

Meeting of the Full Council

Monday 8 April 2024

Agenda item 9.0

END OF YEAR PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2023/24

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a review at the end of the financial year on the Town Council's priorities for 2023/24 (end of March 2024).
- 1.2 The priorities identified for delivery in 2023/24 consisted of initiatives which were often additional to the day to day responsibilities of the Town Council, but demonstrated that by working together with colleagues and partner agencies, we can achieve a great deal for the town and its residents.
- 1.3 Organisations often spend time producing plans or lists of priorities, but do not review progress until the end of the year. With this paper, the Town Clerk provides an update to members to explain the progress being made to deliver these priorities.

2.0 End of Year 2023/24: Progress Update





- 2.1 Of the 12 priorities, eight are complete, one is making good progress and on schedule, and three have recently seen progress but were delayed during the past financial year. This is exceptional work, and highlights what can be achieved by working together across staffing teams, councillors, contractors and partner agencies.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to review this progress report, and note the work undertaken to date.




Appendices: Appendix A: End of Year 2023/24 Progress Report
Contact Officer: Holly Goring




Key:



 = Progress behind schedule	 = Some progress has been made
 = On schedule for completion	 = Completed


APPENDIX A: End of Year - 2023/24 Progress Update

Priority	Status	Notes	Lead Committee	Lead Officer
COMMUNITY GRANTS We will award up to £54,566 of community grant funding to local groups and charitable organisations for the period 2023/24 (£27,566 to community groups, and £27,000 through service level agreements)	✓	All payments have now been made (first instalments in May and second instalments in October 2023).	General Purposes Committee	Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
PUBLIC EVENTS AND ANNIVERSARIES IN THE TOWN We will work alongside the local business community and local community groups to deliver two free public events within the town; King's Coronation and Weald on the Field	✓	With heavy downpours forecast for the King's Coronation, we moved the event inside at short notice to the Weald Hall of the Civic Centre. It was a great atmosphere and the event saw in the region of 30 guests from Arques-la-Bataille join a packed hall of local residents for a picnic and street food, entertained by live music and dance performances. It was such a lovely event. The Weald on the Field event was a great success on Saturday 12 August 2023, and was very well attended from early on. The range of street food and drink stands, and live music performances were very well received.	Full Council	Town Clerk
TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS We will look to upgrade our server and office IT to ensure our software and infrastructure remains secure. We will upgrade our Wi-Fi within the Civic Centre and seek to undertake further improvements to meet hirer needs.	✓	The server upgrade was undertaken on 30 June 2023. The computers that required upgrading were upgraded towards the end of August 2023. The Wi-Fi infrastructure was upgraded in August 2023. We experienced severe internet disruption since the week before Christmas. After replacing the router, which we believe was destroyed in a power cut the previous weekend, we also found an issue on the broadband line. This has since been replaced with a new fibre connection performing at much higher speeds, and a new router.	General Purposes Committee	Estates & Facilities Manager

Priority	Status	Notes	Lead Committee	Lead Officer
<p>ELECTIONS We will support elected councillors with their role in the community and provide them with opportunities to engage with residents and learn about the Town Council's day to day work, and projects.</p>		<p>New Councillors attended 'New Councillor training' with East Sussex Association of Local Councils.</p> <p>A strategic planning workshop was booked in on 3 October 2023, to enable councillors to better understand the council's budget areas and expenditure, and a second workshop took place on 20 November 2024 to look at aspects of the Strategic Plan. Work began more recently with Councillors to review the contents of the Draft Local Plan – a workshop style meeting took place on 25 March 2024 and all Councillors will be expected to contribute to the process. A further workshop is taking place on 18 April 2024, whereby all Councillors are invited, to look specifically at infrastructure requirements within the town. These workshops assist with increasing knowledge and building working relations between councillors.</p>	Full Council	Town Clerk
<p>POLICY REVIEW We will be undertaking a full review of the Town Council's policies in respect of personnel (staffing matters), GDPR and respect in the workplace.</p>		<p>The Internal Audit end of year review provided some recommendations of how to improve our policy framework, with a number of actions already completed.</p> <p>A light-touch organisational review was undertaken by an external company on 13 and 14 March 2024. We are currently awaiting the report, but found this a useful exercise to review our service provision, staffing and identify further efficiencies and improvements.</p> <p>Work to our GDPR and HR policies will follow from these audits.</p>	General Purposes	Town Clerk/ Assistant Town Clerk
<p>UPGRADING GROUNDS EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES We will upgrade equipment to ensure the Grounds team have safe functioning apparatus to undertake open space grass cutting and maintenance for sports and leisure. Work will also be carried out to clean and refurbish the rainwater harvester.</p>		<p>Contractors have visited site to carry out a thorough deep clean and full service to the rainwater harvester. They have recently returned to undertake their annual check.</p> <p>The new Major Contoura rotary mower attachment has been used for this grass cutting season and new purchases and sales have been undertaken of grounds equipment to provide a better suite of equipment for their needs.</p> <p>With the funds received from the sale of the Ransomes Mower, a new small mulching mower has been purchased and a small rotary mower.</p> <p>Further purchases to assist the Grounds team and Ranger with their day to day work, were identified within the budget setting process. The part exchange of the tractor has been arranged and a new tractor due to be paid over two years, is due to arrive mid April 2024.</p>	Environment and Leisure Committee	Estates & Facilities Manager

Priority	Status	Notes	Lead Committee	Lead Officer
<p>WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN We continue our work to deliver our 10-year woodland management plan to ensure ongoing maintenance and tackle diseased trees affected by ash dieback.</p>		<p>Works were undertaken in Boothland Wood and Nightingale Woods, between 6th and 8th November 2023 to address ash dieback.</p> <p>New trees were planted in March 2024, in line with the restocking requirements and Town Council's tree policy.</p> <p>Improvements have commenced to the steps/footways in the woodlands and nature reserves using sleepers, and match grant funding from Wealden DC.</p>	<p>Environment & Leisure Committee</p>	<p>Estates & Facilities Manager</p>
<p>GRASS VERGE CUTTING We will continue to contribute to the costs of East Sussex County Council's grass verge cutting contract to retain a good standard of service and ensure visibility is maintained on pavements and highways.</p>		<p>The payment was made to East Sussex County Council for 2023/24 to maintain existing service standards and frequency of cuts to the town's grass verges. <i>(Urban verges used to receive 5-6 cuts per annum but East Sussex County Council can now only afford to fund two. Rural verges receive two cuts per annum).</i></p>	<p>Environment and Leisure Committee</p>	<p>Town Clerk</p>
<p>TOWN COUNCIL'S BUILDINGS We will focus our attention on the Civic Centre, Foresters Hall, Victoria Pavilion and West Park Pavilion and ensure we are compliant with the latest safety regulations. We will upgrade flooring, redecorate the Weald Hall and explore initiatives for upgrading older heating and plumbing systems.</p>		<p>Great work and progress was made to improve our facilities and ensure they not only look up to standard for our hirers but also met compliance standards.</p> <p>The Ashdown Room was redecorated and a new floor laid.</p> <p>Despite very tight timescales between Monday 23 October and Friday 27 October, the Weald Hall was redecorated. The kitchen floor of Luxfords Restaurant was replaced, a new cooker installed and the walls redecorated. This was evidence of team work amongst our staff and contractors to meet the tight deadline, with a performance in the Weald Hall on the evening of 27 October.</p> <p>The Hub site was demolished and staff from the Estates & Facilities service areas worked hard with external contractors to ensure the Source and wider site was safe, clean, refurbished and met fire and electrical regulations before being used as the Nativity scene by the local Churches for Late Night Shopping. The staff and contractors worked long hours to make this happen, and once again fantastic evidence of team work, to make it happen for the leaseholders and public.</p>	<p>General Purposes Committee</p>	<p>Estates & Facilities Manager</p>

		<p>A unused doorway was blocked up to reduce water ingress in Foresters Hall. PAT testing has been carried out in all buildings. Fire door improvements have been undertaken in the Civic Centre. Emergency lighting has been upgraded in all buildings. Repairs have been undertaken to flooring in Foresters Hall and 2A Vernon Road. EICRs are currently being completed along with remedial works in all buildings. Works are booked in to replace the plumbing and heating within the rear of Foresters Hall, with a heat source system in April 2024. Quotations have been received and are due to be presented to Full Council on 8 April 2024 for the full replacement of plumbing and heating in the Victoria Pavilion.</p>		
Priority	Status	Notes	Lead Committee	Lead Officer
<p>INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING We will work with local partner agencies, residents and local businesses to understand the infrastructure requirements for Uckfield, in regards to sport, leisure and recreation and community facilities and the future impact on the Town Council's provision of allotment and cemetery space.</p>		<p>Much of the focus has been placed on responding to major planning applications, and preparing statements of case and presentations to appeals scheduled in by the Planning Inspector during 2023-24. These exercises are incredibly resource-intensive.</p> <p>A workshop is planned with all members on 18 April 2024.</p>	Full Council	Town Clerk
<p>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN We will support the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to prepare a draft Uckfield Neighbourhood Plan ready for submission to the local Planning authority.</p>		<p>Much of the focus has been placed on responding to major planning applications, and preparing statements of case and presentations to appeals scheduled in by the Planning Inspector during 2023-24. These exercises are incredibly resource-intensive.</p> <p>Now that Wealden DC's Draft Local Plan has been placed out for public consultation, we can ensure that the Vision, objectives and evidence base aligns within the draft Uckfield Neighbourhood Plan aligns with that of the Wealden Local Plan, before sending to the Planning Policy team for screening.</p>	Full Council	Town Clerk

<p>CLIMATE CHANGE We will host an educational activity with primary schools, consider alternative fuel supplies in our wider building portfolio, consider adding insulation within our buildings, review the equipment we purchase, and manage our land for nature, with a continued focus on conservation and tree planting.</p>		<p>This work has had to be placed on hold due to other priorities but continues to be considered in our decision-making. A meeting of the Climate Change Steering Group is taking place in April 2024.</p>	<p>Environment and Leisure Committee</p>	<p>Town Clerk</p>
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