



THE UCKFIELD VOICE

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MAYOR'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

BY TOWN MAYOR, CLLR KAREN BEDWELL

As bonfire season passes and an unmistakable chill fills the air, the shops and festive lights are looking bright in the High Street with Christmas upon us once again.

It is a time for joyous celebration, family gatherings and excited children waiting for Santa to arrive, but for many it is also a time of reflection of Christmas times long ago, remembering loved ones, friends and family.

Reflections on 2024

As I reflect on this year, it has been an honour to serve as Town Mayor and meet so many people helping the community in volunteer and business roles. Uckfield, the town with a village soul, thrives on celebrating the good times and pulling together when things are difficult. 2024 has seen some amazing community celebrations; the beacon lighting to commemorate D-Day in June, Weald on the Field in August, the torchlit procession of Carnival in September and the moving remembrance parade in November, with Late Night Shopping still to come. So much work is done behind the scenes by so many in our community, brought to life by the thousands of local people who attend Uckfield events. Long may it last.

Amazing volunteer spirit

At a time of year when it can be challenging to meet the expectations that media places on 'the perfect Christmas', so many volunteers offer help and support; the food bank, community fridge,



Uckfield Rugby Club delivering Christmas Day meals and the Belmont Centre serving Christmas Day lunch. I am truly humbled by the compassion that people in Uckfield show for their neighbours and friends.

Christmas wishes

On behalf of our town, I must thank all the council staff at Uckfield Town Council. The Civic Centre and grounds staff all work hard to allow the councillors to do their jobs and provide the facilities for our local community to enjoy. They are hidden from view and not given the gratitude that they deserve.

On behalf of everyone at Uckfield Town Council, I wish you all a safe and joyful time over this festive period, with friends and family and raising a glass to those that cannot share it with us.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas!

Cllr Karen Bedwell - Uckfield Town Mayor

Contact us through:



admin@uckfieldtc.gov.uk

[@uckfieldtowncouncil](https://www.facebook.com/uckfieldtowncouncil)

WHAT'S INSIDE

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- Consultation on Strategic Priorities and Budget
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TOWN COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024

Uckfield Town Council has enjoyed another busy and memorable year in 2024, with many key achievements. From the Civic Centre team that keep things ticking over to our grounds team that manage numerous sites around Uckfield, we've been working hard to deliver value for residents.

As a snapshot of some of the projects we've been working on and the moments that stand out, we look back on our last 12 months.

• January



We began the year with plenty of exciting events, led by the completion of work at The Source.

The demolition of the adjoining building, alongside improvements to The Source and the installation of a car park, saw the site future-proofed for its tenants. The BBC also came to town for Radio 4 show 'Any Questions?', which was broadcast live from a sold-out Weald Hall on a thrilling night for Uckfield.

• February

We were delighted to host the ceremony in which Brighter Uckfield received the King's Award for Voluntary Service from HM Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex. From humble beginnings, Brighter Uckfield have had an amazing journey to becoming one of 262 groups across the UK who received the prestigious award for 2023/24.



• March

As ever, March marked the time for the Annual Town Meeting.

A productive session saw residents exchange views and Councillors offer progress reports on several projects and the work of each committee.

In addition, Councillors also represented the town at the Wealden Parish Conference, offering important feedback on Wealden District Council's Draft Local Plan.

• April

The new financial year brought fantastic news for several local charities and organisations, as the Town Council announced the 16 Community Grants recipients - and two recipients of service-level agreements - for 2024/25. A busy month also saw upgrades made to the town centre's CCTV Cameras, while the Town Council also financially contributed to ES Highways grass verge cutting programme within the town.

• May



Cllr Karen Bedwell and Cllr Spike Mayhew received the backing of their fellow Councillors to become Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor respectively, following the Annual Statutory Meeting on 20 May. They have not looked back since, achieving plenty so far!

• **June**

On Thursday 6 June, we marked the 80th



anniversary of D-Day with the Beacon Lighting at Victoria Pleasure Ground. With some excellent music, dance, food and drink before the beacon was lit, the event was a fitting commemoration attended by many residents.

• **July**

In the height of summer, we were successful in obtaining two sets of funding, with a grant to plant community orchards and funding for low-level lighting at the bottom of Luxford Field.

• **August**

Weald on the Field returned and saw an incredible turnout on a scorching day.



With the music line-up topped by Fat Freddie & The Queens, it was an amazing day packed with top-quality local food, drink, crafts and entertainment. Also, new plumbing and heating systems were installed at Victoria Pavilion, Foresters Hall and Foresters Chapel.

• **September**

On Wednesday 11 September, we held the annual Allotment Conference. There were presentations, updates and the excitement of award-giving, as the 2024 Allotment Competition winners were announced!

• **October**



In a month of amazing achievements, the Town Council helped turn Uckfield pink in aid of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and helped celebrate the third birthday of Uckfield Community Fridge.

• **November**

The Town Council led Remembrance events alongside the Royal British Legion and Holy Cross Church, with three events happening between Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day.

• **December**

We will finish 2024 by supporting Uckfield Late Night Shopping and organising the town's Christmas lights. With plenty of events - including panto! - still to take place before the year is out, enjoy the festive period and stay tuned for more Town Council news in 2025!

LOOKING AHEAD

Uckfield Town Council is in the process of setting its strategic priorities and budget for the next financial year.

Currently, one-third of the Town Council's income is generated through our own means; not through your council tax (precept). In terms of expenditure, we are seeing an impact from the increases in utility costs, staffing, building/grounds materials, stock and contracts, and this will continue into 2025, which makes for some more detailed discussions during this year's budget setting.

When do plans come into place?

Members will review a first draft of the strategic priorities and budget papers for 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 at Full Council on 2 December 2024.

The key documents will then be out for consultation until Wednesday 8 January 2025 and can be accessed via: <https://www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk/community/have-your-say/>

We will finalise and adopt the strategic plan, annual budget and annual plan for the Town Council on 13 January 2025, after which they will be available on our website. We are required to let Wealden District Council know what level of precept is required by mid-January.

CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS



The Civic Centre and Luxford Restaurant close after Christmas Eve. They both then open on Monday 30 and Tuesday 31 December before reopening on Thursday 2 January 2025. Grounds staff will work on a rota system so litter collections continue over the Christmas break and urgent matters are addressed. The Town Council offices will close at 3:00pm on Christmas Eve and reopen on Thursday 2 January at 9:00am. Our main email account (admin@uckfieldtc.gov.uk) will be monitored over the Christmas break, should any urgent issues arise. Issues relating to crime and anti-social behaviour should be reported to Sussex Police (999 in an emergency, 101 in a non-emergency or online at <https://www.sussex.police.uk/ro/report/>) and if you or a family member find yourself homeless over Christmas, please contact 0330 123 3517.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Agendas and minutes can be viewed on the Town Council website at <https://www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk/agendas-and-minutes/>. Meetings are held in

person in the Council Chamber at The Civic Centre and all start at 7pm. All questions should be sent to the Town Clerk at: admin@uckfieldtc.gov.uk

MON 2 DEC	- FULL COUNCIL (DRAFT BUDGET)
MON 9 DEC	- PLANS
MON 16 DEC	- GENERAL PURPOSES (IF REQUIRED)
MON 6 JAN	- PLANS
MON 13 JAN	- FULL COUNCIL (BUDGET/PRECEPT)

COMING NEXT MONTH

- Surgeries and Wellbeing
- Parking in Uckfield
- Last Month in Your Council
- Upcoming Meetings

