

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on
Monday 21 February 2022 at 7.00pm
in the Weald Hall, Civic Centre

PRESENT:

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

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the press (recorded meeting)
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

Apologies for absence were received in advance from Cllr. K. Bedwell and Cllr. A. Smith.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 10 January 2022

EL.56.02.22 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 10 January 2022 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:

EL.03.06.20 – The Town Council had been offered a gingko tree from a resident who knew Councillor C. Macve; an 8-foot tall non-native tree
The gingko tree has now been planted. No further action.

EL.49.05.21 – To consider an allotment demand and understanding the legislation if there is demand

The outcomes of the working group's more recent work were reported to E&L Committee on 10 January 2022. Any further issues would be raised at the next working group meeting. No further action.

EL.27.09.21 – To consider resident parking on council land on West Park Local Nature Reserve (WPLNR)

A hedge border was re-instated on the part of council land adjoining the nature reserve. No further action.

EL.38.10.21 – To consider costs for moving the traditional red telephone box

The red telephone box was transferred to a site just outside of Harlands Primary School and restoration works would be completed by the school. No further action.

Cllr. Bennett commented on item EL11.07.20 - to consider installing electric charging points at the buildings. He had been involved with investigations with Mer Electric Car Funding and may be able to provide some useful information regarding their arrangements - whereby they could install however many charging points gratis and the Town Council would receive a percentage of the tariff that comes from this (further details to follow).

Cllr. Beesley asked for an update in relation to item EL18.09.20 – to consider sharing boxes idea from a local resident. The Senior Administrative Officer would ask for an update from the Uckfield & District Lions Club.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – For information only

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

FC.64.01.21 – Tree planting programme

Trees were ordered for the planting season during Winter 2021/22. No further action. However, Cllr. Bennett asked if this could be something that could be tied in with the Green Canopy idea for the Platinum Jubilee. The Estates and Facilities Manager agreed, advising that this idea could be implemented using some of the trees already purchased.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

5.2. To note the Income and Expenditure report (provisional to end of January 2022)

Members noted the report – no comments.

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.

7.2 To consider hedge laying in Luxford Field – Winter 2022

The Estates and Facilities Manager provided an amendment to item 3.1 of the report, updating the amount left in the budget to £1,743, not £898 as previously stated.

A member asked whether this proposal would be funded from the earmarked reserves allocated for allotment fencing. The Estates and Facilities Manager confirmed that it was and said that switching fencing for hedgerows was part of the Town Council's climate change initiative as the council was trying to steer away from fencing per se and help the environment and its future maintenance.

Members considered this proposal to be a fabulous idea and welcomed this. Luxford Fields was regarded as a place where people gravitated to and was the site of major town events.

However, there were some initial concerns. One member reminded the committee that an area on Ridgewood Recreation was opened up to prevent anti-social behaviour and suggested that it might be a good idea to leave the top section of Luxford field exposed, to give the Police more of a chance to see into the field from the car park.

Members agreed that as long as layerage of the new hedgerows was regulated in height to no more than four or five feet and that this was well maintained, visibility would not be an issue. It was also felt that it would be more appealing to have this top part of the field bordered too, as a barrier to the car park.

Another concern was the potential damage that might be caused to newly planted hedgerows, that may not survive, particularly on the eastern side of the field, if people climbed over them, to get to Luxford Field.

The Estates and Facilities Manager added that the fencing on the east side was falling apart and that there was currently no border on the school side of the field either. He stated that this proposal would provide a proper boundary for Luxford Field, and would address the concerns raised.

The report stated that it would be cheaper to purchase the bushes now and involve the Grounds staff in the planting instead of waiting until the next financial year.

One member asked if it was worth replacing one section at a time and to consider fixing the eastern side of the field first as it looked unsightly and potentially dangerous. However, another member agreed with the proposal to do the whole lot in one go as this would be a good way of utilising the budget instead of waiting until next year. They further stated that where funds may be required elsewhere, this could be arranged in an emergency. The proposal was seconded and it was further proposed to claim any retention from next years' budget. The Town Clerk advised that this would form part of the Town Council's annual carry forwards.

The planting would be carried out by both Groundstaff and the Town Council Ranger. Fifty percent of the proposed hedgerows would be hawthorn as this type was thorny and would prevent people from climbing over. This would also support mitigation of climate change and, through maintenance of a low level border, would help with the birds nesting season.

EL.57.02.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to proposals to plant hedges on the border of Luxford Field in its entirety, and;
- (ii) to plant the hedges now and replace any retention of funds out of next years' budget.

7.3 Proposals for tree planting and the natural regeneration of Boothland Wood

EL.58.02.22 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.

8.0 SPORTS AND LEISURE

8.1 To consider a proposal by the Uckfield & District Lions Club for benches on Luxford Field

The Chairman asked members to note that concrete bases would be required for the benches and were expensive (the base for the memorial bench cost £500), so members needed to factor this in during their discussions.

Members understood the need for the concrete bases for residents to put their feet on and for the benches to remain in place for security reasons and voted that they would be happy to proceed with this vision but were conscious of this additional cost element. More clarity was required from the Uckfield & District Lions in this regard.

Councillor. French said that it was lovely to be offered more benches on this field and proposed that members agreed to go ahead with this subject to finding out more about funding for the bases from the Lions.

She also suggested keeping the wooden bench that was already in situ, installing one new bench near the play park (on the school side) and one at the top of the field a bit further along from the new memorial bench.

Councillor. Mayhew seconded this proposal but to reach out to the Uckfield & District Lions first before members decided on costs and positioning.

The Estates and Facilities Manager was also conscious of how long it had taken to get a licence for the memorial bench on London Road and suggested possibly getting a cheaper price for bases.

EL.59.02.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to the kind offer from the Lions for two new benches on Luxford Fields subject to finding out more about the costs (of bases) and to agree locations for positioning on the field.

(Cllr B. Cox arrived at 19:10pm)

8.2 To consider costs to repair cricket nets at Victoria Pleasure Ground

The Chairman highlighted that if members were to embark on any offer of part costs to outdoor activities, and equipment was subsequently damaged, they would be setting a precedent against claims from other hirers, especially whilst some equipment was not being stored properly.

Members agreed that Uckfield Town Council should not be covering the cost and discussed the community grants programme which would be more appropriate.

Councillor. Cox pointed out that the grants scheme for this term was currently going through its final phase, but that they could be put in the direction of other funding opportunities or Wealden perhaps.

Councillor. Edwards added that they could reach out to developers and said that it was a shame that they had not applied this year considering the amount asked for versus the amount allocated in the grants.

It was acknowledged however that this application period had since passed and the cricket team were not made aware of this.

Councillor. Bennett mentioned that there were other grant opportunities from grass roots sports out there and that these small amounts were effectively right and accessible for small grants funding.

The Town Clerk pointed out that the Town Council could run a second programme of community grant funding if there was a suitable amount remaining, which would effectively open up the process to everyone.

A member also highlighted that although this was not a decision this committee could make, it could be referred to the next Finance-Sub committee.

EL.60.02.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree that there was no funding available to meet the request to contribute towards repairs to the cricket nets at Victoria Pleasure Ground, and to;
- (ii) sign post them to suitable funding streams.

- 8.3 To consider fencing along the north end of Harlands Farm Playing Field
Members noted that this was a potentially hazardous part of the field, especially since there was also a walkway there and some had footsteps down to their gardens, yet some did not.

Councillor Cox remarked that there would be nothing worse than a small child trying to retrieve a ball and potentially falling down this area.

On the reverse side of that however, another member pointed out that if we did put a fence up and they kicked the ball over and tried to climb over to get it, this would be more dangerous. One thing the Town Council were trying not to do was to put fencing in.

It was reported that one resident had been concerned about this issue along with other houses being built in this area.

Although this banking has been there for many years, one suggestion was to go back to the Newtown Action group and ask for their views and support.

Councillor. Beesley suggested putting up a warning sign rather than fencing and highlighted the recent issues with broken fences around town caused by the recent storms.

The Estates and Facilities Manager also pointed out that the Town Council would need to speak to residents about this as this also concerned access from their gardens. There were a number of issues associated with this if fencing was installed in that it could block residents' access, or block access for new developers. Additionally, a fence along here would cost roughly in the region of £3,500 and the Groundstaff would have to remove any hedging which would be more work.

Councillor. Edwards also questioned if this land might now be known as a right of way if multiple residents were accessing this field as it was not clear about these accesses on to our lands and other parts of the town.

Members agreed that it would be appropriate to start speaking with the adjoining residents.

EL.61.02.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to contact Newtown Action Group to engage local residents (north of Harlands Playing Field), and;
- (ii) seek to erect signage in the immediate future to advise members of the public of the heath and safety risks.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 Climate Change Working Group

Members noted the report.

9.2 Queen's Jubilee Working Group

Members noted the report.

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

Members noted the report.

10.9 Uckfield Parkrun Board

Nothing to report at this time.

10.10 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee

Members noted the 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
None.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.62.02.22 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 19:47pm