

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

(Draft) **Strategic Plan 2026-31**

Our vision and priorities for Uckfield



# Mayor's Message

Uckfield's Town Mayor, Cllr. Karen Bedwell, offers an update on the current position of the Town Council and its aims for 2026-31.

This Strategic Plan outlines the five-year plan of objectives and priorities of Uckfield Town Council.

The financial situation for all councils remains challenging and preparations must be made for the extra responsibilities that local government reorganisation will bring.

Uckfield Town Council continues to generate around one-third of our income through our own revenue streams.

As our town grows, we will need to continue to review our facilities, infrastructure and staffing structures to support the growing population and its diverse needs.

The Town Council will continue to work in partnership with relevant agencies, community groups, volunteer groups and businesses, and commit to providing the best possible services for Uckfield and its residents.



**Cllr. Karen Bedwell**  
**Uckfield Town Mayor, 2024-**

# About Our Town

Uckfield is the third-largest of five market towns in Wealden District and is a key service centre for the area. The town's economy and facilities serve Uckfield residents and those of neighbouring villages. Situated just outside the Ashdown Forest, the town also boasts an abundance of green spaces.



**15,041 residents**

(2021 census, Office for National Statistics)



**Living in 6,456 households**

(2021 census, ONS)



**2,474 residents are disabled under the Equality Act**

(16.4% of town population)  
(2021 census, ONS)



**0-17 year-olds are the biggest age group**

(21% of our town population are in the 0-17 age group, just above 20% in both the 35-49 and the 50-64 age groups)

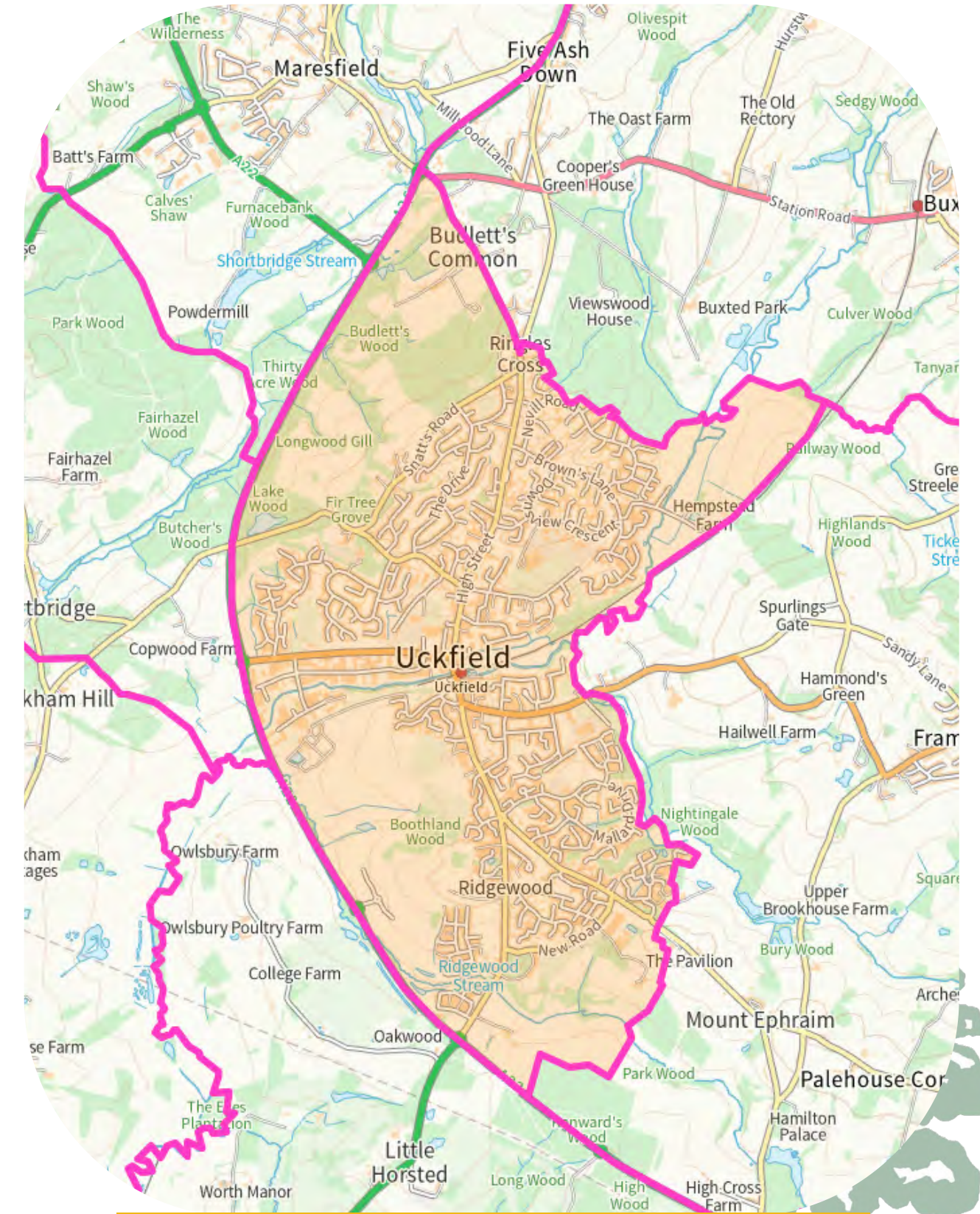
(2021 census, ONS)



**83.8% of residents have good health**

(These residents selected 'good' or 'very good' when asked to describe their health)

(2021 census, ONS)



**Map of Uckfield Parish Boundary (Ordnance Survey, 2026)**

# About Our Town

Uckfield Town Council tracks the changing profile of the town's residents to assess how we can continue to prioritise the right services.

In November 2024, we opened a Residents' Survey to capture views on the services we provide. Scan the QR code (right) to see the results.



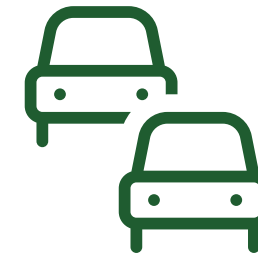
## 63% of adults are economically active

(7,785 of 12,354 working age adults in the town)  
(2021 census, ONS)



## High rate of home ownership

(73.8% of homes, above the UK average of 62.5%)  
(2021 census, ONS)



## Most households have at least one vehicle

(86.9% of households own one or more car/ van)  
(2021 census, ONS)



## Strong levels of education

(83.9% of adult population have qualifications, 2.1% above than the UK average)  
(2021 census, ONS)



## Average rate of working from home

(15.2% economically active adults work most days from home, compared to 16% nationally)  
(2021 census, ONS)



# What We Do

Uckfield Town Council has a large and varied asset portfolio. Some sites are managed by the Town Council, while some are leased to local organisations and some work is contracted out.

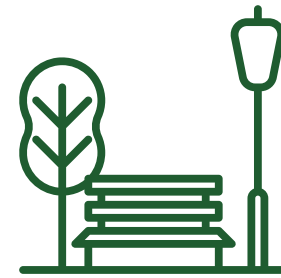
This strategic plan, and our more detailed annual plan and annual budgets, determine how we seek to balance the conservation and continuous improvement of these sites.



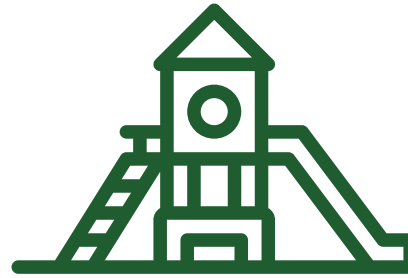
Uckfield Town Council owns and manages the following assets:



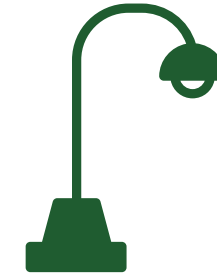
**10 Buildings**



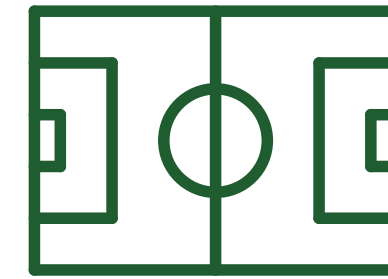
**17 Open Spaces**  
(Including Priority Habitats)



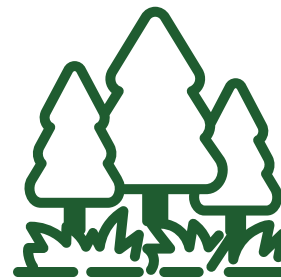
**8 Play Areas**



**192 Streetlights**



**7 Recreation Grounds**  
(Including Sport Pitches)



**4 Woodlands**  
(Including 3 Ancient Woodlands)



**2 Local Nature Reserves**  
(Including Local Green Spaces)



**6 Allotment Sites**  
(245 Plots)



**70 Litter Bins**



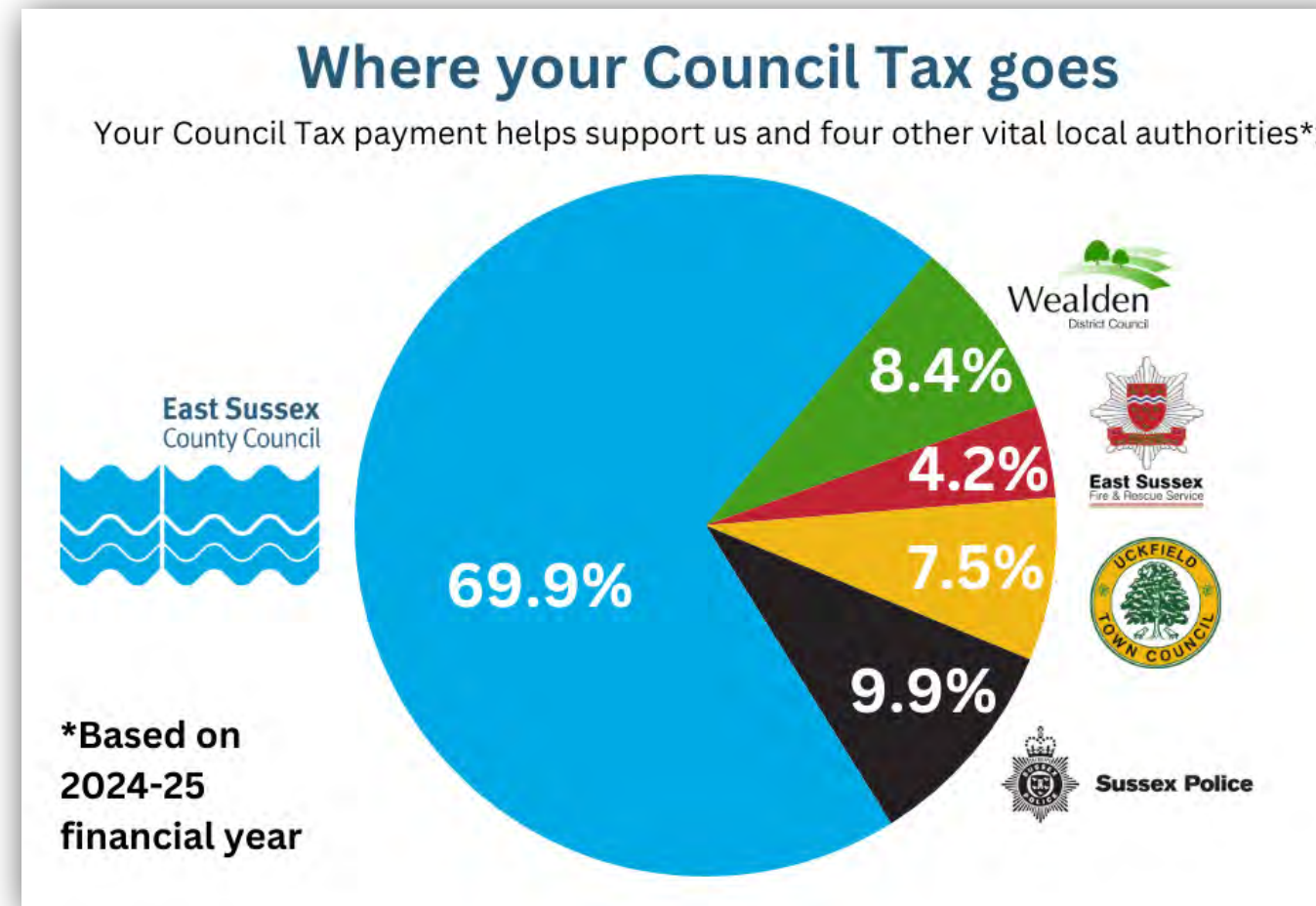
# What We Do

Uckfield Town Council starts the process of budget setting each autumn. During this period, staff and councillors review our income and expenditure for the following year.

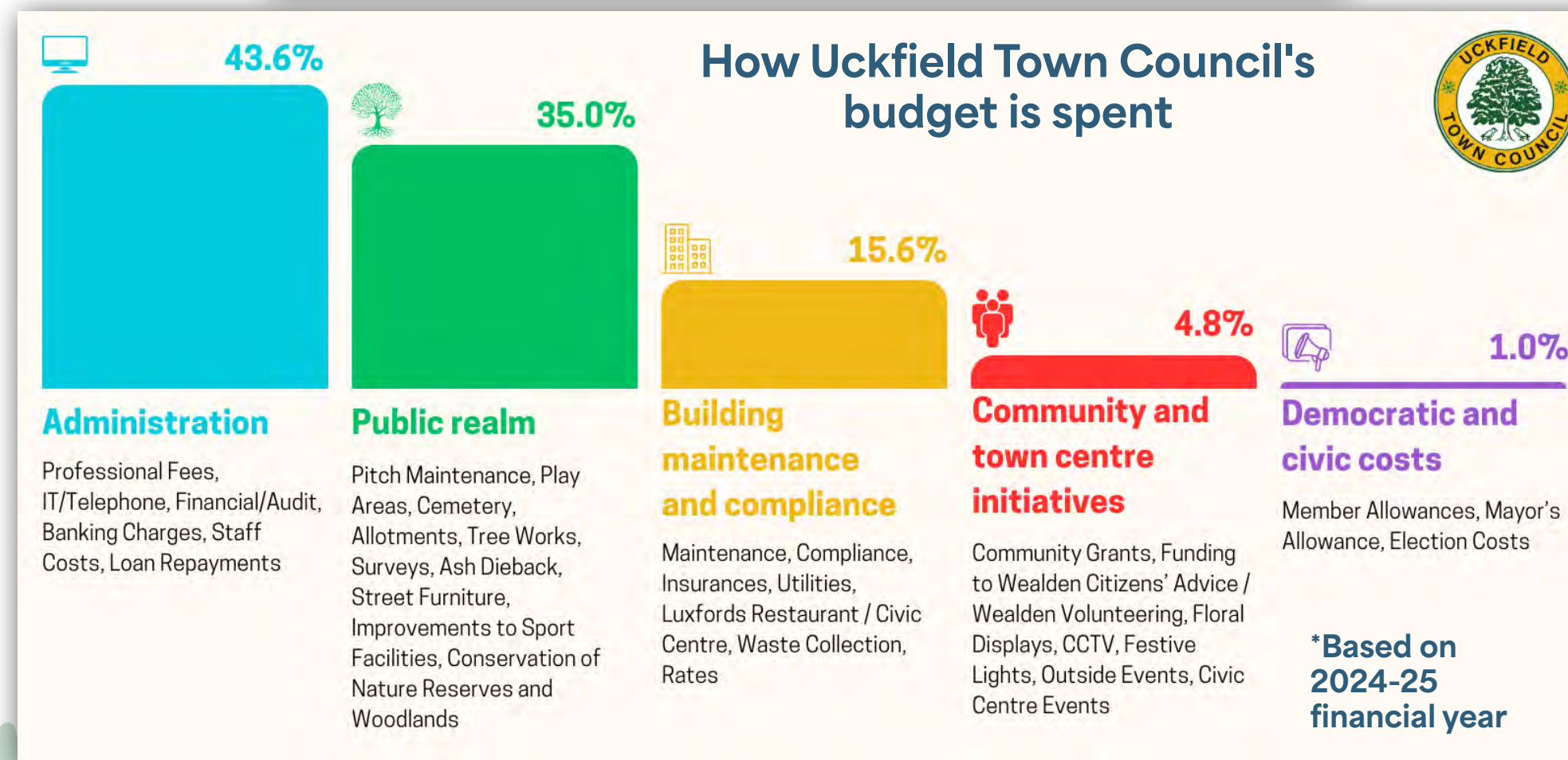
Of the Council Tax collected each year by Wealden District Council, the Town Council obtains a precept to support the provision of services.

For 2025/26\*, Uckfield Town Council forecasts expenditure of over £1.9 million\*. Uckfield Town Council continues to generate one-third of funds through its own income streams.

A breakdown of the precept we receive and how this money is spent is shown on this page.



**\*Please note - all figures mentioned here will be updated after Full Council (Budget) meeting on 12 January 2026.**



# Uckfield Town Councillors

Meet the 15 Councillors working hard for the town of Uckfield.

The Town Council has 15 Town Councillors. Elections take place every four years, with the last taking place in May 2023 and the next scheduled for May 2027.

The positions of Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected by Town Councillors at the start of the annual statutory meeting of Full Council in May, each year.

The Town Mayor is responsible for chairing Full Council, and is considered the first citizen of the town, subject to the attendance of the Lord Lieutenant or a member of the Royal Family. It is a civic role, and one in which the Town Mayor is invited to engagements to learn more about, and honour, individuals and organisations who contribute to the town.



**Karen Bedwell**  
Ridgewood  
*(Town Mayor)*



**Duncan Bennett**  
New Town



**Kathy Butler**  
New Town



**Donna French**  
Uckfield East



**Val Frost**  
Uckfield West



**Jackie Love**  
Uckfield North



**Chris Macve**  
Uckfield East



**Daniel Manvell**  
Uckfield North



**Michael McClafferty**  
Uckfield East



**Spike Mayhew**  
New Town  
*(Deputy Mayor)*



**Bernadette Reed**  
Ridgewood



**Peter Selby**  
Ridgewood



**Angie Smith**  
Uckfield North



**Peter Ullmann**  
New Town



**Diane Ward**  
Uckfield West



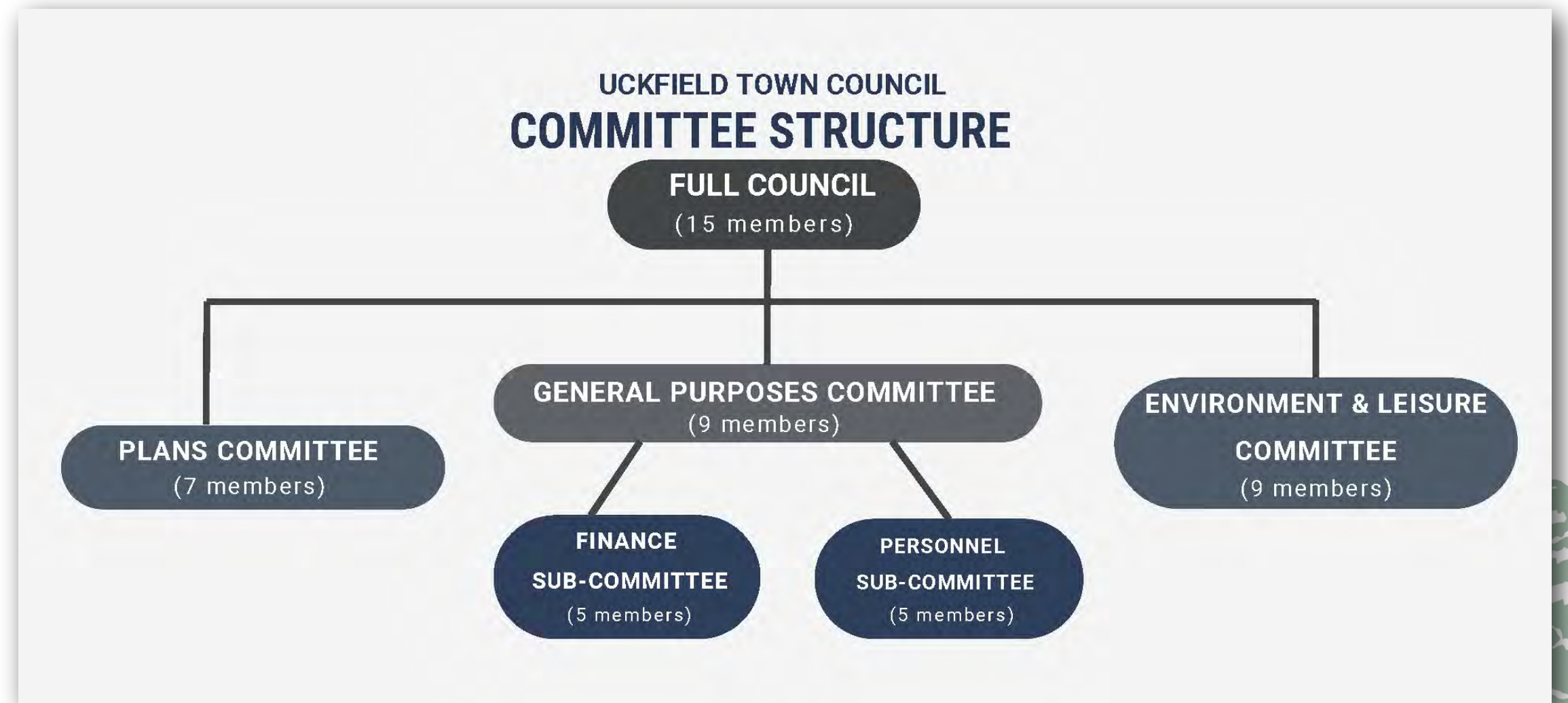
# Who We Are - Councillors

Uckfield Town Council works to a committee system for its decision-making.

In addition to meetings of Full Council, committees are appointed to carry out the functions of the organisation, and decisions are taken on specific areas.

The Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations outline how decisions should be taken and what procedures should be followed to ensure openness and transparency.

These documents can be found on [www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk](http://www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk), or via the QR code below.





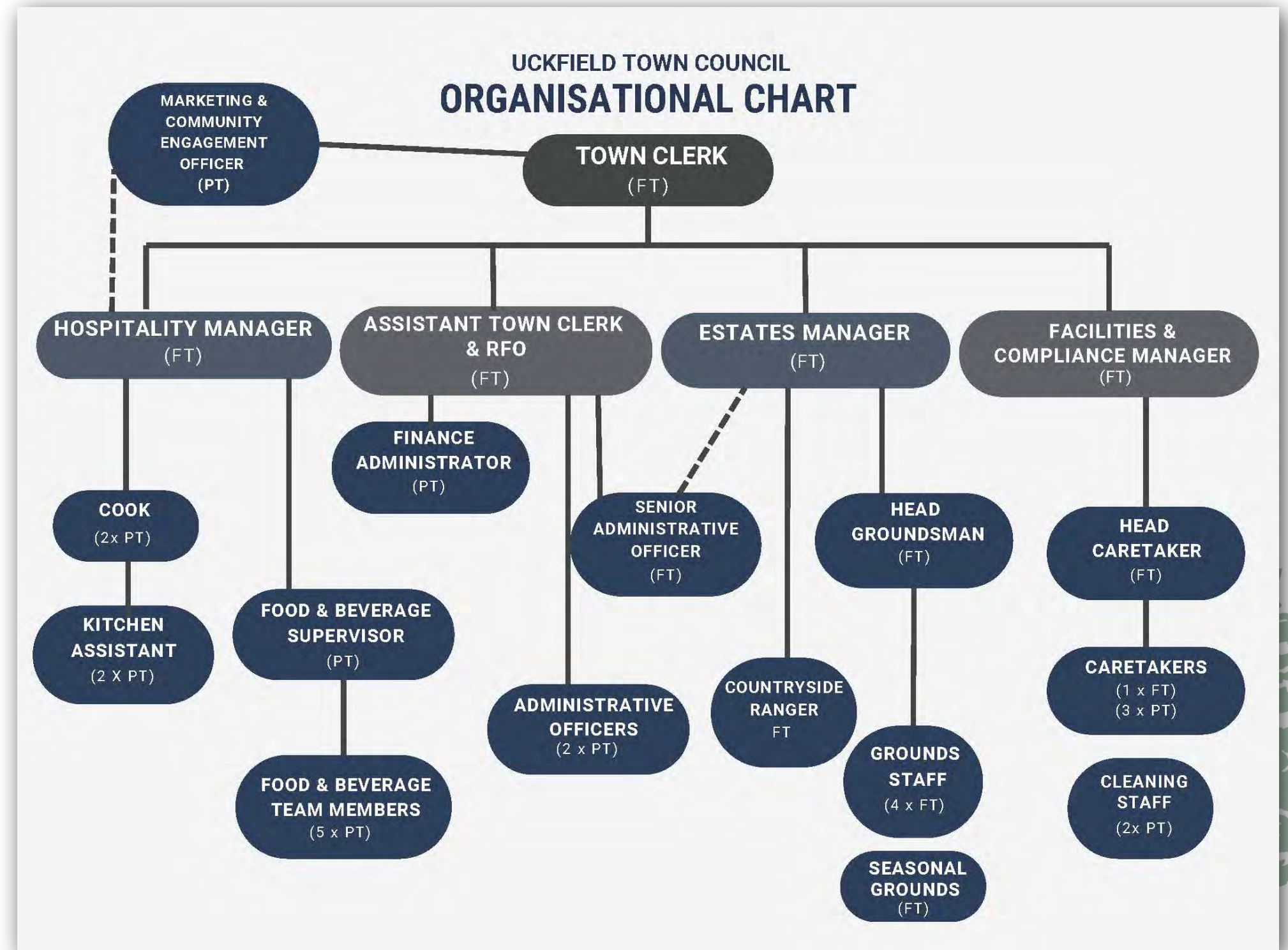
# Who We Are - Staff

Uckfield Town Council works in specific committees and teams to deliver services to the town.

The Town Council's functions are delivered by a team of 32 members of staff, split across four service areas (office, grounds, caretaking and cleaning, and restaurant).

The administration of the Town Council is led by the Town Clerk, with the Assistant Town Clerk, the Estates Manager, Facilities & Compliance Manager and Hospitality Manager also responsible for key areas.

An organisational chart is included here for greater context of where each staff role fits in the Council.



# Challenges and Opportunities



# Our Strategic Priorities

Our priorities are split into the following three areas:

## Restore and protect

Preserving and enhancing the natural and built environment of Uckfield, with a particular focus on effective estate management.



## Empower and strengthen

Providing necessary facilities and enabling local organisations to work together for the benefit of the town.

## Reflect and progress

Ensuring we remain efficient in what we do and that our residents feel engaged.



# Restore and protect

## Our plan for effective estates management.

### By 2031, *the Town Council will have:*

- Maintained a good standard of grounds maintenance;
- Maintained good quality floral displays within the town centre;
- Purchased suitable machinery and equipment to improve open space grass cutting;
- Improved the facilities and surfacing of the Town Council's play areas - upgrading at least two play areas (West Park and Hempstead Fields);
- Undertaken frequent pitch renovations for the Town Council's football pitches;
- Delivered short-term plans to improve the Town Council's sport pitches (cricket and football) and changing facilities with investment;
- Explored and agreed a plan to improve the skate park;
- Designated areas of Town Council land for wild flowers;
- Continued working with Sussex Local Nature Partnership's Green Spaces Project to understand the benefits in Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve and Snatts Road Cemetery;
- Commissioned ecological appraisals and wildlife surveys in our woodlands and nature reserves to inform biodiversity action plans;
- Adopted an action plan to mitigate our carbon emissions, and ensured a periodic review of our contracts, buildings, energy sources and management of nature and waste disposal;
- Hosted events such as the Eco Expo to better inform residents of various alternative technologies;
- Installed further solar panels on the roof of the Civic Centre;
- Recorded and mapped the findings of tree surveys to ensure safety from ash dieback and decay;



# Restore and protect

## Our plan for effective estates management.

### By 2031, *the Town Council will have:*

- Continued to deliver important tree planting schemes, so that for every tree that has been removed, another tree has been planted;
- Provided burial authority services with responsibility for the maintenance of Snatts Cemetery and Holy Cross churchyard;
- Consecrated a new area of land within Snatts Road Cemetery and explored the creation of new cemetery space;
- Continued to review street lighting and replace existing stock with new columns and LED lighting.

### *Our community aspirations, by 2031, are to:*

- Increase opportunities for residents of all ages to take part in activities and improve health and wellbeing;
- Secure funding or land for the creation of further sport facilities, such as a 3G pitch;
- Identify space for new allotment plots and kitchen style gardens;
- Contribute to the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and see the preservation or creation of wetlands and hedgerows, the sustainable management of woodlands and freshwater habitats;
- Provide data and information for Uckfield, to central government departments and Weald to Waves to draw down funding to preserve our rich biodiversity;
- Have created a 'Wilder Uckfield' plan to address the biodiversity crisis.



# Restore and protect

**Our plan for preserving and enhancing the natural and built environment.**

**By 2031, *the Town Council will have:***

- Worked closely with the planning authority to understand and feed into the latest legislative updates;
- Contributed to the planning authority's Local Plan development process;
- Developed an Uckfield Neighbourhood Plan;
- Worked with the relevant authority to ensure the Town Council is fully engaged in regulatory matters such as licensing;
- Undertaken an annual review of the Town Council's assets and strategic asset management plan, improving the efficiency and use of these properties;
- Delivered an annual programme of maintenance and decoration to all of the Town Council's built assets;
- Reviewed the condition of car parks adjacent to Town Council-owned buildings and agreed a programme of repairs or resurfacing, with a particular focus given to drainage and repair at Hempstead Recreation Ground, Ridgewood Village Hall's car parks and the Civic Centre's staff parking area.



# Restore and protect

**Our plan for preserving and enhancing the natural and built environment.**

***Our community aspirations, by 2031, are to:***

- Promote the need for affordable and key worker housing within Uckfield to support those in housing need and first-time buyers;
- Explore options for regeneration within the town centre and the possibility of expanding the retail and business offer through the Uckfield Town Centre Regeneration Committee;
- Consider the infrastructure requirements for the town in terms of sport, leisure, recreation and community facilities, and allotment and cemetery provision;
- Hold developers to account to ensure the conditions of planning permissions are met and that adjacent boundaries and wildlife are sensitively maintained;
- Engage with High Street landlords (commercial and residential) to promote and secure improvements to street frontages;
- Protect the green space between Uckfield and its surrounding villages;
- Work towards the '30 by 30' United Nations target to designate 30 percent of land and ocean areas as protected areas by 2030 to aid nature recovery;
- Work with the relevant agencies to improve the water quality condition of the River Uck.



# Empower and strengthen

**Our plan for enabling local organisations to work together for the benefit of the town.**

**By 2031, *the Town Council will have:***

- Introduced speed reduction initiatives, including community speedwatch and behaviour change campaigns, and explored the introduction of installing permanent speed indicator devices in partnership with neighbouring parishes;
- Created up-to-date street maps of the town, which highlight key footways including alleyways and twittens;
- Introduced key signage and markers to guide walkers and improve health and wellbeing;
- Introduced areas for the installation of public art;
- Worked with Uckfield Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to review festive lighting for the town centre, in preparation for Christmas 2026 and beyond.





# Empower and strengthen

**Our plan for enabling local organisations to work together for the benefit of the town.**

***Our community aspirations, by 2031, are to:***

- Identify and implement solutions for parking controls within the town centre;
- Increase parking capacity within the town;
- Actively promote the electrification of the railway line;
- Actively promote the reinstatement of a link between Uckfield/Lewes/Brighton and Tunbridge Wells railway lines;
- Contribute to a review of the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to develop the town's walking and cycling networks;
- Explore the improvement of footway links between Ridgewood Farm, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) and our nature reserves, as well as exploring the creation of a riverside walk;
- Identify potential areas for improvements to pedestrian safety, including investigating the repair of footpaths on Manor Park to remove the risk of trips and falls;
- Lobby for improved bus services to enable residents on the periphery of town to access the High Street/Business Park, and for local village residents to access Uckfield as their key service centre;
- Identify highway issues within the access corridors into the town centre and utilise Section 106 developer contributions or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to address matters relating to traffic congestion, traffic calming and road safety;
- Address the danger of speeding vehicles by exploring an extension of 20 miles per hour speed limits;
- See the installation of more air quality monitoring units within the town centre;
- Liased with landowners adjacent to the River Uck to investigate the purchase of land from the end of the footpath in Knights Meadow to Hempstead Lane, by the mill, to create a River Walk.



# Empower and strengthen

**Our plan for providing necessary facilities and enabling local organisations to work together for the benefit of the town.**

**By 2031, *the Town Council will have:***

- Supported local community and voluntary organisations with their positive work;
- Delivered a free public event within the town - Weald on the Field;
- Supported the organisation of the annual Remembrance Parade and Services;
- Established a list of special and important dates or individuals within the town's history and commemorated these on heritage plaques;
- Investigated the viability of providing additional public conveniences within the town centre;
- Explored the creation of an outside performance space, for use by the town as part of the annual events calendar;
- Supported the partnership work and continuation of the Uckfield Youth Trust.



# Empower and strengthen

**Our plan for providing necessary facilities and enabling local organisations to work together for the benefit of the town.**

***Our community aspirations, by 2031, are to:***

- Support the town with the promotion of its tourism offer;
- Maintain, improve and protect all of our natural areas to accommodate the demands of future growth of the town;
- Identify future options for providing more community space within the town;
- Understand more about our disadvantaged communities and explored ways to engage with these households;
- Lobby for a banking presence, and support the creation of a banking hub;
- Establish a key register of heritage and non-heritage assets for Uckfield;
- Encourage the expansion of the Wealden Community Toilet Scheme.



# Empower and strengthen

**Our plan for providing necessary facilities - Civic Centre and community space.**

**By 2031, *the Town Council will have:***

- Improved the decoration and flooring within the Civic Centre's main corridors and meeting rooms;
- Improved the Civic Centre's performance facilities (sound, lighting and staging);
- Replaced the tables and table racks within the Civic Centre to ensure easier manoeuvrability for room set-ups;
- Updated room facilities in line with the latest technologies, providing the facilities to enable hybrid meetings to be hosted;
- Introduced temporary air conditioning units within the Civic Centre;
- Developed and implemented a communications and marketing plan for the Civic Centre Uckfield for room hire and its events programme;
- Undertaken feasibility studies to explore the creation of a new Community Hub;
- Diversified the use of our spaces at the Civic Centre, and considered how they are used.



# Reflect and progress

**Our plan for ensuring we remain efficient in what we do.**

**By 2031, *the Town Council will have:***

- Encouraged applications from local traders and organisations in the Town Council's procurement procedures for contractual work;
- Undertaken a thorough review of our key policies;
- Reduced our use of paper by reviewing our working practices and procedures;
- Streamlined our ways of working and created efficiencies with the introduction of new software;
- Placed more focus on searching and applying for suitable grant funding;
- Considered opportunities for Uckfield within the process of local government reorganisation;
- Undertaken detailed periodic reviews of our income generation.



# Reflect and progress

**Our plan for ensuring residents feel engaged.**

**By 2031, *the Town Council will have:***

- Improved communication with residents, businesses and visitors to the town through enhancements to the Town Council website and social media accounts;
- Improved the condition and display of existing Town Council noticeboards and undertaken a review of their locations;
- Installed new parish noticeboards for residents living in newly-built areas of the town;
- Improved accessibility to committee meetings by installing an additional hearing loop in the Civic Centre Uckfield's Council Chamber;
- Increased promotion of the town's key facilities;
- Set up Councillor surgeries to enable residents to have more frequent face-to-face contact with their elected representatives;
- Engaged with residents in a variety of means to understand their requirements and desires for the town, which will better inform our annual business planning, neighbourhood planning and infrastructure planning.





## Uckfield Town Council

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