

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 8 September 2025 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. K. Bedwell (Town Mayor)	Cllr. M. McClafferty
Cllr. S. Mayhew (Deputy Mayor – Chair)	Cllr. C. Macve
Cllr. K. Butler	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. D. French	Cllr. P. Ullmann
Cllr. V. Frost	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. J. Love	Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor Chris Dowling
District Councillor Kelvin Williams
1 x member of the public
James Hollingdale Estates & Facilities Manager
Sarah D'Alessio Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
Louise Slaughter Hospitality Manager
Holly Goring Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

The Town Mayor wished to welcome newly elected Town Councillor Kathy Butler who had gained a seat on the Town Council for the ward of New Town in the July by-election.

The Town Mayor also asked members to join her in sharing their best wishes with Councillor Peter Selby, who was had recently become unwell. Members wished Peter a speedy recovery.

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.

District Councillors D. French and D. Manvell declared an interest in agenda item 12.0, as the car parks mentioned within the motion were owned by Wealden District Council.

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

None received.

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

FC.32.09.25 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable updates to be shared by County and District Councillors.

Councillor Williams provided members with an update on the different grant funding schemes currently available at Wealden District Council – Community Led Infrastructure (CLIF) and Sport Infrastructure (SIF). Councillor Williams had liaised with the Town Clerk on these schemes and understood the current infrastructure requirements for the town.

In addition to the commitment made by Wealden District Council to the Conservators of Ashdown Forest to mark the 100th Birthday of Winnie the Pooh, and the project 'Wilder Wealden' (*aimed at focusing on nature recovery networks with the Sussex Wildlife Trust*), Councillor Williams also updated members on the review of the leisure contract arrangements, and the need to look at the broader picture around health and wellbeing.

County Councillor Chris Dowling had met with Councillor Butler to update her on community concerns relating to speeding traffic and community safety. He was currently raising questions with the County Council. Temporary 30mph signs had been placed up in Framfield Road. Discussions followed on the congestion experienced that day, as a result of an accident and roadworks on the A22 Uckfield Bypass.

The Town Clerk read out an update on behalf of County Councillor Claire Dowling, which included progress updates on:

- (i) drainage issues on Bell lane outside PP Estates;
- (ii) forthcoming drainage works at Snatts Road on 22-24 September;
- (iii) the new streetlighting column outside Greggs being installed on 13 October;
- (iv) The Structures team were investigating the dip in Bell Farm Road;
- (v) Cllr Dowling would arrange to meet Cllr Reed re: raised highway matters, and;
- (vi) the first set of three dropped kerbs had been installed on Manor Park.

Cllr Macve advised that he had been approached by residents of Pudding Cake Lane, in relation to vehicular safety. The lane should be a 5mph limit and the post and brackets were there, but the sign had disappeared. This was a dead end, and not a through road. Sat navs were sending drivers down the lane, and one of the properties had been hit on numerous occasions by delivery drivers. This needed to be addressed.

Cllr Smith expressed her concern with a current job being advertised by ESCC for work in an East Sussex Refuge. The job advertised was paid at minimum wage, with 4 x 12 hour days, which only offered one 30 minute break during each shift. Councillor Smith was also unable to find the new provider for the service on the Women's Aid National Database of Refuge Services. She was therefore

interested in how the the tender process had been undertaken. Cllr Dowling advised Cllr Smith to email the County Councillors with the full details.

Councillor Bedwell, wished to thank East Sussex Highways and Wealden District Council on their work to reduce the scale of the scaffolding structure around the Old Maidens Head building, which had meant the High Street could reopen to two-way traffic.

Councillor Manvell wished to thank Councillors for coming along to the official opening of Coronation Place. A close sense of community was being created in this new development. Wealden DC's debt had been splashed across the press recently, amongst coverage on local government reorganisation (LGR). Cllr Manvell clarified that this figure was the mortgage(s) for the council's own housing stock, and the general fund which covered planning and waste collections. Wealden DC had sound finances, and it was not considered debt, but funding tied up in assets.

Councillor French attended a very successful Afternoon Tea party held at Selby Meadow, and felt most updates had already been provided.

FC.33.09.25 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors D. Bennett, B. Reed, P. Selby, and County Councillor C. Dowling. Reasons given related to mainly sickness.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 25 June 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.34.09.25 Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

5.2 Action List

Members noted the update.

5.3 Forward plan

Members noted the forward plan.

6.0 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(a) Plans Committee of the 14 July and 4 & 26 August 2025

FC.35.09.25 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 14 July and 4 & 26 August 2025.

FC.36.09.25 (b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 7 July and 1 September 2025

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 7 July and 1 September 2025.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 21 July 2025

FC.37.09.25 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 21 July 2025.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES
(none received)

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Civic Centre Working Group

Members noted the report.

(ii) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Councillor Manvell wished to give thanks to those involved in arranging the beacon lighting for VJ Day, after the feedback received in relation to VE Day. He recognised the work that had gone into arranging this. Members subsequently noted the report.

(iii) Ageing Well Forum

Members noted the upcoming event.

9.0 TO RATIFY DOCUMENTATION FROM STANDING COMMITTEES:

Environment & Leisure Committee

(i) Tree Policy

Members sought clarity on what the administrative fee covered, and it was suggested that this be added to the Town Council's Fees & Charges register in order to keep track, and review.

FC.38.09.25 It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the revised Tree Policy.

General Purposes Committee

(ii) Time in Lieu Policy

(iii) Training and Development Policy

FC.39.09.25 It was **RESOLVED** to adopt both the revised Time in Lieu Policy, and Training and Development Policy.

10.0 TO APPOINT A MEMBER TO FILL THE VACANT SEAT ON PLANS COMMITTEE

Due to the Town Councillor interested in this role, being absent from the meeting, the item was deferred.

11.0 TO APPOINT A MEMBER TO THE OUTSIDE BODY – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

FC.40.09.25 Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor D. French as a representative to the Outside Body – Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

12.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MACVE

Councillor Macve submitted a motion, which asked members to explore the option of Uckfield Town Council taking over responsibility for the off-street car parks (Luxfords and Regency Close). At present he felt that the District Council were benefiting from these important community assets and there was a risk with local government reorganisation that charges could be brought in, in future years. The Uckfield Chamber of Commerce had fought on three occasions in the past to stop charges being introduced. Free car parking was of huge benefit to the town's economy – and in particular for customers and employees.

Members discussed the need to investigate further, and wished to understand a

few more details at this early stage.

- FC.41.09.25** With 10 votes in favour, members **RESOLVED** to task the Town Clerk with:
(i) investigating the cost to Wealden DC of maintaining the car parks (annual upkeep), and,
(ii) subject to the outcome of the nomination for Luxford Car Park, to be registered as an Asset of Community Value, put forward a nomination for the Regency Close Car Park(s).

13.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES (Q1 2025/26)

Members were pleased to see the excellent progress that had been made towards the year's annual priorities. A number were already near completion. Members thanked staff and noted the contents of the report.

14.0 TO REVIEW A SNAPSHOT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S BUDGET AND BALANCE SHEET POSITION FOR Q1 OF 2025/26

Members reviewed the balance sheet position for quarter one (30 June 2025). The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk & RFO explained the figures and proposed next steps for budget setting for 2026/27. Members were asked to consider whether they wished to undertake another residents' survey, and if they approved the setting up of an 'All Member' workshop around budget and priority setting in early November.

- FC.42.09.25** Members **RESOLVED** that:
(i) the feedback be utilised from last year's residents' survey during the budget setting process, and;
(ii) an 'all member workshop' be arranged for early November to assist with the review of the Town Council's strategic plan and associated budget setting.

15.0 TO CONFIRM THE TOWN COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION TO DELIVERY OF A FUTURE 3G PITCH AT VICTORIA PLEASURE GROUND

Members were advised of the application that had been submitted to the Football Foundation for the design, supply and installation of a 3G Pitch at Victoria Pleasure Ground. It was anticipated that the application, if successful, would take up to two years to complete. The full project would cost in the region of £1million, to £1.1million. Plus any additional works required to improve associated facilities. If successful, the Football Foundation would be able to fund in the region of 67%-77% of the project. Wealden DC were looking to take a report to Cabinet this autumn to contribute up to £350k -£450k and it was therefore prudent that the Town Council confirmed their commitment of up to £150k. This level of funding would then see the delivery of the full project plus contingency, unforeseen circumstances and inflationary increases, as well as associated infrastructure improvements at Victoria to support the project.

- FC.43.09.25** With unanimous support, members **RESOLVED** to support the contribution of up to £150,000 from earmarked reserves (community infrastructure levy funding), towards the installation of a new 3G Pitch at Victoria Pleasure Ground.

16.0 TO CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR THE 2025/26 FINANCIAL YEAR

Members were presented with a letter of engagement from the Town Council's

Internal Auditor and asked whether based on the experience and details provided, they would support the renewal of the existing contract, for a further year.

FC.44.09.25

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) confirm their satisfaction with the service provided by the current Internal Auditor for the year ending 31 March 2025;
- (ii) confirm that the Internal Auditor (April Skies Ltd) was independent from the Town Council and had no links to staff or elected members;
- (iii) confirm that the Internal Auditor (April Skies Ltd) was competent and had the relevant level of professional indemnity to undertake Internal Auditing Services for Uckfield Town Council, and;
- (iv) conclude that the Town Council confirmed the appointment of the Internal Auditor (April Skies Ltd) for the year ending 31 March 2026;

17.0 TO CONSIDER THE PLACEMENT OF A STORAGE CONTAINER AND TEMPORARY TOILET FACILITY AT HARLANDS PLAYING FIELDS

Harlands Recreation Ground was used for football practice and fixtures, but at present, due to the absence of both welfare and storage facilities, the site was limited, and only boys football could be played there by the Uckfield Grasshoppers Junior Football Club. The Estates & Facilities Manager prepared a report which set out an interim plan for storage and welfare facilities whilst a more permanent and longer-term solution was found. Members sought clarity on the security of these facilities and whether planning permission was required. Members were advised that it would come under permitted development, as the fencing and units would be under 6ft, and the toilet was removable.

Cllr Butler felt it was important to offer disabled toilet provision for the site, and members felt that the storage container should be painted green, and blended in with the trees to reduce the risk of it being an eyesore to neighbouring properties.

FC.45.09.25

Eight out of 12 members voted in favour and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to the Uckfield Grasshoppers Junior Football Club siting a storage container to the south eastern corner nestled behind the trees at Harlands Recreation Ground, and;
- (ii) agree to the temporary placement of toilet provision during the 2025-26 football season (September to May) whilst a longer term solution was sought.

18.0 TO UNDERSTAND THE TOWN COUNCIL'S VIEW ON THE WOODEN SCULPTURES IN BELL WALK

Members were advised that the owners of Bell Walk had approached the Town Clerk to understand the council's view on the wooden sculptures as they were currently in a state of disrepair, and thought we may have responsibility for their maintenance.

Members noted that there were three in total, and the one by the pedestrian crossing was more or less destroyed. These wooden sculptures were not of historical value but represented elements of Uckfield's history. There were mixed views around the table as to whether they should be refurbished or removed due to their current condition. A suggestion was made that the one in worst condition by the pedestrian crossing should be removed and the mounting be used as a location to display art.

A vote was taken on how best to move forward, which resulted in a tie between:
(4 votes in favour of the lady wooden sculpture being removed)
(4 votes in favour of all three being removed)
(3 votes in favour of two being removed).

The Town Clerk would therefore investigate further options with the landowner and propose potential alternatives.

19.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the report.

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

Three deeds of grant were received:
Emma Victoria Gearing
Amanda Markwick and Jayne Belinda West
Christopher Cook

FC.46.09.25 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

21.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

FC.47.09.25 Members **RESOLVED** to extend the meeting until 9.10pm to enable the remaining business on the agenda to be addressed.

22.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk referred to a previous decision taken by Environment & Leisure Committee in 2023/24 to construct a path around the western side of the Grounds yard at Victoria Pleasure Ground to improve safety for those using the sports grounds and walking their dogs. The grounds yard frequently had large vehicles moving and equipment in use, and this area needed to be restricted from public access.

Quotes obtained back in 2023/24 were in the region of £3k if external contractors were used. This project still needed completing, and new quotations had been gathered. The Town Clerk clarified that although funding had not been allocated within the 2025/26 revenue budget, funding was available for this work within earmarked reserves (either open spaces or sports/recreational improvements).

FC.48.09.25 Members **RESOLVED** to give authority to staff to proceed with commissioning a contractor to complete the work to create a new path, and utilise earmarked reserves.

23.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Cllr Bedwell wished to give her thanks to all involved in organising and helping at both the Weald on the Field event and VJ Day Beacon Lighting.

She also wished to give her thanks to the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society who delivered a fantastic Carnival night, which saw large numbers attending, and with the support of Sussex Police, held in a safe and fun environment.

That day, Cllr Bedwell had visited the Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey and Sussex with Cllr Butler. They were used on average 9 times a day, and needed £21million per annum to run. Her family had unfortunately had to use the service twice. On 16 October 2025, there was a national campaign called 'Restart a Heart.' There were in the region of 30,000 out of hospital cardiac arrests, with only 1 in 10 surviving. This national project would seek to get young children up to elderly learning CPR and how to use defibrillator.

The meeting closed at 9.03pm.