

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

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 could bring.

Uckfield Town Council continues to generate around one-third of its income through its 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 the 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)



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)



2,474 residents are disabled under the Equality Act

(16.4% of town population)

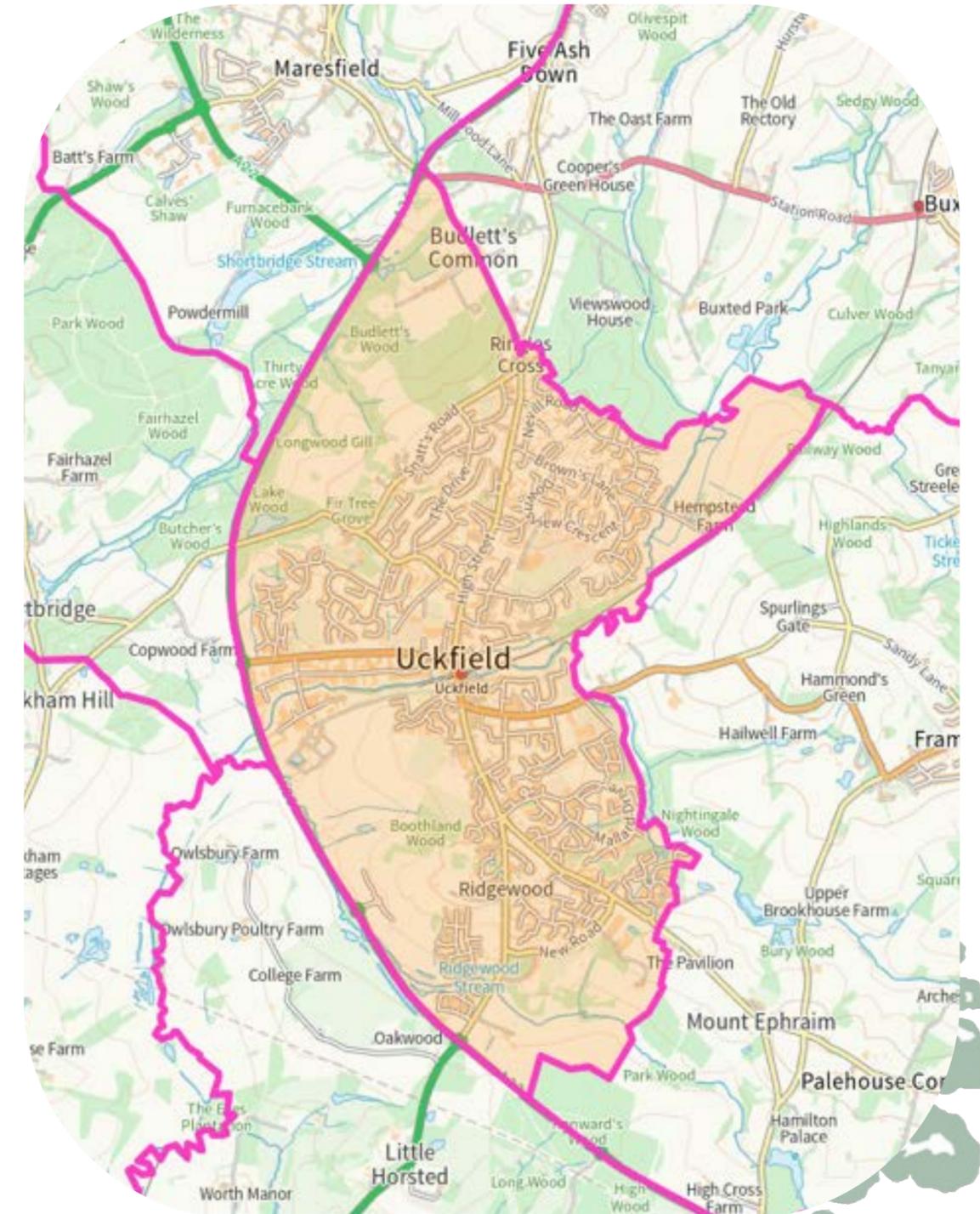
(2021 census, ONS)



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.



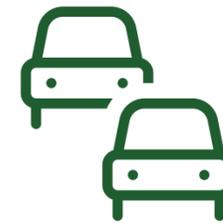
63% of adults are economically active

(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)



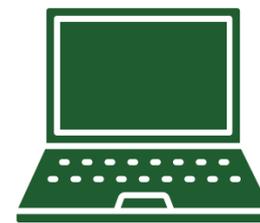
Most households have at least one vehicle

(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.

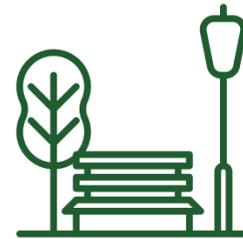
This strategic plan, and our more detailed annual plan and annual budget, determine how we seek to balance the conservation and continuous improvement of these sites.



Uckfield Town Council owns and manages the following assets:



10 Buildings



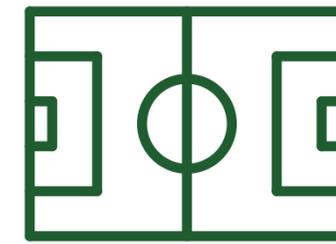
17 Open Spaces
(Including Priority Habitats & 1 Local Wildlife Site)



8 Play Areas



192 Streetlights



7 Recreation Grounds
(Including Sport Pitches)



1 Cemetery
(Also a Local Wildlife Site)



4 Woodlands
(Including 3 Ancient Woodlands)



2 Local Nature Reserves
(Including 1 Local Wildlife Site, 1 Local Geological Site and parkland)



6 Allotment Sites
(245 Plots)



72 Litter Bins



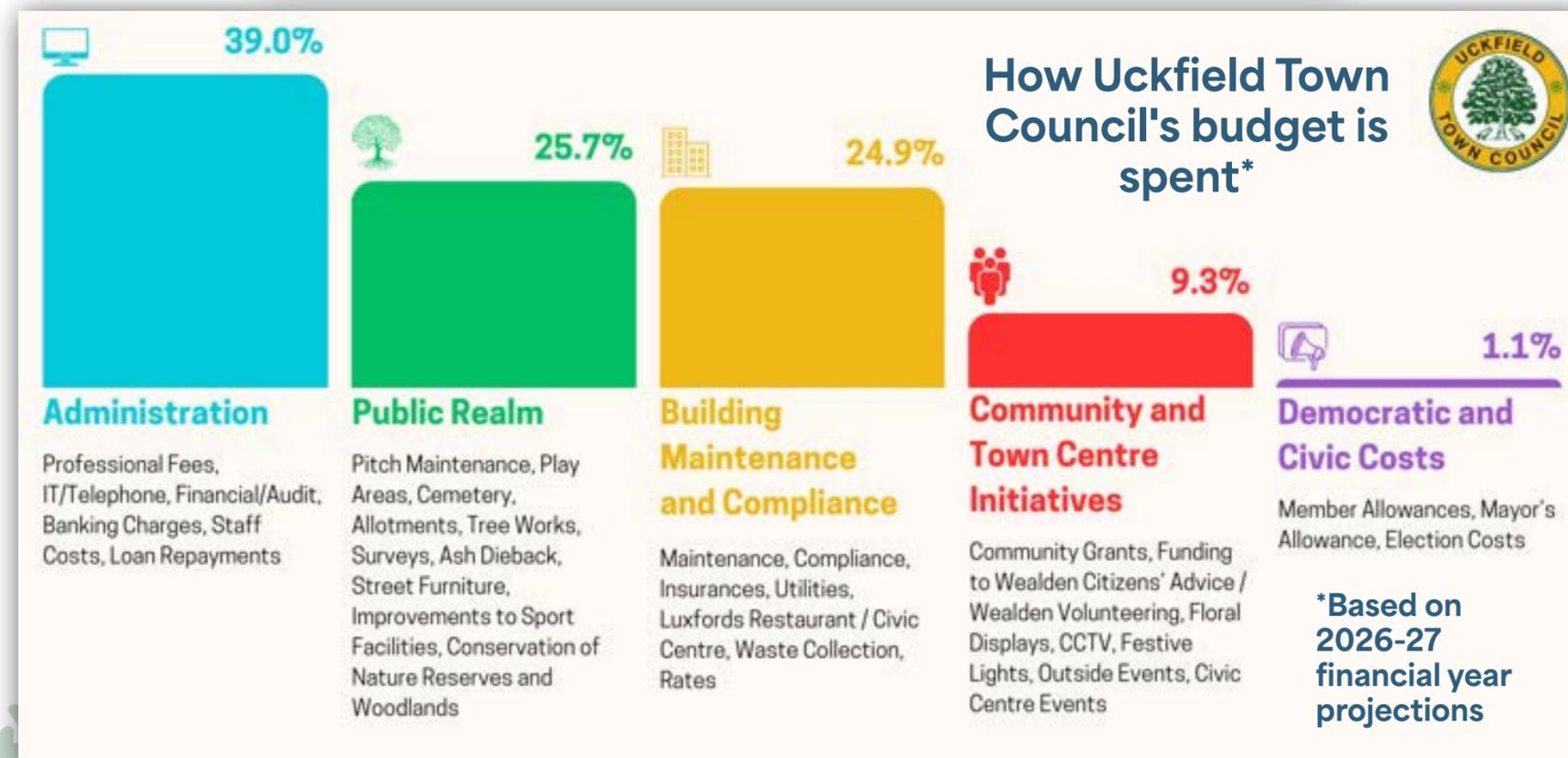
What We Do

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 2026-27, Uckfield Town Council forecasts expenditure of £2.1 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.



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

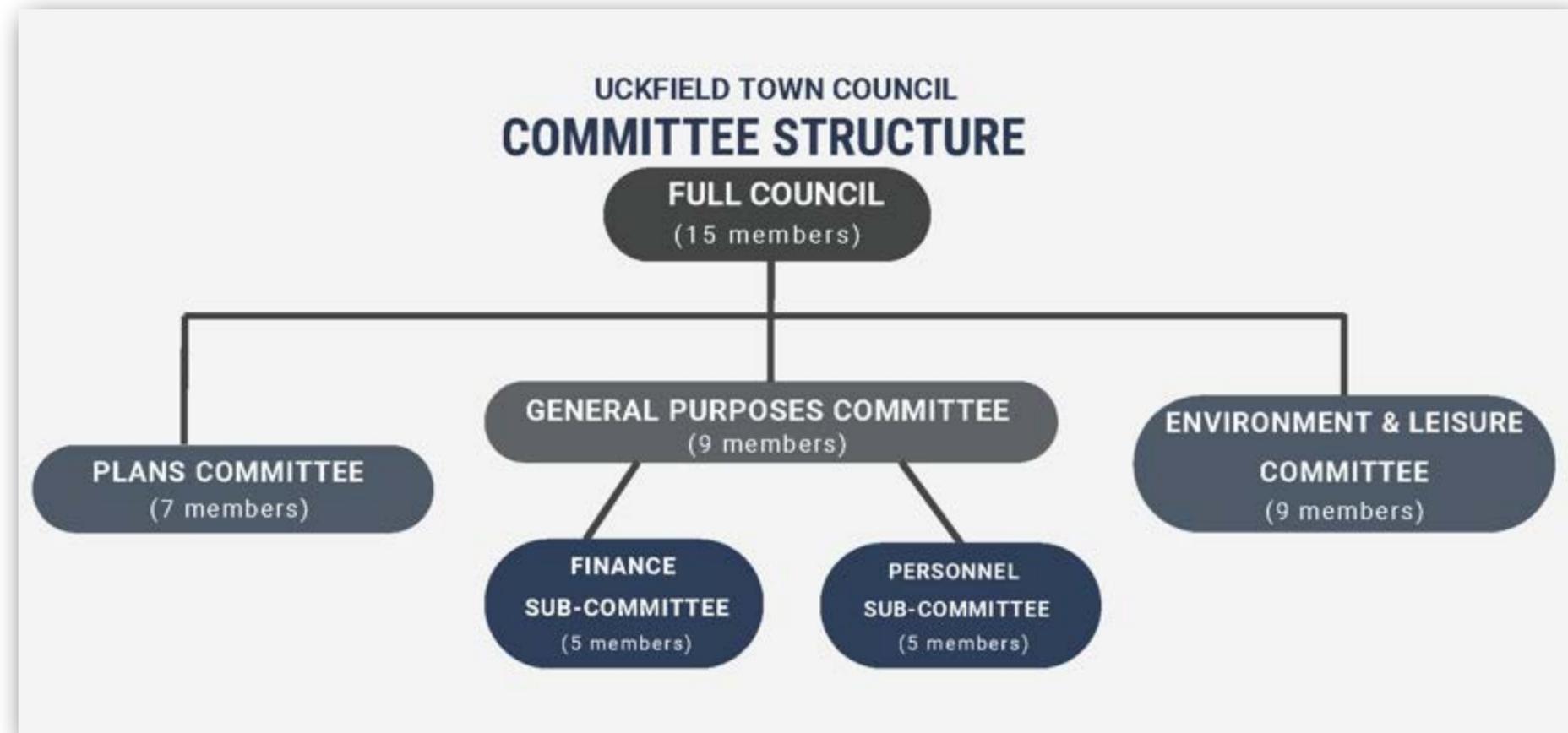
Uckfield Town Council works to a committee system for its decision-making.

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.

The scheme of delegation sets out the responsibilities of senior staff and committees.

These documents can be found on www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk, or via the QR code below.



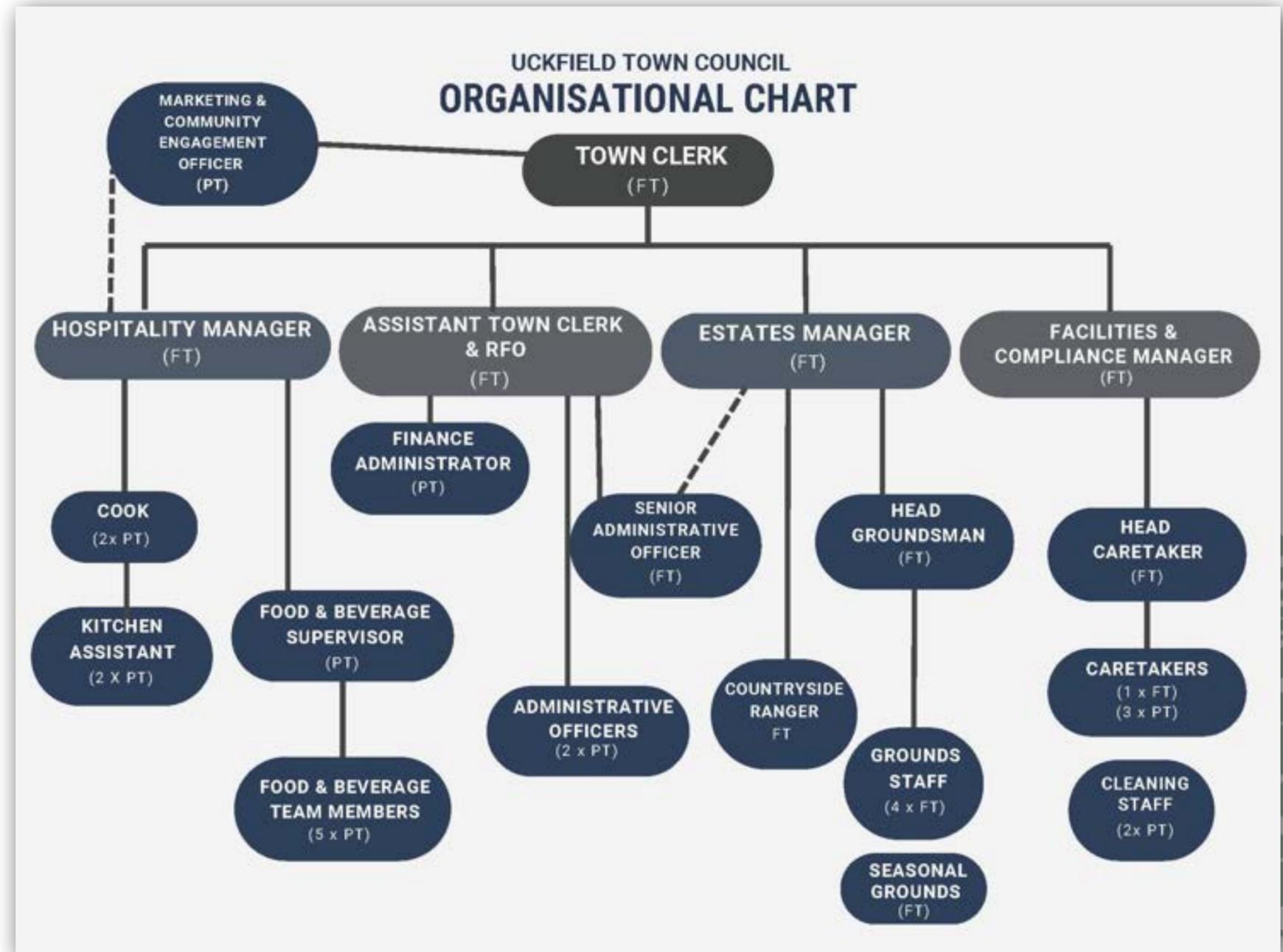
Who We Are - Staff

An update of how Uckfield Town Council's staffing structure currently looks.

The Town Council's functions are delivered by a team of 32 staff, split across four service areas (administration, estate management, facilities management and hospitality).

The administration of the Town Council is led by the Town Clerk, along with the Assistant Town Clerk, the Estates Manager, Facilities & Compliance Manager and Hospitality Manager.

An organisational chart is included here to illustrate where each staff role fits into the Council.



Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

- Biodiversity crisis
- Visitor harm effects on Green & Blue Infrastructure
- Climate change and severe weather conditions
- Flood risk
- Groundwater and water stressed area
- Limited infrastructure to support future growth
- Adequately supporting our new communities
- Lack of affordable housing
- Addressing highway capacity and safety
- Retaining a highly educated workforce
- Financial climate and available funds

Restore and Protect

Empower and Strengthen

Reflect and Progress

Opportunities

- 'Wilder Uckfield' - recording and mapping key data to inform biodiversity action plans;
- Preparedness - for changing weather conditions and climate change
- Strong Voluntary and Community Sector
- Strengths in local knowledge, experience and asset management
- Free car parking and access to public transport
- Shaping local government and community engagement within plans for reorganisation and devolution



Our Strategic Priorities

Our priorities are split into the following three areas:

Restore and Protect

Protecting 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:*

- Purchased suitable machinery and equipment to improve open-space grass cutting;
- Improved the facilities and surfacing of the Town Council's play areas with plans to upgrade at least two play areas (Hempstead Recreation Ground and West Park);
- Undertaken frequent football pitch renovations to develop ground conditions;
- Delivered plans to improve the Town Council's sport pitches, and changing facilities with investment;
- Installed a new 3G Football Turfed Pitch with the support of the Football Foundation and Wealden District Council;
- Explored and agreed a plan to improve drainage and facilities at the town's skate park;
- Maintained and expanded floral displays within the town centre;
- Designated areas of Town Council land for wild flowers;
- Commissioned ecological appraisals and wildlife surveys in our woodlands and nature reserves to inform geological and biodiversity action plans, and update our woodland management plan;
- Improved access to, and buffer restrictions from visitor impact to areas of our ancient woodlands;
- Continued working with Sussex Local Nature Partnership's Green Spaces Project to understand more about the biodiversity of Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve and Snatts Road Cemetery;
- Recorded and mapped the findings of tree surveys to ensure safety from ash dieback, and decay;
- 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;



Restore and Protect

Our plan for effective estates management.

By 2031, the Town Council will have:

- Hosted events such as the Eco Expo to better inform residents of the alternative technologies available for their homes and businesses;
- Delivered 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 Road Cemetery and Holy Cross churchyard;
- Consecrated a new burial space within Snatts Road Cemetery, and explored options for finding new cemetery land.

Our community aspirations, by 2031, are to:

- Identify space for new allotment plots and kitchen style gardens;
- Contribute to the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and prevent direct and indirect harm to wetlands and hedgerows, woodlands and freshwater habitats;
- Present data and information for Uckfield to central government departments and Weald to Waves;
- Create a 'Wilder Uckfield' plan to address the biodiversity crisis;
- Improve the quality of freshwater habitats and local watercourse catchment areas;
- Identify and map green and blue infrastructure networks, and safeguard and restore Local Green Spaces (LGS);
- Propose adequate buffers for important wildlife corridors to restore functional connectivity.



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 input into the latest legislative updates;
- Contributed to the planning authority's Local Plan development;
- Obtained a list of key heritage and non-heritage assets within Uckfield;
- Better understood and mapped existing and new conservation areas for consideration;
- Provided input into planning application responses to provide local information on local character, green and blue infrastructure, and important sites of ecological value;
- 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 built assets and considered the efficiency and use of these properties;
- Delivered an annual programme of maintenance and compliance for all Town Council built assets;
- Further retrofitted its built assets in line with the Town Council's Climate Change Policy and ensured greater energy efficiency;
- 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, and Civic Centre parking areas.



Restore and Protect

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

Our community aspirations, by 2031, are to:

- Hold developers to account to ensure the conditions of planning permissions are met, and that adjacent boundaries and wildlife are sensitively maintained;
- Create a register of brownfield sites in Uckfield;
- Consider the infrastructure requirements for the town in terms of sport, leisure, recreation and community facilities, and allotment and cemetery provision;
- Promote the need for affordable and key-worker housing within Uckfield to support those in housing need and first time buyers;
- Protect the green space between Uckfield town and surrounding villages, exploring settlement gaps to prevent urban sprawl;
- Work with partner organisations to introduce features of public art to improve current green spaces;
- 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;
- Engage with High Street landlords (commercial and residential) to promote and secure improvements to street frontages;
- 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.
- Lobby for adequate funds to be drawn down from development for the Uckfield locality.



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:*

- Created up-to-date street maps of the town, which highlight key community facilities, as well as rights of way, alleyways and twittens;
- Introduced key signage and markers to guide walkers around our open spaces;
- Undertaken improvements to existing access points and footways through Town Council land;
- Liased with local landowners to create sections of river walk;
- Worked with Uckfield Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to expand festive lighting within the Town Centre;
- 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;
- Improved the condition and efficiency of street lights with contractor expertise.



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:

- Contribute to a review of the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to develop the town's walking and cycling networks;
- Work with local planning applicants and the relevant authorities to support active travel;
- Improve footway links between new developments on the periphery of Uckfield, suitable alternative natural green spaces (SANGs) and the town centre;
- Work with partner agencies to increase opportunities for residents of all ages to take part in activities which improve their health and wellbeing;
- Identify potential areas for improvement to pedestrian safety, including investigating the repair of footpaths on Manor Park and the installation of crossings;
- 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;
- Lobby for improved bus services to enable residents on the periphery of the town to access the High Street/Business Park, and for local village residents to access Uckfield as their key service centre;



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 highway issues within the access corridors into the town centre and utilise Section 106 developer contributions to address matters relating to traffic congestion, traffic calming and road safety;
- Address the danger of speeding vehicles by exploring an extension of 20mph speed limits;
- See the installation of more air quality monitoring units within the town centre;
- Protect existing public rights of way within rural character landscapes.



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 community grant funding and project delivery;
- Delivered a free public event within the town - Weald on the Field;
- Supported the organisation of the annual Remembrance Parade and Services;
- Hosted beacon lighting events to mark important civic anniversaries;
- 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.



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:

- Identify future options for the provision of community space to meet current and future need;
- Support the town with the promotion of tourism and heritage;
- Lobby for a banking presence, and support the creation of a banking hub in Uckfield High Street;
- Support the expansion of the Wealden Community Toilet Scheme;
- Understand more about our disadvantaged communities and explored ways to engage with these households;
- Establish a list of special and important dates or individuals within the town's history and commemorated these on heritage plaques.



Empower and Strengthen

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

By 2031, *the Town Council will have:*

- Reviewed our hospitality offer within the Civic Centre to meet current and future demand;
- Updated room facilities in line with the latest technologies, providing the facilities to enable hybrid meetings to be hosted;
- Replaced the tables and table racks within the Civic Centre to ensure easier manoeuvrability for room set-ups;
- Improved the decoration and flooring within the main corridors and meeting rooms;
- Upgraded the flooring and heating within the Weald Hall;
- Undertaken improvements to the venue's performance facilities (sound, lighting and staging);
- Introduced temporary air conditioning units within the Civic Centre;
- Developed and implemented a marketing plan for the Civic Centre;
- Undertaken the relevant investigations and sourced funding to deliver a new Community Hub within the town.



Reflect and Progress

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

By 2031, *the Town Council will have:*

- Given more focus to business development to develop existing, and introduce new revenue streams;
- Identified suitable grant funding to support the delivery of major projects;
- Considered opportunities for Uckfield within the process of local government reorganisation and ensured we hold engagement with our sector;
- Launched a Community Governance Review;
- Undertaken periodic reviews of our key income streams and associated fees and charges;
- Encouraged applications from local traders and organisations in our procurement processes;
- Undertaken periodic reviews of our key policies;
- Streamlined our way of working with the introduction of new software;
- Supported our employees with training, expertise, and delivery.



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 our 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;
- Engaged with residents through a variety of consultations to better inform our annual business planning, neighbourhood planning and infrastructure planning.





Uckfield Town Council

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