

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of **UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL** held
on Monday 7 September 2026 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. K. Bedwell (Town Mayor)	Cllr. D. Manvell
Cllr. K. Butler	Cllr. S. Mayhew (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr. D. French	Cllr. T. Murray
Cllr. J. Love	Cllr. B. Reed
Cllr. M. McClafferty	Cllr. D. Ward
Cllr. C. Macve	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah D'Alessio	Deputy Chief Officer (RFO)
James Hollingdale	Facilities & Compliance Manager
Louise Slaughter	Hospitality Manager
Holly Goring	Chief Officer (Town Clerk)
Minutes taken by Holly Goring	

Further to the approval of Full Council, and the current Mayoral Chain reaching capacity, a new chain was purchased with a single pressing and enameling of the pendant, mounted on a black velvet collar, and the engraving updated by local jewellers, Gale and Woolgar. The Men's Shed were creating a presentation box, which once ready will be shown to members. The Town Mayor explained that the former Chain would be displayed within the Civic Centre.

The Chief Officer (Town Clerk) presented the new Chain to the Town Mayor.

Members were advised that the pin badges for former Mayors were being designed, and it was proposed that these be presented to former Mayors at the Mayor's Carol Service on Thursday 10 December 2026.

Before the meeting commenced, the Town Mayor also wished to welcome Uckfield Town Council's newly elected Town Councillor, Councillor Tim Murray. She asked members to join her in congratulating Tim on his appointment and, making him feel welcome.

The Town Mayor reminded members, that like fellow Town Councils, within these meetings members sought to leave politics at the door, and focus on the priorities of the town and organisation.

Councillor D. Manvell arrived at 7.02pm.

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. None were received.

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

None received.

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

FC.41.09.26

Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable the District Councillors to speak.

Councillor D. Manvell updated members on the announcement on 7 September by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage which proposed the withdrawing and pause of local government reorganisation across 18 areas, whilst a full review be undertaken. This would result in the halting of plans within Sussex. They had been advised that all local elections would proceed as normal in May 2027, meaning Wealden elections (district and parish) would go ahead.

The announcement was likely to be due to the challenges that had been put forward in four council areas. LGR was still considered of great importance, and the work carried out to date would not be wasted. Once further information was received, this would be shared.

The technical consultation (Reg. 19) would commence on 21 September for Wealden's Draft Local Plan. This was the final stage of consultation before its submission at the end of 2026. This consultation was about testing its soundness and compliance.

Councillor Manvell advised members of the support Wealden DC had put in place following the decision of ESCC to cut food vouchers and subsequent support to families within the county. Wealden DC had created a 'Back to School' fund which resulted in supporting over 2,000 children with school uniform and shoes.

The Wealden Sports Hub had opened and already being very well used. The Wealden DC development (Coronation Place) had been nominated for another award.

Councillor Bedwell asked Councillor Manvell to seek clarity on the grant funding schemes currently being offered by Wealden District Council. Councillor Bedwell also spoke of a family she was aware of who had moved into Coronation Place and absolutely loved living there.

In response to a question, Councillor Manvell clarified that the work to establish the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority was separate to that of LGR and would

proceed as planned with elections scheduled for the new Mayor in May 2028.

Councillor Reed spoke of recent concerns relating to Boothland Wood, and the impact of the earth movements on the ancient woodland and adjacent land. A complaint had been raised with Wealden DC for the way in which concerns had been handled.

Members were also advised that the swarms of flies had returned at the sewage treatment works.

MP Mims Davies had met with residents adjacent to the application for the new Ridgewood Care Home.

Councillor Reed also reminded members of the consultation period for the application at Owlsbury Farm for 1550 homes, and that the Horsted Pond planning application could return, as further work had progressed.

The Greenway decision at Wealden District Council had been called into Scrutiny & Performance Committee, as some members felt there had been a lack of communication with members.

Councillor French had provided a response to the planning application for Bird in Eye North, raising serious concerns relating to the flood plain. Councillor French also spoke of her work with residents in relation to the fly swarms on the Ridings estate. There had been an increase in tankers accessing the sewage treatment works in the weeks leading up to the meeting. Last weekend 20 trips into the site and returning, had been recorded. The reason for these additional trips, was currently unknown. The MP had now been engaged on the matter, as it was creating a nuisance to local residents.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Bedwell, advised that she emailed the Home Office to find out if there were any links to the population at the nearby Crowborough camp, to increased deliveries.

FC.42.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

4.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors D. Bennett, P. Selby, A. Smith and P. Ullmann due to sickness, and work commitments.

5.0 MINUTES

5.1 To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of the Council on 29 June 2026 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

FC.43.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Council on 29 June 2026 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

5.2 To receive and note the minutes of the Annual Town meeting on 15 April 2026
These would be shared with members.

5.3 Action List

Members agreed to remove the first item relating to the Nature Reserve byelaws,

as this action had been removed by Environment & Leisure Committee the week before. Members subsequently noted the report.

5.4 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 13 July, 3 and 24 August 2026

FC.44.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Plans Committee of the 13 July, 3 and 24 August 2026.

FC.45.09.26 (b) Environment & Leisure Committee of the 6 July and 1 September 2026

It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the Environment & Leisure Committee of the 6 July and 1 September 2026.

(c) General Purposes Committee of the 20 July 2026

FC.46.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to note the acts and proceedings of the General Purposes Committees of the 20 July 2026.

7.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES
(to be considered under confidential business)

8.0 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM FULL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

(i) Uckfield – Events Working Group

Councillor French wished to thank all members, staff and volunteers who supported the event, on the day. It was very much appreciated. The number in attendance this year, was amazing, and it was great to see families enjoying themselves. A debrief meeting had already taken place, and a review of how to further improve the event. The date for 2027, had been agreed as Saturday 14 August 2027.

(ii) Ageing Well Forum

A Community Wellbeing Event was scheduled to take place in the Civic Centre on Friday 18 September between 10.00am and 1.30pm. All were welcome to attend and help spread the word.

9.0 TO APPROVE PERIODIC POLICY REVIEWS

(i) CCTV Policy

Members noted the update to the Policy, to reflect the addition of the new CCTV camera in Luxford Field. Clarity was provided to confirm that a limb had been removed from an adjacent tree, not the full tree.

FC.47.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the revision to the Town Council's CCTV Policy.

(ii) Financial regulations

FC.48.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the revision of the Financial regulations to strengthen the procurement information further.

10.0 TO RATIFY A RECOMMENDATION FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

General Purposes Committee

(i) Ratification of the Member Audit Policy

FC.49.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the update to the Member Audit Policy.

11.0 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON BANKING AND POST OFFICE SERVICES WITHIN UCKFIELD HIGH STREET

Members received an update on the closure of the Post Office and TG Jones building within the High Street, and subsequent impact this would have on postal services within the town centre. Post Office HQ were in the process of recruiting a new replacement operator.

Members were also advised of the opening of the new permanent Banking Hub, which had been located in the former Santander building. Members thought it was a fantastic addition to the High Street, albeit with some limitation on services, but knew this would be well used by local residents and businesses. It was noted that services were currently available Monday to Friday only. The MP had raised the suggestion that Saturday opening would be well received by the community. At present the banking hub model, didn't offer this option, but it was suggested that Uckfield push to be a pilot.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Bedwell referred to the BBC Sussex interview which had taken place with the Mayor of Crowborough. Crowborough's residents were very unhappy because they had been refused a Banking Hub, due to their proximity to Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells, despite their population being larger.

Members noted the report.

12.0 TO CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR THE YEAR 2026/27

Members were presented with a letter of engagement from the Town Council's Internal Auditor and asked whether based on the experience and details provided, they would support the renewal of the existing contract, for a further year. The Town Council had been impressed with the services offered by April Skies over the previous three years, and how thorough the reports had been. Members were therefore content to formally appoint April Skies once again, for the year ending 31 March 2027.

FC.50.09.26

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) confirm their satisfaction with the service provided by the current Internal Auditor for the year ending 31 March 2026;
- (ii) confirm that the Internal Auditor (April Skies Ltd) was independent from the Town Council and had no links to staff or elected members;
- (iii) confirm that the Internal Auditor (April Skies Ltd) was competent and had the relevant level of professional indemnity to undertake Internal Auditing Services for the size and budget levels of Uckfield Town Council, and;
- (iv) conclude that the Town Council was pleased to confirm the appointment of the Internal Auditor (April Skies Ltd) for the year ending 31 March 2027;

13.0 QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE ON ANNUAL PRIORITIES AND MAJOR PROJECTS (Q1 2026/27)

Members noted the update presented, and commended staff on their hard work within the first few months of the financial year. This demonstrated excellent progress.

14.0 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL'S BUDGET, BALANCE SHEET POSITION AND PRIORITIES

The Chief Officer (Town Clerk) talked members through a powerpoint presentation which reminded members of:

- anticipated growth of the town;
- the current responsibilities and asset portfolio managed by the Town Council;
- strategic and annual priorities set out for delivery;
- progress against the Town Council's major projects;
- a snapshot of the Town Council's financial position;
- public work loans;
- General and Earmarked reserves;
- developer contributions received and expected.

Members were advised that although the Town Council had healthy reserves, much of this was earmarked for major projects. It was therefore prudent, and recommended by the Internal Auditor that the Town Council secure a level of general reserves (and recommended level of three months of precept), should an emergency occur.

Finance Sub Committee had discussed the reallocation of earmarked reserves (Town Centre Consultants - £101,500) to 'Contingency' to ensure this was more readily accessible.

Members also suggested contacting Wealden DC to check whether the funding allocated by the District Council for town centre regeneration in Uckfield would still be ringfenced through the local government reorganisation process.

FC.51.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to approve the reallocation of £101,500 from 'Town Centre Consultants' earmarked reserves, to 'Contingency.'

15.0 TO RECEIVE THE BUSINESS PLANNING TIMETABLE

Members noted the schedule of meetings between September and mid-January to review and prepare the Town Council's priorities and budget considerations for 2027/28.

16.0 TO SIGN AND SEAL LEASE AGREEMENTS

The Osborn Hall lease agreement was ready for signing. The two members who previously offered assistance (Councillors Love and Macve) were asked to liaise with the Chief Officer to undertake the signing and sealing.

17.0 TO NOTE THE MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

There were two minor changes to the report. The Town Mayor was unable to make the engagement in Seaford, and the engagement at Lydfords Care Home had been moved to 26 September 2026. Members noted the update.

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

Three deeds of grant had been received:

Mr Anthony Majcher x 2

Christopher Hartup

FC.52.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** for three councillors to sign the above deed of grant.

19.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None received.

20.0 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chief Officer had a number of announcements, which related to:

- (i) Confirmation of election cycles following the LGR announcement;
- (ii) David Lloyd Club consultation sessions on 18 and 19 September at Maresfield Village Hall;
- (iii) Information that had been shared by a local resident relating to Uckfield Leisure Centre;
- (iv) the NALC campaign for Dependent Carer's Allowance;

The Chief Officer also asked members to assist with gauging a view on the timing of the Annual Town meeting in 2027, as a result of the elections. After some discussion and some indifference in opinion, it was suggested it may be prudent before purdah i.e. March 2027.

21.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor, Councillor Bedwell, reminded members of the Allotment Conference due to take place that week.

The Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Town Crier and Deputy Chief Officer would be abseiling down the Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth on 20 September to raise funds for the two Mayor's charities. Further fundraising activities included an afternoon tea at Ridgewood Village Hall on 26 September, and Race Night in October.

The Mayor's Carol Service was scheduled for Thursday 10 December, and on 8 May 2027, a party would be hosted at the Civic Centre to celebrate the end of her term as Mayor, and present the cheques to the two charities.

The Town Mayor ended her update with a big thank you to the Uckfield Bonfire & Carnival Society for an excellent weekend. It really brought the town together.

22.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

To consider whether to RESOLVE to exclude the press and public (pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960) during consideration of the following confidential business to be conducted:

- 22.1 To consider the proposal/quotation for development of the Neighbourhood Plan
Members were asked to consider a detailed proposal for completion of a Neighbourhood Plan for Uckfield.

Advice was provided by Councillor Murray in respect of the terms of the proposal, and an amendment suggested to clause 3.7.

FC.53.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to extend the meeting until 9.10pm.

FC.54.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to accept the proposed quotation, subject to the amendment to Clause 3.7, and proceed with the development of the plan, utilising funding within Professional fees to cover the costs.

The meeting closed at 9.03pm.