

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held  
on Monday 11 December 2023 at 7.00 pm  
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. B. Reed
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr. P. Selby
Cllr. V. Frost	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)	Cllr. P. Ullmann
Cllr. C. Macve	Cllr. D. Ward
Cllr. D. Manvell	

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

One member of the public  
County Councillors Claire and Chris Dowling  
Holly Goring Town Clerk  
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

## **1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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. They were advised that notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration and that the nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest became apparent.

Councillor C. Macve declared a personal interest in agenda item 27.3.

Councillor D. Manvell declared an interest in agenda item 19.0 (draft budget) as a result of his role on the board for Uckfield Community Fridge CIC if members of full council reached this level of detail.

Councillor J. Love declared a personal interest in agenda item 27.2 on discussions specifically relating to Victoria Pavilion as a result of her work there.

Members subsequently noted the declarations provided.

## **2.0 STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE MAYOR'S DISCRETION**

There were no statements from members of the public.

### 3.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**FC.69.12.23** It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to enable updates to be provided by County and District Council representatives.

Councillor Claire Dowling provided an update on county matters in her constituency. The programmed works for Southview Drive were still on track for February 2024 half term. Cllr Dowling had met with the Town Clerk and an officer from ESCC to review pedestrian movements at school time on London Road. The Town Clerk had provided an update on this in the action list.

Councillor Dowling had chased two highway matters, (i) the dip in the road reported by Councillor French and (ii) would be following up with the issues reported by Councillor Manvell.

The East Sussex Local Transport Plan was out for consultation until the end of February 2024. Members and residents were invited to respond individually, and the Town Clerk confirmed that the plan would be reported to the January meeting of Full Council, should the council wish to produce a collective response. This could also be referenced in the next edition of the Voice.

It was the ESCC Cabinet meeting the next day, and figures were being reported quarterly on expenditure within Children's Services. The costs for Looked After Children had increased astronomically. This was placing great pressure on this service area's costs with some circumstances costing the service £10-20k per week. The most recent report on this was available on the ESCC website from their Cabinet meeting on 12 December 2023:

<https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/documents/s54710/LAC%20Annual%20Report%2022-23%20Cover%20report.pdf>

Councillor Chris Dowling had received a number of concerns about the state of the road in New Road, with the road showing evidence of early subsidence. He had sent photographs into ES Highways. He had not heard any more on the build outs in Lewes Road which formed part of the traffic calming measures associated with the Ridgewood Farm development. Photographs had also been taken of highway issues in Mallard Drive/Kingfisher Close and would be reported to ES Highways.

Councillor K. Bedwell stressed the need to look at Mallard Drive as a crack had started to appear near to the school and new houses. Councillor C. Macve reiterated his query with regard to the highway works which were due to take place on the Copwood roundabout on the 100th house being occupied/built on the Ridgewood Farm site.

Councillor D. Manvell provided an update on District Council matters. He had been made aware that the Sports Hub due to be developed at Hellingly, had received more funding than they were supposed to be given. He had also learnt that no major CIL funded projects had been delivered by Wealden DC since the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy scheme.

Councillor B. Reed referred to the Nature Recovery Strategy and the work of the Ashdown Forest Conservators who had begun work on a joined up recovery

programme, and applied for £750k, perhaps using this links could be better created between there and north Uckfield.

Wealden DC's new Vision could be useful for Uckfield TC in its decision-making and a new report had been issued by Wealden DC officers which would add to planning policy department's evidence base on play and sports facilities.

Councillor Reed also referred to the work of Wealden DC on their Local Plan.

Councillor Manvell referred to the recent change in position of Wealden DC, on the appeal of the Land at Mockbeggars Farm.

**FC.70.12.23** Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

#### **4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Councillors D. Bennett, B. Cox, M. McClafferty and S. Mayhew due to work commitments or health related matters.

#### **5.0 MINUTES**

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 30 October 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**FC.71.12.23** Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 30 October 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

#### 5.2 Action List

Members agreed to remove the following actions and noted the report.

#### **6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

6.1 To note the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings:-

(a) Plans Committee of the 6 and 27 November 2023

**FC.72.12.23** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 6 and 27 November 2023.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 13 November 2023

**FC.73.12.23** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 13 November 2023.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 4 December 2023

**FC.74.12.23** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee of the 4 December 2023.

#### **7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

(i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Panel

Nothing to report at present.

#### **8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS**

(i) Civic Centre Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Members noted the report.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Members noted the report.

(iv) Infrastructure Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

**9.0 TO RATIFY DOCUMENTATION CONSIDERED BY STANDING COMMITTEES:  
General Purposes Committee**

(i) Risk Management Policy – Policy No. 29

**FC.75.12.23** It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the decision of General Purposes Committee on 4 December 2023 and adopt the Town Council's Risk Management Policy.

(ii) Recommendations of Personnel Sub Committee (confidential business)

This matter would be considered under confidential business.

**10.0 TO NOTE THE DECISION OF THE URGENT CONSULTATION PANEL**

A report had been circulated to the Urgent Consultation Panel outside of the meeting cycle to explain that the barista coffee machine in Luxfords Restaurant had failed, and due to the age of the machine, it had not been possible to replace the parts. Quotations had been received for a new full size barista coffee machine, and it would cost in the region of £3,500 with installation and water softener. Two new filter coffee machines were also required as the heating element in these was aged, now. Members had agreed to re-allocate earmarked reserve funding from the Booking System which had been unspent, for the purpose of purchasing the above equipment to the sum of £4,100.

Members noted the decision of the Urgent Consultation Panel.

**11.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR DONNA FRENCH**

Councillor D. French presented her motion which asked members of Full Council to consider whether any further assets (either land or property) in the town, would be beneficial to nominate as an Asset of Community Value. Of the three nominations put forward in 2023, two were successful – Uckfield Leisure Centre and Ridgewood Village Post Office.

Councillor D. French was keen to consider the Uckfield Rugby Club and adjoining land. The Town Clerk advised that she would confirm the land which comprised the Rugby Club site and liaise with the Chair to see how long they had left on their lease agreement.

Other land suggested included:

Land near to White House Farm

Holy Cross Primary School (unfortunately Church of England land holdings were excluded from this process)

Family Hub, Manor Close (Childrens Centre)

Highlands Inn

**FC.76.12.23** After some discussion, members **RESOLVED** to put forward nominations for the Uckfield Rugby Club, the Family Hub (as Childrens Centres were at risk of closure) and the Highlands Inn (as the last remaining pub in the south of Uckfield and their support to community lunches) as Assets of Community Value.

**12.0 TO REVIEW A SNAPSHOT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S BUDGET AND BALANCE SHEET POSITION FOR Q2 OF 2023/24**

Members discussed the papers produced from the Town Council's finance system.

Councillor Macve enquired as to why the Town Council's land and buildings showed a depreciation of £55k, and asked why the bank account was considered a liability. The Town Clerk would seek advice from the Town Council's accountant.

Members noted the report.

**13.0 TO CONSIDER ARBORICULTURAL REPORTS FOR A LIME TREE IN SNATTS ROAD CEMETERY**

Members were provided with a report which highlighted concerns around the health of a Lime Tree in Snatts Road Cemetery. The Lime Tree had already been pollarded and reduced in height. The Grounds team and an independent arboricultural survey had indicated that the tree was showing evidence of disease, but all parties respected the sensitive location of the tree. It was suggested that the height of the existing monolith of sorts be reduced in height to 2.5 to 3metres. The Town Clerk would contact all deed owners of graves/interments in the catchment area to inform them of the need for works to the tree to reduce the risk of any bad weather creating damage to the tree and ground, and to advise deed owners to move any of their personal belongings during the period of works.

**FC.77.12.23 Members RESOLVED:**

(i) For the Senior Administrative Officer and Town Clerk to make contact with the relatives of those who had ashes interments or graves in the vicinity of the base of the tree, to inform them sensitively of the current condition of the tree, and;  
(ii) to seek to address the risks identified, and book in works to reduce the height of the pollarded tree to a monolith shape at a height of approximately 2.5metres at the end of January 2024. This would give time to make contact with relatives but also ensure works are completed before the end of the winter season.

**14.0 TO REVIEW HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT AT LAND OFF EASTBOURNE ROAD**

Members had been provided with detailed plans of the highway works proposed in Eastbourne Road in association with the development planned for 'Land at Eastbourne Road.'

Councillor B. Reed advised that during Wealden Planning Committee North, members asked for the applicants to liaise with the Town Council to discuss the impact of the SUDs and capacity. The Town Clerk had also sought clarity from East Sussex Highways to check that the highway drawings were still accurate, as discussions at Wealden DC's Planning Committee had suggested some changes. However it appeared that most of these changes were on the site itself, to parking etc or within the entrance to the site.

Uckfield TC Plans Committee had previously raised the matter of lack of parking. Members felt that this was more of a Plans Committee matter and not one for Full Council, so members subsequently noted the report.

**15.0 TO APPROVE A BRIEF FOR STREET LIGHTING WORKS WITH EAST SUSSEX HIGHWAYS**

The Town Clerk explained that the brief for Street Lighting followed previous discussions and reports with Environment & Leisure Committee which discussed street lighting designs but also the need for the Town Council to evidence their authorisation of the style and type of lighting used to replace existing lighting stock.

**FC.78.12.23** Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Street Lighting Brief between East Sussex Highways and Uckfield Town Council, and for the Town Clerk and Town Mayor to sign this document on the Town Council's behalf.

**16.0 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEALDEN PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL ON TOWN AND PARISH ALLOWANCES FOR 2024/25**

Unfortunately the information was not yet available. The decision would therefore be deferred to the next meeting of Full Council on 15 January 2024.

**17.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2024-29**

Members thanked office staff for the strategic member workshops which they had found particularly useful.

Councillor C. Macve referred to recent discussions at the All Weather Pitch Meeting with Uckfield College. The EU were due to ban 'rubber crumb' and this could affect the materials used for the matting of astro/3G pitches.

Members subsequently noted the draft Strategic Plan for 2024-29.

**18.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN FOR 2024/25**

Members reviewed the draft annual plan and were asked, similar to the Strategic Plan, if they could provide any further feedback to the Town Clerk over the Christmas break.

Reference was made to a really good biodiversity playground in Westfield, Stratford, London. Councillor Smith would love if this could be replicated in Victoria Play area.

Members subsequently noted the draft Annual Plan for 2024/25.

**19.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2024/25**

Members reviewed the draft annual budget. Members were disappointed that the tax base had seen minimal increase, when the town had seen quite a substantial increase in new homes.

Queries related to grant funding, the cash balance and staffing costs before members noted the draft budget for 2024/25 and recognised that officers would continue to look at ways to reduce the current percentage increase proposed.

**FC.79.12.23** Further to a proposal by Councillor D. Ward, which was seconded by Councillor Manvell, members **RESOLVED** to extend the time of the meeting, to 9.45pm.

- 20.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2024-29**  
Members felt this was a good document, and well prepared. Concerns were raised with regard to the condition of Osborn Hall, and the nearing date of the full repairing lease agreement. The Town Clerk was asked to review the details of the lease agreement, and schedule of condition, and seek legal advice.

Councillor Manvell asked if under paragraph 4, we could incorporate “*Manage our assets and property portfolio to ensure we reach carbon neutrality*” and then on the subsequent page around delivery, add “*Aim to decarbonise our buildings and landholdings, and ensure we use them in an environmentally sustainable way.*”

Members subsequently noted the report.

- 21.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL ANY LEASE AGREEMENTS OF LICENCES READY FOR EXECUTION**

None received by the deadline.

- 22.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR’S ENGAGEMENTS**

Councillor D. Manvell noted a correction that needed to be made to the spelling of MP Mims Davies name within the report.

Members noted the change and contents of the report.

- 23.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT**

Two deed of grants had been received:

Brenda Dorling

Jennifer Madil

**FC.80.12.23** It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

- 24.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

None received.

- 25.0 TOWN CLERK’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Clerk advised that Tracy, the Town Council’s Marketing & Communications Assistant was due to retire on 13 December 2023. Tracy had worked for the Town Council for six years and been the first Marketing role within the Town Council team. The Town Clerk explained that Tracy had set the Town Council up well and been very hands on; carrying out a lot of work in-house. She had been an asset to the team, and we all wished her well with her retirement.

- 26.0 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair, Councillor J. Love explained that there was a Case Management Conference the next day relating to the appeal on the Land at Mockbeggars Farm. Councillor J. Love would be attending and seeking to understand in light of Wealden DC’s change in position, how the appeal would be handled by the Planning Inspectorate.

- 27.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**FC.81.12.23** 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.

27.1 To consider proposals for the Town Centre's CCTV transmission and equipment for 2024/25 onwards

**FC.82.12.23** Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the contents of the powerpoint presentation and update;
- (ii) move to a new contract with ChromaVision and new technology for the Town Centre CCTV system from 1 April 2024;
- (iii) write to BT and end the existing contract from 1 April 2024, and;
- (iv) continue to work in partnership with other Town Councils in Wealden District, and Sussex Police to build further understanding on the information governance arrangements and consider appropriate procedures for the parish and town councils

27.2 To consider quotations for works associated with Town Council buildings and the addition of cyber cover to the Town Council's Insurance.

Lengthy discussions took place with regards to the quotations that had been received for plumbing and heating changes to Foresters Hall and Victoria Pavilion.

Greater preference was given to the renewable energy options, but some members were unable to vote as they wished to obtain more information on these technologies. The Town Clerk was asked to arrange for a presentation prior to the next Full Council meeting on renewable technologies.

Discussions on amendments to the insurance cover, were deferred to the next meeting, due to time.

27.3 To consider a proposal by the Uckfield Grasshoppers Junior Football Club

This item would be deferred to the next meeting, due to time.

27.4 TO RATIFY DOCUMENTATION CONSIDERED BY STANDING COMMITTEES:

(ii) General Purposes Committee  
recommendations from Personnel Sub-Committee

This item would be deferred to a future meeting, due to time.

The meeting closed at 9.39pm.