



# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

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**Town Clerk – Holly Goring**

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A meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** to be held on  
**Monday 18 March 2024 at 7.00pm**  
in the  
**Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield**  
**AGENDA**

Under The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, members of the public are able to film or record during a committee meeting.

## **1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members and officers are reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this Agenda. Should any Member consider that they require a dispensation in relation to any prejudicial interest that they may have, they are asked to make a written application to the Clerk well in advance of the meeting.

Notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration. The nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent.

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

## **3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

## **4.0 MINUTES**

- 4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 5 February 2024
- 4.2 Action list – for information only
- 4.3 Project list – for information only

## **5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

- 5.1 To note bills paid
- 5.2 To consider the income and expenditure reports to the end of January 2024
- 5.3 To note the report of the Internal Auditor (interim audit on 27 February 2024)
- 5.4 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 28 February 2024
- 5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 28 February 2024

**6.0 BUILDINGS**

- 6.1 To note the current position with the Council's buildings
- 6.2 To consider the installation of temporary parking posts at Victoria Pleasure Ground
- 6.3 To consider a response from the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC

**7.0 POLICY**

None.

**8.0 ADMINISTRATION**

- 8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council
- 8.2 To receive Members' audit reports

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

- 9.1 To consider reports from:-
  - (i) Wealden Citizen's Advice
  - (ii) East Sussex Association of Local Councils AGM
  - (iii) Uckfield Volunteer Centre
  - (vi) Wealden District Association of Local Councils
  - (v) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel

**10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

To consider whether to **RESOLVE** to exclude the press and public (pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960) during consideration of the following confidential business to be conducted: -

- 12.1 To note bad debts
- 12.2 To consider contract arrangements for Festive Lights for 2024-25
- 12.3 To consider contract arrangements for credit card terminals
- 12.4 To consider the draft lease agreement for the Quickborn Suite
- 12.5 To consider an update from Luxfords Restaurant



Town Clerk  
12 March 2024

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 5 February 2024 at 7.00pm

## PRESENT:

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

## IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public  
Sarah D'Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk  
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 declared an interest in agenda items 6.1 and 12.1 due to her employment with a business based at Victoria Pavilion. Councillor Love was advised that she would need to leave the room for agenda item 12.1.

As Councillor D. Manvell would be late arriving, the Town Clerk advised that Councillor Manvell had declared a prejudicial interest for agenda item 6.3, due to his role as Director for the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC. Councillor Manvell had been advised to leave the room for agenda item 6.3.

### 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 had been received from Councillor B. Cox due to another commitment.

### 4.0 MINUTES

#### 4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 4 December 2023

**GP35.02.24** Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 4 December 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4.2 Action list

Members noted the action list and agreed to remove item GP08.06.23.

- 4.3 Project list  
Further to seeking clarification on the commencement of the 262 Saturday bus service, members noted the report.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

- 5.1 To note bills paid  
Councillor A. Smith requested that certain unnecessary information be redacted from the report, before members noted the bills paid.
- 5.2 To consider the income and expenditure reports to the end of Nov 2023  
Members reviewed the contents of the report.

The Town Clerk explained how income levels were positive, but expenditure was also higher than predicted across all committee areas. The report for Luxfords Restaurant was looking promising with the deficit reducing substantially from that recorded in the previous year. Aspects of expenditure under General Purposes had been more challenging.

The Assistant Town Clerk clarified that a similar increase in salary scales had been budgeted for in the budget setting process for 2024-25. Members subsequently noted the reports.

Councillor D. Manvell arrived at 7.11pm.

- 5.3 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 9 January 2024  
Members received the draft minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 9 January 2024.

## **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 undertaken.

Councillor D. Ward expressed how disappointed she was by the vandalism in the town, and the impact this was having on community organisations and local businesses. Members noted the report.

- 6.2 To consider a progress update on Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park  
Discussions had commenced on the works required to Ridgewood Village Hall car park in 2022, but due to the estimated costs of works to address the drainage concerns and reduction of surface water runoff into the building and neighbouring land/properties, it was thought costs could reach in the region of £200k. The Town Council did not have this level of funds available.

The Estates & Facilities Manager sought the advice of a building firm who had undertaken other works for the Town Council in recent months and presented an alternative proposal to members, which would reduce the costs to nearer £140k.

Councillor C. Macve made a valid point and advised that the granite sets on the roadside needed to be raised. The proposals for the entrance to the car park would not be adequate enough to handle the water coming off New Road. The Town Clerk agreed, stating that water ran off New Road for some way and soaked into the play area on Ridgewood Recreation Ground. Reference was

made to two other locations in Uckfield – the top of Baker Street, and Nevill Green, where East Sussex Highways had created a high berm, to steer the surface water run off away from residential properties.

There was also concern about the aco drains as they needed a fair degree of maintenance and this would be imperative at the entrance to the car park with debris collecting there. It was thought that a concrete channel would be more appropriate.

Councillor P. Selby (a previous resident of New Road) confirmed that the water ran off New Road into Ridgewood Recreation Ground from as far as the pedestrian gate onto the recreation ground all the way past the village hall car park. There was only a grass verge between the road and the adjacent land. He also felt that an aco drain on the entrance to the car park would accumulate substantial silt and debris. An open drain would be preferred.

Councillor J. Love noted her observations with the drainage/run off from Millennium Green, and wondered if the culvert needed clearing on the corner of the land by the track to adjacent properties. Councillor Selby, thought it might be useful to liaise with the adjacent properties to understand their experience of the water flows.

**GP36.02.24 Members **RESOLVED** to:**

- (i) note the contents of the report;
- (ii) ask the Town Clerk to liaise with East Sussex Highways and ask for their assistance with creating a berm or raising the road edge along the southern side of New Road adjacent to the recreation ground and car park to reduce surface runoff and;
- (iii) ask the Estates & Facilities Manager to proceed with investigating works involved in Stage 1 (*subject to the modifications discussed which would include changing the aco drain for a concrete channel at the entrance to the car park*) with quotations to be sought from three contractors for the exact same specification.

Councillor D. Manvell left the room for the next item.

**6.3 To consider a report from the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC**

Members were presented with a report from the Uckfield Community Fridge, which set out a number of actions that they wished to take in response to the recent vandalism with regards to seating, storage and planters.

In the main, members felt that their proposals made good sense, although there were concerns with regards to the security of the shed. The Town Clerk explained that as the shed was a storage unit rather than the size that a person could get into/or sit in, it would be considered less attractive to the culprits.

The Town Clerk was asked to check if the shed was solely for the use of the Community Fridge or if it was also used to store equipment for Brighter Uckfield.

There were also some concerns with the park style benches. The Town Clerk advised that the site was now enclosed, and fenced off. The Town Clerk also reminded members of the plans to increase lighting in this area.

Councillor A. Smith put forward a proposal which was seconded.

- GP37.02.24** With three members voting in favour, and one abstaining, it was **RESOLVED** to:
- (i) note the contents of the report;
  - (ii) to request the Town Clerk to seek clarification on the use of the shed (in terms of who used the shed, the contents of the shed and who had access); and subject to this,
  - (iii) accept their well-considered proposals but do question whether the shed was needed, as the members did not feel the metal shed would be that secure.

Councillor D. Manvell returned to the meeting.

## **7.0 POLICY**

### **7.1 To consider the Annual Investment Strategy**

The Assistant Town Clerk advised members of a proposed change to the policy on page 2, and then led them through powerpoint slides which guided members through proposals for increasing the return we could obtain on the Town Council's business reserves. This had been a recommendation of the Internal Auditor and followed on from a discussion at the Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 9 January 2024.

The majority of the Town Council's reserves were in a Business Reserves account at a rate of 1.45%. £300k was invested in a 12-month fixed bond which matured at 4.89%. The Assistant Town Clerk advised that the minimum amount of reserves within the business reserve account during the year was £700k, and this was currently only earning 1.45% in interest. The Assistant Town Clerk had approached the Town Council's banking services, and was advised that they held a 35 day account and a 95 day account. Funds could be put away for these periods of time, to raise more return on the council's investments.

It was thought that a sum of £500k could be moved into these accounts.

One member was concerned about the financial services compensation scheme should anything happen to the bank as this was only £85k per firm. Members noted that the current banking provider was part owned by the UK Government.

Members were advised that the matter would be reported to Full Council for decision and ratification.

- GP38.02.24** With four members voting in favour, and one voting against, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council, that:
- (i) subject to the revision on page 2, that the Annual Investment Strategy be adopted;
  - (ii) the Assistant Town Clerk be asked to investigate the financial services compensation scheme further, and to explore other banking options with large banks such as Lloyds and HSBC, and;
  - (iii) in the meantime, propose to move funds of £400k into the 95 day account, and £100k in the 35 day account.

## **8.0 ADMINISTRATION**

### **8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council**

Members sought clarification on the outcome of the annual ROSPA inspections on the Town Council play areas, to which the Town Clerk provided an update.

Clarification was also sought on the water supply to the Signal Box, to which the Town Clerk said all water was turned off, but there was evidence of a leak, so a company had been employed to trace back through the pipework to see if the leak could be found. This investigation has since been halted as its thought that the wrong meter was associated with the Signal Box.

The Town Clerk also clarified that the fire evacuation procedures were being further strengthened.

Members subsequently noted the report.

### **8.2 To receive Members' audit report**

Members noted the completed audit report for November 2023.

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

### **9.1 To consider reports from: -**

(i) Wealden Citizen's Advice  
Nothing to report.

(ii) Uckfield Volunteer Centre  
Nothing to report.

(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.

## **10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair, Councillor D. Ward asked members to join her in wishing His Majesty King Charles III a speedy recovery. News was released that day that he had been diagnosed with cancer, and was undergoing treatment.

The Chair wished to thank the members of the Plans Committee who had worked tirelessly, along with the Town Clerk, to prepare for planning inquiries and hearings over the past four to six months. It was very much appreciated.

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

The Town Clerk advised that the electricity and gas contract was up for renewal for the Town Council buildings. The Town Clerk presented members with the renewal figures from four utility providers for gas and electricity.

In terms of gas supply, the Town Council only had four gas boilers, and it was likely that this number would reduce further in the next 12 months with members supporting the use of renewable energies. The Town Clerk did remind members however that at no point should the gas supply be removed from the Civic Centre as this was critical for the commercial kitchen in Luxfords Restaurant and for adequately heating the building and hot water, alongside the Biomass. At present

the total spend on gas was around £14k across the four buildings. Figures were provided for a 12-month and 24-month contract. The Town Clerk thought it would be prudent to continue on a 12-month contract with the current provider for gas (SSE) as there was very little percentage difference (1%) and so few supplies.

The Town Clerk reminded members that one of the caveats with changing utility provider would be that all smart meters would have to be changed with the change of contractor.

The figures received for electricity were however quite different. The Town Council currently spent around £30k per annum for all buildings, with some element recharged to tenants. The figures showed that it would not be wise to sign up to a two-year contract, 12-month contracts were on a better rate, and it would enable the Town Council to keep options open should they reconsider lease agreements etc.

The tariff for the existing provider (SSE) was 17.77% compared with the cheapest rate of (8.22%) for EDF. Members wondered if the current provider could be challenged, and to see if the proposed rate be reduced even midway between the two tariffs. The Town Council was a very good customer with annual expenditure for gas and electricity in the region of £45 to £50k.

**GP39.02.24 Members **RESOLVED** to:**

- (i) continue with the current utility provider (SSE) for gas, on a 12 month contract, and;
- (ii) for electricity, to renew on a 12 month contract, but ask the brokers to challenge the existing utility provider on their proposed tariff, and see if they would meet partway between their tariff and that of the lowest (EDF). If the current provider (SSE) did not offer a reduction, then Uckfield Town Council should move to a 12 month contract with EDF for electricity.

**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**GP40.02.24** 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.

Councillor J. Love left the room for the next item.

**12.1 To note bad debts**

Members reviewed the report. The Assistant Town Clerk advised that one of the customers listed, had since settled their old debt. Members were concerned with the level of debt recorded for one of the customers, and the Town Clerk advised that they were meeting with the customer later that week, so they would find out the reason and if they were waiting on grant funding or revenue before clearing the outstanding debt with the Town Council.

Since the meeting of General Purposes Committee, the above customer had paid a substantial amount of their outstanding debt and advised that it was in fact due to awaiting grant funding. They were advised to consider the frequency of the council's invoicing and perhaps a quarterly invoice would be more suitable rather than monthly.



Members subsequently noted the report.  
Councillor J. Love returned to the meeting.

12.2 To receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 1 November 2023

These were already presented and received at the meeting of General Purposes Committee on 4 December 2023.

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

These were already presented at the meeting of General Purposes Committee on 4 December 2023.

12.4 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members were pleased to receive this report. The Town Clerk clarified the figures within the report from the quarterly stocktake. Members thought that the target Average Transaction Value (ATV) needed to be reviewed to reflect inflation, and members wondered how we compared in terms of menu prices in the town. The Town Clerk advised that when we reviewed prices, staff explored the food costs of specific dishes and compared the price of those dishes with competitors.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

## UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

### ACTION LIST – FOR INFORMATION ONLY

#### General Purposes Committee

Resolution No.	Details	Date Raised	Action By	Date Completed
<b><u>GP07.06.23</u></b>	<p><u>To consider the quotations for the upgrade to the plumbing and heating system at Victoria Pavilion</u>            After a detailed discussion, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to task staff with:</p> <p>(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).</p>	19.06.23	JH	Quotations to be presented to Full Council on 8 April 2024.
<b><u>GP32.12.23</u></b>	<p><u>6.2 To receive a progress update on the Hub/Source site</u>            Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to:</p> <p>(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.</p>	04.12.23	JH/HG	All works have now been completed. <b>NFA.</b>
<b><u>GP36.02.24</u></b>	<p><u>6.2 To consider a progress update on Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park</u>            Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to: (i) note the contents of the report;            (ii) ask the Town Clerk to liaise with East Sussex Highways and ask for their assistance with creating a berm or raising the road edge along the southern side of New Road adjacent to the recreation ground and car park to reduce surface runoff and;            (iii) ask the Estates &amp; Facilities Manager to proceed with investigating works involved in Stage 1 (<i>subject to the modifications discussed which would include changing the aco drain for a concrete channel at the entrance to the car park</i>)</p>	05.02.24	JH/HG	East Sussex Highways were asked for a meeting onsite in the SLR meeting. Town Clerk to chase to arrange a date. Detailed quotations being sought from contractors.

	with quotations to be sought from three contractors for the exact same specification.			
<b><u>GP37.02.24</u></b>	<p><b><u>6.3 To consider a report from the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC</u></b></p> <p>With three members voting in favour, and one abstaining, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to: (i) note the contents of the report; (ii) to request the Town Clerk to seek clarification on the use of the shed (in terms of who used the shed, the contents of the shed and who had access); and subject to this, (iii) accept their well-considered proposals but do question whether the shed was needed, as the members did not feel the metal shed would be that secure.</p>	05.02.24	HG	A response from the Uckfield Community Fridge is being presented to members on 18.03.24.
<b><u>GP38.02.24</u></b>	<p><b><u>7.1 To consider the Annual Investment Strategy</u></b></p> <p>With four members voting in favour, and one voting against, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to recommend to Full Council, that:</p> <p>(i) subject to the revision on page 2, that the Annual Investment Strategy be adopted;</p> <p>(ii) the Assistant Town Clerk be asked to investigate the financial services compensation scheme further, and to explore other banking options with large banks such as Lloyds and HSBC, and;</p> <p>(iii) in the meantime, propose to move funds of £400k into the 95 day account, and £100k in the 35 day account.</p>	05.02.24	SD/HG	This has been completed. <b>NFA.</b>
<b><u>GP39.02.24</u></b>	<p><b><u>11.0 Town Clerks Announcements</u></b></p> <p>Members <b>RESOLVED</b> to:</p> <p>(i) continue with the current utility provider (SSE) for gas, on a 12 month contract, and;</p> <p>(ii) for electricity, to renew on a 12 month contract, but ask the brokers to challenge the existing utility provider on their proposed tariff, and see if they would meet partway between their tariff and that of the lowest (EDF). If the current provider (SSE) did not offer a reduction, then Uckfield Town Council should move to a 12 month contract with EDF for electricity.</p>	05.02.24	JH	Renewals have been arranged for 12 months. <b>NFA.</b>

**UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL  
PROJECT MONITORING  
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Outstanding initiatives from 2019/20**

<b>Project Name</b>		<b>Online event ticket system</b>		<b>Project Number</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Funds</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Commentary</b>		
<b>FC93.01.19</b>	(minus £1,365.00) = £135.00 remaining				
		03.11.20	The financial element of the software still needs arranging. As we would prefer to use Worldpay or SAGE pay for this, rather than the ones offered with the Tickera package, this will cost an additional amount for the time of web developers. Office staff are currently working through a detailed quotation for this additional work.		
		01.11.21	The additional work has been delayed due to issues with access to Worldpay. The Town Clerk will try and rectify in the to enable web developers to proceed.		

**Outstanding/ongoing initiatives from 2021/22**

<b>Project Name</b>		<b>Climate Change Initiatives (carry forward from 2020/21)</b>		<b>Project Number</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Funds</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Commentary</b>		
<b>FC.92.01.20</b>	£7,500	20.01.20	-		
	Minus £1800.00 plus VAT	17.08.21	£1,800 has been spent to date on the carbon footprint audit tool and associated work.		

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL  
PROJECT MONITORING  
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Outstanding initiatives from 2022/23**

Project Name		Building Maintenance Fund (Year 8 – 2022/23)		Project Number		68	
Resolution No.	Funds	Date	Commentary				
FC82.01.22	Still to be progressed...						
	Proposed expenditure on Building Maintenance Fund 2022/23						
	Year 8		Estimate	Proposed		Actual at year end – 31 March 2023	
	Signal Box refurb windows ext decoration		5000	To be progressed in 2024.		No expenditure.	
	Civic Centre storage solution caretaker station		10000	In progress.		£923.75	
	Osborn & Ridgewood car park drainage		30000	RVH Car Park plans in progress.		£5,422.50	

Project Name		Civic Centre Signage		Project Number	71
Resolution No.	Funds	Date	Commentary		
FC82.01.22	£2,000.00	17.01.22	This funding will be used towards the replacement of the main Civic Centre sign at the front of the Civic Centre and will require the feedback and engagement of Town Councillors. <b>Still to be progressed.</b>		

**UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL  
PROJECT MONITORING  
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Projects for 2023/24**

Project Name	Building Maintenance Programme			Project Number	74	
Resolution No.	Funds	Date	Commentary			
FC86.01.23	£76,000.00	23.01.23		Building Maintenance Fund 2023/24		
				Year 9	Estimate	Actual
				Victoria Pavilion – heating and water supply system replacements, and spruce up.	30,000	Quotations being sought at present.
				Foresters Hall Internal and External repairs	8,000	On hold due to other priorities.
				Signal Box refurbishment	8,000	On hold until 2024/25.

Project Name	262 Bus Service		Project Number	76
Resolution No.	Funds	Date	Commentary	
FC86.01.23	£3,900	23.01.23	A separate report has been prepared on the future of the 262 Saturday bus service. The invoices are usually received at the end of each quarter.	
	Minus £1,137	July 2023	Q1 invoice received (after concessionary fares deducted) for £1,167.23. This has been paid. <b>Service is due to resume on 27 January 2024.</b>	

**UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL  
PROJECT MONITORING  
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

<b>Project Name</b>		<b>WPA NHS Top-Up</b>		<b>Project Number</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Funds</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Commentary</b>		
<b>FC86.01.23</b>	£2,000	23.01.23	This has been an excellent initiative for staff to access to receive cash back on their medical appointments including dental/optical/therapy, and 24/7 employee assistance programme. The programme aligns with the financial year. <b>In progress.</b>		

GP Committee at 31 January 2024

	Apr 23 Actuals £	May 23 Actuals £	Jun 23 Actuals £	Jul 23 Actuals £	Aug 23 Actuals £	Sept 23 Actuals £	Oct 23 Actuals £	Nov 23 Actuals £	Dec 23 Actuals £	Jan 24 Actuals £	Actuals at 31 Jan 24 £	Budget at 31 Jan 24 £	Feb 24 Budget £	Mar 24 Budget £	Total £	2023/24 Budgets
<b>Sales</b>																
Administration	0	0	0	300	0	0	0	150	0	0	450	0	0	0	450	0
Festive Light Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,000	2,000	2,200	0	0	2,000	2,200
Bank Interest - Business Reserve	632	1,189	1,241	1,315	1,124	1,055	1,952	1,641	1,334	1,223	12,706	2,083	208	208	13,123	2,500
Interest Misc. (Fixed Rate Bond)	0	0	0	0	7,050	0	0	0	0	0	7,050	1,000	0	0	7,050	1,000
Civic Centre	15,880	9,961	6,229	12,976	6,544	9,168	14,155	6,164	5,559	6,696	93,332	85,000	8,594	8,594	110,520	102,000
Feed-in Tariff Payments	46	0	1,784	0	9	0	0	0	1,345	0	3,183	4,500	0	1,500	4,683	6,000
Quickborn Suite rent	708	708	708	708	708	708	708	708	708	708	7,083	7,083	708	708	8,500	8,500
West Park Pavilion	0	0	0	830	0	0	0	0	0	0	830	830	0	5,770	6,600	6,600
Victoria Pavilion	875	875	875	875	875	875	968	875	875	875	8,843	11,958	875	875	10,593	14,350
RHI - C.Centre Boiler	0	1,796	0	2,099	0	2,192	0	0	0	3,520	9,607	7,500	0	2,500	12,107	10,000
Victoria Storage Garages	50	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	0	100	200
Cemetery Chapel workshop	0	1,375	0	0	1,375	0	0	1,375	0	0	4,125	4,125	1,375	0	5,500	5,500
Foresters Hall	398	1,218	1,563	915	1,250	350	1,264	2,044	1,195	698	10,895	13,358	1,321	1,421	13,637	16,000
Foresters Chapel	288	0	0	288	0	0	288	0	0	288	1,150	1,150	0	0	1,150	1,150
2a Vernon Road, rent	650	650	650	650	650	650	650	650	650	650	6,500	6,500	650	650	7,800	7,800
Signal Box	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000	6,000	6,000
Osborn Hall	0	0	0	790	0	0	0	0	0	100	890	1,000	0	0	890	1,000
Ridgewood Village Hall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	269	0	269	250	1,351	650	2,271	900
Bridge Cottage	0	0	0	2,154	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,155	2,160	0	0	2,155	2,160
The Source	0	0	737	0	0	0	0	0	0	463	1,200	3,467	0	1,263	2,463	5,050
Town Crier	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	25	0
Community Toilet Scheme	0	283	0	0	283	0	0	283	0	0	848	565	283	0	1,130	1,130
Training admin	0	0	330	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	330	100	0	0	330	100
Wealden Lottery grant funding	8	16	10	8	14	10	10	13	10	13	110	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>19,535</b>	<b>18,070</b>	<b>14,177</b>	<b>23,907</b>	<b>19,906</b>	<b>15,008</b>	<b>19,995</b>	<b>13,903</b>	<b>11,946</b>	<b>17,235</b>	<b>173,681</b>	<b>154,930</b>	<b>15,365</b>	<b>30,139</b>	<b>219,186</b>	<b>200,140</b>
Highlighted sections include monies that will be taken from Earmarked reserves to assist with expenditure																
Costs of server upgrade, computer upgrade and wi-fi upgrade was £14,220. £12,500 available in earmarked reserves to contribute to																
<b>Purchases</b>																
Administration	1,206	824	2,080	1,432	605	1,176	1,362	1,175	897	1,044	11,801	9,396	940	940	13,681	11,275
General Advertising	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250	250	250
Recruitment Advertising	0	0	0	0	0	135	345	0	0	0	480	400	0	0	480	400
Office Equipment/Computers	1,365	377	405	11,444	10,385	484	856	405	1,133	772	27,627	7,917	792	792	29,210	9,500
Hospitality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	11	16	37	83	8	8	53	100
Health & Safety	157	43	0	27	5	27	0	0	0	150	409	2,917	292	292	992	3,500
Insurances	0	0	6,259	0	0	0	35,712	0	0	128	42,099	37,000	0	0	42,099	37,000
Public Works Loan Costs	0	0	0	19,600	0	0	0	0	0	18,600	38,200	38,200	0	0	38,200	39,800
Mayor's Allowance	0	0	466	0	0	466	0	0	466	0	1,397	1,397	0	466	1,862	1,862
Elections	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,992	0	0	0	5,992	0	0	0	0	0
Grants Section142	0	0	9,500	0	0	0	0	9,500	0	0	19,000	19,000	0	0	19,000	19,000
Grants - Power of Competence	0	16,633	0	900	0	0	9,568	0	0	0	27,101	14,400	0	0	27,101	14,400
Volunteer Bureau SLA	0	0	8,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,000	8,000	0	0	8,000	8,000
Clothing - Corp & Prot - Indoor staff	73	7	7	0	0	60	43	0	0	108	298	208	21	21	339	250
Internal Audit Fees	0	0	1,149	0	0	0	0	623	0	0	1,772	1,250	0	1,250	3,022	2,500
(External) Audit Fees	0	0	0	0	0	2,100	0	0	0	0	2,100	2,750	0	0	2,100	2,750
Accountant fees	0	0	4,935	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,935	5,000	0	0	4,935	5,000
Professional Fees	1,373	1,200	566	783	0	675	6,001	0	0	0	10,598	7,917	792	792	12,181	9,500
Festive Lights	5,444	0	0	0	0	0	2,724	0	3,745	0	11,913	10,000	0	0	11,913	15,000
Festive Light Electricity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	500	500	500
Office Staff - Salaries	24,719	24,462	24,525	24,652	24,644	24,945	26,700	38,180	27,232	26,933	266,991	244,423	24,442	24,442	315,875	293,307
Members Allowances/Expenses (TBC)	0	0	4,196	0	0	4,388	0	0	3,377	0	11,961	15,167	0	5,082	17,043	20,328
Newsletter	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	4,000	4,250	425	425	4,850	5,100
Bank Charges	85	79	78	77	66	62	64	66	61	62	701	800	80	80	861	960
Civic Centre Running Costs	8,983	10,603	5,866	12,951	6,229	7,609	7,082	10,965	7,426	11,625	89,339	94,667	0	25,925	115,264	103,700
Caretakers - Salaries	9,863	9,550	11,913	10,513	9,832	12,992	9,872	17,454	11,121	12,667	115,776	94,198	9,894	9,894	135,565	118,733
West Park	97	1,524	280	398	695	273	193	273	0	0	3,734	1,083	0	0	3,734	1,300
Victoria Pavilion	1,703	1,055	1,996	3,539	774	1,857	1,138	996	1,311	1,943	16,311	19,209	0	5,563	21,874	22,250
Cemetery Buildings	87	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	861	2,475	63	63	986	2,600
Signal Box	602	185	192	186	676	192	186	569	353	200	3,340	1,250	125	125	3,590	1,500
The Hub	823	115	7,078	0	497	650	853	80	0	0	10,096	2,500	0	0	10,096	2,500
Foresters Hall	1,786	392	1,169	970	1,210	863	674	752	1,654	600	10,071	11,000	0	3,150	13,221	12,600
2a Vernon Road	0	0	0	120	0	0	100	0	317	164	701	0	0	350	1,051	500
Subscriptions	3,080	123	484	510	13	404	13	408	0	0	5,034	4,500	0	0	5,034	4,500
Training	793	166	1,061	40	145	80	775	70	308	0	3,438	5,000	500	500	4,438	6,000
All Building Cleaning Materials	159	253	116	333	100	349	176	298	350	271	2,404	1,833	183	183	2,771	2,200
<b>Total Purchases</b>	<b>62,799</b>	<b>68,078</b>	<b>92,805</b>	<b>88,961</b>	<b>56,360</b>	<b>60,273</b>	<b>110,915</b>	<b>82,308</b>	<b>60,247</b>	<b>75,770</b>	<b>758,516</b>	<b>668,189</b>	<b>38,556</b>	<b>81,091</b>	<b>872,171</b>	<b>778,665</b>



GP Committee at 31 January 2024

	Apr 23 Actuals £	May 23 Actuals £	Jun 23 Actuals £	Jul 23 Actuals £	Aug 23 Actuals £	Sept 23 Actuals £	Oct 23 Actuals £	Nov 23 Actuals £	Dec 23 Actuals £	Jan 24 Actuals £	Actuals at 31 Jan 24 £	Budget at 31 Jan 24 £	Feb 24 Budget £	Mar 24 Budget £	Total £	2023/24 Budgets
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New initiatives 2023/24

Building Maintenance	12,220	2,006	0	0	560	9,496	42,334	15,093	9,736	6,800	98,245	N/A			N/A	76,000
Server upgrade and small office computer upgrade	0	0	0	0	4,516	4,287	0	0	0	0	8,803	N/A			N/A	10,000
262 Saturday Bus Service contribution	0	0	0	1,167	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,167	N/A			N/A	3,900
WPA NHS Top Up	(228)	631	142	217	234	(207)	598	228	(225)	909	2,298	N/A			N/A	2,000
Insurance rebuild valuations	0	0	0	0	7,240	0	0	0	0	0	7,240	N/A			N/A	8,250
Civic Centre Wi-Fi upgrade	0	0	0	0	5,417	0	0	0	0	0	5,417	N/A			N/A	2,500

123,171

Earmarked reserves																
EICR works	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,524	1,524	N/A			N/A	11,300
Air conditioning units	0	0	304	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	304	N/A			N/A	2,000
Elections	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,992	0	0	0	5,992	N/A			N/A	27,351
General Power of Competence	0	13,417	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,417	N/A			N/A	13,417
Playing fields and pitches	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,001	0	0	0	5,001	N/A			N/A	5,259

26,238

Luxfords at 31 January 2024

	Apr 23 Actuals £	May 23 Actuals £	Jun 23 Actuals £	Jul 23 Actuals £	Aug 23 Actuals £	Sep 23 Actuals £	Oct 23 Actuals £	Nov 23 Actuals £	Dec 23 Actuals £	Jan 24 Actuals £	Actuals at 31 Jan 24	Budget at 31 Jan 24	Feb 24 Budget £	Mar 24 Budget £	Total 2023/24	2023/24 Budgets
Sales																
Restaurant Food Sales	11,115	12,563	11,487	12,846	12,229	12,533	10,051	15,950	14,435	13,372	126,581	108,333	10,367	10,367	147,314	130,000
Restaurant Bar Sales	417	539	1,801	680	413	623	377	433	1,053	1,611	7,946	7,708	771	771	9,488	9,250
Takeaway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,667	167	167	333	2,000
Function Food Sales	1,400	996	8,541	3,128	691	890	6,641	3,662	1,303	1,325	28,578	24,333	1,833	1,834	32,244	28,000
Function Bar Sales	1,136	1,754	5,000	3,845	132	2,303	3,332	654	1,261	804	20,221	17,521	1,490	1,490	23,200	20,500
Hire of Urn	182	155	83	85	147	180	78	94	104	40	1,146	1,042	104	104	1,354	1,250
Hire of Luxfords Restaurant	0	90	0	99	0	0	0	0	0	0	189	833	83	83	356	1,000
Sundry Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	150	0	0	150	417	42	42	233	500
Total Sales	14,249	16,097	26,913	20,683	13,612	16,529	20,478	20,943	18,156	17,151	184,811	161,854	14,856	14,856	214,523	192,500
Stock held - alcoholic and non alcoholic purchases (17 Jan 2024)											2,169					
Stock held - food (17 Jan 2024)											2,134					
Purchases																
Food Purchases	3,372	4,313	6,232	4,277	4,245	3,985	5,653	5,360	5,238	5,287	47,961	33,333	3,333	3,333	54,628	40,000
Bar Purchases - non-alcoholic	72	659	716	190	190	81	319	404	403	55	3,088	2,167	217	217	3,521	2,600
Bar purchases - alcoholic	157	679	2,314	524	967	771	671	349	225	226	6,883	5,833	583	583	8,049	7,000
Consumables	179	163	316	195	258	155	173	587	209	220	2,456	750	75	75	2,606	900
Cleaning	39	65	81	453	60	6	78	77	13	0	872	833	83	83	1,039	1,000
Maintenance & Repairs	0	0	0	0	165	550	119	840	1,409	136	3,218	1,667	167	167	3,551	2,000
Equipment - New/Replacements	363	0	0	0	139	3,240	71	3,291	0	200	7,304	1,668	167	167	7,637	2,000
Equipment Hire	0	0	320	0	0	0	560	0	0	0	880	400	0	0	880	400
Luxfords General Advertising	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	400	400
Uniforms/Protective clothing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	0	0	32	50	0	100	132	150
Credit charges	264	266	304	328	232	282	322	301	302	0	2,602	2,167	217	217	3,035	2,600
Rates	667	667	667	667	667	667	667	667	667	667	6,674	8,000	667	667	8,007	8,000
Electricity	985	694	669	667	709	653	768	0	0	0	5,144	7,500	750	750	6,644	9,000
Gas	0	78	470	310	0	516	0	263	322	0	1,958	2,917	292	292	2,542	3,500
Water	277	0	0	321	0	0	326	0	0	372	1,296	1,250	125	125	1,546	1,500
Refuse Collection	142	168	151	142	168	151	216	142	124	195	1,599	1,333	133	133	1,866	1,600
Stocktaking	205	0	0	205	0	0	205	0	0	205	820	820	0	0	820	820
Salaries	10,315	10,236	12,594	10,643	11,036	12,370	12,295	17,514	12,038	12,312	121,353	109,925	10,993	10,993	143,338	131,910
Casual wages	89	675	756	1,341	1,369	1,434	1,197	912	1,079	1,386	10,238	5,000	500	500	11,238	6,000
Total Purchases	17,125	18,663	25,591	20,262	20,205	24,862	23,641	30,739	22,029	21,261	224,378	185,613	18,301	18,801	261,480	221,380

Breakdown of equipment- new/replacements

	Apr 23 Actuals £	May 23 Actuals £	Jun 23 Actuals £	Jul 23 Actuals £	Aug 23 Actuals £	Sep 23 Actuals £	Oct 23 Actuals £	Nov 23 Actuals £	Dec 23 Actuals £	Jan 24 Actuals £	Actuals at 31 Jan 2024	Budget at 31 Jan 2024	Feb 24 Budget £	Mar 24 Budget £	Total 2023/24	2023/24 Budgets
Earmarked reserves used:						£3,039.99					3,040	3,500	0	0		3,500
								£3,290.96		£199.99	3,491	4,100	£578.00			4,100
											6,531	7,600				
						New oven	Barista & flasks			Toaster			Filter mac x 2			

At 31 January 2024, the restaurant takings were £22,957 up on that budgeted to date, with overspend of £31,461 on that budgeted to date.

Holly Goring  
Uckfield Town Council

29 February 2023

Dear Holly

**Uckfield Town Council**

**Second Interim Internal Audit 23-24**

Following the second interim audit completed on 27 February , I attach my updated report for consideration by the Council. This was the second of three audits I intend to carry out to support my opinion on the 23-24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). I covered the following at this visit:

- Follow up previous recommendations
- Review of accounting and VAT processes
- Risk management and insurance
- Income - controls at over cemetery and booking income
- Budget monitoring reports and plans for 24-25 budget setting
- Salaries and Wages
- Transparency Code data.

I am pleased to report that the Council has successfully maintained a robust system of financial control, and I have identified no matters to date that would result in a negative opinion on the year- end internal audit report. At Appendix A I follow up recommendations raised at my last audit. I followed up recommendations from the first interim audit at Appendix B. At Appendix C I list recommendations arising from this audit.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all members to support and inform them when they are considering the Authority's approval of the annual governance statement. I am required by Section 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to review controls in place at the Council against predefined control assertions. These control assertions are set out below, together with the results of testing carried out at the interim audit.

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### **A - Appropriate books of account have been kept properly throughout the year**

#### **First Interim Audit**

The Council maintains financial records on the Sage Accounting system. My testing confirmed that income and expenditure is balanced to the cashbook and reconciled to bank statements on a regular basis. In the course of my testing I confirmed there is a clear audit trail from the accounts to supporting documentation such as invoices. The Council received a clear audit opinion for 22-23, so there is nothing that needs to be taken into account for the current financial year.

I checked the brought forward balance sheet on the Sage Accounting System. The opening cash balance on the trial balance at 1.4.23 was agreed to the audited accounts for 22-23.

The Council has a system of member audits. These are carried out each month, and a member is tasked with reviewing the following:

- Supplier invoices
- Sales ledger transactions
- Staff timesheets
- Bank and petty cash reconciliations

I note that the Members' Audit Policy has recently been reviewed. At the time of my audit, (November 2023), no member audit had been completed since July. I remind members that checks of this nature are only meaningful if they are completed on a timely basis, and I therefore recommend that member audits should be completed within 4-6 weeks of the month end under review.

The Council is registered for VAT, and submits VAT returns to HMRC on a quarterly basis. I reviewed the VAT return for quarter 2. The return was completed on 4 November 2023 and VAT of £5,446 was reclaimed from HMRC. I checked the VAT return and test checked that entries in the return could be agreed to VAT reports extracted from the Sage system.

I discussed VAT accounting with the RFO. There has been no review of VAT arrangements for some time. It may be beneficial to commission a VAT review from a sector expert to :

- Review VAT accounting arrangements, to ensure Council is accounting for VAT efficiently
- Review any partial exemption and option to tax arrangements in place for Council assets to ensure these are properly documented and understood by Council officers.

I recommend the Parkinson Partnership. [Home \(parkinsonpartnership.uk\)](http://parkinsonpartnership.uk)

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The RFO should consider developing a Finance Improvement Plan, with realistic targets for implementation of recommendations identified in my audit reports, together with other opportunities identified by the RFO and Town Clerk.

**B - The Council's financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for**

### **First Interim Audit**

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are based on NALC templates. Both documents were last reviewed at the Full Council meeting in May 2023. .

The Council has a clear process for making payment to suppliers, compliant with financial regulations. Invoices are sent into the office, these are then reviewed against orders and coded and signed off for processing by the Town Clerk. The invoice is passed to the RFO, who inputs the invoice into Sage. Every 2 weeks a BACS run report is run from Sage. The RFO rechecks invoices against this report and the payment is entered by the RFO on to the Council bank account. Payments and payment run information is then presented to Councillors, who physically sign bank payment reports, and approve payments at bank.

I carried out a sample test of non-pay expenditure transactions selected from the cashbook for the first 7 months of the financial year. I was able to confirm the following for all transactions:

- Payment agreed to invoice
- Invoice passed for payment by Town Clerk, evidenced on the face of the invoice
- Invoice signed off by 2 councillors on face of invoice
- VAT accounting correct
- Bank payment instruction signed by 2 councillors
- Expenditure appropriate for this Council

There is a clear audit trail from Sage to source documentation to demonstrate compliance with Council financial regulations in the processing of payments to suppliers.

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**C - The Council assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.**

**First Interim Audit**

The Council is insured with Zurich Municipal on a standard local council package for employer liability and public liability plus some smaller assets. The policy was in date at time of audit, with an expiry date of 19 June 2024. I reviewed this policy at my June audit, so no further work has been completed at the first interim audit. I will review in more detail at my final audit, alongside buildings insurance.

The Council has raised the level of fidelity insurance with Zurich, following a recommendation I raised at last audit. This has not yet been resolved, but I am satisfied that the Council is reviewing cover in this area. The Council does not have any cyber insurance in place at present. I recommend that cyber risk is added to the Council's risk assessment. The Council should work with the Council's ICT provider to assess whether cyber insurance should be purchased.

**Second Interim Audit**

The Council completed the review of its Risk Management Policy at the Full Council meeting on 11 December 2023 (resolution FC 75.12.23). This followed on from a detailed review at the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 4 December (resolution GP33.12.33). The Risk Management Policy identifies risks and controls put in place to counter these risks. I am satisfied that the Council has met obligations in this area for 23-24.

**D - The annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate**

**First Interim Audit**

The precept and budget setting process for the 2024-25 financial year is under way. An initial review of fees and charges and new initiatives has been commenced by officers and councillors, with a budget planning meeting held with councillors in October. The draft budget will be reviewed by Full Council in December, with Finance and Full Council meetings in January to finalise the precept and budget. I am satisfied that plans are in place to meet precepting authority deadlines.

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I confirmed regular budget monitoring reports, as required by financial regulations, continue to be produced for Council meetings, by reviewing minutes. I confirmed the following:

- General Purposes and Luxfords – quarter one reports delivered to the September committee meeting
- Environment and Leisure – position at end of August delivered to the October committee meeting
- Quarter 1 position for whole Council was reported in July, with quarter 2 due to be reported in December.

I will review the Council's reserve balances at my year end audit.

### **Second Interim Audit**

The Council has completed the budget and precept setting process for 2024-25. The budget and precept for 24-25 were approved at the Full Council meeting on 15 January 2024. A precept of £1,127,348 was approved ( minute FC 91.01.24) The budget is supported by a strategic plan for 24-29, and an annual plan for 24-25. I have confirmed that the budget process included a detailed review of individual budget areas by individual committees and consideration of the draft budget in December 23.

### **E - Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for for**

### **First Interim Audit**

I reviewed controls in place at Luxfords restaurant and bar at my first interim audit. Controls over income were generally satisfactory, with income properly recorded on the sage system , and agreed back to z readings produced from the till. Stock was reasonably secure, I was pleased to note that the Council employs an external stocktaker to undertake quarterly stocktakes, reconciling stock to sales and purchase records. I have however, identified a number of recommendation for improvement:

- There is no documented till procedure. Whilst simple instructions are in place, a properly documented till process setting out what staff need to do at the start of the shift, during shift and at cashing up should be drawn up and used to train staff;
- All staff log into the till using a single fob. This means there is no audit trail as to who is accessing the till. All staff should use individual key fobs when accessing the till;
- 

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- There is no sign off by restaurant and bar staff that the float is correct at the start of the shift. Whilst it appears that the float is counted, evidence should be provided of who counted the float and when;
- The end of shift count is completed by a member of bar/restaurant staff, then reperformed by the Clerk or RFO at a later date, before banking. It is best practice to ensure that all cash counts are completed with 2 people present, and that this is evidenced. For efficiency, it is recommended that the shift end cash count should be carried out in the main council office, the count can then be completed by a Luxfords officer and counter signed by the RFO or Clerk. Cash should then be held in the safe until banked;
- The RFO banks cash at the post office once a week. This is time consuming, and it is not sensible for a council officer to be carrying cash across town. I recommend that the Council should employ a cash collection company to bank cash.

### **Second Interim Audit.**

I reviewed cemetery allotment and room booking income at my second interim audit.

### **Cemetery Income**

I confirmed that fees for 23-24 were approved at the Environment and Leisure Committee meeting in March 23. I selected a sample of credits from the nominal ledger for cemetery income. For all transactions selected I was able to agree entry in the sage sales ledger back to burial records. Correct fees were charged in all cases.

### **Allotment Income**

The Council has 245 allotments 245 in total. I confirmed that a satisfactory invoicing process is in place. I have one recommendation, the Council may wish to considering issuing direct debit forms to allotment holders at next renewal, this would reduce the administration workload in collecting relatively small items of income.

### **Room bookings**

I confirmed that room hire charges for 23-24 were agreed at the General Purposes Committee meeting on 21 November 2022. The Council has installed the Hallmaster booking system for hall and room booking. All bookings are entered on to the system after booking forms have been sent to the Council by hirers. Invoices are then produced from the Sage accounting system, which collects data from Hallmaster. I carried out the following testing:

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- A sample of bookings were selected from the Hallmaster booking system for the 23-24 financial year. In all cases I was able to confirm these bookings resulted in generation of an invoice, showing correct booking and fee information.
- Product data for room hire on the Sage sales ledger system was checked and agreed to approved fees and charges for 23-24.

I have one recommendation. Standing information on fees is updated annually following approval of fees and charges by Council. This information is input by the RFO – it should have a second check from the Town Clerk before the revised fees go live, evidence of this check should be retained.

### **Sales Ledger**

I reviewed the sales ledger at 27.2.24. Debts outstanding at this date were £29,460, 65% of this current. There is £6,190 worth of debt more than 90 days old. I reviewed the 3 largest debts with the RFO, all debts appear to be managed. Aged debtor reports are reported quarterly to councillors with information on problematic debts.

### **F - Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts; all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for**

#### **Second Interim Audit.**

Petty cash is checked as part of regular member audits. I checked the February audit record. The petty cash recorded in the member audit agreed to petty cash records.

### **G- Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.**

#### **Second Interim Audit**

The RFO logged into the HMRC account on 27 February. This showed that the Council is up to date with HRMC submissions and no payments are outstanding.

Payroll is processed monthly, in good time for monthly payments to staff. Timesheets are sent into the office, these are inspected and signed off by the Town Clerk. The RFO sets up the monthly payroll on the Sage payroll system, and checks outputs prior to further processing. Payroll is set up on Natwest Bankline. The Bankline report is signed by the RFO, and checked and signed by the Town Clerk. Authorisation for payment is provided by a councillor.

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I checked the January 2024 payroll. The cashbook payment was agreed to the payroll summary and the to the bankline report. I confirmed the bankline report had been reviewed and signed off by the RFO / Town Clerk and a councillor.

I selected 5 members of staff from the bankline report. For all staff selected I was able to agree pay to payslip. I tested gross pay for each officer, and confirmed that this could be agreed to a pay award letter. Correct scale point was applied and all scale points were checked to staff pay award letters.

I am satisfied that the Council has a robust payroll system, is up to date with HMRC submissions and payments, and that staff tested are being paid in line with approved rates of pay .

**H - Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.**

Year end test

**I – Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.**

**First Interim Audit**

I reviewed the bank reconciliation file. All September bank reconciliations had been completed, and October bank reconciliations were being worked on at the time of my November audit.

I reperformed the September bank reconciliations. I was able agree the sage bank reconciliation back to bank statements for the general and business reserve accounts. The £300K fixed rate deposit was checked to the original deposit at my last audit - no further documentation has been issued by the bank since then. The Council has not received a bank statement for the Lloyds bank account, which holds £21,067, since March 23. It is recommended that a statement is obtained each quarter for this bank account whilst it is open, but it would appear sensible to close this account, as it serves no specific purpose. The September bank reconciliations are due to be checked as part of the next member audit, but had not been signed off as correct at the time of my interim audit.

The Council has an investment strategy in place, as required by regulations. The annual review of the investment strategy is due be reviewed by General Purposes Committee in January 2024 before ratification by Full Council. I note that the general reserve account is only paying 1.7% at present, and the Council has £1million+ in this account . I recommend that the Council explores other options as part of the review of the investment strategy, and seeks to maximise returns within the limited savings and investment options open to Town Councils.

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**J - Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.**

Year end test

**K: If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 23-24 , it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.**

Not applicable

**L: The Authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements**

### **Second Interim Audit**

Uckfield categorised as a large Council, with income and expenditure in excess of £200K and is required to follow the 2015 Transparency Code.

The Council publishes extensive financial information on the Finance and Audit page of the Council website. I tested the following at my second interim audit:

- Payments to suppliers. Bills paid are published each month. I checked that the website was up to date to the end of December 2023, so I am satisfied that the Council is publishing the information required in this area
- Land held by the Council – details are published on the land and property section of the website
- Grants – a schedule of all grants paid in year is listed under the community page on the website

The Council prepares an annual Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) report for consideration by the Council and the District Council. For clarity, this should be published on the Council website, as it is a requirement of the CIL Regulations 2010 (121B)/

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## **M - Arrangements for Inspection of Accounts**

Inspection periods for 22-23 accounts were set as follows

<b>Inspection - Key date</b>	<b>22-23 Actual</b>
<b>Accounts approved at Full Council</b>	28 June
<b>Inspection period begins</b>	3 July
<b>Inspection period ends</b>	11 August
<b>Correct length</b>	Yes

The Council met the requirements of this control objective.

## **N: Publication requirements 22-23 AGAR**

The Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the external audit certificate for 22-23 are published in document archive section of the Council website. The external audit certificate was clear. There are no matters to take into consideration in the 23-24 accounts. The Conclusion of Audit certificate was published on 19 September, after the date of the audit certificate ( 18 September), and before the regulatory deadline of 30 September . The external audit certificate was reported to the meeting of Full Council on 17 October (minute 10.0).

The Council is required by regulations to publish AGAR documentation for the previous 5 years. I have checked the Council website, and I was able to view AGAR documentation going back to the 2017-18 financial year.

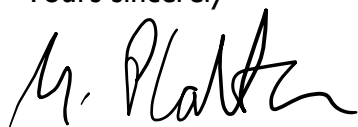
The Council met the requirements of this control objective.

## **O - Trust funds (including charitable) The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.**

Satisfactory –The Council has confirmed to me that the Council is not sole trustee of a charity.

I would like to thank you and Sarah for your assistance with the audit. I look forward to seeing you on 18 June for the year end audit.

Yours sincerely



Mike Platten CPFA

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## Appendix A

### Follow up outstanding recommendations from 22-23 audit

Matter Arising	Recommendation	Council Response
The process of producing the annual return is complex, as the nominal code structure is not currently aligned with the requirements of the annual return.	<p>I recommend that nominal codes are reviewed in the course of 23-24 with the aim of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing the number of nominal codes to ensure that only those needed for management accounting reports are maintained</li> <li>- Aligning the nominal code structure to the AGAR statement of accounts requirements, to reduce the level of manual intervention required to produce accounting statements.</li> </ul>	This underway – RFO is reviewing this process, subject to workload.
Member audits	I recommend that this check should be completed within 28 days of each month end to any matters identified are rectified on a timely basis .	Last completed in July – point reraised
Standing Orders and Direct Debits	Payments made by direct debit and standing order should be approved in an advance at a Council meeting.	Report went to Council after my last audit . These should be added to member audits.
Utility meters are not always read in advance of direct debit payments	All meters should be read monthly by council officers, and readings sent	Now being read each month.

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# April Skies

## Accounting

leaving the Council's bank account.	to the RFO ready to be checked against bills	
The Council should add the purchase orders module to the Sage accounting system.	Purchase orders should then be completed on line by budget managers as goods or services are ordered, and sent to suppliers by email. This will improve budget monitoring ( by enabling commitment accounting) and will link all purchases to the accounting system at the point of ordering	Still to be done, but RFO and Clerk intend to action this point.
Fidelity cover may not be sufficient, this is set at £1 million.	Given that Council bank balances regularly exceed this amount, I recommend that the insurer is contacted . The Council can then decide if it wishes to increase insurance cover	This has been queried with the insurer, but not yet finalised.
I checked earmarked reserves back to the Sage balance sheet, as at 31.3.23. This check showed there are significant differences between the earmarked reserves on the spreadsheet reported to Council and the sage accounting system .	I therefore recommend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Earmarked reserves on Sage are reviewed and journals posted to bring the reserve balances to levels reported to Council at 31.3.23</li> <li>- Reserves are managed on the Sage accounting system going forward, and all reporting of reserves to Council should be based on Sage reports.</li> </ul>	Still in hand - to be reviewed before year end, I will check at my next audit.
I have 2 recommendations relating to budget monitoring:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The overall Council budget and balance sheet position should be reviewed by a Council committee (Full Council or Finance) on a quarterly basis.</li> <li>- The Council should move away from using spreadsheets for budget monitoring and should make use of budget monitoring modules in Sage.</li> </ul>	Actioned for q1 23-24, Q2 report due. .  Longer term project, but recommendation agreed

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# April Skies

## Accounting

I recommend that pay / scale point and contracted hours are confirmed by notification from the RFO, issued from the payroll system, whenever these are changed.	This ensures that there is a clear record of pay for each officer on the payroll.	To be tested at next audit
Bank reconciliations	It is recommended that monthly member audits should cover all bank account and deposit balances, with all bank reconciliations reviewed and signed off as reviewed on the face on the reconciliations and bank statement. This is a requirement of financial regulations.	Test has been added to member audit schedule

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## **MATTERS ARISING 23-24 – FIRST INTERIM AUDIT**

<b>Matter Arising</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Council Response</b>
At the time of my audit, (November 2023), no member audit had been completed since July. I remind members that checks of this nature are only meaningful if they are completed on a timely basis.	I therefore recommend that member audits should be completed within 4-6 weeks of the month end under review.	The audits were booked in. We are now up to speed with this process.
There has been no review of VAT arrangements for some time.	It may be beneficial to commission a VAT review from a sector expert to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review VAT accounting arrangements, to ensure Council is accounting for VAT efficiently</li> <li>- Review any partial exemption and option to tax arrangements in place for Council assets to ensure these are properly documented and understood by Council officers</li> </ul>	To be explored.
Finance Improvement Plan	The RFO should consider developing a Finance Improvement Plan, with realistic targets for implementation of recommendations identified in my audit reports, together with other opportunities identified by the RFO and Town Clerk	To be produced shortly.
The Council does not have any cyber insurance in place at present.	I recommend that cyber risk is added to the Council's risk assessment. The Council should work with the Council's ICT provider to assess whether cyber insurance should be purchased.	Members have agreed to take this out. Currently liaising with IT security and facilities providers



<b>Luxfords</b> There is no documented till procedure.	Whilst simple instructions are in place, a properly documented till process setting out what staff need to do at the start of the shift, during shift and at cashing up should be drawn up and used to train staff.	The instructions are currently in two places. We will therefore collate these into one booklet/document by the time you attend your next visit.
<b>Luxfords</b> All staff log into the till using a single fob. This means there is no audit trail as to who is accessing the till.	All staff should use individual key fobs when accessing the till.	This action has been completed. Named fobs now in place
<b>Luxfords</b> The end of shift count is completed by a member of bar/restaurant staff, then reperformed by the Clerk or RFO at a later date, before banking. It is best practice to ensure that all cash counts are completed with 2 people present, and that this is evidenced.	For efficiency, it is recommended that the shift end cash count should be carried out in the main council office, the count can then be completed by a Luxfords officer and counter signed by the RFO or Clerk. Cash should then be held in the safe until banked	This used to be completed in this way prior to the pandemic, and the division of the office and restaurant teams to reduce contact. We will refer back to original procedures as of Jan 2024
<b>Luxfords</b> The RFO banks cash at the post office once a week. This is time consuming, and it is not sensible for a council officer to be carrying cash across town.	I recommend that the Council should employ a cash collection company to bank cash.	The RFO will explore the costs associated with this option.
I note that the general reserve account is only paying 1.7% at present, and the Council has £1million+ in this account .	I recommend that the Council explores other options as part of the review of the investment strategy,	This has been considered at Finance Sub Committee (9 Jan 24), General Purposes

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# April Skies

## Accounting

		Committee (5 Feb) and their recommendations are being taken to Full Council on 26 Feb 24 for ratification
The Council has not received a bank statement for the Lloyds bank account, which holds £21,067, since March 23	It is recommended that a statement is obtained each quarter for this bank account whilst it is open, but it would appear sensible to close this account, as it serves no specific purpose.	The RFO attended an appt with a Councillor at the bank on 4 Jan 2024 to obtain easier access to the bank statements. These funds are due to be removed at financial year end

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## **APPENDIX C**

### **MATTERS ARISING 23-24 – SECOND INTERIM AUDIT**

<b>Matter Arising</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Council Response</b>
Allotment income	Council may wish to considering issuing direct debit forms to allotment holders at next renewal, this would reduce the administration workload in collecting relatively small items of income.	
Standing information on fees is updated annually following approval of fees and charges by Council.	This information is input by the RFO – it should have a second check from the Town Clerk before the revised fees go live, evidence of this check should be retained.	
The Council prepares an annual Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) report for consideration by the Council and the District Council.	For clarity, this should be published on the Council website, as it is a requirement of the CIL Regulations 2010 (121B)	

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# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Sub-Committee**,  
on Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 6.30 pm  
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield.

**PRESENT:** Cllr. B. Cox (Chair) Cllr. P. Ullmann  
Cllr. D. Manvell Cllr. D. Ward  
Cllr. S. Mayhew (Vice-Chair)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

21 members of the public

Sarah D'Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer  
Holly Goring – Town Clerk

Minutes taken by Sarah D'Alessio

The Chair welcomed all those present and set out the order of the meeting. Applicants were invited to speak and were advised that they could speak for up to two minutes and questions may be asked by members to clarify details of their application.

**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 this agenda.

The Town Clerk read out the various declarations of interest submitted by members in advance of Finance Sub-Committee, and advised where they could speak but not vote, or not participate at all. This part of the meeting also set out the dispensations that had been given in respect of certain applications, in particular where members were aware that other Town Councillors held the role of Chair in organisations such as Uckfield Theatre Guild, Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society, The Luxford Centre & Ridgewood Village Hall Committee. Dispensations would allow the members to participate fully in both the discussion and vote, and for the meeting to be able to continue where possible.

**2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

**3.0. MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on the 9 January April 2024.

**FS.07.02.24**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee of the 9 January 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4.0**

**RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM APPLICANTS FOR THE COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2024/25**

**FS.08.02.24**

Members of Finance Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to allow grant applicants to speak.

The various representatives attending the meeting were asked to provide a summary of their application and any additional information which might support their application.

Committee members asked a number of questions to which the representatives responded during this part of the meeting.

Following the presentations from those attending and questions from Committee members, the Chair reminded the representatives of the subsequent format of the meeting, and advised that they could leave if they wished to, once they had spoken.

**FS.09.02.24**

The meeting then resumed and it was **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

The Chair advised that the meeting would now move into confidential business to enable members of Finance Sub-Committee to discuss the applications in detail and recommend the allocation of grant funding. These recommendations would be presented to General Purposes Committee on 18 March 2024 for review and ratification.

**6.0**

**CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**FS.10.02.24**

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.

**FS.11.02.24**

Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders at 8.46pm, to extend the meeting, to enable all agenda items to be discussed in full.

6.1

To consider the allocation of grants

Committee members worked through and considered each individual grant application on its own merits to consider whether funding should be provided, and if provided, to what amount. The figures and recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee would be reviewed and ratified by General Purposes Committee at their next meeting on 18 March 2024.

**FS.12.02.24**

Members of the Finance Sub-Committee worked through the allocation of grant funding and **RESOLVED** to recommend to the General Purposes Committee that the following grants be awarded:

<b>Community Grant Funding under the General Power of Competence</b>	
1. Family Support Work	£2,255
2. Uckfield & District Preservation Society	£1,000
3. St Wilfrid's Hospice	£1,100
4. Ashdown Radio Limited	£1,000
5. The Luxford Centre	£2,000
6. Proms on the Pitch	£1,000
7. Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society	£4,000
8. Royal British Legion – Uckfield Branch	£200
9. Uckfield Music Club	£450
10. Uckfield Theatre Guild	£1,000
11. East Sussex Hearing	£694
12. Uckfield Community Orchestra	£400
13. Sussex Support Service CIC	£800
14. Care for the Carers	£2,500
15. Ridgewood Village Hall	£4,134 (for banking and drainage works)
16. Uckfield Housebound Club	£245.62
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b>£22,778.62</b>

The meeting closed at 10.12pm.

## Meeting of the General Purposes Committee

Monday 18 March 2024

### Agenda Item 5.5

#### **TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2024**

##### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee from their recent meeting on 28 February 2024 whereby they considered and put forward recommendations for the allocation of community grants in 2024/25.
- 1.2 Recommendations were put forward for all applications and representatives were present from all organisations on the night of the meeting.

##### **2.0 Recommendations of Finance Sub-Committee**

###### To consider the allocation of grants

Committee members worked through and considered each individual grant application on its own merits to consider whether funding should be provided, and if provided, to what amount. The figures and recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee would be reviewed and ratified by General Purposes Committee at their next meeting on 18 March 2024.

##### **FS.12.02.24**

Members of the Finance Sub-Committee worked through the allocation of grant funding and **RESOLVED** to recommend to the General Purposes Committee that the following grants be awarded:

<b>Community Grant Funding under the General Power of Competence</b>	
1. Family Support Work	£2,255
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9. Uckfield Music Club	£450
10. Uckfield Theatre Guild	£1,000
11. East Sussex Hearing	£694
12. Uckfield Community Orchestra	£400
13. Sussex Support Service CIC	£800
14. Care for the Carers	£2,500
15. Ridgewood Village Hall	£4,134 (for banking and drainage works)
16. Uckfield Housebound Club	£245.62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£22,778.62</b>

### **3.0 Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the above allocations and confirm if they wish to ratify the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee for the Town Council's 2024/25 annual community grant funding programme.

Contact Officer: Sarah D'Alessio



## **Meeting of the General Purposes Committee**

**Monday 18 March 2024**

### **Agenda Item 6.1**

#### **TO NOTE THE CURRENT POSITION WITH THE COUNCIL'S BUILDINGS**

##### **1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report sets out the current position with the Council's buildings.

##### **2.0 The Buildings**

###### **2.1 The Civic Centre**

- Further to the main pump failure on the heating system, new pumps have now been collaborated with the BMS system so pumps now communicate and run correctly;
- The annual biomass boiler service has been carried out but requires parts as the pellet feeding mechanism has broken;
- Lift hydraulics refurbishment works have now commenced. The lift cabin refurbishment which will include the landing doors and architraves will follow in April, during the Easter holidays;
- More emergency lights are being replaced in the hopper room due to being flagged on the testing schedule;
- The Electrical Installation Condition Report has been carried out in the Civic Centre and Quickborn suite;
- The new flooring has been adapted in the restaurant kitchen where it covers drains;
- A washing machine has been installed in the staff kitchen to enable the restaurant to launder table cloths etc;
- Fire damper servicing has been carried out, further works to be quoted;

###### **The Source**

- New front door installed. Keys have been updated for both leaseholder and UTC;
- Car parking spaces are to be marked up for the Community Fridge to aid delivery access;
- The youth shelter has been removed to help prevent ASB. A quote has been obtained for pillar lights up the side of Luxford field to the community fridge entrance;

###### **The Signal Box**

- Weekly checks continue to be carried out for insurance purposes. A Structural engineer is booked in to assess the first-floor safety concerns and if there's any asbestos present. A schedule of works will then be produced to improve the building in preparation for a commercial/community tenancy;
- The possible water leak has now been rectified;
- A break-in to ground floor was discovered on the weekly inspections. Extra locks to be fitted;

#### Victoria Pavilion

- The security system works have been undertaken;
- The boiler on the first floor has been repaired due to breakdown;
- Defib software updated;

#### Foresters Hall

- Air source heat pump installation booked in for rear half of the building;
- Plinth and fencing to the site to protect the air source unit is to be installed before the installation date;
- Repairs have been carried out in children's toilets to seats and roll holders;

#### Snatts Road, Chapel

- Nothing new to report.

#### West Park

- Nothing new to report.

#### 2A Vernon Road

- Bedroom floor now replaced due to dangerous trip hazard and need for water proof area by shower cubical;
- Wall has been plastered following sink removal and painting scheduled for the lounge;

### **3.0 Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the report.

Contact Officer: James Hollingdale

## Meeting of the General Purposes Committee

Monday 18 March 2024

### Agenda Item 6.3

#### TO CONSIDER A RESPONSE FROM THE UCKFIELD COMMUNITY FRIDGE CIC

##### 1.0 Summary

1.1 Members of General Purposes Committee considered a report which detailed plans of the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC to address recent anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of their unit, and to make improvements to their outside space.

1.2 Members advised the Clerk of the following at the last General Purposes Committee:

##### GP37.02.24

With three members voting in favour, and one abstaining, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the contents of the report;
- (ii) to request the Town Clerk to seek clarification on the use of the shed (in terms of who used the shed, the contents of the shed and who had access); and subject to this,
- (iii) accept their well-considered proposals but do question whether the shed was needed, as the members did not feel the metal shed would be that secure.

1.3 This report provides members with a response from the Fridge to the above points, and to advise members that the works will be commencing next week (week beginning 18 March 2024).

##### 2.0 Response from the Uckfield Community Fridge

2.1 *I can confirm that Brighter Uckfield would like to still be able to store equipment in the shed in future and as UCF enjoys working with other charitable groups we would be keen to allow this. However last time this was a joint venture, UCF will be funding the shed this time. I am not aware what the equipment will be and it will be why we have space for once our 'stuff' is stored.*

*The shed proposed, as previously mentioned will not be fit for a person to get in to. We discussed at our directors meeting last week the pros and cons of bench seating and concluded whilst it would be lovely, it runs too greater risk of becoming the perfect ground for antisocial behaviour. Thus we would like to continue with a plan to store (new) seating in the (new) shed and continue to get this out when needed rather than run the risk of park benches.*

##### 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

Contact Officer: Holly Goring

## **Meeting of the General Purposes Committee**

**Monday 18 March 2024**

### **Agenda Item 8.1**

#### **TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

##### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an update for members on the various elements of health and safety that need to be considered within the organisation.

##### **2.0 Health and wellbeing of staff**

- 2.1 The table overleaf provides an update on sickness levels for the period between 1 April 2023 and 12 March 2024. Unfortunately there have been a number of nasty viruses about – flu and sickness, which has affected staff sickness levels in the past couple of months.
- 2.2 The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO continues to liaise with the East Sussex Wellbeing at Work Programme, with an intention to work towards and achieve the Bronze Level Award. The process initially involves undertaking a wellbeing survey with all staff, to assist with developing a set of actions specific to the organisation in addition to the generic action plan set out for each award level.

	<b>As at 12 March 2024 (sickness recorded since 1 April 2023) (30 staff)</b>	<b>As at 24 Feb 2023 (sickness recorded since 1 April 2022) (28 staff)</b>
Actual days taken as short-term Doctors' certificate	36.0 days	29.0 days
Actual days taken as self-certificated sick leave	118.0 days	36.0 days
Actual days taken as long-term sick leave	5.0 days	51.0 days
Of which actual days taken for full Covid isolation (staff member unwell for full isolation period or in a position whereby they were unable to work from home)	4.0 days (staff member works part time)	4.0 days
Of which actual days taken for staff member supporting family member/dependent for Covid isolation but not unwell themselves	0.0 days	0.0 days
Of which actual days taken for Covid isolation but able to work from home some of the time	0.0 days	10.0 days

- 2.3 As the results show, we have been impacted by numerous viruses over the course of the year, which has had an impact on staff teams across the whole organisation.

### **3.0 Personal learning and development**

- 3.1 The Head Groundsman and Ranger attended a Tree inspection course. Groundsmen to attend a chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting course in March.
- 3.2 Organisation-wide with the current roll out of annual appraisal reviews, the management team are currently drawing together an up to date training plan which will assist with understanding what training should be completed in person and what could be completed online. The training matrix has been created and looking to start with this in the new financial year.

### **4.0 Health and Safety Risk Assessments**

- 4.1 First aid kits in all buildings continued to be checked regularly.
- 4.2 Regular water monitoring continues to be carried out in each building to ensure Uckfield Town Council remains compliant. This includes reviewing the Legionella's risk assessment, tank cleans and water samples for all managed buildings. An external contractor has been appointed to audit these checks and review in more depth.
- 4.3 Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs) have now been now carried out in 2A Vernon Road, Foresters Hall, Foresters Chapel, The Source, Luxford Field power box, Uckfield Community Fridge, Civic Centre, Bridge Cottage, and Ridgewood Village Hall. The rest are booked in for the coming months. Bridge Cottage and Ridgewood Village Hall will fund their EICRs as a result of having a full repairing lease.
- 4.4 Other works include annual servicing of the biomass boiler at the Civic Centre, the annual service of the air conditioning system in the main hall of Foresters Hall and the Signal Box, the water cooler has been serviced in the Civic Centre and the gutters have been cleaned out at the Civic Centre.

### **5.0 Fire Safety**

- 5.1 The fire damper servicing has now been carried out.

Contact Officer: Holly Goring

Appendix A

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



**MEMBERS AUDIT FORM**

MONTH: DECEMBER 2023

**Checklist:**

**Documents will be chosen at random by Members carrying out the Audit.**

**SAGE AUDIT TRAIL (DETAILED)**

Check source documents including nominal code and authorisation.

Supplier Invoices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Customer Invoices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Timesheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**BANK RECONCILIATION AND VERIFICATION TO NOMINAL CODE:**

Check bank reconciliation to SAGE print outs, bank statement and nominal codes.

Clerks Account	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
General Account	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Business Reserve	<input type="checkbox"/>

**BANK RECONCILIATIONS QUARTERLY VERIFICATION**

Clerks Account	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
General Account	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Business Reserve	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**PETTY CASH**

Check cash balance and vouchers

Town Council Petty Cash	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Luxfords Petty Cash	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Signed

Print Name ....DONNA FRENCH....

Dated .....27/2/24.....

### Supplier Invoice Checked

Supplier Name	Invoice No. and Date	P. Order No	Confirmed stamped, signed, correct nominal code	Confirmed payment method, entered and signed by two Cllrs
PARKER BUILDING SUPPLIES	0001/04216272	16688	YES	1024731279 YES
Q CATERING	I 1316888	16666	YES	1024756285 YES

### Customer Invoices Checked

Customer Name	Invoice No.	Are charges correct?	Payment date on invoice	Bank Statement Page No.
T J MORRIS HOME BARGAINS	CC43319	YES	YES	2 of 6
* <del>MRS A BROWN</del>	<del>L 4908</del>		<del>YES</del>	
CAROLINE MARSHALL	L43323	YES	YES	2 of 6 8/12/23 CC 24/11/23

BALANCE  
DEPOSIT.

### Timesheets checked

Staff Name	Are hours correct?	Is payment correct?	Payslip date	Ref code on BACS payment record
JO BROOKER	YES	YES	29/12/23	1024758676 YES
TONY GRIFFITHS	YES	YES	29/12/23	1024758676 YES

**Bank Reconciliation Checked**

Bank Account	Statement No.	RFO has signed both records	Amount reconciled and if not reasons noted	Nominal Code
GENERAL	1 of 6	YES	YES	1200
CLERKS	1 of 2	YES	YES	1810

**Quarterly bank reconciliation verification**

Bank Account	Statement No/Date	RFO has signed both records	Member signs both records	Notes
Clerks Account	1 of 6	YES	YES	
General Account	1 of 2	YES	YES	
Business Reserve	1 of 2	YES	YES	

**Petty Cash Checked**

Account Name	Is reconciliation correct? Month	Selected Voucher Name and findings	At time of visit, are petty cash floats aligned to SAGE balance
Town Council	YES DEC 2023	POST OFFICE LTD.  INCOME FOR PETTY CASH	£25.79 ✓ YES
Luxfords	YES DEC 2023.	TESCO £23 ✓	131.20 ✓ YES





Appendix A

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



**MEMBERS AUDIT FORM**

**MONTH:** JANUARY 2024

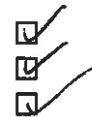
**Checklist:**

**Documents will be chosen at random by Members carrying out the Audit.**

**SAGE AUDIT TRAIL (DETAILED)**

Check source documents including nominal code and authorisation.

Supplier Invoices  
Customer Invoices  
Timesheets



**BANK RECONCILIATION AND VERIFICATION TO NOMINAL CODE:**

Check bank reconciliation to SAGE print outs, bank statement and nominal codes.

Clerks Account  
General Account  
Business Reserve



**BANK RECONCILIATIONS QUARTERLY VERIFICATION**

Clerks Account  
General Account  
Business Reserve



**PETTY CASH**

Check cash balance and vouchers  
Town Council Petty Cash  
Luxford:



Signed

Print Name B E M REED

Dated 11 MARCH 2024

Members comments:-

very impressed, thank you.

### Supplier Invoice Checked

Supplier Name	Invoice No. and Date	P. Order No	Confirmed stamped, signed, correct nominal code	Confirmed payment method, entered and signed by two Cllrs
Bentons	132781 17/1/24	16787	✓ 5840	1036658800 BR
Biffa	319617326 10/1/24	YEARLY CONTRACT	✓ 5182	1031958936 BR

1489.28  
Panel 5  
Invoices together

### Customer Invoices Checked

Customer Name	Invoice No.	Are charges correct?	Payment date on invoice	Bank Statement Page No.
BROOKES FAMILY MEDIATION	G43482	2 hours 12.20pm	2/2/24 BACS	2/2/24 Pg 7 of 8
HOMEBARGAINS T J MORRIS	G43410	Tea / Coffee ✓	15/1/24 43410 43412 43417	15/1 Pg 3 of 7 January

3 Invoices combined

### Timesheets checked

Staff Name	Are hours correct?	Is payment correct?	Payslip date	Ref code on BACS payment record
Lorraine Covey	✓	✓	26/01/2024	1036505482
Janice Lawrie	✓	✓	26/01/2024	—

**Bank Reconciliation Checked**

Bank Account	Statement No.	RFO has signed both records	Amount reconciled and if not reasons noted	Nominal Code
BUSINESS RESERVE	JAN 10+2	✓	✓	1227
GENERAL	JAN. 6 of 7	✓	✓ noted 787.65 524.30 ✓	1200

**Quarterly bank reconciliation verification**

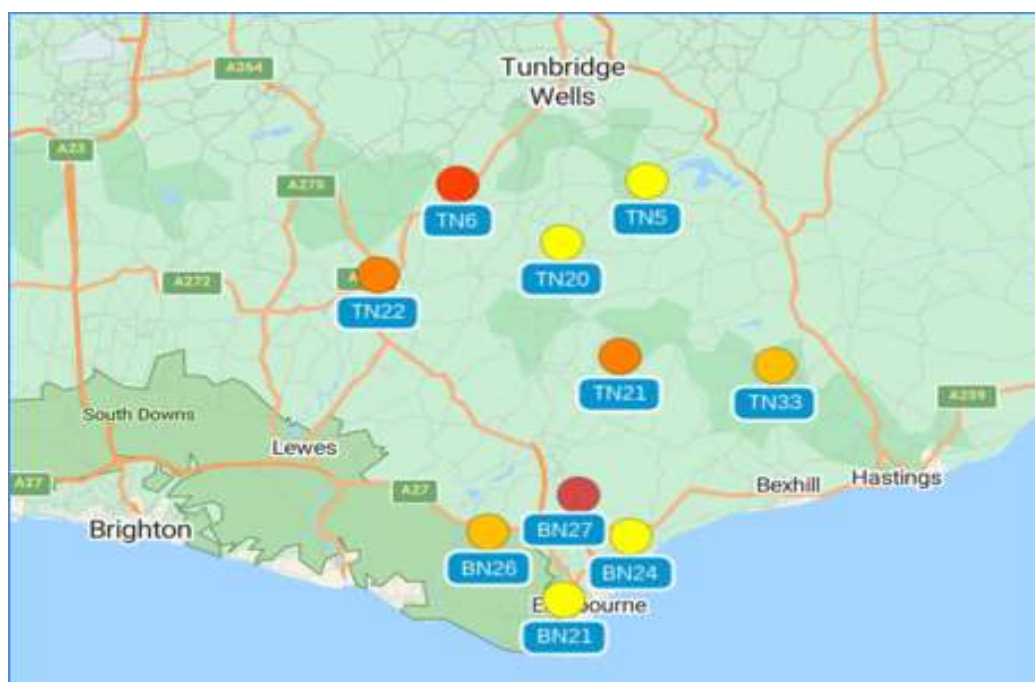
Bank Account	Statement No/Date	RFO has signed both records	Member signs both records	Notes
Clerks Account				
General Account				QTR.
Business Reserve				

**Petty Cash Checked**

Account Name	Is reconciliation correct? Month	Selected Voucher Name and findings	At time of visit, are petty cash floats aligned to SAGE balance
Town Council	✓ JAN.	SOLEMAN. KEYS £9.00.	142.34. -20p
Luxfords	✓ JAN.	POST OFFICE 150.00 INCOME.	102.03 -1p 00.

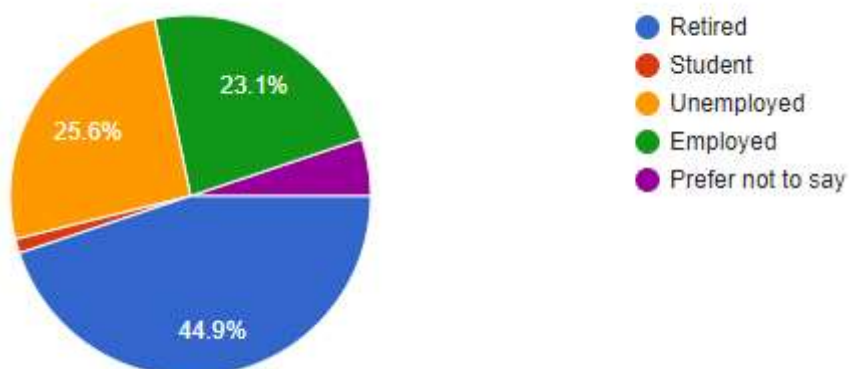


## Demographic data



- 42% of participants were in the BN27 area, followed by TN22 and TN6
- 75% of participants were female.
- 41% of participants were over 65 years old, 18% were aged 45-54 and 14% were aged 55 – 64 and 25-44 years old.

## Occupation



**There are 5 main themes of exploration from this survey covering Digital confidence, access, affordability, contacting service providers and Digital exclusion.**

## Digital confidence

More participants report feeling confident using the internet than not with the average score rating being 3.6 out of 5.

44 participants (56.41%) reported a score of 4 or 5 feeling confident using the internet.

15 participants (19.23%) reported scores of 1 or 2 feeling not confident using the internet.

47 participants (60.26%) responded saying that they do not seek support from either a trusted individual or a charity/organisation to do anything online on their behalf.

Of the 27 participants who identified that they either sought support from a trusted individual or a charity/organisation to act online on their behalf 25 participants (92.59%) sought support from a trusted individual only and **not** a charity/organisation.

### Case Studies:

**- Client seeking a review on Wealden District Council decision not to renew her tenancy. The client, aged 57yrs, single with dependent children, has poor mental health and limited ability to read and write. Not able to use digital services. Client relies on her 17yr old son to read emails.**

**- Client aged 78, has lived in the one bedroomed flat for 25 years, he is on a rolling tenancy, and the landlord has increased his rent in the past. Client has been told his rent will increase from £580 per month to £700 per month. Client does not use the Internet but has a niece who acts on his behalf.**

More participants report feeling confident completing an online form in English by themselves than not.

Just over 25 of participants report confidence levels of 5 (32 participants or 41.03%).

45 participants (57.69%) report confidence levels of 4 or 5. This is consistent with the responses to question 2 relating to confidence levels using the internet.

However, 21 participants (26.92%) reported lower confidence levels of 1 or 2.

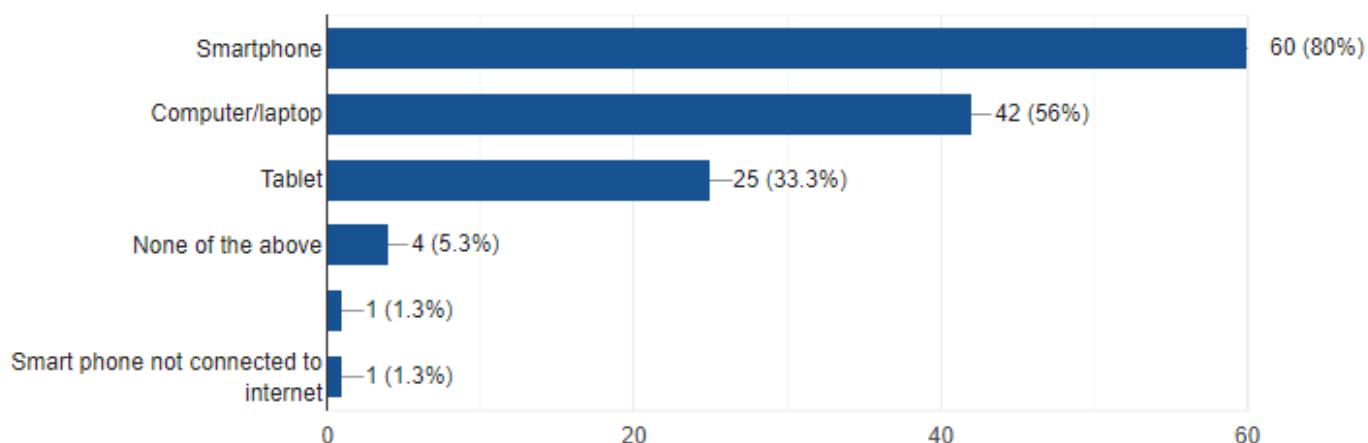
Overall, those with the lower confidence levels with a rating of 1 or 2 in response to both questions 8 and 2 have almost just as little confidence using the internet as they do completing an online form in English without assistance.

28 participants (35.9% of all participants) report confidence levels of 1 or 2 when using the internet, and 26 participants (33.3% of all participants) report confidence levels of 1 or 2 when completing an online form in English without assistance.

However, more participants report feeling *not at all* confident doing a more complex task (completing a form online in English without assistance) compared to those who report feeling not at all confident using the internet in general.



## Devices and internet access



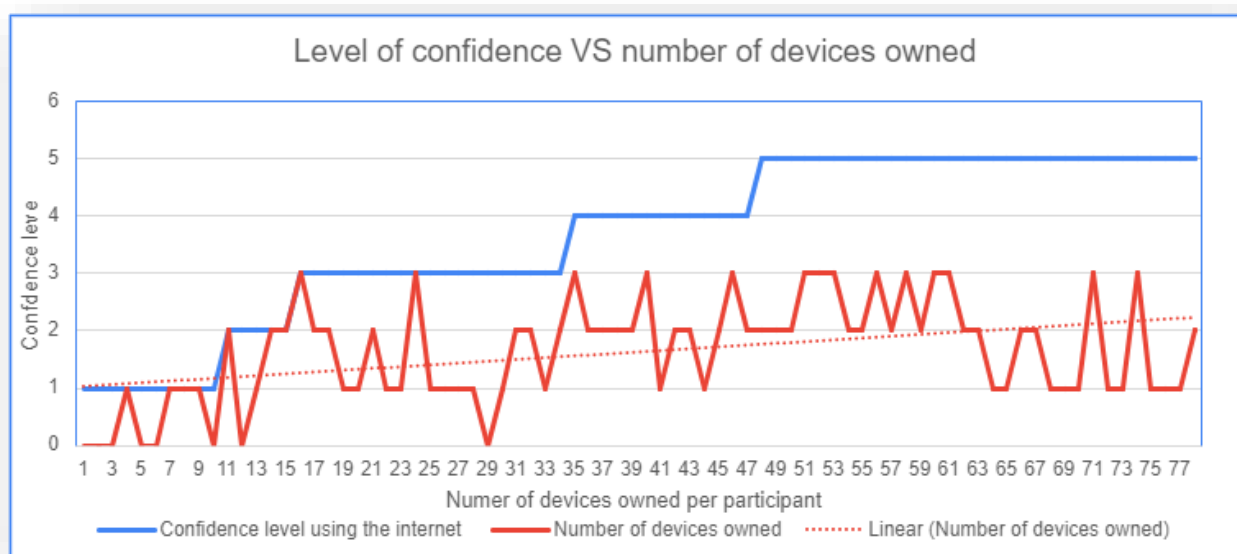
Where participants did not have a device, they rely on a neighbour or someone else device or have an old device that does not work.

**Cost is the biggest barrier to digital inclusion for those who are unemployed – this is less of a concern for participants with other employment status.**

The most common single device 26 participants (33.3%) own is a smartphone with 30 participants (38.46%) owning 2 devices.

The average number of devices owned across all 78 participants is 1.74.

Those with a self-reported answer of 'very confident' (5) in response to question 2 'how confident do you feel using the internet' own on average 1.96 devices, whereas those with self-reported as 'very unconfident' (1) own an average of 0.4 devices.



## **Affordability**

16 participants (20.51%) reported not having a working internet connection set up at home (\*1 additional participant was included in further analysis of this question making the total 17).

11 of these 17 participants responded saying that they did not have work internet connections set at home as they could not afford it - 12 including the participant who gave multiple reasons and cited this as one of them.

Overall, 70.59% of respondents who do not have working internet connections at home do not have it as they cannot afford it.

### **Case Studies:**

***- Client is a 74-year-old white British married man living in owned outright bungalow who is fuel poor. Client is currently recovering from cancer. As a result of limited income from pension (including Pension Credit) and increased costs - including recently having to buy a new boiler - client decided that the cost of broadband was too high and has cancelled his account.***

***- Client unable to access support/information digitally reliant on information sent in post - further impacted via the delay in Royal Mail post.***

## **The Internet in Public Places**

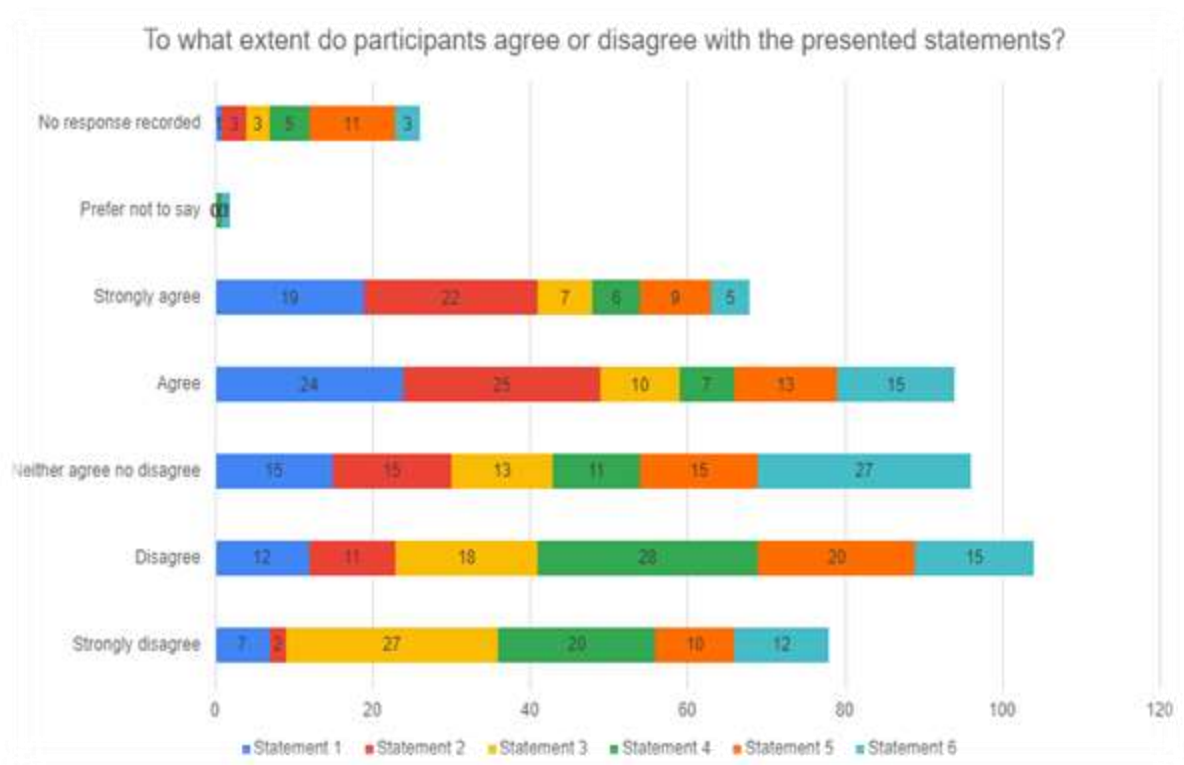
53 participants (67.95%) report not using the internet in public places for personal use/reasons. Over half of participants who do not have a working internet connection at home do not use the internet in public spaces for personal reasons.

44 out of 78 participants (56.41%) reported usually primarily using the data on their smartphones to access the internet.

### **Case Study:**

***- Client aged 73 years, uses her phone to access the internet, she cannot afford to look at extensive info online. Client said she does not know how to use a computer. Client has been signposted for IT support at the library.***

## Comments



### **Statement 1: I feel that accessing services online makes my life easier**

The majority of participants agree with the statement (24 participants or 18.72%). This was followed by 19 strongly agreeing with the statement (14.82%).

### **Statement 2: I am concerned about my privacy and security online**

The majority of participants agree with the statement (25 participants or 19.5%). This was followed by 22 strongly agreeing with the statement (17.16%).

### **Statement 3: I do not have the skills and/or knowledge to use the internet**

The majority of participants strongly disagree with the statement (27 participants or 21.06%). This was followed by 18 disagreeing with the statement (14.04%).

### **Statement 4: I do not use the internet because it is too expensive**

The majority of participants disagree with this statement (28 participants or 21.84%). This was followed by 20 strongly disagreeing with the statement (15.6%).

### **Statement 5: I feel that I am missing out by not using the internet**

The majority of participants disagree with this statement (20 participants or 15.6%). This was followed by 15 neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement (11.7%).

### **Statement 6: I think using the internet is anti-social**

The majority of participants neither agree nor disagree with the statement (27 participants or 21.06%). This is followed by 15 participants who disagree with the statement (11.7%) and 15 participants agreeing

## **Summary**

**More participants agree that accessing services online makes their life easier.**

**More participants agree that they are concerned about their privacy and security online.**

**More participants strongly disagree that they do not have the skills and/or knowledge to use the internet.**

**More participants disagree that they do not use the internet as they cannot afford it.**

**More participants disagree that they are missing out by not using the internet.**

**More participants neither agree nor disagree that using the internet is anti-social.**

**Over half of participants either agree or strongly agree with the statement 'I feel that accessing services online makes my life easier' and the statement 'I am concerned about my privacy and security online'.**

**12 Participants who answered to question 5 previously identified cost as a barrier to having a working internet connection set up at home and with 5 participants in response to the statement 'I feel that accessing services online makes my life easier' either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.**

23 participants (28.21%) responded to this question.

No participants listed access to local training or confidence building as their only answer - both these responses only appeared where participants selected more than 1 option in response to the question.

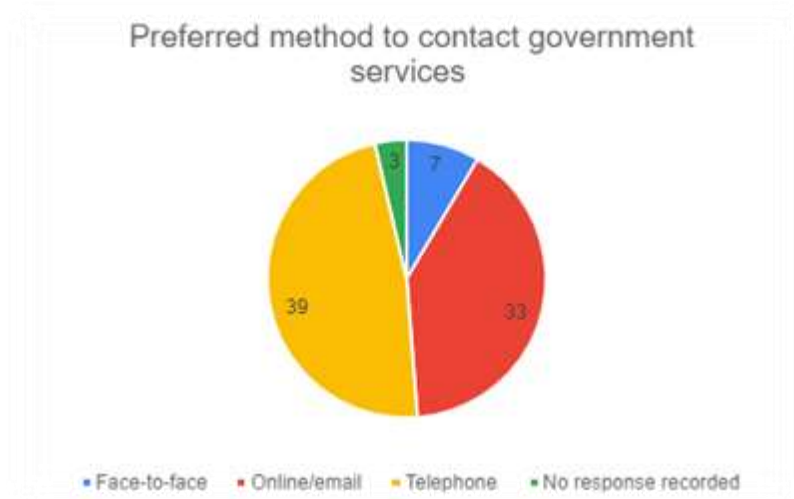
5 out of the 6 participants who selected 'I do not wish to use the internet', selected this as their only response.

50% of participants who responded to this question consistently report that they do not have a working internet connection set up at home due to issues with affordability across other questions.

Participants who do not use the internet are less likely to use the internet in public spaces but are more likely to seek support from a trusted individual/charity or organisation to do things online on their behalf.

These participants are also less likely to own electronic devices or have a working internet connection set up at home compared with those participants who do use the internet.

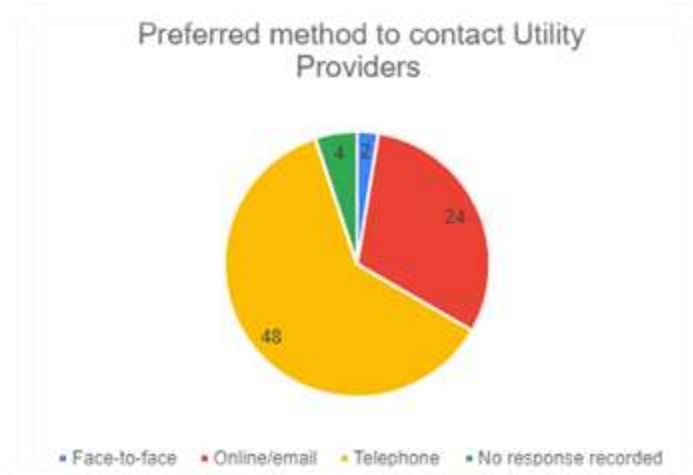
## Contacting service providers



3 participants indicated that they like to contact government services and their utility providers by post in the additional comments section. 11 out of the 25 comments (44%) received across all the questions related to the difficulty in contacting providers. These comments also highlighted issues around the length of time it can take to connect to and speak with providers by phone and the frustration that this difficulty can cause.

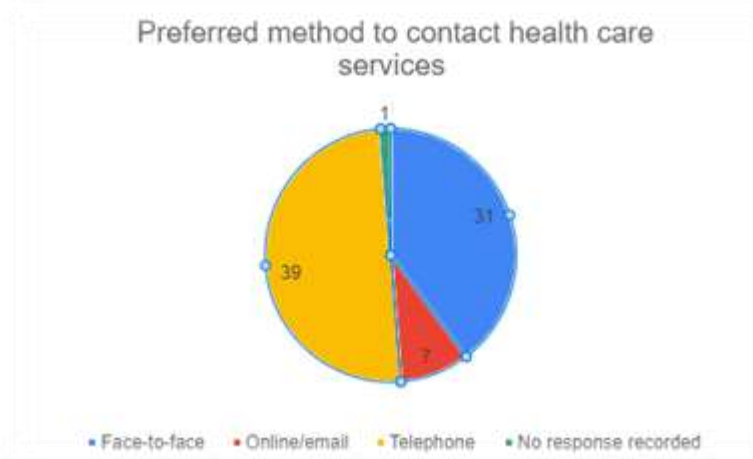
Just under half of all responses (47.56%) to question 12 indicated that participants prefer to contact government services by phone. This is followed closely by online/email with 33 responses (40.24%) indicating this preference.

This pattern of preferring telephone contact and then online/email is repeated when we look at responses to question 14 and how participants prefer to contact utility providers. Here, 48 participants or 61.54% of responses indicated that participants prefer to contact these service providers by telephone.



This is followed by 24 responses (30.77%) preferring online/email contact.

However, when we look at how participants prefer to access health services, 39 participants, exactly 50%, indicate that they prefer to contact health services by phone.



The second most popular response is face-to-face with 31 responses (39.74%) indicating this preference, with only 7 participants (8.97%) indicating a preference to contact health providers online or by email.

Out of the 238 total responses recorded across all three questions, over half of these were for telephone contact (126 responses or 52.94%) followed by online/email contact (64 responses or 26.89%) and then face-to-face contact with 40 responses or 16.81% responses indicating a preference to access services face-to-face.

### **Digitally excluded participants**

187 responses indicated digital exclusion or disadvantage was being experienced by participants.

The total number of participants who are experiencing digital exclusion or disadvantage across these questions is 69 out of the total 78 participants (88.46% of participants).

Most participants (21) have 1 recorded indicator and the most common factor for these participants, along with those who have 2 indicators, come from responses to question 7.

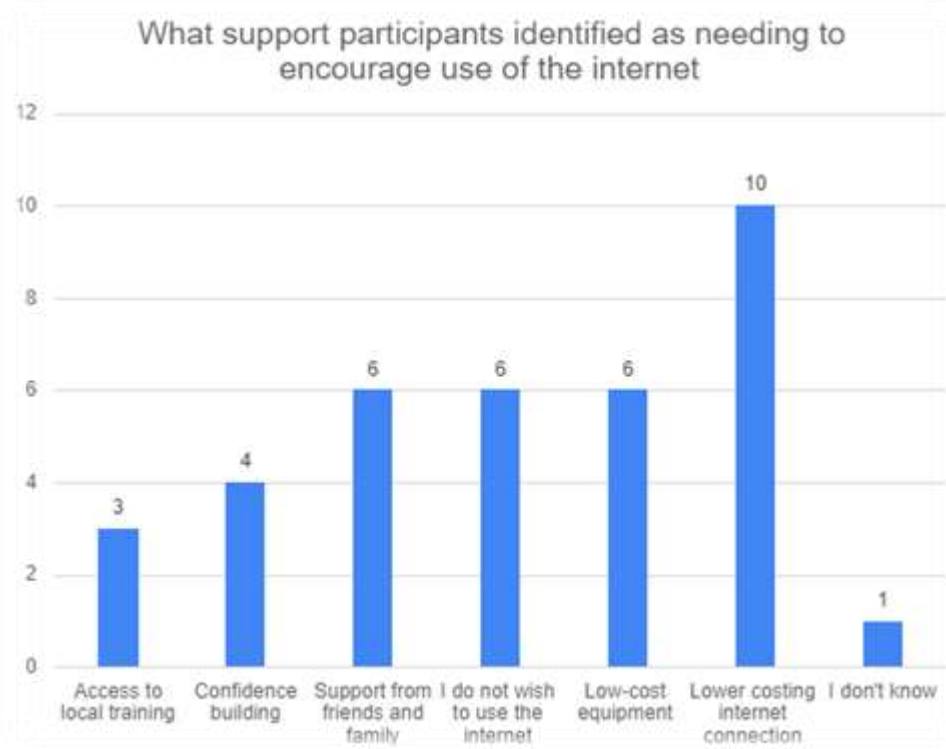
However, a total of 22 participants who are either digitally excluded/disadvantaged or at risk of this have 4 or 5 indicators - a total of 22 participants (31.88% of all participants with digital exclusion/disadvantage indicators) between them having 98 indicators - just over half of all indicators with 52.41% of all indicators belonging to these participants.

The complexity of participants' risk increases with the number of indicators from primarily focusing on access to wi-fi and participants using mobile data to connect to the internet, to confidence completing tasks online, having others do things online on their behalf, and not feeling confident using the internet and needing support to do so.

### **Case Study:**

***Access to Wealden Household Support fund, Client has no internet access and must use the library to access emails. Wealden District Council do not have anyone who can assist clients with the application and there is no alternative way of applying, online applications only. Client could lose out on additional money to support through the cost-of-living crisis. Client would need support to make this application, even if he had access to internet as he is not IT literate.***

## NON internet users



23 participants responded to this question, between them selecting 36 options. 9 participants selected more than 1 category recording 22 options between themselves, and 14 participants selected 1 option each in response to the question.

No participants listed access to local training or confidence building as their only answer - both these responses only appeared where participants selected more than 1 option in response to the question.

5 out of the 6 participants who selected 'I do not wish to use the internet' selected this as their only response.

6 participants (26.09%) each also selected support from friends and family, and lower-cost equipment as part of their responses.

10 participants (43.48%) selected lower costing internet connection as part of their response.

When we look at how these 10 participants responded to question 4 'Do you have a working internet connection set up at home?', 6 of these participants responded with 'no', whereas 4 responded with 'yes'.

5 of these 6 participants who selected 'no' as their response to question 4 then reported in question 5 'If you do not have an internet connection set up at home, please tell us why not' with because 'I cannot afford it'.

1 participant responded with it 'would be no use because I can't use it'.

From this we can see that 50% of these participants consistently report that they are unable to access the internet at home due to issues with affordability.



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our findings are that –

Participants are more likely to use a trusted friend or family member to assist them online rather than a charity.

Participants are using their mobile data due to the costs of internet packages, for many the cost is a factor to accessing services online.

It seems that companies/organisations no longer want to talk to people direct only through email or chat boxes.

The Government departments often carry no phone numbers.

AI, chatbots are replacing people and unless there is mention of a vulnerable person in the household you remain speaking to a robot.

Changes in 2025 with BT going digital will affect many of our clients, bringing big changes.

## **Recommendations/findings –**

1. Services need to continue to make their channels that clients use to contact them through adequately resourced and helpful to ensure that clients are not kept waiting a long time to get through (particularly by phone), and that they are able to successfully get through. Link to work with DWP currently ongoing around client difficulties in using phone service. Companies/organisations should provide consumers with a contact phone number as often these days no numbers are included in any correspondence only an email or other form of IT link.
2. Building relationships with clients' needs to be at the heart of all outreach work, and any service that offers support to clients who are digitally disadvantaged or excluded need to prioritise this.
3. The price of WiFi/mobile data needs to be affordable and accessible. Not being able to afford WiFi impacts on ability to partake in Universal Credit Work related activities as well as most jobs require online applications, as well as impacting all other areas of their lives.
4. Those who are most digitally disadvantaged are less likely to use the internet in public places for personal reasons, and so are less likely to also come across support in these spaces.
5. Services need to make sure that support to complete online forms that are required for their service is available, or that paper versions are available and accessible to clients who are digitally disadvantaged and unable to complete these online.
6. Participants preferred to contact health service by phone and then face to face, fewest number of participants preferring to contact health services online.



### **Acknowledgements**

This report was produced by Wealden Citizens Advice Research and Campaigns team – Jennifer Jadia, Emma Lindsay, Carola Coles, Sam Manton, and Ann Kates.

We would also like to say thank you to everyone else who provided us with all the relevant information to enable us to complete this digital survey report.