

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **General Purposes Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 3 February 2025 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr. D. Ward (Chair)	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. C. Macve (Vice Chair)	Cllr. P. Selby
Cllr. J. Love	Cllr. A. Smith

IN ATTENDANCE:

Town Mayor, Councillor Karen Bedwell
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 personal interest in agenda item 12.1 due to her employment at these premises. Councillor Love was advised that she would need to leave the room for this item.

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

No statements received.

3.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors V. Frost and P. Ullmann due to personal and work commitments respectively. Councillor B. Cox advised that he would be arriving late but due to sickness was unable to attend.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on the 16 December 2024

GP37.02.25 Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 16 December 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Action list

Members noted the report.

4.3 Project list

Members noted the updates within the report.

4.4 Forward plan

Members noted the items detailed on the Forward Plan.

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 December 2024

Members discussed the detail within the reports.

Councillor Macve commented on the overall picture of both Luxfords and General Purposes Committee. The Town Clerk provided more context on the variation in figures for Luxfords Restaurant between October and December both for income and expenditure noting that December was a shorter month with the bank holidays, and a number of Christmas bookings see deposits paid in advance. The backpay for staffing at the April 2024 rate was also applied in the November payroll, for all of the organisation.

It was also noted that the income and expenditure levels were looking positive at this stage for General Purposes Committee. Members subsequently noted the contents of the report.

5.3 To receive the minutes of Finance Sub-Committee on 16 December 2024 and 7 January 2025

Members received the draft minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 16 December 2024 and 7 January 2025.

6.0 BUILDINGS

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

Councillor Smith enquired about the recent office moves on the first floor of the Civic Centre, and subsequent hire of these rooms. The Town Clerk clarified that one meeting room was on a longer-term rental arrangement, and the Council Chamber, Martlets Room and Oakleaf room were still available to hire upstairs and were well used. All staff in the Civic Centre were assisting with the promotion of the facilities, and had been showing potential new customers the various rooms available in the building and facilities available.

Councillor Macve wondered if would be helpful to explore adding a moveable partition to the Council Chamber to enable this to be split into two spaces if smaller rooms were of more interest. The Town Clerk explained that this had been in the Strategic Plan for some years, but was removed in 2024, due to other matters being of greater priority. It could still however be a consideration for the authority, moving forward.

Councillor Macve discussed the pillar lighting at the bottom of Luxford Field. He asked if the design of the lighting was specified by us or the contractor. He felt that if the lights were not secure, that design was perhaps not suitable for that location. The Town Clerk confirmed that the lights were branded as being anti-vandal. They had been strengthened internally and deep into the ground. She felt it was more the fact it was something new. The Town Clerk also referred to recent vandalism in Luxfords Play Area. Councillor Macve wondered if it would be helpful to get the manufacturer onsite.

Members reflected on patterns of anti-social behaviour and vehicles in the 10hour section of Luxfords play area. It was questioned whether the ANPR cameras could be utilised that Wealden DC owned for enforcement of the car park, but the

Town Clerk didn't believe this was possible, as the cameras would be used for the purpose of parking enforcement only. It was however discussed that it may be worth exploring additions to existing CCTV systems owned by the Town Council – either Civic Centre, or the Town Centre based system.

Members noted the report.

7.0 POLICY

None.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION

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

Members digested the update on sickness, and health and safety. Members discussed the forthcoming fire door works, and were keen to understand a bit more about this. The Town Clerk explained the varying work that had to be undertaken to meet fire safety compliance – frequent checks, fire alarm testing, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, drills and signage/muster points, fire risk assessments, and regulations that needed to be met.

It was asked whether any staff had undertaken Mental Health First Aid training. The Town Clerk thought the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO had attended but would check.

Members noted the update.

8.2 To receive Members' audit reports (November and December 2024)

Members noted the member audit reports for November and December 2024.

9.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

9.1 To consider reports from: -

- (i) Wealden Citizen's Advice
Nothing to report.
- (ii) Wealden Volunteering
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

The Town Clerk tabled a report which included quotations to appoint an accountant to assist with the preparations of the year-end accounts for the period ending 31 March 2025.

Members were presented with two quotations (Option A and Option B). Members felt it was prudent to review the Town Council's accountant on a more frequent basis, and wished to see a change every five years at least. It was suggested by a second member that the contract could align with the four-year term of the elected members.

GP38.02.25 Members **RESOLVED** for officers to proceed with Option B, and work with this accountant to prepare the end of year accounts and AGAR return for the period 31 March 2025.

The Town Clerk also reminded members of the funeral arrangements for Mrs Velda Reed who had sadly passed away on Christmas day. Velda had been integral to maintaining and developing the area of Selby Meadows, off Selby Road, Uckfield which had become a beautiful space for local residents.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

GP39.02.25 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 consider an update on the renewal of the lease agreement for the first floor of Victoria Pavilion

The Town Clerk provided members with an update on the rental valuation for the first floor of Victoria Pavilion and the range of that valuation. There were a couple of factors that needed to be considered before members could consider the valuation further. This included clarification on the leaseholder's charitable status, if they were VAT registered and if they paid business rates. The Town Clerk advised that the VAT specialist was due to visit the Town Council on 5 March 2025.

It was therefore suggested to wait until further information was available before members could determine their terms for the lease for negotiation with the leaseholder.

12.2 To note bad debts

Members discussed and noted the bad debts listed.

12.3 To note an update in relation to the Signal Box

Members were in support of the intentions of the commercial enterprise who had expressed an interest in the property, and were happy for all parties to proceed on that basis.

12.4 To consider an update on Luxfords Restaurant

Members discussed the report, and in particular the menu pricing, stocktaker, staffing and events. They subsequently noted the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 8.21pm.