

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 16th November 2020 at 7.00pm

REMOTE MEETING (VIA ZOOM)

PRESENT:

Cllr. J. Beesley (Chairman)	Cllr. D. French (Vice Chairman)
Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. J. Edwards	Cllr. G. Johnson
Cllr. S. Mayhew	Cllr. A. Smith

IN ATTENDANCE:

Two members of the press (recorded meeting)
One member of the public
Councillor C. Macve

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Mark Francis - Estates & Facilities Manager
Rachel Newton – Senior Administration Officer
Minutes taken by Rachel Newton

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.

Councillor K. Bedwell declared an interest in relation to item 7.4 regarding an interim update on the outstanding issues at Ridgewood Recreation Ground and Car Park and as Chairman of Ridgewood Village Hall.

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

EL.24.11.20 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable Town Councillor but non-E&L Committee member, Councillor Macve to speak.

Councillor C. Macve was granted permission to speak in relation to item 7.2 on the agenda regarding Strengthening Local Relationships. He wanted to include an item in relation to the rainwater disposal problems that had occurred in Spring Meadow off Hempstead Road, a matter which had been discussed at the Uckfield College all-weather pitch meetings and with a local resident. During periods of heavy rain, a manhole at the top of Spring Meadow had severely overflowed with the torrent of rain which indicated that this was obviously not how the drainage system should operate and would be dangerous during cold weather. There had been reports that this had only occurred since the all-weather pitch had been built on the Uckfield campus and East Sussex County Council had connected the drainage to an East Sussex drain. Councillor C. Macve and Councillor C.

Dowling had both raised this matter previously with ESCC and a CCTV survey was subsequently carried out inside the drainage system and a problem was located. Although ESCC had not yet submitted their findings Councillor C. Macve suspected that it could have been root ingress which had caused the blockage but ESCC had said that they would not be doing any repair works until the beginning of the new financial year. Councillor C. Macve said that it would be dangerous to leave this over the winter period and asked if this could be raised at the next Strengthening Local Relationships meeting in January. Discussions had been scheduled to take place with ESCC before the meeting today but had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 and there would not be another All-Weather Pitch meeting until February.

Councillor S. Mayhew commented that this was not a new complaint and that he knew residents who had bought a brand new house in this area and had raised the same issue seven years ago but eventually moved away as nothing had been done.

EL.25.11.20 It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received prior to the meeting from Councillor D. Bennett due to work commitments.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 19th October 2020

EL.26.11.20 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 19th October 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2. Action list

Members noted the action list and Councillor J. Beesley raised items that no longer required action:

EL.16.09.20 – To note the current position of the Town Council's Estates. The issue concerning the broken lock on the gate at the Bird-in-Eye allotments leading from Keld Avenue had been sorted out – the lock had been re-installed and residents of the Bird-in-Eye allotment site had all been given the new code. The fence panel had also been damaged and re-fixed. No further action.

Members agreed to remove this item from the list and subsequently noted the action list.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – For information only

Members noted the report.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the bills paid.

5.2. To note the income and expenditure report for 2020/21

Members noted the report.

5.3 Update on new initiatives for the draft budget 2021/22

Councillor D. French stated that there was no proper path linking Victoria Pleasure Ground up to New Barn Estate and Boothland Wood, and asked if something could be done here as this was often where people tended to walk but were cut off from Victoria Pleasure Ground.

The Town Clerk reminded members about the Welbeck ownership of the Ridgewood Farm site and previous discussions with developers about having a footway link between that site through Boothland Wood, which would go around New Barn and border the hedgeline to link up with Victoria Pleasure Ground near to the bottom of the cricket pitch and mentioned that there may be some funding for this in the future.

Councillor S. Mayhew added that drainage was a massive problem in this area and more concrete development would mean more flooding in the skate park so proposed for some proper drainage there as well.

Councillor J. Beesley asked if the Estates and Facilities Manager could add this to his report and if we could look at the budget to combat some of the ASB and vandalism in other areas of town too; not just at Ridgewood, for monitoring incidents of anti-social behaviour in town.

Members subsequently noted the report.

6.0. **ADMINISTRATION**

(nothing to report at this time)

7.0. **ENVIRONMENT**

7.1 To note the current position of the Town Council's Estates

Members noted the report and thanked the Estates & Facilities Manager for the report.

Councillor D. French also thanked the grounds team for the removal of graffiti on the bins in Elizabeth Gardens as this was resolved promptly.

7.2 Updates further to the Strengthening Local Relationships Meeting held on 15th July 2020

Councillor D. French asked if the overgrown vegetation opposite the petrol station at the top of the high street had been cleared as a result of this being one of the points she had previously raised. The Town Clerk stated that this matter had been addressed with the owners directly and with East Sussex Highways prior to the SLR meeting and they had appointed contractors who were able to work on the side of the highway during autumn months so this matter had been dealt with outside of the SLR meeting.

Councillor K. Bedwell then raised an item regarding numerous emails received from a local resident who lived along the Eastbourne Road about speeding between Goldcrest Drive and Fernley Park roundabout where cars would often suddenly brake. Councillor K. Bedwell said that she had forwarded all these emails to Sussex Police and that this gentleman was worried that his house may take the brunt of a serious accident that was likely to occur on this road and did not feel that his fears were being met and asked for speed monitors to be installed.

Councillor S. Mayhew said that he had been involved in a meeting that morning with the Police & Crime Commissioner, where they discussed the subject of road

safety. It was noted that the new Chief Constable of Sussex Police was particularly focused on this matter.

The Town Clerk clarified that there had been two groups previously set up – the SID (Speed Indicator Device) working group set up by the Town Council and led - by Councillor P. Sparks. A Community Speedwatch Group was being set up in the Ridgewood area by local residents. This had a certain level of enforcement attached, with warning letters and the involvement of Sussex Police at the point of the third warning. . Councillor S. Mayhew said that the Police had carried out a day of speed checking in this area and agreed that there was a serious issue along Eastbourne Road.

Councillor A. Smith asked if the Town Council could apply for a speed limit reduction but the Town Clerk said that this would involve a long process which would require a lot of supportive evidence and said that even from analysing traffic calming measures for the new development along the Lewes Road the actual speedsurveys did not always reflect what you would expect in terms of data and statistics. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had previously paid for detailed speed surveys to be undertaken in all access corridors to the town. Average speeds determine whether speed restrictions can be reduced in a particular area and would involve both the Police and East Sussex Highways.

It was pointed out however that one difficulty had been the funding which would come back to us most likely through the Community Match Initiative and parish councils would be required to part-fund any scheme, so it would ultimately come down to gathering the necessary evidence to make a case for change.

Councillor J. Edwards agreed that we would need something in place to catch drivers speeding as a proper deterrent, such as the Community Speed Watch Group and on social media, although he did not think that a speed limit reduction alone would ultimately reduce cars speeding along this road.

Councillor G. Johnson commented that speed and noise were all valid complaints but argued that some drivers simply did not care or would maybe drive to work in a daydream so suggested that if a sign were to flash up they might take more notice. He also raised concern about the hierarchy of speed awareness and that Councillor P. Sparks had looked at this last year with Councillor C. Dowling along with ESCC and members were reminded that this was difficult to get up and running and maintain momentum. He added that the signs that flashed up and showed drivers what speed they were doing when they came in to a town were useful and that SID would most likely be the next step.

The Town Clerk stated that Sussex and Surrey Association of Local Councils had sent some information about the latest kind of flashing signs on the roadside and this would be circulated to members to look at and that the SID Group and Community Speed Watch Initiatives could all be set up whilst investigations begun.

Councillor J. Edwards agreed that the overall statistics would not show a true trajectory of the problem at hand and would include those drivers who were not speeding along this road so this would be really unfair on the majority of those residents who were not breaking the law. He added that this would not be taken seriously until an accident occurred.

Councillor B. Cox agreed that instead of looking at the majority of drivers it would be better to monitor those who exceeded the speed limit later in the day along

this road and retrieve the average speed, especially when many drivers felt safer to drive at stupid speeds.

Councillor J. Beesley concluded that members were obviously keen on doing something about speeding issues generally and highlighted the ongoing problem at Ringles Cross with a proposal to move this forward with these initiatives and go from there.

Councillor S. Mayhew suggested that he would contact the previous groups and if they could not participate for any reason, he would ask other Councillors to assist. Since this problem had always required volunteers, Councillor S. Mayhew highlighted that residents might also like to get involved and the local media may wish to help promote the need for support

EL27.11.20 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the report;
- (ii) liaise with the Community Speed Watch Group in Ridgewood to re-establish in the New Year and raise awareness of speed restrictions between New Road and Fernley Park roundabout;
- (iii) continue to look at phase four of the access corridors into town around highway improvements to combat speeding.

7.3 To note the current position with the Town Council's Grounds vehicles

Councillor J. Edwards asked if the proposed vehicle would be a good enough replacement for the Ranger. The Estates and Facilities Manager remarked that this would depend upon which direction members wanted to go, whether fully electric or hybrid, as the UK did not build pick-up trucks in these designs yet. He said that this was the only fully electric Gator type vehicle currently on the market, at quite a reasonable cost compared to a pick-up truck and could add a trailer to it as well as good access in to wooded areas so was considered to be a more versatile option. Councillor J. Edwards agreed and said that it would therefore most likely come down to the John Deere v the Polaris and asked if more information on the Polaris would be available as seemed to be more powerful and could take more load. The Estates and Facilities Manager also pointed out that the John Deere only came with grass tyres so was mainly designed a golf course, whereas the Polaris came with all terrain tyres and was 4x4 compared with the John Deere's tyres which were only 4x2.

Members agreed that going down the electric route was the best option and also agreed that this vehicle was smaller, a lot more versatile and cheaper than a diesel truck, so the Estates and Facilities Manager said that he would provide some more informative data on this type of vehicle for members to make a more informative decision.

Councillor A. Smith asked to compare with other local authorities for their experiences of the electric vehicle market and Councillor D. French asked to look at the extra £500 discount if two were purchased. Councillor B. Cox asked if the range of 30mph was sufficient.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said that it would usually only be driven by the Ranger to either Hempstead Meadows or West Park and would not be going very far from Victoria Pleasure Ground nor be used all day and would be charged overnight for eight hours so would keep going all day. Also, two Gator type vehicles would be the same cost as one full Ranger although a date could not be concluded yet as to when the next vehicles would need replacing.

Proposals for an electric vehicle were seconded by Councillor D. French who said that this tied in nicely with our climate change objectives. The Estates and Facilities Manager would now be asked to report back at the next meeting on the options available.

EL28.11.20 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note the report and;
- (ii) agree to go fully electric for a replacement grounds vehicle and for an update report to be present on currently availability in the UK market at the next E&L meeting.

- 7.4 To provide an interim update on the issues outstanding at Ridgewood Recreation Ground and Car Park
Members noted the report - no comments.

Councillor J. Beesley informed members of the latest meeting with the Town Clerk and Head Groundsman and would put a full briefing together for the next Full Council Meeting so that members could discuss in more detail how to move agenda items forward.

8.0 LEISURE

Nothing to report at this time

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

- 9.1 Climate Change Working Group
Nothing to report at this time

10.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- 10.1 Active Uckfield
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.2 Age Concern
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.3 West Park LNR and Hempstead Meadows LNR – Supporters Group
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.4 Luxford Centre Management Committee
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.5 Uckfield and District Twinning Association
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.6 Uckfield Parkrun Board
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.7 Uckfield Plastic Free Working Group
Nothing to report at this time.

- 10.8 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee
The Chairman thanked Councillor C. Macve and members noted the report.

- 10.9 Uckfield Youth Club Board
Nothing to report at this time.

10.10 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link
Members noted the report.

10.11 All Weather Pitch Operational Group
Nothing to report at this time.

11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor. J. Beesley had nothing to report at this meeting.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.29.11.20 It was **RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted it was advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

12.1 To note a report on the Marketing programme.
Members noted the report.

The meeting finished at 20:03pm