



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 7.00pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre**

**PRESENT:**

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

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor C. Macve  
Two 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.11.09.22** It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable Paul Fletcher, Chairman of Grasshoppers Football Club to speak in relation to item 8.1 on the agenda.

Uckfield Grasshoppers had made a request to Uckfield Town Council to change the football pitches to a new configuration at West Park. The Chairman made an announcement with their reasoning behind this request. Currently, the consequence of only having two pitches marked out left significant areas of the park that were not being utilised for the purpose of football. The club had also seen a huge rise in girls' participation in football over the last three to four years, especially with the introduction of the girls' football leagues throughout the county and countrywide. As such, Uckfield Grasshoppers had created its own girls only tournament.

The club had invested significantly in obtaining legal advice whilst seeking to take over the lease of West Park Pavilion and with this process being near complete, he stated that this would provide the Town Council with significant public savings year on year. He announced that the club would be responsible for paying all of the utility bills and any other associated costs would fall to Uckfield Grasshoppers, so with this major investment, there was now the aspiration for the football club to turn West Park into its headquarters for the club.

Furthermore, the pavilion offered the club the opportunity to provide tea, coffee, and food and the trophy cabinet to celebrate the club's history and ongoing successes. Other ideas would involve a widescreen tv to review video footage, as well a

secondhand swapshop. Central to all of this would be to change the pitch configuration so that the club would have the ability to play more matches and cater for the growing number of teams, and increase revenue streams with all that could be placed at the pavilion.

The Chairman added that with the age old problem with space for pitches and ever expanding Uckfield areas, this could be resolved with the space at West Park, but only if the Town Council provided enough pitches to allow more games. When the club encountered the adverse weather in the winter, pitches could be rested or rotated in use. A further pitch would also allow the mini section of the club to split the extra pitch into smaller ones, which in effect would provide the opportunity for five pitches to be configured, utilising the space accordingly.

To minimise any impact on local residents, the club had been incorporating a staggered kick-off process whereby matches kicked off at different times throughout the morning, over Saturdays and Sundays. This was to reduce traffic and cars being parked in the side roads and around the park, and also being mindful of litter being collected at the end of match days. The ideas for reconfiguration of the pitches had been planned to minimise the impact to any house with goals positioned at a very reasonable distance away to prevent any possible footballs being kicked out of the park and into neighbouring gardens. The club would also be happy to consider purchasing a temporary netting structure that could be put up and taken down to alleviate any potential issues, if this was considered necessary.

**EL.12.09.22** Members **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

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

Apologies were received prior to the meeting from Councillor James Edwards, Councillor Duncan Bennett and Councillor Diane Ward who were all unable to attend.

### **4.0. MINUTES**

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**EL.13.09.22** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 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 – there were no items to be removed.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

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

FC82.01.22 – Replacement Ground tools and equipment

This project had now been completed – no further action.

### **5.0. FINANCE**

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

5.2. To note the Income and Expenditure report up to 31 July 2022

Members noted the report.

### **6.0. ADMINISTRATION**

6.1. To note draft minutes from the Strengthening Local Relations meeting on 13 July 2022

Members noted the report.

6.2 Update on Allotment Competition 2022

The Chairman thanked the judges from Stavertons Nursery for their support and judging capacity. Members subsequently noted the report.

**7.0 ENVIRONMENT**

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

Members noted the report.

7.2 To consider HMLNR Management Plan

Councillor Karen Bedwell wished to thank the Ranger for his detailed report.

**EL.14.09.22** Members **RESOLVED** to agree to the five-year management plan submitted by the Ranger for Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve, which would run until 31 December 2027.

7.3 To note temporary bench removal – Hempstead Meadows (anti-social behaviour)

Following an enquiry from a local resident in June, regarding incidents of anti-social behaviour at Hempstead Meadows LNR, the closest bench to the Waitrose car park was temporarily removed, to prevent any further concerns during the summer months. The resident had also been asked to keep reporting any further incidents to Sussex Police so they could accurately carry out patrols in the area.

Members discussed the issue at some length, balancing the enjoyment of these open spaces for all users versus recorded incidents of ASB. Other areas of the town were referenced where issues had been experienced such as a bench which was located on the entrance to Mallard Drive.

There had been no feedback of further incidents at Hempstead Meadows LNR over the summer months, nor any anti-social behaviour near to the bench further along nearer to houses, although, this area was more sheltered by the trees so not in the open.

Members agreed that this should be a matter for Sussex Police to monitor, rather than to permanently remove a piece of street furniture such as a bench or litter bin, since issues such as those mentioned did tend to diminish once intercepted in the correct manner.

One member reiterated that the police should act if there was a pattern and a build up of incidents, so residents would then be encouraged to report any repeat incidents of anti-social behaviour.

The Town Clerk had a meeting with the local PCSO Officers on Friday and would request that this area be included in their patrols.

**EL.15.09.22** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) reinstate the bench within Hempstead Meadows Local Nature Reserve;
- (ii) for the Town Council to engage with the local PCSO in relation to any reported incidents of alcohol and drug abuse in this area, and for;
- (iii) local residents to be asked to report any ongoing concerns of anti-social behaviour to Sussex Police in order for them to monitor and implement any changes on their patrols.

7.4 To consider street lighting repairs

A report was presented to members which set out a number of street lights which required repair and/or replacement. Within this report members were also reminded

that there was still a need for street lighting designs moving forward to remove the risk of liability should an accident occur.

The Estates and Facilities Manager explained that East Sussex Highways were keen to pass the liability to the asset owner (in this case the parish/town council) so it was advisable to return to full Council with a more detailed report or presentation from East Sussex Highways for consideration.

For a full lighting design, East Sussex County Council would need to look at a whole road and check whether the current standards for lighting would be met for that particular stretch of road, which could result in the local council having to purchase more street lights in the future. This could cost around £500-£2,500 per column. In the current climate, the Estates and Facilities Manager recommended that it would be more affordable to repair the lights as they were. The Town Council would be liable too if it did nothing, or, took the street lights away, and it may not be a viable option to ask if East Sussex County Council could take ownership of all the street lights.

The Estates and Facilities Manager recommended one of two options. One being that the main roads should be carried out first, and then consult on the side roads, although one member suggested that the side roads may pose more of a risk, with parked cars and those areas being less lit than main roads. Alternatively, they could all be upgraded at once, although this would be costly. There were currently one hundred and ninety-one street lights, forty of which were still concrete, which all needed replacing.

The Estates and Facilities Manager also highlighted that all the CIL money from future developments was being swallowed up by street light repairs over the past two to three years, so this was not helping other places in the town. There were an additional list of four or five street lights that also needed repairing. Any lighting design could cost between £1-1,500k per road. The Town Council could be looking at around £14-15k for a close of eight houses, bearing in mind the budget was £11k per year, so the costs would be high. For Mount Pleasant alone, being a private road, a lighting design may recommend five to six lights be installed, which could be considered light pollution by some residents and permission crossing private land could pose issues. In that instance, it was recommended to run a consultation between ES Highways and those residents to discuss a suitable way forward.

Members agreed with the proposals in the report for the list of street lights needing repaired to be actioned,. One member was hesitant about taking on this risk before liaising with the Officer at East Sussex Highways and then taking this back to Full Council. However, the Estates and Facilities Manager recommended going ahead with this proposal, since this money was currently available and, although a contingency was in place, prices may rise. He also suggested those street lights would not be taken away under a new lighting design.

The Town Clerk added that it would be a good idea to get the street lights in the report repaired first rather than wait, as this was necessary during the winter months particularly as there was quite a wait on repairs at present.

(Cllr Angie Smith arrived for the meeting at 19:23hrs)

**EL.16.09.22** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) agree with proposals to carry out repairs on the street lights within the report, and;
- (ii) for the Town Council to get back in touch with East Sussex Highways to arrange for further details to be presented to Full Council for consideration on street lighting designs.

## 8.0 LEISURE

### 8.1 To consider West Park Pitch Reconfiguration

On the whole, members were in support of this idea if the increase in pitches would benefit more children playing football and keeping fit, and were especially supportive of the increase in girls football teams.

The only concern raised was over the impact on residents and mitigating the balls in the direction of houses nearest the football posts, since some residents had complained in the past about the noise during the Sussex Sixes Tournament, so teams just needed to be mindful of this. One member pointed out that there would always be something that someone would not be happy about, but felt that it was important to encourage sports in the town.

The club would purchase netting to put up and take down and monitor the situation and get bigger nets if needed. One member asked for the club to monitor the situation with a view to making sure the nets were fit for purpose.

The Estates and Facilities Manager said that the position of the pitches wererecommended bearing in mind that there was still a problem with drainage from the east side of the park. The pitches nearest this end would be better utilised once reconfigured.

The Chairman added that this would not be a financial strain to the Town Council, since the netting would be provided by the club and pitch fees were being reviewed this year. Also, with more players, this made perfect sense.

**EL.17.09.22** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree with proposals from Uckfield Grasshoppers Football Club to reconfigure the pitches at West Park (in line with the current FA guidelines), to include three pitches (rather than the current two).

### 8.2 To consider cricket net repairs

There were mixed viewpoints on whether to allow one club or groups the option of having exclusive use of the cricket nets, especially if the Town Council were to offer funding towards any repairs. On balance, this was regarded by most as a resource available to everyone and some members did say that they had seen other members of the public using the nets, including club members.

Another member proposed maybe providing the costs of these nets over a staggered period so that they could be maintained on a yearly basis, rather than reaching a point where we had to renew them again, which would be for all who use the nets and benefit those who might want to try out a different kind of sport.

The Town Clerk reminded members of the work of the Infrastructure Working Group and desire to improve sport and leisure facilities for the town. It was suggested that if a percentage of money could be contributed toward the nets, then the Town Council could look then work with the Sussex Cricket Foundation to review the current facilities and understand the programme of work and associated costs required to improve our facilities.

Members agreed on the whole that the nets should be for sharing rather than facility owned, as the Town Council was a service provider to local residents. Members also agreed that the money would be well spent to repair the nets, which was well overdue and we had a duty of care to make safe.

A proposal was made to authorise for repairs to be undertaken to the nets; accepting a contribution of up to fifty percent of the costs for these repairs by Anderida Cricket Club.

**EL.18.09.22** Members **RESOLVED** to make a proposal to Anderida Cricket Club to accept a contribution of up to fifty percent towards the repair costs for the cricket nets and ensure the repairs were undertaken

## **9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

9.1 Update from the Sports Facilities Working Group – Fees and charges  
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  
Members noted the report.

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 - there will be a poster coming out soon with a line-up of events.

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**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission had asked if the Town Council would like to put up a sign at Snatts Road Cemetery to let passers by know there were war graves situated there. The Signs Project commenced as part of the centenary of the First World War and it was hoped that they could erect signs at as many churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds as possible that contained war graves, and to increase awareness and remind the public that they need not travel abroad to find Commonwealth commemorations.

There were 23 graves, all in the old section of the cemetery on the south side, but not all in one particular area, for British, Canadian and Commonwealth Servicemen and women who died in the First and Second World wars. The graves could be found

across various sections of the cemetery, so it was suggested to have one sign on the stone wall as visitors entered the cemetery and two signs at the back of the cemetery on either side where most of the war graves were situated.

Councillor Macve said that he had visited lots of different churches during his time as a bell ringer and said that this was something that he felt passionate about and needed to be honoured so that those who sacrificed their lives for us would not be forgotten.

**EL.19.09.22** It was **RESOLVED** to authorise for an application to be made to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for the installation of signage at Snatts Road Cemetery.

The Chairman also announced to members who may not have known already, that the Estates and Facilities Manager, Mark Francis, was leaving Uckfield Town Council, for pastures new. Mark had worked for the Town Council for four years and had within that time managed to provide excellent advice and had always offered his full support and assistance to staff and councillors. The Chairman thanked Mark personally and asked members to join him in wishing Mark all the best in his new role.

## **12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**EL.20.09.22** 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 20:26pm