

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



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

## PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Ward (Chair)	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. P. Selby
Cllr. J. Love	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. C. Macve (Vice-Chair)	

## 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.

Councillor D. Manvell explained that he and Councillor B. Cox were Directors of the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC and for that reason, had a prejudicial interest in any discussions relating to the Hub site (agenda item 6.2).

### 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 had been received.

### 4.0 MINUTES

#### 4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 17 July 2023

**GP22.09.23** Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 17 July 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4.2 Action list

Members noted the update and agreed to remove completed actions:  
GP18.07.23 – Finance summary (investment)  
GP19.07.23 – Town Clerk's Announcements (railway station office consultation)

#### 4.3 Project list

Members noted the update and agreed to remove completed projects:  
Project no. 75 – Server upgrade and small office computer upgrade  
Project no. 78 – Civic Centre Wi-Fi upgrade  
Project no. 79 – Insurance rebuild valuation

## **5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

### **5.1 To note bills paid**

Members noted the bills paid.

### **5.2 Bad debts**

Members were provided with an update on the current list of bad debtors, to which they noted. They suggested that a watch be maintained on the payment plan by R&R Taxis. They also noticed that the list of bad debtors appeared to be getting longer. The Town Clerk explained that many of the bad debts were from regular hirers, who had often paid more recent invoices but appeared to have missed previous invoices. The Admin Office staff were chasing these customers. Members suggested that an attempt to return the bottom two outstanding debts, should be made via the Small Claims Court.

Members also questioned whether this report should be presented under confidential business or in the public setting. The Town Clerk was asked to speak to the Internal Auditor to obtain their advice.

### **5.3 To note the income and expenditure reports up to 30 June 2023**

Members were presented with a report showing profit and loss of sales and purchases for both Luxfords Restaurant and the Council's budget areas under General Purposes Committee.

Councillor C. Macve observed that the disparity was improving on the sales and purchases for the restaurant, and asked for thanks to be passed to the rest of the team.

Councillor B. Cox left the room at 7.30pm.

Members were pleased with the balance of actuals versus expenditure and wished to pass on their thanks to staff for their financial prowess. Members subsequently noted the content of the reports.

## **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 thanked the Estates & Facilities Manager for his report, and subsequently noted the update.

### **6.2 To note the project schedule for the demolition of the Hub building**

Members were presented with an update on the current demolition of the Hub building. The Chair, Councillor D. Ward expressed her upset that details of the works had been shared on social media by others before the Town Councillors had been informed.

Members referred to the project plan and noted the contents of the report.

## **7.0 POLICY**

### **7.1 To review the Town Council's Publication Scheme**

Members were provided with a revised copy of the Town Council's Publication Scheme which set out where specific documents and information could be

accessed by the public, and if there were any charges for particular formats i.e. hard copy printed versions.

Members noted that there were a couple of typos – for example the member allowance and expenses information was freely available in the Town Council’s annual report which was accessible on the Town Council’s website. So clarity was needed on the freely available items to ensure consistency.

**GP23.09.23** Members **RESOLVED** that subject to the above checks to ensure consistency in the charging schedule, to approve the Town Council’s Publication Scheme for adoption.

7.2 To undertake initial consideration of the Town Council’s room hire fees and charges for 2024/25 (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

Members noted that the past year’s increase had been higher to reflect no increase being made in the previous year and the increase in utility and staffing costs. It was not necessary to set such a high increase for 2024/25. Members thought that 5% would adequately reflect increases elsewhere, and sounded reasonable.

Members discussed the possible introduction of incentives for regular hirers who made block bookings but there were mixed views. There were concerns that should these regular hirers leave you could lose funds so a deposit would be required and it could become too complicated to manage.

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward asked that a check be made again on the cost of materials such as flip charts to determine these costs.

Members were happy to initially consider a 5% increase on room hire fees and charges, and to review material costs for additional items for hire. A final decision would be taken on this during the budget setting process.

**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 June 2023.

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

9.1 To consider reports from: -

(i) Wealden Citizen’s Advice

Members noted the written report.

(ii) Uckfield Volunteer Centre

Councillor P. Selby provided a verbal update based on his attendance at the Trustee’s meeting on 20 July 2023. This was his first meeting as UTC representative so he primarily listened to the discussion. One of the main issues related to the update of the charity to an Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to ensure that the Trustees did not have any personal financial liabilities. UVC were currently monitoring the community grants as per the

service level agreement. The next meeting was due to take place on 12 October 2023. Members noted the update.

- (iii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Mgt Committee  
Councillor D. Ward advised that there was a meeting of the WDALC committee that week.
- (iv) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel  
Nothing to report.

#### **10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward wanted to thank everyone who had helped at the Weald on the Field event. It had been an excellent day and it was great to see the Uckfield Carnival event so busy as well.

#### **11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

#### **12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**GP24.09.23** 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 on Luxfords Restaurant  
Members wished to thank the Hospitality Manager for a fantastic report. Business was looking very positive and long may it continue. Members wished to pass their congratulations to the Hospitality Manager and all the staff working in the restaurant.

- 12.2 To consider an enquiry from a potential leaseholder  
Members discussed the contents of the report, and asked the Town Clerk to explore their feedback in further detail.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.