

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 8 April 2024 at 7.00 pm
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Bennett	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. B. Cox	Cllr. S. Mayhew
Cllr. D. French (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr. B. Reed
Cllr. V. Frost	Cllr. P. Selby
Cllr. J. Love (Town Mayor)	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. P. Ullmann	Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

2 members of the public
County Councillor Chris Dowling
District Councillor Kelvin Williams
James Hollingdale Estates & Facilities Manager
Holly Goring Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda. They were advised that notice should be given at this part of the meeting of any intended declaration and that the nature of the interest should then be declared later at the commencement of the item or when the interest became apparent.

Councillor J. Love advised that she had a personal interest in agenda item 17.1 due to her employment with a business that runs out of part of Victoria Pavilion.

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

FC.109.04.24 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable residents and County and District Councillors to speak.

A local resident wished to speak on agenda item 10.0 in relation to pavement parking within the town. They recalled it being a hot topic at the annual town meeting the previous month which had generated a number of ideas being put forward. The resident felt it had become a lawless town when it came to parking.

People were parking on the pavements, outside schools and there was no consideration for pedestrians. The reality was that Wealden District was one of only two districts in the country who did not have civil parking enforcement. The

resident wanted to remind people that the charges introduced could remain low. New ideas were being piloted in areas near schools in Kent and elsewhere. It was clear that Sussex Police would never be involved in parking matters, regardless of their responsibilities. The Town Council didn't have a lot of power or authority with regards to parking but felt changes needed to be made for the safety of people, and to improve quality of life. It was a serious matter, and there had to be a solution.

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

Councillor C. Dowling referred to matters in his area. He had been grateful to work with Councillors Bedwell and Reed regarding concerns around road safety and speeding on the new development of Ridgewood Place.

The recent repair works and patching works in Keld Drive had been completed and gone well. Works over three weeks on London Road which had taken place overnight had been a little disruptive but the works were considered of good quality and a vast improvement.

East Sussex County Council Social services were under enormous pressure (both Children Services and Adult Social Care). These service areas had come in largely over budget. The demands on these services were getting bigger and bigger. Some cases of Children's Services were costing the County Council in excess of £1million a year. The individuals were entitled to this support but it was expensive.

The Town Mayor wished to relay her thanks to County Councillor Claire Dowling for her action on addressing the litter left outside Bishops by contractors. The residents were happy with the outcome.

Councillor D. Bennett highlighted his concern with the condition of the road between Framfield and Blackboys between Framfield Grange and Pump Lane. It had been in a severely poor condition for weeks and yet not been addressed despite reports being made. It needed to be repaired within two hours or the carriageway needed cordoning off. It was not just the imminent danger caused to vehicles who tried to avoid the pothole but the wear and tear on vehicles which could cause accidents later on.

Councillor V. Frost congratulated Councillor Dowling on his recent appointment as President of the Uckfield Chamber of Commerce. Councillor Frost advised that she was still receiving complaints from residents who lived on Rocks Park Road, regarding the recent jointing works. Residents felt the quality was poor and were concerned about the standard of work. Residents had also received verbal abuse from contractors. Damage had been caused to the kerbs and they questioned the age of the machinery used by contractors. The Town Clerk encouraged residents to report concerns direct and when they occurred, as the works had now been completed. Councillor Dowling and the Town Clerk would follow up with ES Highways.

Cllr Ben Cox arrived at 7.18pm.

Councillor B. Reed had emailed ES Highways in relation to three issues – a massive hole had appeared in Budletts Lane, and been reported on more than one occasion. It posed a risk to pedestrians should a vehicle mount the pavement if they hit the pothole. Councillor Reed made a recommendation relating to the software tool being used and was keen to know the schedule of works for highway repairs and resurfacing.

Councillor Macve, was grateful for the works undertaken on London Road, and had also seen the scale of the pothole/hole on Budletts Lane. He had asked repeatedly but was yet to receive a response about what was happening to Copwood roundabout on the Uckfield bypass. Improvements were due to be undertaken following completion of the 100th house on Ridgewood Farm, but it hadn't yet been completed.

Councillor French raised again, the concern regarding the subsidence in Bell Farm Road near to Brookside (entrance to the Industrial estate). She was worried that it was due to a culvert.

Councillor Reed had shared a detailed written update on matters within her ward, and matters relating to Wealden DC. She advised that there had been quite a bit of concern regarding an oak tree on the site of Horsted Pond Farm. The Tree Officer at Wealden DC thought that the recent activity near the tree may have related to a bat survey but investigations were underway. Councillor Reed had asked to call in a planning application for nine properties off Lewes Road, due to the number of entrances now being created from developments onto Lewes Road and the close proximity to the New Road junction, the parked cars down by Ridgewood Post Office, the traffic calming measures and bus stops.

Councillor P. Selby advised that Ridgewood Post Office were concerned that with the recent developments off Lewes Road (Siggs Yard, Ridgewood House and Horsted Pond Farm) that more utility works would be undertaken as a result.

Councillor D. French advised that it was her first official day that day as a Wealden District Councillor, following the by-election on 4 April 2024.

Councillor K. Williams provided a detailed update to members. Wealden District Council had adopted an Environmental framework. The principles were to be encouraged amongst licencees and event organisers. Some had taken the approach to mean events would have to be cancelled, this wasn't the case. It was about looking to introduce more environmental approaches, such as removing or reducing single use plastic. Wealden DC may introduce a rating system like the food hygiene awards.

The Draft Local Plan was being exhibited at the Civic Centre on Saturday 13 April. Residents were being encouraged to engage in the process either in person or virtually. A report was being processed through the District Council's Cabinet to recommend that a top slice element of CIL funding (Community Infrastructure Levy) be set aside for small scale sporting events and venues. This would allow for small events or playing fields to apply for funding to get extra support. The decision once granted would have to be ratified by Full Council.

Wealden DC had supported the Wealden Volunteer Centre's open day. The Manager (Mrs Judith Austin) had done an excellent job at taking the organisation from strength to strength.

Sussex Bay, a new organisation which saw local authorities such as ESCC, Wealden DC and voluntary organisations working together to improve the marine environment.

Wealden Crematorium had an open day scheduled in for 31 July 2024 between 11am until 3pm.

Councillor Williams had encouraged Wealden DC's CEO to engage with the Integrated Care Body who look after all the medical centres in the area, to understand what needed to be done to deliver more medical facilities.

Councillor B. Reed referred to Uckfield Leisure Centre. Councillor Williams reminded members that everyone was working hard to do everything they could between the local authorities and Freedom Leisure to provide a long-term agreement. Personally Councillor Williams felt that swimming was a vital skill as a former lifeguard.

Councillor Cox referred to a recent Licensing Committee where there had been a robust discussion in relation to the mentioned green aspects of licensing. He also referred to the conversations held on keeping taxis safe whilst ensuring they remained financially viable for drivers. Taxi drivers had previously challenged Wealden DC and therefore it was important that the committee balanced the needs of safety and ensuring vehicles were roadsafe whilst also keeping costs affordable.

FC.110.04.24 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

County Councillor C. Dowling left the room.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors K. Bedwell, M. McClafferty, and D. Manvell. Apologies were also received from County Councillor Claire Dowling.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 26 February 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.111.04.24 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 26 February 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

5.2 To note the minutes of the meeting of the Annual Town meeting on 20 March, and for the Town Council's committees to take forward the issues raised as appropriate. Members subsequently noted the minutes from this meeting.

5.3 Action List

Members noted the contents of the report and wished to remove FC.104.02.24.

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

- FC.112.04.24** (a) Plans Committee of the 11 March and 2 April 2024
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee on 11 March and 2 April 2024.
- FC.113.04.24** (b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 4 March 2024
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee on 4 March 2024.
- FC.114.04.24** (c) General Purposes Committee of the 18 March 2024
It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committee on 18 March 2024.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

(i) The Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Joint Committee

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Gatwick Airport Consultation Panel

Members noted a typo in the third paragraph. The report should have referred to 245 aircraft movements not £245k movements.

Members discussed the grant funding schemes and Councillor D. Bennett asked if there was a formalised way for schools to apply for support. Councillor C. Macve advised that unfortunately Uckfield and Heathfield fell outside of Gatwick Airport's boundary for the STEM initiative. He reassured Councillor Bennett that Gatwick Airport were in very close contact with schools and colleges so members agreed that it would be useful for them to widen their scope, before members noted the report.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Civic Centre Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(ii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Nothing to report at present.

(iii) Uckfield Dementia Forum

Members noted the update provided.

(iv) Infrastructure Working Group

Nothing to report at present. The next meeting was on 18 April 2024.

9.0 TO CONSIDER THE END OF YEAR PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2023/24 (Q4)

Members were provided with an end of year review of progress made towards the council's annual priorities for 2023-24.

Councillor C. Macve wished to congratulate all of the staff. It was very encouraging to see the extent of the work throughout the year.

Members accepted and noted the report.

10.0 TO CONSIDER CURRENT ISSUES WITH PAVEMENT PARKING, AND PROPOSALS FOR UNDERTAKING A CAMPAIGN

Members had received a report which highlighted the level of concern raised by residents and some businesses about pavement parking, parking obstructions and parking on yellow lines. The matter had been raised at the Annual Town meeting, by a local residents' association and residents near to a local primary school.

The report suggested that Town Council staff create a communications campaign which would focus on key hotspots within the town and key messages to address poor parking behaviour and to have respect for pedestrians, and those with pushchairs, buggy's or wheelchairs.

Members had been asked whether they were happy to support a campaign, and were asked to indicate any particular hotspots of concern, that could feature within the campaign.

Hotspots highlighted by members included:

Town Centre	Parking on the pavement outside Mojava (High Street) People parking in the disabled bay outside Card Factory (High Street)/Caprinos People parking on the pavements by the takeaways (<i>just north of Civic Approach by Indian takeaways and outside Fish and Grill</i>) Parking in Upper High Street on pavements to collect takeaways and pop into convenience stores Parking bays by Framfield Road junction were misused. It was usually the same vehicles parking all day. Grange Road – parking on pavement and double yellow lines
Wider Town	Regency Close – ambulance wasn't able to get through to member in an emergency Mill Lane – corners by Citroen Garage (so congested, difficult to access) Keld Avenue/Framfield Road – parking on corners of junctions had affected visibility for other road users. Farriers Way – commuters parking up road and into Forge Rise

The main issues identified were:

- Parking on double yellow lines;
- Lorries parking on pavements;
- Parking on pavements to collect takeaways or to collect deliveries for these businesses;
- People parking in disabled bays who didn't have a badge displayed;
- People parking across dropped kerbs;

Suggestions were made further to the idea of a communications campaign, which included:

- (i) To explore an idea similar to Community Speedwatch – members and residents recording the vehicle registration plates, and reporting vehicles who were parking poorly, and reporting these vehicles to Operation Crackdown. Notices or letters could be placed on the car, and then they would know they were being monitored;
- (ii) Questioned whether it would be worth approaching Network Rail about the large station car park, as this was often underused to see if a partnership initiative could be set up;
- (iii) It was suggested that any campaign undertaken should remain positive and residents be reminded about why parking was currently free, and to effectively adhere, otherwise this could be lost;
- (iv) Request that ES Highways repaint the road markings for the disabled bays so they were obvious to road users and clearly marked;

- (v) Consider creating loading and unloading bays. If there were regular spots, it would manage the use of the on-street parking bays better;
- (vi) Review the two parking bays by the Framfield Road junction as these were misused and there was no provision for disabled parking in that area of the town;
- (vii) Consider the placement of planters in the hotspot areas such as Mojava, outside Truffles and Upper High Street;
- (viii) Review the previous materials introduced by Jeremy Leach from Wealden DC about behaviour change. The Town Clerk still had some of this material;
- (ix) Engage with the local businesses and create posters and stickers for shop windows;
- (x) With the Police & Crime Commissioner elections in May, it was thought that this would be a good time to ask the candidates about their thoughts.

FC.115.04.24 With unanimous support, members **RESOLVED** to approve for the Town Clerk and Marketing & Community Engagement Officer to proceed with a communications campaign around poor parking behaviour.

11.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL ANY LEASE AGREEMENTS OR LICENCES READY FOR EXECUTION

The Town Clerk explained that the copy of the lease agreement for the Quickborn Suite presented to General Purposes Committee on 18 March 2024, had been approved. The paperwork was just being prepared for execution.

FC.116.04.24 Members **RESOLVED** that subject to the preparation of the final lease agreement, that two Councillors be authorised to sign and seal the lease agreement in the presence of the Town Clerk.

District Councillor K. Williams and the two members of the public left the room.

12.0 NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the update provided.

13.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT

There were no deeds of grant on this occasion.

14.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received in time for the meeting.

15.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk advised that further to discussions at the Annual Town meeting that the Luxfords Centre had been in touch, to request support for a nomination to be made to Wealden DC to record the site as an asset of community value. The Town Clerk explained that since receiving the initial enquiry, the Luxford Centre Executive Committee had now made a nomination direct.

Wealden DC had advised that some changes were due to be made to waste collection times from 15 April 2024, due to the increase in properties on their rounds. Members were asked to help spread the word amongst their residents.

The Royal Portrait of his Majesty, King Charles III had arrived and would be added to the wall of the Council Chamber in due course.

16.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, Councillor J. Love advised members that she had attended the Uckfield Theatre Guild Youth Production of Oliver the previous weekend and it had been an excellent performance with some very talented young performers.

A number of new businesses had come to the town. Councillor Love hoped members would join her in welcoming them and supporting them, and encouraging local residents to support their business.

Wealden DC were running their exhibition at the Civic Centre on Saturday 13 April 2024, to present the draft Local Plan. Members were asked to support office staff with the promotion of the event, and to try and gain interest from local residents, and ensure adequate footfall through the door.

The Town Mayor also advised that the Farmers Market would be coming back to Uckfield, once a month on a Saturday morning, and it was planned to use the Source site. Once information was available, once again, members were asked to help spread the word. Members noted the update.

17.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

FC.117.04.24 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.

17.1 To consider quotations for the installation of new plumbing and heating at Victoria Pavilion

FC.118.04.24 With nine votes in favour, and two members abstaining, it was **RESOLVED** to select Company A at the quotation of £41,946.

17.2 To consider the data governance proposals for the new Town Centre CCTV contract with Sussex Police

The Town Clerk provided a brief update on the transition to the new contract and advised that the information governance documentation was not yet quite ready, and would be circulated to members once available for consideration.

17.3 To note a reminder of works planned in Snatts Road Cemetery

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on the works taking place on 17 April 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.49pm.