

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 7.00pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. S. Mayhew (Chairman)  
Cllr. K. Bedwell  
Cllr. D. Bennett  
Cllr. J. Edwards

Cllr. A. Smith  
Cllr. J. Beesley  
Cllr. B. Cox  
Cllr. D. French

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

One member 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 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 received.

**3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

**4.0. MINUTES**

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**EL.43.11.21** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 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 item which had been completed:

EL.37.10.21 – To consider the draft licence agreement between Manor Park & Hempstead Fields Residents’ Association and Uckfield Town Council for Brown’s Lane Rockery

The licence had been prepared and since been signed at the Full Council meeting on 25 October 2021 before being sent to the Residents’ Association for signing. No further action.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – For information only

Members noted the report and agreed to remove the following item:

FC.64.01.21 – Animal friendly bins – Victoria Pleasure Ground & Hempstead Rec  
Six bins had been ordered with the budget available. No further action.

Cllr. J. Edwards asked if the covid contingency funding for play area spraying would still be going ahead in autumn. The Town Clerk said a request had been made by the Estates and Facilities Manager for a swab test to be carried out at the end of this month and a report would then be taken to full Council on 6 December for a decision going forward.

**5.0. FINANCE**

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

5.2. To note the Income and Expenditure report ending September 2021

Members noted the report – no comments.

5.3 To review fees and charges for our sports facilities in 2022/23

The Chair referred to a question that had arisen by a member of the public at the recent allotment conference on 10 November 2021 about whether all spending reviews would be dealt with the same way following the announcement that the allotment fees and charges were due to rise in April 2023.

A member from that committee explained that since the allotments had been making a loss over a long period of time, those fees needed to increase and those reasons had been explained. The allotment tenants had been informed that we would be looking at the same format to review other provisions such as room charges, the cemetery and playing fields.

This review would need to look at the structure of the income and outgoings of sports facilities and whether we needed to cover more costs in the budget setting from April 2023.

Rather than setting up another working group members agreed that the same members of the allotments and the cemetery reviews would be best placed to carry on with this review of sporting facilities as well since they had a good understanding of the research involved. A mixture of the two groups was also suggested as a good idea so as not to double up on the workload. Equally, if members wished to withdraw from this review due to other commitments this would of course be validated.

It was also understood that with the upcoming review of allotment rules and regulations and the cemetery review in tow, each individual remit would involve an awful lot of work and furthermore, with a review of the sports facilities there would also be peculiarities involved with some areas such as sporting provision and specialist maintenance. Cllr Edwards had been involved in the review of the

football playing fields earlier this year, so it was thought to be a good idea to include his expertise on this committee.

One member wished to make it clear to what degree the town council would be subsidising, as this was one of the questions raised by a resident during the review of allotment fees. The Town Council would not be looking to double their fees and make it directly comparable to the percentage increases, but to provide a similar level of subsidy for all facilities and equally, if there was no subsidy available, the Town Council would not need to increase fees unduly.

Members agreed that it would be sensible to start this review in a few months time and after the budget setting process had been completed.

At the same sitting, members also needed to consider whether to increase the current rates for sports facilities in 2021/22. One member proposed that since inflation was set to rise by an average of 4% this year, fees should increase accordingly. Members agreed to this proposal of a 4% increase since there had been losses in sports and pitch hire due to various external reasons, especially during the pandemic.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said the Town Council had paid just under £18k this year alone, just to maintain six football pitches and the income received for playing fields and pitches was just over £13k so that was a huge loss. With fuel rises and everything else going up he did not think that the normal 1.5% increase would cover increasing expenses and suggested that it may be a good idea to have a working group look at this aspect too. He said that costs may vary and fluctuate depending on external factors but for this period this increase was necessary due to inflation and to help with running costs.

**EL.44.11.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to increase the fees and charges for the hire of sports facilities in 2022/23 by 4%, and;
- (ii) agree to set up a working group to discuss the pricing structure and the provision of sports facilities (member volunteers to be re-dressed about this at the Environment and Leisure meeting on 16 May 2022).

## **6.0. ADMINISTRATION**

- 6.1 To note the minutes of the Allotment Conference on 10 November 2021  
Members noted the minutes of the Conference.

## **7.0 ENVIRONMENT**

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

- 7.2 To consider the Town Council's draft woodland management plan  
It was noted by members that this was an important development in order to manage the biodiversity of our woodlands, especially since the days were gone when woodlands could just be left to manage themselves.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said that this would be a rolling programme of changing pathways and with Boothland wood and the new development, there was a concern that there would be an increase in footfall along that route, especially during the winter when the paths became muddy and people tended to walk on the sides of the paths, making it even wider.

The Chairman highlighted that many years ago there had been a recommendation to install a floodlit footpath through Boothland Wood but the council did not want artificial street lights or a concrete footpath.

Members discussed the more informal exits and entrances into the woods and those routes created by walkers over the pandemic that were not particularly safe either. It was hoped that this would be taken in to account as part of the management plan.

One member said that he had once been a conservation volunteer on Ashdown Forest and they used to have a lot of issues with overwalked pathways. He said that the most ecological way forward perhaps would be to redirect people closely around any muddy areas by driving pales into certain areas and diverting them.

Areas mentioned where the muddy patches were at their worst were the entrance to the housing estate and a pathway leading to the west side on the right at the far end of the woods. It was suggested that it might be better to install some sort of wooden pathway here instead.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said that since there was a blanket Tree Preservation Order (TPO) bordering numerous properties specifically on Nightingale Wood, instead of having to apply for each individual tree, this would hopefully now supercede that with Wealden DC's approval, and the Town Council could manage the woodland as per the plan instead of having to jump through hoops. He added that this would also attract grant funding for specific works in future years.

**EL.45.11.21** Members noted the report with thanks and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to the proposed woodland management plan over a 10-year period for the Town Council owned woodlands and ancient woodlands of Nightingale Wood, Bridge Farm Wood and Boothland Wood.

- 7.3 To receive an update on tree planting proposals for Winter 2021/22  
Members gave thanks again to the Ranger for his hard work and efforts in this report for the next phase of tree planting.

**EL.46.11.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to the areas highlighted for the Winter 2021/22 tree planting programme.

- 7.4 To consider the amendments being proposed by DEFRA to the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (as applied to groundwater Activities and related surface water discharge activities)  
Members discussed a number of potential issues such as whether this proposal would prevent anyone from being interred within a certain distance being set away from a dry ditch, water course, field boundary or drain.

Also, as the cemetery would become limited with burial space and the Town Council would be exploring options to expand, members asked if this might affect those with pre-purchased graves.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said that potentially this could happen although he would find out more information and if there were any springs and water courses in the distance which met with any requirements.

The Town Clerk highlighted that the initial deadline to answer those questions was to NALC (The National Association of Local Councils) by 26 November, but

the deadline for the DEFRA consultation was 22 December 2021. Also, it stipulated in the report that cemeteries with low numbers of burials (which Snatts Road Cemetery came under) may be exempt from these proposals anyway.

Officers and members were asked to look at the information again in greater detail in order to decide if the cemetery would be entirely exempt before any detailed report be undertaken by the Town Council.

**EL.47.11.21** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** for officers to advise the Town Council if Snatts Road Cemetery would qualify as being:  
(i) exempt from the permitting scheme for small cemeteries, and/or;  
(ii) an 'exempt facility', to comply with the General Binding Rules (as outlined in the report).

## **8.0 LEISURE**

Nothing to report at this time.

## **9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

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

The Chair attended an AGM on 13 November 2021 and reported that there had been a new Chairman elected on the committee (Ian Smith) who was a former councillor as well as Mike Skinner as Vice Chair. There had also been proposals being made for a revamp of the festival to provide something a bit different for next year.

### 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

The following items which had been removed from previous action lists but were still outstanding and would need further consideration:

### 1. To consider resident parking on council land at West Park Local Nature Reserve (WPLNR) – Saunders Close

A letter had been posted to the resident on 16 September 2021: a polite notice asking the resident to stop parking in this area or placing bins here as it was council land and part of our nature reserve. It had also been requested that the fencing be re-installed.

The Estates and Facilities Manager had contacted the Council's solicitor since the resident was still parking on the nature reserve and staff were unable to repair the fence.

Members were informed that this item would have to be added to the action list again and that they would need to consider any options made by the solicitor going forward.

### 2. Covid bench installation – London Road/Southview Drive

Application S171 was completed in September 2021 (for consent to make an excavation in a street). However, ES Highways had not notified Uckfield TC that the incorrect form had been completed and with the delays generally (it took two months for a response) it might have been better just to install the bench (that had been in storage for six months) on council land such as Victoria/Luxfords field/Ridgewood or for members to provide an alternative location.

(The Licencing and Enforcement Officer had said that unfortunately, the contractor would also need to have all their information updated again in order to excavate on the public highway).

The Estates and Facilities Manager said the two issues were that we needed another contractor and another quote as the previous ones were now outdated. He agreed, we could carry on trying to get the licence for a standard bench instead on London Road.

One member asked if the bench could be placed near to one of the play parks, Luxford Field for example, especially for those with a dogs on leads who needed to watch over their children or grandchildren playing in the park. Members therefore suggested for the bench to be placed nearer the top of Luxfords Field as there were fewer benches there and to make sure that this was a safe distance from the car park .

## 12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.48.11.21 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 20:10pm