

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Monday 14 June 2021 at 7.00pm**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. S. Mayhew (Chairman)  
Cllr. K. Bedwell  
Cllr. B. Cox  
Cllr. H. Firth

Cllr. A. Smith  
Cllr. J. Beesley  
Cllr. J. Edwards  
Cllr. D. French

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

Holly Goring – Town Clerk  
Mark Francis - Estates & Facilities Manager  
Rachel Newton – Senior Administrative 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. No declarations of interest were announced.

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

A resident and allotment tenant had requested to speak in relation item 6.1 on the agenda and regarding the changes to the structure of the allotment fees and charges from April 2022.

Two other local residents attended this meeting together and asked to speak in relation to item 7.2 regarding their application to purchase an area of council land at Shepherd's Gate (New Barn Lane).

**EL.03.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable all those residents to speak.

The first resident announced that she had tried to speak at the previous Environment and Leisure meeting (via zoom) about the Allotment Association and availability of Allotments in the town, but had internet issues and therefore requested to speak (in person) at this meeting instead.

She said that some of the proposed changes to Allotment fees and charges were higher than some tenants had expected, especially for those tenants who were

on limited funds, unemployed, on universal credit or elderly on fixed pensions who did not have extra income. She was pleased that every point had been listened to and that it had been agreed that the pricing structure would be reviewed by the new Allotment Working Group. She also thanked the Councillors for listening and asked if it would have been possible to be co-opted onto (or work alongside) the new Working Group. The Chair said that she would be kept updated and that her request would be discussed by the Allotment Working Group.

One of the other two local residents then spoke in relation to their application to purchase land owned by the Town Council, at the back of their garden. They wanted to know if they could purchase a piece of land which was approximately 2m<sup>2</sup> at the back of 63 New Barn Lane (Shepherd's Gate). The purchase of land would enable them to extend their garden in order to accommodate their three children and provide them with more space to play. She also mentioned that the grass on this small strip of land had not been maintained for a few years.

The Chairman informed them that this would be discussed by members later at item 7.2.

**EL.04.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

### **3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received 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 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**EL.05.06.21** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4.2. Action list**

Members considered the action list which had been previously circulated and agreed to remove the following items which had been completed or appeared later in the agenda:

EL51.02.20 – 7.3 To consider the support the Town Council can provide to the Uckfield Community Fridge Campaign. An update report was presented to GP Committee on 1 June 2021. This action has been superseded by this. No further action.

EL08.07.20 – 6.1 To consider suggestions put forward for a memorial in West Park Nature Reserve. A decision was taken by E&L Committee on 4 May 2021 and has been actioned accordingly. No further action.

EL37.03.21 - 7.2 To consider an update on Community Speedwatch and review into speed reduction monitoring devices (Black Cat). The Bushnell had been purchased and training undertaken with new recruits and refreshers for existing volunteers. Further work would follow with members to ascertain what would be the best device to purchase for the roadside. No further action.

EL39.03.21 - 9.2 Allotments Working Group – review of fees and charges. This process had commenced with a letter being sent to all tenants on 1 April 2021 by email and in person. No further action.

EL52.05.21 - Climate Change Working Group - Work has commenced on the carbon footprint audit tool and the Green Partnership meeting has been arranged with interested parties for 22 June 2021. No further action.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – For information only

Members considered the Project Monitoring List previously circulated and agreed to remove the following item:

FC.64.01.21 - ESCC Grass Cutting Contribution - The invoice for 2021/22 had already been processed for the amount of £4,271.00. No further action.

**5.0. FINANCE**

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

5.2. No income and expenditure reports were available due to year end processes

**6.0. ADMINISTRATION**

6.1 To appoint members to the Allotment Working Group for 2021/22

Members considered this report. The Chairman announced that the new Allotment Working Group would discuss issues raised following the proposed changes, ways in which to consult with Allotment tenants and the Allotment Association and the future of allotment provision in Uckfield.

**EL.06.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) appoint four members to the new Allotment Working Group: Councillors S. Mayhew, B. Cox, K. Bedwell and J. Edwards, and;

(ii) agree for the new working group to discuss issues raised by Allotment tenants, ways in which to communicate with tenants going forward, including the Allotment Association and future demand for allotment sites.

6.2 To appoint members to Outside Bodies (Local Nature Reserve Supporter Group)

The Town Clerk wished to clarify that previously this had been separated by West Park and Hempstead Meadows yet it was understood that the supporters group worked across both sites - only two representatives were needed. Two members were subsequently elected: Councillors D. French and H. Firth.

**EL.07.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) appoint two members to the Hempstead Meadows and West Park Local Nature Reserve Supporter Group (L.N.R.): Councillor D. French and Councillor H. Firth.

6.3 To receive clarification on the Town Council's proposals for the Allotment Competition and Calendar Competition for 2022

Allotment Competition

The Senior Administrative Officer said that with pressures of Covid-19 and the impact on businesses and priorities, officers had not been able to start the Allotment Competition for 2021. The competition would have normally started in February and tenants notified in the spring time. However, Staverton Nursery had been extremely busy with returning customers since the re-opening of their garden centre, so it would have been difficult for us to ask them for their assistance with the judging alone. Also, with the unfortunate weather conditions with rain and wind earlier this season, many tenants had also found it difficult to grow much at all. Councillor D. French said that as it was now halfway through

the year and tenants would have needed to prepare for the competition it would be a bit late now and recommended to cancel this year's Allotment competition. Members agreed.

**EL.08.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) cancel the Allotment competition for the year 2021 due to Covid-19 and weather conditions.

Calendar Competition

Members noted the report and were asked for further clarification on their proposals for the Calendar Competition this year.

Councillor D. French asked if we could still go ahead with #myuckfield – with a selfie and what Uckfield meant to them. Councillor S. Mayhew agreed and said that we should only open this up to all schools in the Town, including Uckfield College.

As the normal closing date was 31 August 2021, members also said that this wouldn't give the schools much time, but could be carried out through the summer holidays.

Further options discussed: a description and name, age and story. Students/schools would decide how to judge and select which ones they liked – top two from each year group, possibly looking at years 4,5 and 6 primary and Uckfield College. Members agreed to let the schools decide how they would run the competition .

Councillor A. Smith also asked if this could include artwork as well as a photograph as selfies might cause an issue due to child protection. Councillor B. Cox highlighted that permission could be arranged between the schools and parents and would only be for those parents that were happy to enter their child's photos for example. Councillor J. Edwards agreed and said he couldn't see this being an issue, as long as a consent form was provided to those parents involved.

Councillor D. French then proposed for the calendar competition to be announced to students before the summer holidays and the closing date deferred to the end of September when the final judging would then take place. All those recommendations above were agreed by members.

**EL09.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) go ahead with #myuckfield for the calendar competition to include name, age and story (reason why it represents #myuckfield): what Uckfield means to them (which is the bit that matters);
- (ii) announce competition to schools asap before the summer holidays and provide a closing date of the end of September;
- (iii) only open up to schools this year (to simplify the judging process) including Uckfield College;
- (iv) schools to decide how they wish to select their own winners – top two from each year group, with two being selected by the Uckfield TC judging panel from each school by early October for the calendar.

**7.0 ENVIRONMENT**

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

Members noted the report. The Estates and Facilities Manager added to his report with the following:

- the pitch renovations had been completed;
- there would be additional bin collections until September due to high usage more recently;
- the footpath at Hempstead Meadows would be repaired in-house by ES Rights of Way team, during the summer;
- Ash dieback was becoming increasingly visible in our open spaces, the Ranger was currently dealing with it and there was a big list of trees to cover so there would be a lot of work involved in the coming months.

Councillor K. Bedwell asked the Estates and Facilities Manager if he had heard from ES.Highways regarding the drainage and flooding issues at Ridgewood. The Estates & Facilities Manager advised that he had chased them up the previous week. Councillor A. Smith mentioned that there had been a lot of negative press about young people in the last day or so but that she had seen some young lads at the skate park recently clearing up the rubbish at the end of the day which was amazing to see. Members were impressed by this altruism and were pleased to hear this positive news.

- 7.2 To consider a request to purchase land at Shepherd's Gate (New Barn Lane)  
Two residents had requested to purchase a piece of land at the back of their garden at 63 New Barn Lane, Uckfield.

Councillor K. Bedwell said that with what had been happening to green spaces, she had big concerns about this and was not in support of selling off any council land. Councillor B. Cox and Councillor S. Mayhew raised their objections too, saying that this could incur costs to the town council and create a precedent for future requests for the purchase of council land. Councillor H. Firth said that she had lived here for a long time and had always supported the protection of precious green spaces in this area.

Councillor J. Edwards said that he did not agree and expressed his concern over the repeated references made by councillors to dismiss an application for land, based on historical views. Changes to the covenant on the land could be explored and arguably, any fees that may be incurred could be picked up by the buyer instead and the council could make a profit from selling this disused piece of scrubland.

Councillor S. Mayhew stated that any decision regarding the potential purchase of council land would not be taken lightly and repeated the concerns raised by members and said that the town council would no doubt be inundated with requests, by at least those who had previously been turned down. Councillor K. Bedwell agreed and added that a buyer may wish to put a gate on the land with access to a woodland, so this would cause future problems and cost to the town council. She recommended that this request be rejected for all those reasons mentioned above. This was seconded by Councillor B. Cox.

**EL10.06.21** With six votes in favour, and one vote against (Councillor J. Edwards), it was **RESOLVED** to object to this request by local residents to purchase land at Shepherd's Gate - back of 63 New Barn Lane, Uckfield.

7.3 To consider a report on the boardwalk structure at West Park Local Nature Reserve

Members noted this report which included quotes to replace the Boardwalk at West Park Local Nature Reserve due to costly ongoing maintenance by the Town Council's Ranger. The Estates and Facilities Manager explained the quotes. He said that any introduction of pipework would incur higher maintenance (*as you would have had to clear the pipes every six months*). Out of the options given, the cheapest quote was not as well made, the most expensive contained pipework and the third quote was deemed to be the most suitable option for its purpose based on processes and budget restraints, leaving any remaining budget for any contingency required. Councillor H. Firth proposed that the third option sounded good. Councillor B. Cox seconded this..

**EL.11.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to appoint Contractor 3 – to replace the boardwalk with a solid, type 1 surface which would be a similar design and in keeping with the right of way at Hempstead Meadows LNR and the SANGS;
- (ii) approve for those works to go ahead at a cost of £24,600.00 + vat.

7.4 To receive an update on the Town Council's land at Bellbrook

A report was submitted following unauthorised groundworks carried out in the woodlands at Bellbrook by adjacent business owners. This land had been earmarked by the council to have its name changed to 'Riverside Wood' and to allow the natural regeneration of woodland. On visiting the site, it was discovered that local residents has carried out significant groundworks and had cut down quite a few of the trees which were now lop sided and would probably die. The Town Council was dissatisfied with the approach taken and lack of communication. Councillor B. Cox said that they should rectify the damage that had occurred, including tree replanting, noting that those trees could not be replanted in the same location, due to the damage, so would have to be replanted in different areas.

The Estates and Facilities Manager asked members to consider whether to take legal action or maybe ask them for a donation.

Councillor K. Bedwell said that she was not happy how people had taken action to fell trees and without any consultation with the land owners and wanted the council to ask for some recompense for the damage to those trees.

Councillor D. French asked if this had caused a particular detriment to the land. The Estates and Facilities Manager advised that quite a few of the trees had been cut badly and would die and said that it would have been more of a courtesy situation to be consulted first. Councillor D. French suggested we recommend that we ask them to cover the costs involved as a donation to replace the damaged trees. Councillor S. Mayhew agreed.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said that what they had done had made sense but a donation for the replacement of those trees that were damaged and planted in other parts of town might be the most beneficial option in order to manage the situation and prevent any future prospect of further damage to our trees. Members agreed.

Councillor J. Beesley also asked if we could request evidence from the adjacent business owner to understand what had happened for them to take action.

**EL.12.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) ask the adjacent business who had cut down trees at Bellbrook without consultation for recompense for the loss and damage to those trees, and;
- (ii) agree to plant new trees elsewhere in a part of town where they can be safely managed, and;
- (iii) request evidence to show why this action had been taken.

## **8.0 LEISURE**

To receive an update on the sanitisation of the Town Council's play areas

Along with current recommendations to suspend further spraying after 28 June 2021, members were asked for their views. Some members said that we should cease spraying due to the costs involved, but one member stated his concerns about the rise of the new covid-19 variant and urged caution.

Councillor B. Cox suggested that we should review again if cases were on the rise. With the further easing of nationwide Covid restrictions having been deferred to 19 July Councillor J. Edwards suggested extending for another month, although he said it was understood that this was carried out on a three-monthly contract.

Councillor K. Bedwell said she believed the risk of transmission was thought to have been a lot less from service to service. For example, in clinics they no longer had to carry out the same protocol of cleaning as they had done the previous year during lockdown, so she proposed looking at the most recent findings. Councillor A. Smith said that there had been less than 1 in 10,000 microbes on contaminated surfaces indoors and agreed to stall the spraying. Councillor J. Edwards asked if we could have hand sanitiser stations instead and said that signage was on play areas already.

Members were reminded that the Town Council had put aside £2.5k for this specifically (approx.£500/mth) and that we had been trying to hold this budget off until winter in case of another wave when the virus was more virulent.

Councillor B. Cox remarked that it wasn't just childrens' hands that could be infected as they wiped their faces too. However, he agreed with the majority to review in September/October after further investigation and swab testing.

Councillor K. Bedwell proposed not to reinstate spraying, to hold off and discuss later in the year. Councillor D. French seconded this and asked if swab tests could be sought in the meantime..

**EL13.06.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to suspend further spraying after 28th June 2021, with the potential for future consideration of this item in the autumn/winter months of 2021/22.

## **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 All Weather Pitch Operational Group  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.4 Conservators of Ashdown Forest  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.5 West Park LNR and Hempstead Meadows LNR – Supporters Group  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.6 Luxford Centre Management Committee  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.7 Uckfield and District Twinning Association  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.8 Uckfield Festival Association  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.9 Uckfield Parkrun Board  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.10 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee  
Members noted this report.
- 10.11 Uckfield Youth Club Board  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.12 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link  
Nothing to report at this time.

**11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

As new Chairman of the Environment and Leisure Committee, Councillor S. Mayhew acknowledged and praised his predecessor, Councillor J. Beesley for his hard work over the last three years.

**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**EL.14.06.21** 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 consider a report on the Marketing programme  
Members noted the report.
- 12.2 Initial discussion on the consideration of future initiatives under Environment & Leisure Committee  
Members discussed matters raised for future initiatives.

The meeting finished at 20:41pm