



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 13 February 2023 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre

PRESENT:

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

Cllr. A. Smith (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. D. Bennett
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public
Councillor Chris Macve

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Minutes taken by Holly Goring

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.

Councillor K. Bedwell declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7.2 as a result of her position as Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee, and the hall being located adjacent to the car park.

Councillor J. Beesley declared a personal interest in agenda item 7.2 in his position as Town Council representative for Ridgewood Village Hall Committee and attending their meetings.

The Town Clerk advised that Councillor K. Bedwell would not be able to speak or vote on the item, and Councillor Beesley could participate in discussions.

2.0. STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE CHAIRMAN'S DISCRETION

Councillor C. Macve wished to speak on section 10.0 of the agenda – reports from outside bodies, but as a Town Councillor, standing orders did not need to be suspended.

Councillor C. Macve suggested that 10.2 be removed from the list of outside body organisations as the local group of Age Concern now ceased to exist and they operated under a different banner. The meeting of the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest was due to take place three weeks prior to the E&L Committee meeting but was cancelled due to bad weather. Councillor C. Macve also wished to comment on agenda item 12.1 under confidential business on the marketing report but would wait until that section of the meeting.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies had been received in advance of the meeting but it was thought that Councillor H. Firth was currently unwell.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 3 January 2023

EL.31.02.23 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 3 January 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2. Action list

Members discussed items on the action list.

It was agreed to remove the actions on:

2017/18 - Harlands Farm Pond

EL09.06.22 – To consider removal of bin on Hunters Way

EL27.01.23 – To consider the purchase of a new mower/mower attachment

Councillor K. Bedwell suggested that the Grounds staff be notified that the use of the litter bins should be monitored at Ridgewood Recreation Ground, as one individual was seen placing up to 20 dog poo bin bags in one bin at the same time. Members subsequently noted the report.

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 provisional Income and Expenditure report for end December 2022

Members noted the report.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1. To note the draft minutes from the Strengthening Local Relationships (SLR) meeting held on 17 January 2023

Members were presented with a copy of the draft minutes from the SLR meeting with East Sussex Highways on 17 January 2023.

Members raised their concerns with the queries highlighted and the speed at which matters were being dealt with. They also raised their concerns with road maintenance and the quality of the works being carried out to fill potholes and rectify issues. The Town Clerk advised that similar concerns had been raised by a neighbouring parish and that a letter was due to be presented to Full Council on 6 March 2023 on this matter.

EL.32.02.23 Members noted the minutes and **RESOLVED** to request the Town Clerk to obtain a copy of the policy and/or procedures for quality control in relation to Highway pothole repairs and road maintenance. They were particularly interested in understanding the procedures for inspecting or signing off of the works undertaken by contractors and subcontractors.

6.2. To review the proposed amendments to the Allotment Agreement and Rules/Regulations

Members reviewed a copy of the Allotment Agreement that new tenants were required to sign, and a copy of the full regulations. These had been updated and would be sent to all allotment tenants at the end of March with the start of the new

contract (fees and charges). These documents included proposed amendments shown by tracked changes in red, for members to consider and discuss and one of the main additions were changes related to Data Protection (GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations).

One member noted that some of the allotment plots were not being tended as well as they should be. Members of the Allotment Working Group explained that there was a new process underway which involved Town Councillors visiting the allotment sites with the Senior Administrative Officer to undertake inspections, and these visits were set up twice a year. These site inspections had proved useful in 2022, and would continue this year. One member noted that the Spring visit in 2022, was slightly too early as a number of tenants had not yet turned their plot over for the growing season. A representative from the Allotment Association had also participated in some of the site visits. Councillor B. Cox further explained that each allotment site now had a site representative which was improving two-way communication between the Town Council and the sites.

A couple of points were raised for review within the regulations:

- one member referred to pesticides and thought that there was a section which requested that tenants did not use glyphosate. Glyphosate was known to be a particular environmentally damaging weedkiller. Councillor Smith was unable to see this referenced in para. 2.6 and requested this clause be added;
- one member was curious as to why the limit for hens was five, when most people who kept hens would have them in even numbers;
- the Town Clerk wished to rephrase the paragraph on bees, as it read in a way that suggested that the Town Council was not supportive of bee keeping, when in fact bees were being kept by the garages adjacent to the Hospital Approach road.

The Chair, Councillor S. Mayhew and Councillor K. Bedwell wished to thank the Senior Administrative Officer for her hard work to research numerous other allotment agreements and regulations, in addition to checking the requirements within the legislation to ensure our documentation remained up to date.

The documents would return to Environment & Leisure Committee on 20 March 2023 for final approval and adoption, so members had time to send any further thoughts or feedback to officers before then.

- 6.3 To review the proposed amendments to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations
Members reviewed a copy of the cemetery rules and regulations which had been updated to reflect GDPR and information governance procedures, but also incorporated proposed amendments via tracked changes.

The Senior Administrative Officer had changed some of the wording on the renewals to give more time. The Town Clerk mentioned that the working group had highlighted some specific matters in the meeting before Christmas so the clerk would check these had been incorporated and considered, before the rules and regulations returned to Environment & Leisure Committee on 20 March 2023, for approval and adoption.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

A correction was noted on paragraph 2, with regard to the cricket pitch audit being undertaken by the Sussex Cricket Foundation. This should have read 23 January 2023 not February.

One member noted that the bird ringing exercise should be publicised to ensure members of the public were aware of the operations in the nature reserves. Members noted the rest of the report.

7.2 To consider proposals for Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park works

Members had been presented with a report and site plan which set out layout and drainage proposals for the car park adjacent to the Village Hall from architects and drainage engineers. Although there were no associated costs identified at this stage, the Town Clerk was keen to obtain initial feedback from members on the design and their preference for materials used. It was due to be presented to both standing committees for comment (Environment & Leisure and General Purposes).

Members found it difficult to put forward feedback on the options as there was no detail available on the associated costs for each option. However the Town Clerk did explain that the costs of the project could be high, and it may be necessary to utilise Community Infrastructure Levy and developer contributions to pay for this project.

Members felt strongly that the project needed to be undertaken, and the car park resurfaced to ensure the safety of users of the car park. It was a very busy car park.

Members discussed the use of grasscrete elsewhere in town, but did recognise that it had to be laid well, otherwise it could cause further trip hazards.

One member felt that the engineer's recommendation – Option 1, would be preferred. A second member also felt that Option 1 was also preferred.

The priority was sorting the drainage out.

Members felt that the layout of the parking bays made the car park look slightly smaller so it was questioned whether there was an opportunity to add a couple of spaces in the middle. It was thought that perhaps the regulations set a size limit on the parking bays, which could result in a reduction in parking bays.

In summary, members felt they didn't have the specialist knowledge to know what would be best, so the engineer's expertise was important. They were also concerned that if you went for a cheaper option, you may have to return and redo the work a couple of years later. It was suggested that perhaps the engineers be invited in or to provide more detail, to help members with their considerations.

7.3 To provide an update on signage for the beacon at Victoria Pleasure Ground – marking the Queen's Jubilee

Members thought that it was fairly expensive, and no funding had been set aside in the 2023/24 budget for this project.

It was suggested that perhaps an alternative could be explored – a small shield that could be added down the pole of the beacon for each royal occasion. The Chair thought this had been previously suggested, and this might be a suitable option. It could perhaps be quoted for, for the Queen's Jubilee and King's Coronation, but not imminently, as this was not a current priority.

It was questioned whether the beacon should be upgraded to reflect the King, but members explained that the beacon was specifically installed to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the beacon was often used for other anniversaries, not just royal occasions. For example in 2024, the beacon was due to be lit for the D-Day commemoration.

EL.33.02.23 Members **RESOLVED** to get the Diamond Jubilee sign cleaned and for the idea of the shields to be explored and costs obtained for the Queen's Jubilee and the King's Coronation.

- 7.4 To consider an invitation to become part of an East Sussex Highways pilot to reduce grass verge cutting on rural verges in Uckfield Town
East Sussex Highways wrote to all parish and town councils, explaining that a number had participated in a pilot in 2021 and 2022 which sought to reduce the verge cutting of rural grass verges for environmental benefit. East Sussex Highways had received an increase in correspondence requesting this, and although they had run the trial in the previous two years, neither of those years were typical growing seasons.

At present there were two cuts per annum to rural verges which consisted of a 1metre wide swathe undertaken along the verge length with wider cuts made around junctions and areas of reduced visibility. The pilot/trial would involve only visibility cuts being made in May/June and a single 1metre swathe with visibility cuts in the autumn.

The Town Clerk had provided a weblink to the mapping system for members to view, but also summarised within the report that there were very few verges designated as rural in the Uckfield Town boundary. The ones in place tended to be located on the outskirts of the town boundary, such as Eastbourne Road, London Road, Snatts Road and Lewes Road.

Members were mixed in their views, with concerns relating to visibility. It was however recognised that this was a trial, and it was likely that the parish/town councils would be contacted each year as they were now for the urban verge cutting programme on what their preference would be for the next financial year.

- EL.34.02.23** With five votes in favour, one vote against, and one member abstaining it was **RESOLVED** to sign up and trial the early season reduction in rural verge grass cutting undertaken by East Sussex Highways.

8.0 LEISURE

- 8.1 To consider the celebration of King Charles III's Coronation at Victoria Pleasure Ground

The Chair, Councillor S. Mayhew advised that he was aware that there could be a visit to Uckfield by one of the Twin Towns on the same weekend as the King's Coronation. It was also acknowledged that the Rotary Club had offered their support. Brighter Uckfield had also expressed their interest in undertaking a project on the 'Big Help Out' day on the Monday.

Members were being asked to consider their ideas for the weekend, in terms of decoration, purchases, events and activities and possible ideas for the 'Big Help Out' on the Monday.

There were a variety of ideas, and with £2,000 set aside in the Town Council's budget towards the weekend, it was suggested that a working group meet as soon as possible as it was only 11 weeks away.

- EL.35.02.23** Members **RESOLVED** to expand the current events working group membership to also include Councillor A. Smith and Councillor B. Cox and for the Clerk to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

- 8.2 To consider a request to remove the activity panels at Ridgewood Recreation Ground Multi Use Games Area

A complaint had been received in relation to the noise stemming from the back panel on the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Ridgewood Recreation Ground. This panel was a cricket activity panel.

Further to officer's investigations, it was found that the MUGA had been

designed with a back panel, so any removal of the panel would result in gaps large enough to lose a ball through, it was also a specifically requested addition to the design of the MUGA, when Uckfield Town Council were liaising with the Play Area Company. Any changes would therefore result in changes needing to be made to the main frame of the MUGA and the addition of the panel was to support a variety of activities and sports within the area for local people, as the recreation ground itself had limited facilities.

Members noted the report and felt that no changes should be made.

- 8.3 To consider additional tourist signage on the access corridors into Uckfield
Members were given the opportunity to consider ideas for the addition of further brown signs on the access corridors into Uckfield. At present there was one large brown sign on the southbound side of the A22 By-pass which was getting a bit crumpled and out of date, in addition to a couple of specific signs relating to the hotels of East Sussex National and Little Horsted Place.

Facilities that the Town held in esteem, included a historic market town, with a theatre, cinema, local nature reserves, sports facilities and food outlets. There were currently no signs for Uckfield railway station, or Bridge Cottage. This could also be an opportunity for a businesses like Ashdown Radio to sponsor any board or signage on the by-pass.

It was also noted that members had previously sought to find a suitable place to install an information/events board similar to Crowborough. The Town Clerk would take this feedback forward.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Nothing to report.

10.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- 10.1 Active Uckfield
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.2 Age Concern
This outside body should be removed.
- 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 at this time.
- 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
Members noted the report.

11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS
None.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.36.02.23 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 20.55pm.