

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 7.00pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. S. Mayhew (Chairman)  
Cllr. J. Beesley  
Cllr. D. French

Cllr. A. Smith  
Cllr. B. Cox

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

One member of the press (recorded meeting)

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**

None forthcoming.

**3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Bedwell and D. Bennett. Also, although an apology for absence was not recorded in the minutes for Councillor J. Edwards he had previously advised staff members that he would be on leave during this time.

**4.0. MINUTES**

**4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**EL.15.07.21** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 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:

EL07.06.19 – Historical plaques. This initiative had been on this action list for some time. Members needed to decide if they wished for it to remain. No comments, although one member did suggest maybe bringing this back in future. Members were happy to remove from the action list. No further action.

EL46.05.21 – To decide on a theme for the calendar competition 2022  
This item had been superseded by EL.09.06.21 No further action.

EL09.06.21 - Members were asked for further clarification on their proposals for the Calendar Competition this year. This project was now underway. No further action.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – For information only  
Members noted the report – no comments.

## **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  
Members noted the report –\_no comments.

6.0. **ADMINISTRATION**  
None.

## **7.0 ENVIRONMENT**

7.1 To note the current position of the Town Council's Estates  
Members noted the report.

7.2 An update on Street Lighting maintenance and repairs  
The Estates and Facilities Manager provided further explanation with regard to the risks outlined in paragraph 3.1. He said that this was raised a couple of months ago at a previous Environment and Leisure Committee which highlighted a liability type change in street lights across the UK. Where there had been lighting designed on a road this may not have been pre-covered in cases of a car accident with potential for car insurers to contact the council and ask if the lighting specification was correct at the time of the accident. This would currently have been considered low risk, although ES Highways had noted this as a concern. It was therefore suggested that the Town Council produces a statement stating that whenever the Town Council are to replace street lights in the future it would be advisable to have a street lighting design carried out, (which would cost in the region of £2-10k per road) but in the meantime, the Town Council would be happy to replace the current lights like for like in their present state.

Councillor S. Mayhew asked if there would be a problem in the future for insurance reasons and the Estates and Facilities Manager said that this could be the case as potentially we would have to level up the risks compared to the costs, but we should understand what ES Highways were recommending which would be to acknowledge that there was no lighting design for specific roads but going forward any new roads would require a lighting design. The Estates and Facilities Manager pointed out that with a hundred and ninety street lights, there would be no way we could afford to get lighting designs for the whole town and that this was the same across Sussex and the rest of the UK.

Councillor J. Beesley asked more about the lighting design criteria. The Estates and Facilities Manager replied that a professional expert would be appointed to survey the roads and determine the position of lighting and lumens involved or how this would be affected by trees if positioned on the high street or a country lane. Councillor D. French commented that if there was a claim made that there shouldn't be a question from the insurers about whether the lighting was adequate or not as we did not have the certification, although we wouldn't have a lot of choice but to pay for the new lighting design for new roads and that lighting designs carried out on new developments would be covered anyhow.

Councillor B. Cox asked if it would be more prudent to look at the problem areas first with speeding for example. The Estates and Facilities Manager said that he would be able to get a quote although this would be expensive and stipulated that this would only be a contributing factor as to whether the insurance company would even consider that the lighting and if it had contributed to a particular accident. It would also depend on the weather and other contributing factors. This may cost up to £100k so with the quotation for current repairs and replacements at £25k and only a £2k budget plus money from CIL to cover the difference, this would not leave much left over for street light repairs let alone street light designs.

Councillor S. Mayhew said that was a very good point and that we should start to prepare for this in the future.

Members were happy to include this statement for areas requiring new lighting and estimated costs and said that it was good that this had been brought to their attention.

Members were also asked if they wished to agree to the revised quotes. The Estates and Facilities Manager said the slight cost increase was because the first quote had not included column 5 on Church Street. Also, as this was a narrow road this would require traffic management for the two columns but made sense not to ask them to come back for the third column so would be more cost effective all round. Councillor J. Beesley agreed and stated that we had to do the best we could with the finances we had right now.

Members agreed to go ahead with the works and gave praise to the Estates and Facilities Manager for all his hard work on this project.

**EL16.07.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) accept the statement of risk outlined in paragraph 3.1 – as per the report presented to Environment & Leisure committee on 22 March 2021, prior to authorisation of works being carried out, and;
- (ii) agreed to proceed with the streetlighting repairs/replacements detailed in the table under section 2.1 utilising Community Infrastructure Levy funding within earmarked reserves the total sum being £25,084.70.

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

Further to discussions by members at the previous meeting, the Estates and Facilities Manager had asked the building owner, who had cut down the trees at Bellbrook open space without consultation, for recompense for the loss and damage to those trees. Since the building owner had provided no survey report for the damage to the retaining wall, the Estates and Facilities Manager had presented to them the title deeds explaining the boundaries.

The building owner had offered to donate £200 towards Uckfield Town Council's tree planting programme, assuming no further action would be taken in regard to the works that had been carried out. They also had an Oak sapling they wished to donate to be planted on Hempstead Meadows. Members were asked to consider whether they agreed to accept the donation of £200 and the provision of an Oak sapling as recompense for the works carried out.

Councillor D. French was surprised to see that the wall was dangerous but said that it was a shame that they didn't consult neighbouring landowners about this, i.e. the Town Council. Members asked the Estates and Facilities Manager for his own estimations of the costs involved. He summarised that fruit trees would be approximately £100 each and saplings would be £10-30 each and that they were hoping to plant fruit trees this year and get two trees out of that and twenty smaller trees too, so on the grand scheme of things £200 was a low offer. Also, members agreed that there was no justification as to why they did this and the fact that they didn't have a survey beforehand knowing that the Town Council owned the land. The building owner had previously spoken to the Estates & Facilities Manager about fly tipping.

Councillor B. Cox asked if it would be worth pursuing with time and resources. The Estates and Facilities Manager pointed out that this was still damage to council property and that this would equate to a similar situation for example if the grass was damaged after a fair on the field where we would normally charge a deposit and damage could reach up to £700. Councillor B. Cox said that a counter offer of £500 would be more justifiable and reasonable because you needed to consider the rate of planting, added tree protection and stakes. He said that if the land was put back to the way it was before then this could potentially cause an issue for their wall but they had removed a lot of trees which would have cost a lot more than £200 to replace.

Members were swayed by this argument and Councillor A. Smith added that this would follow in line with the 'tree for a tree' scheme to replace the number of trees that had been destroyed with the planting of the same number. Councillor S. Mayhew totally agreed and said that the money side of this was not as relevant as the 'tree for a tree' replacement scheme and also the tremendous effort put in by the Ranger and staff resources. Members agreed and asked for a counter offer to be sent to include the cost of the trees and tree guards.

**EL.17.07.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree for the Estates and Facilities Manager to send a higher counter offer to the building owners, which worked in line with the estimated costs for new trees to be purchased and planted with the Town Council's pro-tree planting and 'tree for a tree' scheme.

## **8.0 LEISURE**

### **8.1 To consider options to review the gate access to Ridgewood Recreation Ground off New Road**

Discussions were held regarding the gate leading to Ridgewood Recreation Ground off New Road, Ridgewood, opposite the old terrace of cottages in New Road, specifically numbers 17 to 19. Despite regular maintenance of the gate, it appeared that the mechanism (gate closers) was being regularly adjusted by a user of the recreation ground which had resulted in wasted resources i.e. staff time and money to repair and replace the closers each time. The groundsman had replaced the closer on this specific gate over ten times in the past eighteen months. Members were asked to identify a suitable option going forward as this situation was not cost effective.

One member noted that this matter had been raised on Uckfield News and that quite a few comments had been noted. Councillor J. Beesley agreed that this was clearly not financially viable, especially in current times and that the preferred option 2 - a stile type replacement, would still provide access for visitors to the park as well as the driveway via Ridgewood Village Hall. Councillor D. French said that she agreed with a stile although noted that this would be inconvenient for some people. However, she said that the council had to do something about this gate and agreed with option 2 as the best outcome and members agreed because if the gate had to be fixed again this problem would continue.

**EL18.07.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to Option 2 – to replace the gate at Ridgewood Recreational Grounds off New Road, Ridgewood (opposite the old terrace of cottages in New Road, specifically numbers 17 to 19) with a stile.

8.2 To appoint a representative to join a stakeholder group exploring the future provision of Tennis in Uckfield

The Town Clerk had been approached regarding the setting up of a stakeholder group within the town, which had a keen interest in supporting the development of tennis in Uckfield, and future provision of facilities.

Councillor S. Mayhew opted to join as well as Councillor A. Smith and possibly Councillor J. Beesley since he had been part of Active Uckfield.

**EL19.07.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) appoint Councillor S. Mayhew and Councillor A. Smith as a substitute to join the stakeholder group looking at the future of tennis facilities in Uckfield, and;  
(ii) recommend to the Infrastructure Working Group to invite those key members of the stakeholder group to a future working group meeting to understand current levels of demand and future provision required to support population growth.

**9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

9.1 Climate Emergency Steering Group update – Green Partnership

Members noted the report. The Estates and Facilities Manager also highlighted that he had carried out a carbon footprint audit of the Town Council with an external company (shared with the Climate Change Working Group last week). He would be presenting this to full council at a future meeting and aimed to reduce that going forward in the next few months by making some sort of climate change charter. Councillor D. French thanked Councillor A. Smith and the Estates and Facilities Manager for this report and work carried out and looked forward to seeing the finished presentation.

9.2 Initial update from Allotment Working Group meeting held on 12 July 2021

An Allotment Working Group had been set up consisting of four Town Councillors, and supported by Town Council staff. The first meeting took place on 12 July 2021. Councillor J. Beesley asked why the allotment conference would have to be postponed and Councillor B. Cox explained that it was more about the overall package since the allotment working group had started reviewing the future of fees and charges and that they wanted to make sure that they gathered all the information first before presenting to the allotment holders. The Town Clerk echoed that point and said that the meeting would take place in the autumn/winter but that the council needed to be fully prepared with facts and figures first and that as we were short of approaching the summer holidays with

people going away we needed a bit more time to collate all that information. Members agreed.

A proposition was also made at this meeting by the Estates and Facilities Manager of a suggestion to place hedgerows in place of fencing around allotments in place of delapidated fencing. The Estates and Facilities Manager had estimated that it would cost in the region of £12k - £15k to fence around the Framfield Road West allotment site alone. Councillor A. Smith agreed and said that this would be something that the Climate Change Working Group would fully support and need to look at.

**EL20.07.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to the postponement of the Allotment Conference until all recommendations had been explored by the working group, and;
- (ii) allow the Estates & Facilities Manager to further investigate the replacement of allotment boundary fencing with hedgerow planting as a more greener and cost effective idea (to be raised with the Climate Change Working Group).

## **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

Members noted the report.

### 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

Members noted the report.

## 11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

No comments from the Chairman.

## 12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

**EL.21.07.21** 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.

The meeting finished at 19:53pm