

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 4 December 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.

A number of members knew of the organisations listed in the community grant evaluation report in agenda item 5.6. The Town Clerk had given members of General Purposes Committee dispensation to discuss the evaluation report in general, but if discussions relating to the report became detailed on two particular organisations (Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society and Uckfield Community Fridge CIC), the following members would need to leave the room:

Councillor D. Manvell explained that he and Councillor B. Cox were Directors of the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC and for that reason, had an interest in any detailed discussions relating to the evaluation of community grant recipients in the report of the Uckfield Volunteer Centre in agenda item 5.6.

Councillor J. Love explained her involvement in the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society and would follow suit.

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 23 October 2023

GP29.12.23 Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 23 October 2023 be taken as read,

confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Action list

Members noted the action list.

4.3 Project list

Members agreed to the removal of the redecoration of the Weald Hall from the 2023/24 Building Maintenance Programme as this work had now been completed. Members subsequently noted the update.

4.4 To receive the minutes from the Personnel Sub-Committee on 1 November 2023 (under confidential business)

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 Sept 2023

Members reviewed the contents of the report.

Councillor C. Macve thought it was good to see income increasing, but unfortunately expenditure had also increased substantially. At the previous meeting members had asked for the breakdown of funds covered by earmarked reserves to be included within the report.

The Town Clerk explained the difficulties they had experienced with the utility company for gas/electric and the discrepancies with some of the bills despite the Town Council submitting actual readings. These bills were currently being paid by direct debit but office staff were going to cancel the direct debit to ensure that only fuel used was paid for. This would hopefully make things smoother for recharging tenants/leaseholders.

It was also suggested that the stock held by Luxfords Restaurant (recorded at the most recent stocktake) be referenced in the report. Members recognised that it was difficult to predict sales of alcoholic and non-alcoholic purchases but kitchen staff would know if they'd had to purchase a larger amount of food, in time for events or functions.

Members noted the report.

5.3 Bad debts

The Town Clerk explained that the Internal Auditor did not have any strong views on whether the Bad Debts should be presented within the main part of the agenda or under confidential business.

Councillor C. Macve proposed that this agenda item be moved under confidential business on a permanent basis. The proposal was seconded by Councillor B. Cox. Some members were uncertain, as they understood the importance of transparency.

GP30.12.23 With four votes in favour, one member recorded as voting against (Councillor D. Manvell) and one member abstaining from the vote, it was **RESOLVED** to move this agenda item under confidential business, for all future meetings.

- 5.4 To note the report of the Internal Auditor
Members thought it was a brilliant report. They noted the suggestion about exploring the cost of an external cash collection company. One member had experience of these services.

Members noted the contents of the report.

- 5.4 To confirm the fees and charges for room hire at the Civic Centre and Foresters Hall for 2024/25 (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025)
Members referred back to their initial suggested increase of 5% on all room hire charges, and associated equipment hire costs, and still supported this proposal.

GP31.12.23 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to a 5% increase in room hire fees and charges for the Civic Centre, Foresters Hall and Victoria Pavilion and associated equipment charges for 2024/25.

- 5.5 To consider the grants monitoring report from Uckfield Volunteer Centre which evaluates the use of funding in 2022-23
Members were presented with an evaluation report by the Uckfield Volunteer Centre of all successful grants awarded during the financial year 2022-23.

Members were keen to see more photographs of purchases or projects undertaken by the awardees using the money they received.

It was also mentioned that Finance Sub-Committee should take a dimmer view of any grant awardees that failed to respond to the Uckfield Volunteer Centre during the evaluation process, and within the timeframes provided.

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 and noted the work being undertaken within these buildings.

- 6.2 To receive a progress update on the site of the Hub/Source
Members were presented with an update on the current demolition of the Hub and all of the works that had been completed by Town Council staff – including the Estates & Facilities Manager, a caretaker, and members of the Grounds team.

Members wanted to say a big thank you to James and Ron for all of their hard work. The Source site was open, safe and able to be used for Late Night Shopping which was fantastic.

Members gave credit for their hard work, but felt they shouldn't have needed to do this. Members were very disappointed with the performance of the agents and contractors.

The report outlined two further projects to complete the site:

- for a new retaining wall to be built inside of the existing wall on the boundary of Civic Approach, to enable the fencing to be erected at this point, otherwise there

was a risk of the wall/fenceline collapsing (approx. £6,800 plus VAT).
- to replace the old internal doors with a new UPVC door and panel (£2,800 plus VAT).

- GP32.12.23** Members **RESOLVED** to:
- (i) note the contents of the report;
 - (ii) say an enormous thank you to our staff who made this happen in three weeks;
 - (iii) agree to the remaining works to finish the site and ensure the safety of leaseholders and their visitors, and;
 - (iv) advise the Town Clerk to liaise with the contractors/agent to express the dissatisfaction of the Council.

7.0 POLICY

- 7.1 To review the Town Council's Risk Management Policy (Policy No. 29)
Members reviewed the revisions to the policy.

- GP33.12.23** Members **RESOLVED** to approve the revised version of the Risk Management Policy, which included updated information relating to contracts and procedures.

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 were reminded of the importance of these audit reports, and noted the completed audit reports for August, September and October 2023.

9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- 9.1 To consider reports from: -
- (i) Wealden Citizen's Advice
Members noted the report.
 - (ii) Uckfield Volunteer Centre
The Town Clerk provided a verbal update, which members noted.
 - (iii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Mgt Committee
Councillor D. Ward provided a verbal update, which members noted.
 - (iv) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel
Nothing to report at this meeting.

10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward, spoke of the wonderful festivities at Late Night Shopping, and the Festival of Trees at Holy Cross Church; thanking all those involved in making these events happen.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nothing to report.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

- GP34.12.23** 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 receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 1 November 2023

Members received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 1 November 2023.

12.2 To consider the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 1 November 2023

Members were informed of the proposed delay of the organisational review to March 2024, and the proposed recruitment of a further part-time role within the office to support a very high workload.

This item would be deferred to a future Full Council meeting for decision.

12.3 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members were pleased to receive this report. The Town Clerk updated members on recent events and the fantastic work of the team. Members thought that the target Average Transaction Value (ATV) needed to be reviewed to reflect inflation.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.