

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



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

PRESENT:

Cllr. C. Macve (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. D. Manvell

Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. P. Selby

Cllr. J. Love
Cllr. A. Smith

IN ATTENDANCE:

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda.

Councillor D. Manvell advised that he had a personal interest in agenda item 5.5 due to his position on the board of the Uckfield Community Fridge, and their link to an application for community grants, and a prejudicial interest in agenda item 6.3 due to this position. Councillor Manvell was aware that he would need to leave the room for agenda item 6.3.

Councillor J. Love declared a prejudicial interest in agenda items 5.4 and 5.5 due to her position as Chair of the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society. Although specific applications were unlikely to be discussed individually, if this were the case, Councillor Love would need to leave the room.

The Chair for this meeting, Councillor C. Macve also declared a prejudicial interest in agenda items 5.4 and 5.5 due to his role as Chair of Executive Committee at Luxford Centre Management Committee. As Councillor Macve was chairing the committee meeting, another member would be appointed to chair this agenda item.

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 the Chair, Councillor D. Ward due to another commitment. The Vice-Chair Councillor C. Macve would take on the role of Chair for this meeting.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 5 February 2024

GP41.03.24 Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 5 February 2024 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 the following items:
GP32.12.23 – progress update on the Hub/Source site;
GP38.02.24 – consider the Annual Investment Strategy;
GP39.02.24 – utility provider renewal.

4.3 Project list

Members noted the report.

5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

5.1 To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

5.2 To consider the income and expenditure reports to the end of January 2024

Members reviewed the reports. Councillor Macve advised that it was very encouraging to see that the income levels were above that budgeted. Sadly the expenditure was also higher than that predicted for this point in the financial year, although the use of earmarked reserves for specific projects, was helping to balance the figures. Councillor Macve felt we should record our thanks to the office staff for their hard work on this. Members agreed and thanked officers for the explanations, before noting the report.

5.3 To note the report of the Internal Auditor (interim audit on 27 February 2024)

Councillor C. Macve advised that the report confirmed that the Town Council had retained a robust system of financial control. Councillor C. Macve also commended the detail of the report from the Internal Auditor. Members recorded their thanks to the auditor for their due diligence and efforts, before noting the report.

5.4 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 28 February 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 28 February 2024.

Members asked if in the minutes of the meeting next year, if the amount requested by applicants could be incorporated in the table presented so both they and members of the public could view the recommended allocations in comparison with the amount asked for by each of the applicants.

It was also questioned whether more detail should be included in the minutes to explain the level of detail that the Town Clerk went into, prior to and at the meeting to consider member declaration of interests and where dispensations had been granted. The Town Clerk confirmed that this could be added. For the time being, the report the Town Clerk prepared for the meeting would be uploaded to the Town Council's webpages as a supplementary paper for the meeting, so it was accessible should anyone have any questions.

Members received and noted the contents of the draft minutes of the recent Finance Sub-Committee held on 28 February 2024.

5.5 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 28 February 2024

Councillor Selby was appointed Chair for this agenda item, due to the prejudicial interest of Councillor Macve.

Councillor Manvell wished to check what would happen to the remaining funds unallocated from the £25,000 grant funding available. This would be just over £2,221.38. The Town Clerk advised that a report was usually taken to General Purposes Committee each April/May to consider carry forwards from the previous financial year, so any funds which remained unspent at the end of the financial year 2024/25 would be recommended to be carried forward into earmarked reserves. This funding was allocated under the General Power of Competence so thankfully had quite a broad remit for use.

GP42.03.24 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations for the 16 applications, with a total sum of £22,778.62 being awarded under the General Power of Competence for Uckfield Town Council's Community Grant Programme in 2024-25.

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 A. Smith thought the Source site was looking really smart, and wanted to say a big well done to all those involved in getting the works completed, and bringing this building back into use.

Members referred to the recent issues experienced with the Signal Box. The Town Clerk confirmed the location of nearby CCTV, and that she had a meeting with Sussex Police about a couple of matters on Wednesday 20 March, so would address her concerns about this area and the bottom of Luxford Field at that time.

Members subsequently noted the report.

6.2. To consider the installation of temporary parking posts at Victoria Pleasure Ground

The Town Clerk used powerpoint presentation slides to present photos of the proposed area to place temporary parking posts in the parking bays at Victoria Pleasure Ground.

The Town Clerk reminded members of the suggested steps that office staff wished to take to address parking issues at Victoria Pleasure Ground, as discussed at the Full Council meeting on 26 February 2024. Residents and users of the park and pavilion had been complaining in recent months that they had been unable to park at the pleasure ground. The parking was for the users of the recreation ground and open spaces, and at present it was thought local commuters and workers in New Town were using the car parking area. Longer term ideas would be presented to members in due course, but to ensure that the

Grounds staff, staff using Sussex Support Services and the sports clubs using the pavilion and sports pitches could access parking through the week in particular, it was proposed to place ten temporary posts with associated signage and locks, on the ten parking bays on the eastern side of the car park.

Members discussed the difficulties experienced in this location. The only concerns members raised was that if the posts were down at the weekend to free up spaces for the sports clubs and park users, it was possible that we could find a vehicle parked in that space before the Grounds staff arrived at 7.15am on the Monday morning. It was questioned whether a proportion of the posts could be kept up at the weekend. The Town Clerk suggested that we proceed as planned and react accordingly.

Members suggested that any small signs placed by these bays say when the spaces were reserved such as Monday to Friday 7.00am until 4.30pm.

GP43.03.24 Members **RESOLVED** to approve for the installation of parking posts and associated signage for ten parking spaces at Victoria Pleasure Ground.

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

- 6.3 To consider a response from the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC
Members read the update provided from the Uckfield Community Fridge CIC and confirmed they were happy with their intentions.

Councillor D. Manvell returned to the meeting.

7.0 POLICY
None.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

- 8.1 To receive a report on Health and Safety within the Council
Members noted that the sickness levels had been particularly high this winter for self-certified sickness. The Town Clerk agreed and said that although these viruses were not testing positive for Covid, the symptoms of the viruses were similar. It was confirmed that staff were still being asked to take a test on the arrival of symptoms, to reduce the spread of sickness amongst staff.

Members subsequently noted the report.

- 8.2 To receive Members' audit report
Members noted the completed audit reports for December 2023 and January 2024.

9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- 9.1 To consider reports from: -
(i) Wealden Citizen's Advice
A report was shared with members on the results of their Digital Fairness Survey. Councillor Manvell would seek to share this further with Wealden DC's Overview & Scrutiny members, as they had recently been discussing the subject of digital exclusion.

Members discussed digital exclusion, and asked if further information on available information and training/skills support could be promoted in the foyer of the Civic Centre. Members also questioned whether consortiums or offers could be considered by Wealden DC similar to the home energy schemes – such as a reduced rate on broadband connections. Members subsequently noted the report.

- (ii) Uckfield Volunteer Centre
Nothing to report.
- (iii) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Mgt Committee
Nothing to report.
- (iv) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel
Nothing to report.

10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP44.03.24 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.

12.1 To note bad debts

Members were pleased to see the reduction of some of the bad debts, and subsequently noted the report.

12.2 To consider contract arrangements for Festive Lights for 2024-25

The Town Clerk explained that there was one year left on the current contract for the Festive Lights, and to leave would result in a penalty charge of £5k despite the service over the past two winters being poor. There were a mix of views but members felt that the contract should be carried through to complete the contract and avoid these high charges. The work which the Town Clerk explained was taking place with East Sussex Highways to check all the lighting infrastructure/power supplies were up to scratch, would be ready by autumn, and members advised that office staff would need to monitor the contract closely this winter.

12.3 To consider contract arrangements for credit card terminals

GP45.03.24 Members **RESOLVED** for office staff to proceed with changing to a new provider for the Town Council's credit card terminals, in order to reduce costs and refer back to monthly statements rather than daily.

12.4 To consider the draft lease agreement for the Quickborn Suite

GP46.03.24 Subject to one point of clarification with the Solicitors, three members voted in favour and **RESOLVED** for office staff to proceed with the lease agreement.

12.5 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members were pleased to receive this report and noted the contents.

The meeting closed at 8.28pm.