

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held  
on Monday 12 January 2026 at 7.00pm  
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

**PRESENT:** Cllr. K. Bedwell (Town Mayor)  
Cllr. S. Mayhew (Deputy Mayor) Cllr. D. Manvell  
Cllr. K. Butler Cllr. B. Reed  
Cllr. D. Bennett Cllr. P. Selby  
Cllr. D. French Cllr. A. Smith  
Cllr. M. McClafferty Cllr. P. Ullmann

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

1 x member of the public  
County Councillors Chris and Claire Dowling

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

On behalf of Uckfield Town Council, the Town Mayor, Councillor K. Bedwell, wished to share her condolences with the family and friends of Mr Alan Sallows, of the Uckfield Rugby Club who had recently passed away. The service was due to take place at St Bartholomew's Church, Maresfield on 21 January 2026 at 11.30am.

## **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.

Councillors D. French, P. Selby and A. Smith, recorded a personal interest for agenda item 12.0 due to their roles as Town Council representatives on Wealden Volunteering and Wealden Citizens Advice as outside bodies.

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

No statements were forthcoming.

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

**FC.76.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable the County Councillors to speak.

County Councillor Claire Dowling provided an update on the minor defects that had been reported as well as recent utility works within the town such as UKPN, SGN and water leaks which had resulted in road closures or temporary traffic lights. She had been working closely with the Network Management team to address concerns and keep traffic moving where possible.

Additional signage had been provided at the junction of the A272 with London Road (Budletts) to reduce the risk of accidents from the temporary road closure and difficulties with vehicles turning right.

Members stressed again their concerns in relation to Copwood roundabout and the near misses and accidents occurring due to the confusion with the lanes on the approach to the roundabout. This had been a particular issue since the widening works had been undertaken.

Councillor B. Reed also added that accidents were occurring more frequently on both Batts Bridge roundabout and Blackdown roundabouts. The road condition had also been reported as being of concern.

County Councillor Chris Dowling referred to matters in his constituency and in particular the forthcoming partnership meeting in relation to Lewes Road regarding vehicular and pedestrian safety. The meeting was due to take place shortly.

Councillor D. Manvell led the updates from Wealden District Councillors; referring to two recent Cabinet meetings; one focused on local government reorganisation, and one on the Draft Wealden Local Plan shortly due out for public consultation.

Councillor D. Manvell was also seeking further advice from the Planning Officer regarding the application for Ridgewood Manor Care Home.

Councillor D. French had also been present at the two Cabinet meetings.

Councillor B. Reed referenced the Cabinet meetings, an application she was preparing for Defra for funding. Councillor Reed had been working with residents near to Bentley, in relation to an application for a Battery Energy Storage system and solar farm. Councillor Reed also added further detail on the application for Ridgewood Manor Care Home (four-storey 77 bed home), which raised concerns in terms of its scale, form, impact on adjacent ancient woodland and light pollution.

**FC.77.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

### **4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Councillors V. Frost, J. Love, C. Macve and D. Ward due to sickness and personal commitments.

## 5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 1 December 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**FC.78.01.26** 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.63.10.23 - Motion on pedestrian crossing

FC.41.09.25 – Motion from Cllr Macve (car parks)

Members subsequently noted the report and requested copies of the correspondence.

### 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 8 December 2025 and 5 January 2026

**FC.79.01.26** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 8 December 2025 and 5 January 2026.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee

No meeting held.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 15 December 2025

**FC.80.01.26** It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 15 December 2025.

## 7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

None received.

## 8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

None received.

## 9.0 TO RATIFY DOCUMENTATION FROM STANDING COMMITTEES:

General Purposes Committee

(i) Risk Management Policy

**FC.81.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to ratify the adoption of the revised Town Council's Risk Management Policy.

## 10.0 TO CONSIDER THE RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM THE HOME OFFICE TO THE REQUEST FOR ENGAGEMENT RELATING TO CROWBOROUGH ARMY CAMP

Members were provided with a copy of the letter received from the Home Office, in response to the Town Council's request for engagement, whereby the Town Council was advised that the Home Office did not provide running commentaries on individual sites, and in summary advised that any formal communication would be issued to statutory partners only prior to the site being occupied (i.e. Sussex Police and Wealden DC).

Understandably this was a disappointing response and both the Town Mayor and Town Clerk would continue to push for direct communication and engagement with the parish and town council sector.

An update was provided on the concerns recently raised by local residents, as well as the work being undertaken to remain on the radar with key statutory authorities likely to be engaged, as well as sharing key messages with the community around community safety. The Town Clerk had also requested a meeting with Uckfield College.

Members discussed the current position of the Town Council, and as no direct communication or information was being shared by the Home Office with the parishes, it was felt that a public meeting would be of no benefit, as there was no additional information to share, other than that already within the public domain.

#### 11.0 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEALDEN PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL ON TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES FOR 2026/27

Members were presented with the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel. This report recommended a 3.8% increase. Uckfield Town Council had not followed the recommended increases for a period of three years following the pandemic, which meant that the starting position was different to that within the Panel's report.

It was suggested by the Town Clerk in order to keep discussions contained, that members consider four options. Members were first asked for their initial views by email prior to Christmas, to assist with gauging a view in determining draft figures for budget setting.

These were:

OPTION	DESCRIPTION	BASIC ALLOWANCE	CHAIR ALLOWANCE
<b>A</b>	Freeze member allowances at the current rate	£1,458.08	£2,013.37
<b>B</b>	Increase the current rate of allowances by a further <b>5%</b> ( <i>to move us closer to the Panel's suggested figure</i> )	£1,530.98	£2,114.04
<b>C</b>	Increase the current rate of allowances by a further <b>3.8%</b> ( <i>so we stay behind the recommended figures, but align with the Panel's proposed percentage increase</i> )	£1,513.49	£2,089.88
<b>D</b>	Increase member allowances to the current figure recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel	£1,595.00 <b>(9.4%)</b>	£2,203.00 <b>(9.4%)</b>

The results of the initial feedback received before Christmas:

Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
3 in favour	5 in favour	5 in favour	1 in favour

One member acknowledged that all-out Town Council elections were due in May 2027. A second member, reminded those present of the challenges that differing work or personal circumstances had. For example, those who were self-employed, could lose income when attending council commitments or meetings.

A show of hands was suggested on the two most preferred options:

Option B – 5.0% increase (7 votes in favour out of 11 members present)

Option C – 3.8% increase (3 votes in favour out of 11 members present)

**FC.82.01.26** With 7 votes in favour, it was therefore **RESOLVED** to agree to an increase of 5% to the basic member allowance and the Chairman's allowance which would set the basic allowance at £1,530.98 and the Chair's allowance at £2,114.04 for 2026/27.

## **12.0 TO CONSIDER PROPOSED DRAFT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS FOR 2026/27**

Further to discussions by Finance-Sub Committee and General Purposes Committee through the budget setting process, service level agreements had been drafted for three organisations (i) Wealden Citizens Advice, (ii) Wealden Volunteering and (iii) Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society, for consideration by members. All service level agreements were for a term of 12 months.

Councillor B. Reed proposed that all three agreements be accepted. This was seconded by Councillor P. Selby.

**FC.83.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to accept the service level agreements for 2026-27 for the following organisations:

- (i) Wealden Citizens Advice;
- (ii) Wealden Volunteering, and;
- (iii) Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society.

## **13.0 TO ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-31**

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

Councillor B. Reed and Councillor D. French noted a couple of typos which could be easily rectified.

Discussions then continued on:

- loss of affordable housing as a result of challenges experienced after planning permission had been granted. There was a need to secure homes for the local community. It was suggested that commuted sums be ringfenced for local delivery;
- biodiversity net gain and the suggestion that the Town Council's Strategic Plan should lobby for a tighter percentage of 20% onsite;
- the need to attract a higher level of community infrastructure levy to support infrastructure improvements as a result of the growth in and around the town, through agreements with neighbouring authorities, or a community governance review;

The Town Clerk felt the debate that followed in relation to biodiversity net gain highlighted the gaps in knowledge amongst Town Councillors and the need for

this matter to be discussed further before seeing inclusion in the plan.

Members discussed the potential of initiating a Community Governance Review. It was felt this should be a direct action taken by the Town Council, rather than a community aspiration.

**FC.84.01.26** Subject to the inclusion of a new objective to launch a Community Governance Review, members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the 2026-31 Strategic Plan.

**14.0 TO ADOPT THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PLAN 2026/27**

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

Further to discussions on the Strategic Plan, and support for the process of a Community Governance review to be initiated, it was suggested that this be included in the annual plan, as direct action would be taken by the Town Council to initiate this process.

Councillor D. Bennett, requested whether the reinstatement of the railway could be incorporated into the annual plan. The Town Clerk advised that this wasn't a direct action being taken by the Town Council or project that could be directly delivered by the Town Council in the new financial year. This had already been incorporated within the Strategic Plan and a key priority for the organisation longer-term.

Members asked if there were any beacon lighting events due to occur this year, to which the Town Mayor explained that this had been asked by Finance Sub-Committee and checked by staff, to which none had been reported online.

**FC.85.01.26** Subject to the addition of 'Community Governance Review', members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Annual Plan for 2026/27.

**15.0 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE AND FORMALLY SET THE ANNUAL BUDGET (PRECEPT) FOR 2026/27**

The Assistant Town Clerk & RFO presented the final draft of the budget for 2026/27. She updated members on the work undertaken in the weeks leading up to this meeting, which resulted in the presentation of a fair and realistic budget for the next financial year.

Since the first draft was shared, Wealden DC had informed Uckfield TC that the Council Tax Base had increased by 41. A small number but it had helped to spread the budget a bit further. A small amount of funds had also been set aside again for contingency. The Finance Sub Committee reviewed and scrutinised the finer details of the budget the previous week, and the Assistant Town Clerk handed over to the Vice Chair of the Sub-Committee, Councillor Manvell, in the absence of the Chair.

Councillor D. Manvell, reflected on the views of the sub-committee, and the difficult decision by the Town Council the previous year. For 2026-27, the Town Council was in a stronger position, but still needed to balance delivery of a number of major projects and their associated professional fees with increasing

costs, and support to local community organisations through service level agreements. The major projects being taken forward for the town council would generate additional revenue in the future, and therefore the increases now would speculate to accumulate.

The Town Clerk endorsed these comments, and reminded members of plans for local government reorganisation in April 2028, which could result in the parish/town council sector taking on more services or the management of additional assets in future years. She also reminded members, that it was prudent that the Town Council maintained a watch on its general reserves to ensure adequate levels were maintained, particularly during periods of high expenditure on major projects.

Comments from members included:

- (i) support for consideration being given for contingency;
- (ii) support for consideration of expanding the professional fees budget to accommodate any costs in delivering the Neighbourhood Plan;
- (iii) support for the drafting of a prudent and sensible budget;
- (iv) clarification sought on a reduction in estates salaries, which was explained by a balance of contract work and in-house delivery with the use of efficient machinery and equipment;
- (v) request for an update on the Signal Box, to which officers responded.

**FC.86.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to ratify the recommendation of Finance Sub-Committee and adopt the annual budget for 2026/27 of £2,121,082 with a precept of £1,432,188. This would result in an increase of £16.62 (7.55%) per annum for the average Council Tax Band D household (approx. £1.66 per month).

Members also wished to record their thanks to Management Team for their hard work on preparing the annual budget.

**16.0 TO ADOPT THE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2026-31**

**FC.87.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to adopt the Asset Management Plan for 2026-31.

**17.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRIORITIES FOR 2025/26 (Q3)**

Members were presented with an update for quarter 3 (Oct – Dec) for 2025/26. Members wished to acknowledge the amount of work undertaken by staff to deliver these projects alongside their day to day work, and subsequently noted the report.

**18.0 TO REVIEW A SNAPSHOT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S BUDGET AND BALANCE SHEET POSITION FOR THE END OF DECEMBER 2025**

Councillor P. Ullmann wished to seek clarification on a liability showing on one of the bank accounts, which would be checked by the Assistant Town Clerk & RFO. Members noted the reports.

**19.0 TO CONSIDER A REVIEW OF ESTATES MACHINERY**

A report was presented to members which proposed the sale and replacement of both the Town Council's tractor, and rotary mower. Existing machinery was incredibly large and heavy and was proving difficult to use on the pitches during the winter months, due to their size and weight. Valuations had been obtained for

this machinery for sale, and alternative models were proposed for replacement which were more suitable for football pitch and open space maintenance particular during the winter months. The Estates Manager also advised that the new machinery would see a 50% reduction in running costs and fuel costs.

The Estates Manager answered specific enquiries relating to the existing and proposed new machinery. It was asked if the nominal book value could be checked against the market value of the existing machinery. Members were also interested in what additional tasks could be carried out by the proposed new machinery.

**FC.88.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to approve the sale of the Tractor and Major Contoura Rotary Mower, and proposed options for replacement.

**20.0 TO CONSIDER PROVIDING A CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUR PARKS INITIATIVE UP TO 31 MARCH 2026**

The Town Clerk explained the sudden removal of public health funding for the programme and the success of the initiative within Uckfield. Members understood the benefits and need to support the continuation of the classes whilst exploring all available future options.

**FC.89.01.26** Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) approve the allocation of earmarked reserves to contribute a sum of £1,280 to continue the initiative for a period of eight weeks;
- (ii) identify alternative funding for the programme for 2026/27, and;
- (iii) support Our Parks with the promotion of the Coach Parker programme and overall initiative in Uckfield, in order to maintain access to free exercise for local residents.

**21.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Members noted the report.

**22.0 SIGNING OF GRAVE CERTIFICATES AND TO NOTE TRANSFERS OF DEEDS OF GRANT**

Five deeds of grant have been received:

Gavin Galbraith-Marten x 2

Edward Mower

Carmel Weekes

Louise Marie Elliott

**FC.90.01.26** It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

**23.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**

None received.

**24.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Clerk confirmed that a response had been submitted by the deadline on behalf of the Town Council to the MHCLG consultation on local government reorganisation proposals in Sussex. A copy of the response would be shared with members.

**25.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm.