

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 22 July 2024 at 7.00pm

## PRESENT:

Cllr. C. Macve (Vice-Chair acting as Chair)  
Cllr. V. Frost  
Cllr. P. Selby

Cllr. J. Love  
Cllr. D. Manvell  
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 J. Love declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 11.0 Town Clerk's Announcements as the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society had been a beneficiary of community grant funding. Councillor A. Smith declared a similar interest for her involvement with Uckfield Green Partnership. Councillor D. Manvell had previously that day declared an interest in this item, due to the Uckfield Community Fridge being one of the beneficiaries of the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society's fundraising, so not directly linked to this report, but wished to make attendees aware.

### 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 Councillors P. Ullmann and D. Ward due to work commitments and sickness. The Vice Chair Councillor Macve, chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chair. The Town Clerk had also been advised that Councillors D. Manvell and P. Selby would be arriving late to the meeting.

### 4.0 MINUTES

#### 4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 10 June 2024

**GP11.07.24** Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 10 June 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4.2 Action list

Members noted the action list.

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 note the income and expenditure reports up to 31 May 2024  
The Town Clerk explained that unfortunately officers were not yet ready to present these reports as a result of the new financial year being established on the finance system.

Councillor D. Manvell arrived at approximately 7.05pm.

5.3 To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee on 18 July 2024  
Members received the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee on 18 July 2024.

5.4 To consider the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 18 July 2024  
There were a number of recommendations from the Finance Sub-Committee from their meeting on 18 July, which related to the Town Council's handling of its finances and investments.

The Town Clerk presented powerpoint slides from the RFO relating to the first recommendation on the investment of a proportion of the Town Council's funds which were in a fixed term rate account with NatWest which was due to mature on 26 July 2024. Further to the sub-committee's recommendations, the Town Clerk presented the latest interest rates for both HSBC and the UK Govt Gilts. The rate that day for the HSBC Fixed Term Bond was 4.33%, and the Gilts were 4.13%, and predicted to fall to 3.88% in 12 months time.

Members discussed the options available.

Clarity was sought on whether the Town Council would be able to select the NatWest 12month fixed rate presented to Finance Sub-Committee which was at a rate of 4.17%. The Town Clerk explained that this had been considered by the sub-committee members, but it was felt that it would be prudent to have funds with more than one bank, to avoid the risks attached to the financial compensation scheme, should anything happen.

One member was concerned that it was a lengthy process to set up a business bank account.

Members felt it was prudent to maintain an account with Lloyds Bank to enable the Town Council to open any further business accounts in the future. They felt that once the funds were removed which had been allocated for projects in this financial year. It was therefore recommended that another Lloyds Bank account be opened, and once open, that the small amount remaining in the Treasurers account be transferred over to the new account, and the Treasurers Account be closed.

Any accounts opened, officers needed to ensure that statements were frequently and readily available, and consideration was given to the signatories.

Councillor P. Selby arrived at approximately 7.19pm.

**GP12.07.24** Members **RESOLVED** to:  
 (i) open an account with HSBC, with a fixed rate for 12 months (Fixed Term Bond Account);

Members reviewed the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee to align the Scheme of Delegation with the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

**GP13.07.24** Members **RESOLVED** to support the recommendations of Finance Sub-Committee in relation to the Scheme of Delegation:  
*(i) to remove Section 21 relating to virements;*  
*(ii) to align Section 25 with para. 5.4 in the Financial Regulations;*  
*(iii) to align Section 18 with para. 6.17 of the Financial Regulations and reduce the suggested 10k limit to 5k;*  
*(iv) to align the procurement information in the Financial Regulations with the relevant sections in the Scheme of Delegation;*  
*(v) to review the wording of paragraphs 5.4 and 6.17 in the Financial Regulations to ensure they better align and be re-worded to ensure matters are referred to next scheduled committee meeting in the absence of an Urgent Consultation Panel;*  
*(vi) to review the over/under payment requirements within the Financial Regulations, and update the Scheme of Delegation according;*

Members reviewed the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee where, alternative action was considered prudent, in place of the suggestions by the Internal Auditor:

**GP14.07.24** Members **RESOLVED** to support the recommendations of Finance Sub-Committee which sought to take alternative action to three recommendations of the Internal Auditor during their visits in 2023-24:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed alternative action</b>
<i>I recommend that the Council should employ a cash collection company to bank cash.</i>	<i>It was proposed that at all times, the RFO must have a second person accompany them to the bank or post office when banking or taking out funds. The Town Council reviewed the costs involved. As a result of the increased use of debit cards/credit cards by customers, the council and its services had seen the handling of cash decline and it was therefore not financially viable to arrange for cash collection at this time. Members were however concerned about the welfare of officers.</i>
<i>The Council has not received a bank statement for the Lloyds bank account, which holds £21,067, since March 23</i>	<i>It was proposed to remove the funds required to fund projects in 2024-25, then open a second account with Lloyds Bank with the remaining funds before</i>

<p>Lloyds bank account £21,067 – no statement on file since July 2022 so I cannot confirm the current balance on the account.</p>	<p><i>closing the Treasurers account;</i></p>
<p><i>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.</i></p>	<p><i>The Assistant Town Clerk &amp; RFO had experience of setting up direct debit forms, and had also obtained details of the administration costs involved. It was proposed that this suggestion was not cost effective at this time, but that the Town Council would review this on an annual basis prior to the annual issuing of the invoices.</i></p>

## 6.0 BUILDINGS

### 6.1 To note the current position with the Council's buildings

A question was asked in relation to the Signal Box. The Town Clerk advised that it was planned to present the outcome of the surveys and feasibility study to Full Council in September at the earliest.

Members subsequently noted the report.

## 7.0 POLICY

### 7.1 To review the room hire terms and conditions for the Civic Centre and Foresters Hall

The Town Clerk presented proposed amendments to the room hire terms and conditions for Foresters Hall.

**GP15.07.24** Members **RESOLVED** to accept the proposed amendments.

## 8.0 ADMINISTRATION

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

The Town Clerk advised that there was a new strain of covid, which was affecting local residents and businesses. Members noted the report.

### 8.2 To receive Members' audit report

Members noted the completed audit report for April 2024, and the Town Clerk's acknowledgement that the bank reconciliation needed updating to reflect the new bank accounts.

## 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  
Nothing to report.

(iv) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Planning Panel  
Nothing to report.

## 10.0 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice Chair, Councillor Macve who had taken on the role of Chair for this meeting, hoped members would join him in passing his best wishes to the Chair, and wishing her a speedy recovery.

## 11.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk referred to the recently received report from Wealden Volunteering which evaluated the use of grant funding by awardees of the Town Council's community grant programme for 2023-24.

Wealden Volunteering often struggled to obtain feedback from the organisations who were awarded funding and some were confused as to which year the evaluation related to. Two organisations had omitted to respond by the deadline, and despite being chased, some organisations needed a lot of support to obtain the right information.

The Town Clerk also highlighted further anomalies where for example one organisation hadn't returned unspent funds from the previous year.

It was suggested that the Finance Sub-Committee maintain a log of anomalies, and/or decisions taken by the sub-committee in relation to awarded funding.

Members believed that the handling of this grant funding needed to be consistent. Members also felt that they should be able to approach awardees after financial year-end, to clarify information.

Members noted the report.

## 12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

### GP16.07.24

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

The Town Clerk updated members, and advised that three companies had paid the outstanding funds.  
Members noted the report.

### 12.2 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members reviewed the report and discussed further context on the figures such as including customer numbers etc.

### 12.3 To note an update on the Cemetery Chapels

The Town Clerk updated members on the lease agreements for these Chapels.

### 12.4 To consider the revised quotations for the works to the Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park

This item was deferred, as officers were still awaiting information. It would be referred to Full Council in September instead.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.