

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 7.00pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. S. Mayhew (Chairman)  
Cllr. J. Beesley  
Cllr. H. Firth

Cllr. K. Bedwell  
Cllr. J. Edwards  
Cllr. D. French

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

One member of the press (recorded meeting)  
Three members of the public

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**

**EL.22.09.21** It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable two separate members of the public to speak on items raised.

The first resident wished to draw our attention to item 8.1 of the minutes of the Environment and Leisure meeting held on 26 July 2021, regarding replacing the gate leading to Ridgewood Recreation Ground with a stile. This resident said that a suggestion at that meeting that a user of the gate had caused damage had incorrectly implied that someone was responsible for vandalism and that despite this not being stated in the Council Minutes, it was reported as such, in Uckfield News. He said that he found this offensive and insulting and that this was not an opinion shared by all and that earlier this year, the gate had collapsed due to one of the holding posts having rotted at its base which was not an uncommon fault of timber gates and fence posts. He also added that during the lockdown period, a far greater number of the public were using (and still were) this green space for exercise and hence much more frequent use of the gate which consequently meant a lot more 'wear and tear'. He also mentioned that representations made by council tax payers in New Road about the provision of a stile had also been ignored in that the provision of a stile would exclude many users, including those with disabilities who would not be able to gain access or egress; pushchairs, buggies, bicycles, scooters, wheelchairs etc would also be restricted and raised

issue that the councillors' recommendations might also be in breach of obligations to meet legislation protecting those with disabilities and those who were vulnerable (ref. Equalities Act 2010). He said that the car park entrance had no separate defined pedestrian way on to the village green and that the conflict of motor vehicles and much increased foot traffic would require an updated risk assessment and health and safety check. The resident also raised another issue affecting this matter. A section of the old fence would have to be removed, otherwise once the stile was in place he claimed that no one over the height of five feet would be able to climb over because the ground also sloped downwards into the green and therefore constructing a stile on undulating ground would not be easy.

The second member of the public wished to speak in his capacity as the Chairman of Uckfield Grasshoppers JFC. The Town Council had allowed Grasshoppers to consider leasing West Park Pavilion as their home and suitable structure and they would like to make a formal application. They had discussed the various options in detail and were happy for a full repairing lease which would be subject to approval. The FA would require the correct number of changing rooms for boys and girls, home and away to cater for two matches that would play simultaneously along with an Official's room. He reiterated that the measures stipulated were mandatory in league rules. He said that at this point in time they had approximately three hundred and fifty members which would make them one of the biggest providers of sport in our local community and that these numbers would continue to grow with a rapid expansion of our town. He also stressed that without further green space in the area our pitches and venue spaces would be far stretched, so what was in place needed to be protected. They would look at carrying out the following works: creating a social area inside for the players before and after games; decorate to create a warmer feel and refurbish the shower areas, install cctv and broadband to ensure greater suitability for venue hosting, replace and update the kitchen areas so that they could host events such as birthday parties etc. A landlord override switch would also be installed to cut the power bar essentials to reduce utility costs. He said that they would also develop a second-hand shop to help their community and in time, add an extension based on needs. They had already been in touch with Sussex FA who would look to use the building for courses, events and hearings and in contact with fitness groups who would like to use the building for their classes as well as access to the toilets and kitchen facilities. He said that West Park pavilion would be great as an head quarters for their annual Sussex Sixes Tournament and would attract teams throughout the county. This event had been running continuously for 29 years until the covid pandemic and was still one of the biggest Sussex tournaments and their main fundraising event throughout the season. They were also developing a girls tournament as the demand was there for them to do so. He concluded by saying that not having West Park as a sports venue would have a detrimental effect on the club. They wanted to protect their services and venues which would allow them to continue providing opportunities for children in our communities to play sports.

The Chairman thanked both speakers and confirmed that both statements had been noted by members.

**EL.23.09.21** It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

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

Apologies for absence were received in advance from Cllrs A. Smith, D. Bennett and during the meeting by Cllr B. Cox.

#### **4.0. MINUTES**

##### **4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**EL.24.09.21** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 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:

EL36.03.21 – To consider an opportunity to light the Town’s beacon – TRBL Centenary The beacon lighting was carried out on Saturday 28 August 2021. No further action.

EL17.07.21 – To receive an update on the Town Council’s land at Bellbrook The Estates and Facilities Manager has been in touch once again with the adjacent business owner who had agreed to pay compensation of £500 and donate an oak sapling. 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 report ending 31 July 2021**

Members noted the report – no comments.

#### **6.0. ADMINISTRATION**

##### **6.1 To initially receive information on options to increase utilisation of West Park Pavilion**

The Chairman asked for comments. Cllr. French was impressed with Grasshoppers plans for the pavilion and believed that would be the ideal answer. She said it would be great to see investment, time and money put into grassroots football, especially girls football too and the pavilion updated with all their proposals. Cllr. Edwards and Cllr. Beesley both agreed that option 2 (leasing the building on a full repairing lease to a local sports club) appeared by far to be the strongest option and Cllr. Beesley, especially compared to previous costs of running the building and making user friendly. The Chairman highlighted that this was a sports pavilion after all and said that he had also lent towards this being the best option, although he also made clear to say that there were a lack of venues in the town and that this would be a difficult final decision to make at full Council.

Cllr. Edwards asked if there would be more detail provided with regard to proposed costs and figures. The Town Clerk announced that she would require a decision at the next full council meeting, regardless of whether members would be provided with those figures in commercially sensitive confidential papers or public domain, as members would still be able to come to a decision with the information they had been presented already. Cllr. Edwards then recommended for the committee to put forward option 2 to the next full Council meeting. The Town Clerk made clear that all viewpoints on this subject from all other meetings

could be put forward on Monday for all members to achieve a balanced decision at full Council.

**EL25.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) recommend Option 2 as part of full Council discussions on Monday 13 September (*lease the entire building on a full repairing lease to a local sports club*).

6.2 To consider an enquiry from the Children's Air Ambulance for the placement of a textile recycling bank

Cllr. Bedwell said that her only concern would be that there was already a textile bin at Ridgewood car park where piles of clothing had been left in the car park next to the bins and regularly overflowed. We would not want to have a similar situation whereby the Groundsman had to pick up pieces of strewn clothing. Cllr. Firth understood the need to rid of various bits of crafts and textiles herself but agreed that bins would have to be emptied regularly and monitored to ensure that nothing was left thrown on the ground.

Cllr. Bedwell said that it wasn't the size of the bin as such, it was that bags of clothing were often placed to the side of the bin as they wouldn't fit in and certain groups of people would displace garments all over the car park. Cllr. Beesley said that the bins would need to be emptied more frequently and Cllr. Edwards added that it might also be a good idea to ask for the bins to be made more accessible due to height restrictions or weight of clothing perhaps. Cllr. Beesley said that this wouldn't be possible to change the design of the bin with his background knowledge of these types of bins however.

Cllr. French said that we shouldn't feel restricted by this request unless we did have space and asked if there was room by the Community Fridge. The Estates and Facilities Manager reminded members of the proximity to Luxford Field and risk if bags of clothing were left. Cllr. Beesley said with his experience of bins it would be down to how often they were emptied and also to note that competitors had been known to try and break in to them or steal them so they would need to be heavy and durable. Cllr. Edwards asked if the Town Council would be bound by any contractual rights in terms of proximity by other vendors with similar textile collections, since there was one in the Tesco car park. He also suggested that having another one around the town might also mitigate other bins becoming overfilled. Cllr. French also mentioned that it would be good to think about places in the north of the town such as the Osborn Hall at Hempstead Recreation Ground. Cllr. Firth suggested Foresters Hall car park since there were other bins there and it was fenced off and quite well shielded. The Estates and Facilities Manager suggested that Osborn Hall was a bit out of the way but could be an option as well as Foresters Hall. Cllr. Firth proposed for members to agree to having a textile recycling bin and for council staff to decide where it would best placed. The Chairman agreed and said that ideally this should be where there weren't any other collections and to ask that this be monitored and with more frequent collection times.

**EL26.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to having a textile recycling bank on behalf of the Children's Air Ambulance, and;  
(ii) for council staff to discuss the best placement for this, taking in to consideration all members' viewpoints including monitoring if this becomes a nuisance and having more frequent fortnight collection times in the agreement.

## 7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Members noted the report.

### 7.2 To consider resident parking on council land at West Park Local Nature Reserve (WPLNR)

The Estates and Facilities Manager provided further explanation. The Ranger has noticed that the resident had been parking on Town Council land and that the low fence was hit by accident and they were now parking on this section of land. They had also placed bins on this area where the fence used to be.

Cllr. Bedwell said that as the Town Council had very limited green spaces, although she appreciated that this was next to the resident's house and therefore easy to park there, that she also lived next door to council land which would be very easy to use for recreation purposes, she felt that this could open up to all other areas where housing was next to council land and that if every resident ended up using this kind of land to park on we would lose quite a lot of town council land. Also, she was not happy that the damage to the fence had not been mentioned to the Town Council nor had they offered to repair it, so she thought that a letter should be sent to the resident and to ask for the fence to be repaired.

Cllr. Firth agreed that council land was being abused here and that our green spaces should be preserved.

Cllr. Edwards argued that this was only a small bit of scrubland and asked if we would be interested in renting the land instead. The Chairman reiterated that this was about someone parking on council land and damaging the fence and members had been asked to make a decision on how to enforce this, not to offer to rent or the purchase of council land. He also reminded members that there had been an issue more recently when we had forced a business to replace trees and compensate the council because they had carried out work on our land after they had caused damage, so it would be double standards if we did not do the same in this instance.

Members agreed that they had set a precedent for this before about selling and renting land, and more specifically about the business. Cllr. Beesley said that he agreed that they should assess each individual case, but in this situation they had damaged council land. The Chairman made a proposal for council staff to send the resident a letter asking them to repair the fence that had been accidentally damaged and to inform them that this was council land and that no parking was allowed in this area or to place their rubbish bins.

### **EL.27.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree that a letter be sent to the resident requesting the vehicle be moved and fence reinstated and that no rubbish bins be placed there either.

### 7.3 To note woodland management report and public consultation

Cllr. Bedwell wished to say a big thank you to the Ranger and Groundsmen for the incredible amount of work carried out to sort out the ash trees; although it was extremely sad to see so many of them being destroyed.

Cllr. Edwards asked if we would need to look at moving any funds from reserves for the tree budget this year. The Estates and Facilities Manager said that we had spent approximately £3,500 on trees this year alone and we hadn't even come in to the winter season yet, so yes although this report should self-fund

itself and be the only way we could afford it. He added that a day rate for contractors would be close to a thousand pounds and that there were four areas needing attention so this could take weeks and was a five-year project. Also, working with the English Woodlands, they could tender out the works to local contractors so they would end up getting the timber but doing the work for us so we wouldn't get too involved or be too costly. Cllr. Edwards said that with the tree budget being set too low, was this an unexpected circumstance. The Estates and Facilities Manager said that this was part of an historic budget setting and now with more indepth tree surveys and ash die back becoming more of a problem this was just a culmination of things. The Chairman said that he had also noticed road signs lately driving to Brighton regarding ash die back stating please do not buy or burn wood with this disease as it would very quickly spread.. Cllr. Firth asked if oak was now in danger. The Estates and Facilities Manager said that a couple of samples had been sent back, and this may be something that would have to be considered in the future.

**EL.28.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree for the works to go ahead in line with the recommendations of the Ranger's report.

7.4 To consider installing a new litter bin along Streatfield Road

Cllr. Firth was happy to propose that this would be a sensible idea having a bin placed near to the public bench recently installed. The Estates and Facilities Manager confirmed that there were spare bins available and that we needed to order some small bins too and had the budget for this. Members agreed since there were no issues with resources for this.

**EL.29.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to the installation of a new litter bin at the end of Streatfield Road next to the newly installed bench.

(Cllr. B. Cox emailed an apology for non-attendance at this meeting at 19:48 hours)

**8.0 LEISURE**

8.1 To consider a storage option at Harlands Playing Fields

Cllr. Bedwell said that she was in two minds about this idea due to the fact that it might be seen from the houses opposite and also with the new development in Mallard Drive, although she said that it was lovely to see the field being used and kids playing football on Harlands. She was hesitant because she wasn't sure if a metal container would look particularly pleasant with the little bit of space on this field, but was sold on the fact that it wouldn't be burnt down like the wooden storage shed. The Estates and Facilities Manager said the primary reason why the shed burnt down was due to youths smoking at the back of the shed as the council had been informed of this by local residents. Whereasa metal container would be nearer the road and more visible. Cllr. Beesley said that the situation at Ridgewood Place and firemen attending there quite regularly meant that another wooden storage option would not be a good idea and proposed that a metal container would be a better option. He said that it would have to withstand the elements and vandalism. Cllr. Edwards said that the shipping container would look really good maybe facing the roadside, painted up nicely with the Grasshoppers and Uckfield Town Council logos and maybe some youth involvement. Cllr. Mayhew suggested it could be surrounded by plants to disguise it more and Cllr. Edwards added that we also had to consider that this was a club that was effected by three hundred odd households and something for kids to do and they needed somewhere to store their stuff.

The Chairman concluded that members were not objecting to a storage unit but wanted to come up with a sensible place to put it so that it was masked and secure. The Estates and Facilities Manager said that the container was not that high and would prefer not to put it back where the shed had been as he was still dealing with that. He suggested either the road side or school side would be the better options and that the school side would be higher so the hedge would mask it. He believed that the Grasshoppers Chairman said they would be happy to plant around it too. The Chairman proposed this idea and for the Estates and Facilities Manager and the team to find the best way to mask the container from the residents in the houses opposite. Members agreed.

**EL30.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to having a small metal shipping container used for storage on Harlands Fields, and;
- (ii) for the Estates and Facilities Manager and the team to liaise and decide on the most suitable location and the best way of masking it from the residents from the houses across the road on Mallards Drive.

8.2 To consider opportunities to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022

The Town Clerk had asked if members wished to register their interest in any of the activities in this report to mark Her Majesty the Queen becoming the first British Monarch in 2022. Cllr. Bedwell requested a good team effort with this from members. The Town Clerk said that she had had a meeting with the lady who ran Uckfield Phab who was looking at organising a charity fundraising event, potentially on the Bank Holiday Friday and that the Lions Club might also be doing something on that Sunday so events were already been planned in the town and the weekend could become quite busy.

Cllr. Mayhew said that the beacon lighting should happen anyway and that perhaps a working group would need to be set up for this. Cllr. French liked the idea of planting a tree for the Queen's Jubilee as this would tick all the boxes of other things we were trying to achieve. Cllr. Bedwell was happy to coordinate a working group along with volunteers Cllr. French and Cllr. Firth. The Chairman suggested announcing this at the next full Council meeting for other members who may also wish to get involved.

**EL31.09.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) set up a working group after showing interest in activities to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, led by Cllr. Bedwell including (so far) Cllrs. French and Firth, and;
- (ii) for the Chairman at the next full council meeting to announce the new working group and invite any other members who may also wish to volunteer.

## **9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

### **9.1 Climate Emergency Steering Group update – Green Partnership**

Cllr. French wished to mention that they were building their next meeting with the greening group which was more like an umbrella group and that Cllr. Smith would have been able to explain a little more about our engagement with them if she were present today, but it was a good start. Cllr. Bedwell said that they had to cancel the 'Climate Change EXPO' event due to covid reasons but that they were going to try and re-arrange this for the end of April 2022 and try to get local businesses involved to showcase what climate change businesses were out there and those which were accessible to residents. The Estates and Facilities Manager announced that they had completed their carbon footprint and that he had prepared a Climate Change presentation for the Climate Change Working

Group, but would like to show this to members next week to highlight their aims and way forward.

## **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

Nothing to report at this time.

### 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**

- 11.1 There was a late addition to the agenda requesting members to consider a request from Manor Park and Hempstead Residents' Association to obtain a licence to cultivate land at Brown's Lane (Brown's Lane Rockery). The Chairman asked if members were happy for their request for up to five cherry trees to be supplied, planted and maintained by the association and members agreed that this would be good thing to see happen. Cllr. French commented that the association had always kept well maintained rows of flowerbeds on the estate and were a great asset so this would be a lovely addition.

### **EL32.09.21 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:**

- (i) agree to this request by Manor Park and Hempstead Fields Residents' Association to obtain a licence to cultivate land at Brown's land (Brown's Lane Rockery) and to supply, plant and maintain five cherry trees.



## 12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

**EL.33.09.21** 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 To initially receive information on options to increase utilisation of West Park Pavilion (exempt information – considered commercially sensitive)  
Members discussed the contents of the report.

The meeting finished at 20:23pm