if the companies providing quotations for the project, consider if a discount could be applied for reviewing the plumbing and heating system of Victoria Pavilion and Foresters Hall.

7.0 POLICY

None.

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 report

Members noted the audit report for February 2023.

8.3 To consider the renewal of the existing Insurance contract for public liability, employer liability and vehicle insurance

The Assistant Town Clerk and RFO explained that they had added two further bins to the policy, had enquired in relation to the CCTV cover, and ensured that the drone insurance remained.

The quotation for renewal had increased by around £400 since 2022. Councillor C. Macve asked whether benches maintained by the Town Council should be included on the insurance. Officers would check.

The Town Clerk also advised that the Internal Auditor had suggested increasing liability within the insurance policy, and officers would check the finer details of this on their site visit on 21 June 2023.

GP09.06.23 Members **RESOLVED** to accept the quote, subject to the additions suggested.

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) Uckfield Volunteer Centre

Nothing to report at this time.

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

Nothing to report at this time.

(v) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel

Nothing to report at this time.

10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward reminded members that all representatives of outside bodies or working groups were responsible for producing a written update, and sending this to the Town Clerk at least a week before the committee meeting.

Committee members were asked to let the Chair and Clerk know if they needed to send their apologies for a meeting.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

Councillor D. Ward, requested that the standing orders be suspended to extend the meeting until 9.30pm.

GP10.06.23 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to extend the meeting by an extra 30 minutes to address the agenda items under confidential business before 9.30pm.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP11.06.23 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 write off small and under overpayments on the Town Council's accounts (section to be considered under confidential business)

Members discussed this matter at some length and requested that the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO liaise with the business to understand better, their current position, and to report back to a future committee meeting.

12.2 To receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 13 June 2023

Members noted and received the minutes of the recent Personnel Sub-Committee on 13 June 2023.

12.3 To consider the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 13 June 2023

GP12.06.23 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 13 June 2023.

12.4 To consider external quotations for external works at Foresters Hall

This item was deferred until a future meeting, and staff were asked to obtain a quotation from a local company for the service required.

12.5 To consider the renewal of the lease agreement for Foresters Chapel

GP13.06.23 It was **RESOLVED** to agree to the renewal of the existing lease agreement and for the Town Clerk to proceed with the recommendations of the committee.

12.6 To consider the renewal of the lease agreement for the Quickborn Suite

GP14.06.23 It was **RESOLVED** to agree to the renewal of the existing lease agreement and for the Town Clerk to proceed with the recommendations of the committee.

12.7 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members wished to thank the Hospitality Manager for a very good report, which was testament to the hard work being put in by the team.

GP15.06.23 It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

The meeting closed at 9.23pm.