

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 1 December 2025 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:	Cllr. K. Bedwell (Town Mayor)	Cllr. D. Manvell
	Cllr. S. Mayhew (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr. B. Reed
	Cllr. D. French	Cllr. P. Selby
	Cllr. J. Love	Cllr. A. Smith
	Cllr. C. Macve	Cllr. P. Ullmann
		Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

1 x member of the public

Sarah D'Alessio	Assistant Town Clerk & RFO
James Hollingdale	Facilities & Compliance Manager
Louise Slaughter	Hospitality Manager
Thomas Woollard	Estates Manager
Holly Goring	Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring	

The Town Mayor, Councillor K. Bedwell, wished to make three statements:

- (i) To thank everyone for their kindness and thoughts following the death of her mother, and to apologise for missed Mayoral engagements the two weeks prior whilst her mother was unwell;
- (ii) Having attended the public meeting at Crowborough on 13 November 2025, she wished to send thoughts and support to the Crowborough Town Mayor and wider Councillors. Following the meeting, some of the Town Councillors were threatened and followed home; receiving verbal abuse and items thrown at their properties. She therefore wished to send support to fellow colleagues;
- (iii) At Wealden District Council's Full Council meeting on 19 November, the Chair of Wealden District Council referenced the varying Remembrance services he had attended and advised that in Uckfield, the Chair and his wife were ignored, and left on their own in the car park in the cold and all wind. The Town Mayor clarified the situation and Uckfield TC's version of events, and the various people present who spoke to the Chair and his wife. A complaint was raised by the Town Council, and a request for the statement to be withdrawn. The Town Mayor also wished to thank the Town Clerk for the work put into the Remembrance Sunday parade which was one of the largest in the district.

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 A. Smith recorded a personal interest for agenda item 16.0 for the same reasons outlined at the previous meeting of Full Council.

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

FC.63.12.25 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable a member of the public to speak.

Resident 1 – the question related to the use of the Crowborough Army Base for Asylum Seekers. The previous week a contract had been awarded to Foster Hartley who had been commissioned to run a fleet of several shuttle buses to local towns. The resident wished to understand what provisions had been made or discussed with the Home Office to facilitate these shuttle buses from the Crowborough site.

Councillor Bedwell explained that she had asked that very question to the Home Office at the public meeting on 13 November in Crowborough. She asked the Home Office to contact Uckfield TC directly, and explain how they were going to support the policing of any buses leaving the camp and visiting areas of the district. To date, no communication had been received. The Town Clerk had returned from leave and would be chasing for a response. The update from Wealden District Council from the day of the meeting – *“the Home Office continues to undertake feasibility assessments of the site, and confirmed to Uckfield TC that no decision had yet been made on using the site.”* The Town Clerk had also approached Sussex Police and the MPs for East Grinstead and Uckfield, and Wealden, and awaited a response.

The resident felt that the contractual process undertaken showed intent and raised their concerns with the lack of consultation and transparency from the Home Office.

The Town Council explained that they would continue to push for updates from the various parties involved.

FC.64.12.25 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

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

Councillor B. Reed provided her District Council update, and advised that she had asked for Wealden District Council to communicate with the parishes and consider affected bus linkages, train lines and accessibility to leisure centres and key services. District Councillors were receiving a lot of correspondence and concerns in relation to the transparency of the matter.

In relation to her ward, Councillor Reed continued to support residents in Little

Horsted with the issues being experienced at Horsted Green including receiving updates on winter maintenance schedules, safety of the subway into the SANG, and car parking provision at Seghers Place.

Councillor Reed referenced Wilder Wealden, the recently approved five-year initiative between Wealden District Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust to reverse biodiversity decline. This was hoped to have a positive effect on Uckfield.

Councillor Reed had also been reviewing the proposals at Bentley for a solar farm, as well as the care home proposed off Lewes Road, Uckfield and 100 homes proposed south of Victoria Pleasure Ground, Uckfield.

Councillor D. Ward left the room temporarily at 7.15pm.

Councillor D. French had been liaising with County Councillor Chris Dowling in relation to the recent road closure on Eastbourne Road, and the impact this had had on neighbouring roads - New Road and Lewes Road.

Councillor French had also raised concerns with planning enforcement on the amount of mud left on the Uckfield Bypass from pre-construction works.

Councillor D. Manvell was proud of the decisions recently taken at Wealden DC to support sport and infrastructure improvements in Uckfield (i) approved funding of up to £350k towards the development of a 3G Pitch and (ii) up to £1.3million to support grounds and club improvements at Uckfield Rugby Club. Councillor Manvell also referred to other key projects within the district such as Mayfield Medical Centre.

Councillor Manvell added to existing conversations relating to the Home Office and Wilder Wealden. He also explained the work behind the scenes to understand if Wealden DC could support delivery of the affordable housing element of Mockbeggar Farm. Representatives of the District Council had recently attended an award ceremony for Coronation Place

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors D. Bennett, K. Butler, V. Frost and M. McClafferty due to sickness.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 20 October 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.65.12.25 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 agreed to the removal of the following actions, which had been completed:

FC.41.09.25 - Consider a motion from Cllr Macve (ii) - ACV;
FC.45.09.25 – Storage and temporary toilet facility Harlands (ii) – temp toilet.
FC.56.10.25 – Motion from Cllr McClafferty – legal advice provided.

Members subsequently noted the report.

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 27 October and 17 November 2025

FC.66.12.25 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 27 October and 17 November 2025.

FC.67.12.25 (b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 24 November 2025

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 24 November 2025.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 3 November 2025

FC.68.12.25 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 3 November 2025.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

(ii) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Members noted the report.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

None received.

9.0 TO RATIFY DOCUMENTATION FROM STANDING COMMITTEES:

General Purposes Committee

(i) Complaints Policy

FC.69.12.25 Members **RESOLVED** to ratify the adoption of the revised Town Council's Complaints Policy.

10.0 TO APPOINT A MEMBER TO SERVE ON PLANS COMMITTEE

The Town Council still held one vacant seat on Plans Committee – a committee of seven members. The committee met three weekly to review Uckfield based planning applications as a statutory consultee to the local planning authority.

FC.70.12.25 Further to the offer by one member to fill the seat, members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor P. Selby to the seventh seat on Plans Committee.

11.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-31

Members were presented with the first draft of the refreshed Strategic Plan for 2026-31.

Councillor B. Reed put forward some suggested tweaks to strengthen the 'Challenges and Opportunities' page as well as the data included to illustrate 'About the town.' It was suggested that reference to green and blue infrastructure be incorporated in page 10, as this identified both challenges and opportunities for the council moving forward, as well as edge effects from forthcoming growth.

Councillor A. Smith felt that reference should be made to devolution within both page 10 and the objectives, and the opportunities and challenges brought about by these changes.

Members discussed the headings of the overarching three Strategic Priorities and

felt they should be more detailed to reflect the restoration of existing assets for example.

The Town Clerk would take forward the comments made to date as well as input from key stakeholders to collate the final version for presenting to Full Council on 12 January 2026.

12.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2026/27

Members were presented with the first draft of the refreshed Annual Plan for 2026/27.

It was asked if the priority around the protection of Boothland Wood, could be broadened to 'Protecting and restoring ancient woodland' to encompass the wider works being undertaken. It was also requested that further wildflowers be planted around Mallard Pond, Harlands.

The Town Clerk took on board the comments and members noted the draft.

13.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2026/27

The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO presented the first draft of the budget for 2026/27. This was still very much work in progress and a first look by Management Team of anticipated income and expenditure levels in 2026/27.

Members discussed the balance of investing in existing assets, conservation and meeting future demand and need. Further clarity was sought from the Estates Manager on the focus of the Environment & Leisure Committee and Estates team more specifically. The Estates Manager explained that in addition to improving the maintenance of sports pitches, open spaces and sensitive areas such as the Cemetery, there was also a need to focus on fully understanding the wildlife within our ancient woodlands and nature reserves. Wildlife monitoring and ecological appraisals had commenced, but further work was required, and 2026 would see the creation of biodiversity action plans with professional expertise, to capture the relevant data to draw down grant funding, as well as understand what next steps the Town Council needed to take to better manage these areas.

One member noted that the pension contribution had slightly reduced, which the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO confirmed (18.2% employer contribution instead of 20.1%).

The Estates Manager referred to the early proposals for improvements at West Park in relation to sports pitch improvements and the play area.

Members were also brought up to speed on the current position of existing assets and interest in developing a new community facility.

Members noted the early draft, and were content that further work would be undertaken by Management Team and Finance Sub Committee prior to the presentation of the final draft to Full Council on 12 January 2026.

14.0 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2026-31

Members noted the draft prior to the final draft being presented to Full Council on 12 January 2026.

15.0 TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL TO UPGRADE THE MAYORAL CHAIN

The current Mayoral chain was in need of retirement as the hook had become weak, all the metal plates had been utilised and the medallion needed to be re-enameled.

The Town Mayor had sought advice on these three aspects of the chain, and also wished to propose that a small pin be considered for former mayors, to wear at mayoral engagements. The Town Mayor explained that former Mayors and the consorts of former Mayors were invited to a number of engagements, and elsewhere they wore something to recognise their former role.

Members discussed the options to replace and improve the condition of the chain, as well as recognising the work of former Mayors. It was also discussed how far back this should be recognised. It was advised that former Mayoral robes were at the Keep.

FC.71.12.25

With 7 votes in favour, and one abstention out of 11 members present, it was **RESOLVED** to task staff with exploring the cost of the creation of a small pin to recognise former Mayors.

FC.72.12.25

With 7 votes in favour, and one abstention out of 11 members present, it was **RESOLVED** to task staff with preparing a report of the proposed replacement Mayoral chain (in gold, enameled medallion and engraved details).

16.0 TO UNDERTAKE AN INITIAL REVIEW OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS:

- (i) **Wealden Citizens Advice**
- (ii) **Wealden Volunteering**

Members provided initial feedback on both service level agreements and the work of both organisations. Councillor A. Smith (representative for Wealden Citizens Advice(WCA)) advised that the recent AGM was well attended, and WCA were very much aware of the potential impact of local government reorganisation and looking at options. They were also considering the potential impact of the Crowborough camp on service provision.

A written update was requested on Wealden Volunteering. The Town Clerk explained that a meeting was booked in shortly with the CEO, and would report back.

17.0 TO CONSIDER A RESPONSE TO MHCLG'S CONSULTATION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN EAST SUSSEX, BRIGHTON & HOVE

The Town Clerk reminded members that a deadline had been set for consultation responses of Sunday 11 January 2026, and highlighted on the variations between the two models.

Members put forward three options for handling the compilation of an organisation-wide response:

- (i) individual Councillors respond and send their responses to the Town Clerk to formulate a joint response (*five votes in favour out of 11 members*);
- (ii) establish a working group of up to five members (politically balanced) (*zero votes in favour out of 11 members*);

(iii) run an all member workshop prior to the deadline
(7 votes in favour out of 11 members).

A vote was taken on the above, which subsequently saw a preference being given to a workshop.

FC.73.12.25 Members **RESOLVED** for the Town Clerk to facilitate a workshop to review the proposed models of local government reorganisation and formulate a response to the consultation prior to the deadline of 11 January 2026.
(Unfortunately due to the festive period and difficulty in getting members together, Option (i) had to be taken forward in place of option 3).

18.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the report.

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

One deed of grant was received:

Laura Hayes

FC.74.12.25 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deed of grant.

20.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

FC.75.12.25 Councillor Ward advised members of the time, and members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to extend the meeting by a further 10 minutes.

21.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk referred to signage associated with highway improvements for the site Land at Mockbeggars Farm off London Road. The Town Clerk had been approached by the agents working on this, and with input from East Sussex Highways had identified the potential location for the 'Welcome to Uckfield' sign. This was proposed to be placed just north of Paygate Wood on the western side of London Road on the grassed bank, with a planter located underneath. The Town Council was being asked if they were satisfied with the proposed location, and their preferred design for the planter.

There were mixed views, and further clarity was sought on the location, and need for signage to identify Ringle Cross and Budletts Common more clearly. The Town Clerk would therefore follow up with Councillors J. Love, D. Manvell and B. Reed separately, before responding.

22.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor Bedwell, reminded members that the Mayor's Carol Service would be taking place on Thursday 11 December 2026 at 6.00pm at Holy Cross Church. The High Sheriff of East Sussex, Vice Lord Lieutenant Kathy Sambrook OBE DL, the MP for East Grinstead and Lewes, and Mayors from elsewhere in East Sussex as well as representatives of key organisations would be in attendance. The Town Mayor also asked members to support the Pantomime on Friday 12 and Saturday 13 December.

The meeting closed at 9.04pm.