

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on
Monday 4 April 2022 at 7.00pm
in the Council Chambers, Civic Centre

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Mayhew (Chair)
Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. D. Bennett

Cllr. A. Smith (Deputy Chair)
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. B. Cox

IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public
Councillor C. Macve

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. J. Edwards and Cllr D. French.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 21st February 2022

EL.63.04.22 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 21 February 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.27.11.20 – To note the current position with the Town Council's Grounds vehicles

The outcomes of the Carbon Audit highlighted that vehicle emissions were lower than that of utilities. This work will therefore remain on hold until an action plan has been agreed for a way forward. No further action.

EL.57.02.22 – To consider hedge laying in Luxford Field – Winter 2022
Works have started with left over plants from allotments and the rest will be planted Winter 2022. No further action.

- 4.3. Project Monitoring List – For information only
Members noted the report.

5.0. FINANCE

- 5.1. To note bills paid
Members noted the report.

- 5.2. To note the Income and Expenditure report (end of February 2022)
Members noted the report – no comments.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

- 6.1 To consider revised Litter policy – Policy No. 78
The Litter policy was last updated in 2016 which included a bin scoring evaluation system. One member asked if this could also be re-considered, given that environmental concerns had become more important in recent times; having enough litter bins in the town could help prevent litter ending up in the environment.

A proposal was made to downgrade the requirements in the litter bin scoring system to achieve more successful outcomes for the provision and installation of litter bins. The current scores were banded 0-40 (unsuccessful) and 41-80 (successful) and it was suggested to alter this respectively to 0-30 and 31-80, which was previously requested at the last E&L meeting on 21 February, to which members agreed. It was acknowledged that more bins would result in higher costs, but this was viewed as necessary if we were to promote environmental issues and all members agreed with these proposals.

Members also agreed to the proposed amendments to the litter bin policy (Policy no 78) and the installation of three litter bins, one in Streatfield Road, one at Ridgewood MUGA and one at Scarlett's Close (these items were discussed at the previous E&L meeting on 21 February and 10 January), since they now passed the revised litter bin scoring criteria.

The Estates & Facilities Manager raised two issues for members to consider:

Firstly, that if a request was made for a new litter bin, we should use the litter bin scoring system (which had not been done previously). There was an item in the evaluation process that asked for the number of separate requests for a litter bin received within the last 6-month period; the more requests, the higher the score.

Secondly, although the proposed amendments had now been approved, members were asked to note that in future, there would be a cost involved for a licence fee from Highways (approximately £400 per bin), plus the purchase of a bin as well as emptying it (£260 + vat/yr). There were currently 66 litter bins already in the town and that now the scoring system was lowered, we could potentially have hundreds of new litter bins agreed as a result. Emptying these would create additional work for groundstaff.

Members commented that installing litter bins wouldn't prevent people dropping litter.

One member of the public had contacted a councillor asking if we could ask our local schools to talk to their pupils and educate them about littering.

Another member asked for clarification on how to place a request for new bins as she was unable to attend the last meeting when this subject was last discussed. She added that there were no litter bins present in certain areas such as from Selby Close as well as the bottom of New Town (from the corner of Framfield Road) back up to Pipersfield and she asked if a bin should be installed on the corner of Harcourt Road.

At the recent Climate Emergency Conference there was an annual audit detailing the main producers of litter, and Councillor A. Smith suggested it would be quite interesting to do this in Uckfield. Also, the Climate Change steering group could start a 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign.

Councillor B. Cox added that we used to have several litter bins, mostly provided by McDonalds (a few up at football pitch) but those bins have since been removed and we received nothing from McDonalds or KFC, when we should expect them to assist with this, given the litter their outlets generate. As New Town had lost a lot of bins over a period time, maybe they could contribute towards picking up litter within the town (perhaps by means of a community involvement scheme), and asked if this could be placed on the next Climate Change Steering Group agenda. The Town Clerk had been trying to get in touch with KFC regarding replacement bins.

Councillor D. Bennett said that litter bins were once a remit of Wealden DC and that they had undertaken a cost saving exercise which had resulted in the reduction of litter bins in Uckfield. He asked if we could go back to them and ask for support and question why they wanted to charge us such an excessive amount to keep their streets tidy. The Senior Administrative Officer clarified that Wealden DC did not charge Uckfield Town Council for any bin collections.

On a separate note, Councillor J. Beesley asked if local sports clubs and schools had been contacted (following up from the last meeting in January) to ask their members to be mindful and respectful of litter at Ridgewood MUGA and to either take their rubbish home or use the bins provided in the town. The Senior Administrative Officer said that the Marketing and Communications Officer had sent an e-bulletin out.

Members agreed that education was paramount in order to tackle the problem of litter not being put in the litter bins provided, and that we could not keep relying on members of Brighter Uckfield to be picking up litter after others.

EL64.04.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) note and approve the proposed amendments to the Town Council's Litter Policy – Policy no. 78, and;
- (ii) agree to the proposed amendments to the Litter Bin Scoring system, and;
- (iii) to proceed with installing three new litter bins at Steatfield Road, Ridgewood MUGA (Town Council land) and adjacent to Bell Lane Allotments (by Scarlett's Close).

6.2 **To consider additional street lighting repairs**

Members noted the report and were happy to go ahead with the proposals.

EL65.04.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

(i) agree to authorising the works proposed for 2022/23, whilst accepting the lack of lighting design and accepting responsibility for the risks associated with the authorisation of these works.

6.3 To note the minutes of the Strengthening Local Relationships Liaison Meeting of 22 February 2022

Members noted the report.

6.4 To update members on the feedback received from residents in Mount Pleasant re: streetlighting

Members noted the report and were happy to proceed on this basis.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Members noted the report.

7.2 To consider wild meadow planting over previously mowed area

Members noted the report and agreed with the proposals set out by the Ranger.

7.3 To consider signage for ducks crossing – Mallard Pond

Councillor D. Bennett had spoken with a local resident and started communications with ES Highways with regards to having a ducks crossing sign at Mallard Pond. He asked if we could clarify the situation with them first before doing anything.

Members supported this, however, they found out that there were local residents who lived opposite the pond feeding the ducks, which would indicate why the ducks might cross the road. Those residents would need to be discouraged from doing this.

There was a sign at the pond saying not to feed the ducks, but one member felt that this only encouraged people to feed the ducks elsewhere, encouraging the ducks to cross the road. It was suggested that this sign should be taken away and for people to be able to feed the ducks at the pond, and to educate people about what to feed them.

Dogs and foxes were also considered to be a serious threat, so a member suggested having a platform in the middle of the pond to make it safer for the new ducklings. This had been considered before and Thornes had previously said they might like to get involved so one member asked if we could contact them again.

Councillor B. Cox mentioned that there was also a local resident who lived near The Jays who would also like to put infrastructure on their land for ducks, and were willing to pay for and install it.

It was agreed that people needed to be aware of ducks crossing and to drive carefully in this area (most people did and there were speed bumps there to make sure people slowed down).

Installing a sign would be costly, at £460 per sign (as this was on ES highways land), and we would also need to pay for a licence if we wanted to put a sign on grass area and it couldn't be guaranteed that a sign would even be effective.

The Estates & Facilities Manager asked if we could be careful when considering suggestions in response to individual requests before raising at the next meeting. This was not planned in this year's budget and there were other priorities this year, such as street lighting repairs, which were costly. If members did agree to this proposal, this could be budgeted for next year.

After much discussion, members decided to remove the sign at the pond, and that councillors attempt to identify and contact the residents who were feeding the ducks across the road, asking them to desist.

EL66.04.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) not install 'Duck Crossing' signs at Mallards Pond since this had not been accounted for in this year's budget, and;
- (ii) other ideas were approved to prevent ducks from crossing the road: local residents who lived opposite to be asked not to continue feeding ducks, and the sign on the pond saying 'do not feed the ducks' should be removed.

- 7.4 To consider requesting that dogs be put on leads during bird nesting season in the Town Council's ancient woodlands, and West Park Local Nature Reserve
Two members agreed and supported this idea although they acknowledged this could upset a lot of residents.

Another member disagreed as irresponsible dog owners already failed to clear up their dog's mess, so it would be impossible to enforce.

More people owned dogs than ever before, following covid lockdowns, so one member suggested that if we were going to stop letting dogs off leads, we would have to provide an alternative place where those dogs could exercise.

Members were referred to links in the report about birds nesting and fouling in woodland areas and open spaces.

Alternative suggestions were Horsted Green (the SANGS) and Victoria Pleasure Ground which were not really suitable, as these areas were popular with children.

Councillor B. Cox thought that people would comply if asked to do this for a couple of months a year, to protect wildlife. We had put signs up warning dogwalkers about cattle and people put their dogs on leads then.

It was agreed that there were two separate issues, regarding dog owners and the bird nesting season. Regarding nesting birds, we had the signs already and we just needed to add 'during nesting season, when asked to, please put dogs on leads'.

With regards to the education of dog owners not picking up after their dogs, this was a different matter and people may still ignore the signage in place. However a campaign could be run via social media to encourage people to take better care of the environment they live in.

EL67.04.22 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree to the proposal for dogs to be requested to be placed on a lead during bird nesting season in Boothland Wood, Nightingale Wood and West Park Nature Reserve (wooded area).

- 7.5 To review the Woodland Trust's Lake Wood Management Plan for 2021-26

Members noted the report and agreed with the proposals set out.

8.0 SPORTS AND LEISURE

8.1 To note revised structure of Allotment fees and charges from 1 April 2023
Members noted the report.

8.2 To receive an update on the 2022 Allotment Competition
Members noted the report. Councillor K. Bedwell highlighted that both herself, a member of the Allotment Association and council officials had started carrying out checks on the allotments which had been productive so far.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

None received.

10.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

10.1 Active Uckfield
Nothing to report at this time.

10.2 Age Concern
Members noted the report.

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.

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.68.04.22 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 20:01pm