

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 16 March 2026 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT: Cllr. K. Bedwell (Town Mayor) Cllr. M. McClafferty
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. J. Love Cllr. D. Ward
Cllr. C. Macve

IN ATTENDANCE:

4 x members of the public
County Councillor Claire Dowling

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

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 D. Bennett declared a personal interest in agenda item 10.0 as a result of knowing the resident who submitted the enquiry.

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

FC.91.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable a member of the public and a County Councillor to speak on this and the next item.

Resident 1 wished to speak in relation to agenda item 10.0. Their enquiry related to land adjacent to their property.

Their family were hoping to purchase a triangle of land from the adjacent green space of approximately 30sqm. It would extend their garden and enable them to improve the space around their home. Their property was East facing and they lost the evening sunlight. Her mother suffered from COPD and the garden and fresh air were good for her health.

The land itself was not used for any specific purpose by the Town Council and there was often dog mess, and it was not well maintained. The resident thanked members for listening to her and for considering their request.

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

County Councillor Claire Dowling reported on the work with Town Councillors to address a number of issues within the town. It was pleasing to see the water leak repaired in Hempstead lane. 56 potholes had been repaired, some of them temporary, and it was anticipated with the wet weather that this number could increase. Four drainage matters had been addressed, and some were still under investigation.

Councillor Dowling met with the Highway steward on Friday to discuss a number of these issues. She also declared her support for protecting the railway trackbed.

Councillor Reed reiterated her interest in a developer's intention to synchronise the traffic lights in the town centre, when the Town Council were led to believe this had already been completed in 2016. This sat with Development Control, so it would need to be confirmed when they were last synchronised.

Councillor French had emailed East Sussex Highways about the traffic lights. Modifications were made to traffic light systems including changes to detectors and timers at Bell Lane as well as the addition of the filter light at Framfield Road in 2016. They were not 'smart' traffic lights but this could happen in the future. There was scope with the existing system to support to provide greater capacity.

Councillor Butler raised issues associated with the temporary closure of Eastbourne Road. The signage relating to the closure should have been placed at Highlands roundabout. It caused a number of difficulties for road users, and placed added pressure on Lewes Road.

Councillor Bedwell had contacted Southern Water and South East Water regarding the water in Lewes Road. All parties were declining that it was within their remit. ES Highways advised that it was not a priority, but it had been flooding since October 2025.

Councillor French had been focusing on the allocation and approval of her ward budget, and assisting with the Town Council's response to the Local Plan.

Councillor Reed referenced the extension of the deadline for the consultation response on the Local Plan. This would now fall at the end of March 2026. Previous comments submitted in the 2024 consultation would also be incorporated in the Regulation 19 alongside this application. There were about 70 in attendance at the in-person exhibition on 14 February 2026.

Councillor Reed also referred to past concerns raised in relation to the management of the SANG (Horsted Green). In 2025, the skylark habitat was mowed whilst they were nesting. There were a dozen there this weekend and contact has been made with the Wealden DC Officers, so signage could be arranged and grounds maintenance schedules adapted accordingly.

Councillor Manvell had also been working on the allocation of ward budgets – this included funding being provided to the 4th Scouts Group and Uckfield Youth

Trust.

All Uckfield members voted in favour of the cost of living proposals within the Wealden DC budget as well as the introduction of exemptions in council tax for low income households.

Changes had been seen at the Maidens Head, and it was hoped that the tiles could be re-attached fairly soon. This would result in the scaffolding being reduced. There would still be further work required but good progress had been made to date.

Concerns had been raised about the hedgerows at Mockbeggars Farm. Planning officers had driven past the site and felt the works had followed the Arboricultural assessment. It did look stark, but officers would continue to check that works met the specifics of the application. Councillor Bedwell commented on her disappointment on the hedgerow. And also noted the Town Council's disappointment in the lack of meeting held to address Maidens Head to round the matter up in these latter stages.

Councillor Reed then referred to correspondence held with the Head of Planning with regards to Seghers Place and the issues that had occurred with the footpath closure and lack of construction plan adjacent to the ancient woodland. Councillor Bennett recalled the site being graded for archaeology some years back so confused further work was being undertaken.

FC.92.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors V. Frost and P. Ullmann due to sickness and work commitments respectively.

Apologies had also been received from Councillor Chris Dowling.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 12 January 2026 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

FC.93.03.26 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.61.10.25 - initial review of service level agreements;

FC.88.01.26 – review of Estates machinery

FC89.01.26 – contribution to Our Parks initiative

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 26 January, 16 & 23 February and 9 March 2026

FC.94.03.26 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 26 January, 16 & 23 February and 9 March 2026.

(b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 19 January and 2 March 2026
FC.95.03.26 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 19 January and 2 March 2026.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 9 February 2026
FC.96.03.26 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 9 February 2026.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES
None received.

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS
Members noted the update from the Events Working Group, and support required by all Town Councillors both at the event and the sharing and promotion of business sponsorship opportunities.

9.0 TO RATIFY DOCUMENTATION FROM STANDING COMMITTEES:

General Purposes Committee

(i) Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference

FC.97.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to ratify the adoption of the revised Town Council's Scheme of Delegation.

Environment & Leisure Committee

(ii) Memorial Safety Policy

FC.98.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to ratify the adoption of the revised Town Council's Memorial Safety Policy.

Councillor Bennett left the room for agenda item 10.0 at 7.30pm.

10.0 TO CONSIDER AN ENQUIRY RELATING TO LAND ADJACENT TO 10, WILSON GROVE

A resident living on West Park, submitted an enquiry to the Town Clerk to see whether an area of green space owned by Uckfield Town Council which sat adjacent to their property boundary, was available for purchase. At present the land was not being utilised.

There were a mix of views around the table.

Those in favour of the request to purchase the land had no real objection with the enquiry, but felt any legal or associated costs with the sale, should be picked up by the buyer.

Those against the enquiry, were concerned that it could see an increase in enquiries from those living adjacent to Town Council land. It was noted that the land at West Park had various covenants in place. The future proposals to increase capacity for recreation and community space at West Park, may also require the Town Council to relook at the car parking area next to this green verge, and as a result should hold off from making any decisions at the current time. Similar requests had been turned down previously in the vicinity, so it was important for continuity. There may also be stipulations on the original S52 agreement on the transfer of land to the various local authorities.

It was suggested that a policy be created on the handling of these enquiries, as a number were submitted to Environment & Leisure Committee each year, and no set policy in place.

Councillor Bedwell proposed, to find out legally what the S52 agreement was with Charles Church and then take the matter back to E&L Committee to consider the Town Council's policy longer term on the handling of similar enquiries.

At the start of the discussion, Councillor McClafferty put forward a proposal to accept the interest in the purchase of the land.
This was seconded by Councillor Manvell.

A vote was taken on the proposal for the resident to purchase the land subject to the covenants and former S52 agreement being checked and the buyer bearing the associated costs of any sale. A show of hands, identified:
4 votes in favour
6 against (of which one was Cllr Selby)
1 abstained (Cllr Love)
This proposal therefore failed.

A second proposal was considered by Councillor Manvell – for the Town Council to develop a policy on the handling of such enquiries so both the residents and staff were clear on the Town Council's view on this matter.
Councillor McClafferty seconded the proposal.

FC.99.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to report the matter to Environment & Leisure Committee and for a policy to be developed by the Town Council on the handling of enquiries from residents on the purchase of Town Council land.

Councillor Bennett returned to the room at 7.46pm.

11.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR D. BENNETT

Members were presented with a motion which sought the support of the Town Council on the ESCC 2025 Rail Plan, and asked for ESCC to immediately reinstate full trackbed protection.

Councillor Macve referenced paragraph 2.3 of the report. He wished to include an alteration to say 'the reinstatement of a twin/dual track line.' Councillor Bennett advised that the existing track policy just needs to be reinforced at this stage. The Town Clerk advised that a tweak would be made to the Strategic Plan and motion accordingly.

Concerns had been raised with the proximity of the Owlsbury Farm development for example. Members requested the incorporation of reference to a dual trackbed. It was clarified that yes, fence to fence double track protection was important.

FC.100.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to support the motion submitted by Councillor Bennett:

'Uckfield Town Council welcomes and strongly supports our County Council's 2025 Rail Plan in recognising the pivotal role of rail and the development of the town's connections to Lewes and Tunbridge Wells for modern railway use. We therefore urge and indeed expect ESCC to immediately reinstate the full dual trackbed protection (fence to fence) which existed in the Council's

Structure Plans.’

12.0 TO CONSIDER A MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR D. FRENCH

Councillor French submitted a motion which requested that the Town Council make a nomination for the Uckfield Police station site to be considered as an asset of community value. The building itself was prominent in the town’s landscape and should be listed.

Members noted that the boundary around the area nominated was important. It was thought that this should include the Police station building within its setting.

FC.101.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to support the motion submitted by Councillor French:

“If Uckfield Police Station is not currently listed, could Uckfield Town Council please make a nomination for this site to be registered as an Asset of Community Value. The Police station is located on New Town, Uckfield, TN22 5DL.”

13.0 TO NOTE THE DECISION OF THE URGENT CONSULTATION PANEL

A matter was brought to the attention of the Town Council’s Urgent Consultation Panel on 18 February 2026, due to the timescales involved to request the extension of leave of absence/attendance from the Town Council for a Town Councillor due to their current health. This was a consideration under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members noted the decision taken, to extend their current leave of absence for a period of three months to enable more time to be given to understanding the current circumstances and plan how best to proceed. Members wished the Town Councillor a speedy recovery.

14.0 TO NOTE PLANS TO PRESERVE BOOTHLAND WOOD AND ASSOCIATED FOOTPATHS

Members were presented with an update further to a decision taken at Environment & Leisure Committee on 2 March 2026 to fence areas around the perimeter and internally within Boothland Wood to protect the ancient woodland. The main footpath across the Ridgewood Farm site had been closed off with no prior notice, and this had resulted in increased footfall within the woodland. Since the report had been prepared, a meeting had taken place onsite with the East Sussex Public Rights of Way team.

Members noted the beautiful dead hedging that had been introduced to keep walkers to the footpaths.

Points raised by members during the discussion:

- could the developers (applicants) contribute to the costs of the fencing;
- could the fencing be brought out any further at New Barn to provide a greater buffer (officers advised that this would not be possible due to the close proximity of the football pitch);

Members supported and subsequently noted the report and plans in place.

15.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL LEASE AGREEMENTS

Councillors C. Macve and P. Selby confirmed they were happy to sign and seal the lease agreements for Osborn Hall and the Storage Garage at Victoria, once these were ready.

16.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the report.

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

Seven deeds of grant had been received:

Mr Harvey Lee Eastwood

Jill Young

Emma Clifton

Carol Ralph

Paul James Philip Hazell

John Charles Sawyer

Mrs Diane Ward

FC.102.03.26 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deeds of grant.

18.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

19.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

20.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor K. Bedwell, referred members to the Larger Parish Forum which consisted of the Chairs and Clerks of the five towns in Wealden District. This was a useful forum through which to share challenges and work together on matters affecting all areas, in the lead up to changes in local government reorganisation.

The forum had put forward a number of matters to the Wealden District Association of Local Councils (WDALC) in relation to the transfer of assets during the process, as well as communication from and with Wealden District Council. The next meeting of WDALC was due to take place on 8 April 2026.

The Town Mayor also wished to read out in update in relation to the current use of the Crowborough Training Camp in the absence of local residents attending to speak on this topic. This would hopefully update members on the work of the Town Council to date, as a great deal had been undertaken behind the scenes. The Town Mayor and Town Clerk met with a local resident on 19 December 2025 to discuss their concerns around safety, in response to the news regarding the camp. This included the resident's initial worry that asylum seekers could be bus'd into Uckfield to utilise local services, thus impacting the personal safety of Uckfield residents, in particular women.

In that meeting, both the Town Clerk and the Mayor explained the remit of the Town Council and the lack of engagement from the Home Office with the parish sector. It was explained that Parish and Town Councils had very few powers, let alone in this situation, when the Home Office had already confirmed in December that they would only communicate with the statutory agencies (namely Sussex Police and Wealden District Council).

In the meeting with the resident, a number of actions were agreed that would be taken forward. The Town Council was therefore disappointed to then see a very different interpretation of the meeting spread over social media that evening, and a number of personal attacks directed towards the Town Mayor and other councillors.

The Town Mayor confirmed that she cared very deeply about those who lived and visited Uckfield. Both she and the Town Clerk had worked hard to address points raised by the community in relation to the camp, and to push for better communication and engagement from the Home Office and local statutory agencies. They would not however engage in back and forth correspondence on social media.

Information and communication by the Home Office

Four months on from the public meeting the Town Mayor attended in Crowborough on 13 November, UTC was only just starting to see recognition of the parish and town council sector, and need for the Home Office to engage with parishes as well as statutory agencies. Thanks to the MP Mims Davies, the Town Clerk and Mayor had a 30minute face to face meeting at the Home Office with Alex Norris, Minister for Border Security and Asylum and other Home Office representatives to discuss issues impacting local parishes neighbouring Crowborough, and the need to engage organisations such as ourselves who are based in these communities and working on the ground. As a result, it was only now, that progress was being made.

More recent correspondence from the statutory agencies, still confirmed that currently there were no plans to 'bus' asylum seekers to Uckfield from the site. A number of activities were facilitated onsite for the individuals and scheduled bus services were only going to one urban area at present.

Community safety

In the meeting, the Mayor had talked about work that was already in the pipeline to further improve and upgrade CCTV coverage within the town centre. One camera has been upgraded, and a second new installation was in progress as we speak.

Two Town Councillors and the Town Clerk had started conversations with Uckfield College to understand their work with students around personal safety. They had a robust programme in place with all year groups, as well as safeguarding policies and practices. We offered further support in this area, and would continue to liaise on this subject. The Town Clerk and Mayor had also engaged closely with Sussex Police to share any information and concerns received. To date, there had been no reports of any issues in Uckfield.

Communication

An article has been published each month by Uckfield Town Council in the Uckfield Matters magazine delivered to all 6500 households on either community safety or the camp since January.

UTC had a dedicated page on the website, in which information would be shared going forward. The Mayor would continue to feed comments to the Home Office and statutory agencies, on behalf of residents. The safety of those living, working and visiting our town was important to UTC.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.