



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 20 March 2023 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Mayhew (Chair)
Cllr. J. Beesley
Cllr. B. Cox
Cllr. D. French

Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. D. Bennett
Cllr. J. Edwards
Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

One member of the public
Councillor Chris Macve

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
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 provided at this stage in the meeting.

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

EL.37.03.23 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders to enable one member of the public to speak followed by a Town Councillor, who was not a member of this committee.

The member of the public wished to speak in relation to item 8.2 in the minutes of the previous Committee meeting held on 13 February 2023:

At the previous Environment and Leisure Committee on 13 February, the resident advised that Councillors had said no to a perfectly polite and understandable request to substitute two small sections of boarding which, when hit by a ball or similar object, reverberated a loud noise which indeed was alien to the MUGA let alone the locality.

Some weeks ago, the resident had also reported to Uckfield Town Council that there was some very unsavoury graffiti on the blank side of the one of the boards, which had now been removed.

Noise generated by use of the MUGA which had been accepted by the person who raised the issue and indeed by those on Ridgewood Recreation Ground, allotments and residents in New Road. However, the resounding crash when these panels were hit was at a different level. The resident had attended the meeting on 13 February and was upset and somewhat shocked by the response of the committee. They and the person in question who raised this matter had been in Ridgewood for

many years (as had many residents and allotment holders) and long before the MUGA and other equipment were put in place. Councillors had not taken the trouble to speak with the person who wrote the letter or listen to the offending noise.

Councillor C. Macve wished to comment on agenda item 6.4 in relation to the renewal of the Allotment Rules and Regulations. He suggested that it would be prudent to include a phrase to state that only residents of Uckfield could apply to acquire an allotment. This matter would be discussed later on in the meeting.

EL.38.03.23 It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate standing orders.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received in advance of the meeting from Councillor A. Smith who would not be available to attend due to annual leave.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 13 February 2023

EL.39.03.23 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 13 February 2023 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2. Action list

Members agreed to remove the actions on:

EL.35.10.21 – To review fees and charges for Snatts Road Cemetery for 2022/23

EL.44.11.21 – To review fees and charges for our Sports facilities in 2022/23

EL.32.02.23 – To note the draft minutes from the Strengthening Local Relationships (SLR) meeting held on 17 January 2023

EL.34.02.23 – To consider an invitation to become part of an East Sussex Highways pilot to reduce grass verge cutting on rural verges in Uckfield Town

Members subsequently noted the report.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report and agreed to remove the following action on:

FC.82.01.22 – Tree for a tree planting programme

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

5.2. To note the provisional Income and Expenditure report ending 31 January 2023

Members noted the report.

5.3. To approve fees and charges for Snatts Road Cemetery in 2023-2024

One member was aware of the input by officers and members and recommended acceptance and approval of a 5% increase due to the rising costs of materials and resource.

EL.40.03.23 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree to a 5% increase to the fees and charges for Snatts Road Cemetery in 2023-2024.

5.4. To consider and approve fees and charges for the hire of Sports facilities in 2023-24

Cllr Duncan Bennett declared an interest in this item since AFC Uckfield Town Football club were a hirer of facilities at Victoria Pleasure Ground and he was a member of their committee.

The Chair pointed out that the Town Council were always wary when announcing a rise in fees and charges for its services to the public. However, the Town Council had been impacted by the ongoing financial crisis and increase in costs, to equipment repairs, materials, seed, machinery, and resource. It was recommended that an increase be applied of ten percent or more, if need be, due to the increased costs, the recent outlay for reconfiguring pitches at West Park and costs involved to maximise and maintain the use of sports facilities in the town.

Whilst reviewing other fees and charges in recent years, members agreed that due to the history of this and struggles to get to a point where we were working at a better rate, a ten percent increase would mean that we were not continuing to play catch up and leaving this to the next council.

It was also made clear this would still not cover the costs of pitch preparations (line marking, grass cutting, and aeration) nor pitch renovations each year. But, this would contribute towards the provision of these facilities for the benefit of the community.

The Town Clerk sought clarity on whether the 10% would also be applied to the hire of open spaces such as Luxford Field for events. Members agreed that the 10% should be applied across event and sport hire.

EL.41.03.23 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree to a standard increase of 10% to the fees and charges for the hire of sports pitches and open spaces for sports fixtures, training, and events in 2023-24.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1 To approve the Cemetery Rules and Regulations for Snatts Road Cemetery

Members reviewed the final draft of the cemetery rules and regulations. The Senior Administrative Officer had undertaken detailed research into comparative local authorities, advice from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and the latest legislation and guidance.

The Chair raised the matter of the parish boundary and priority to parishioners, which had been previously referenced by a Town Councillor who was not a member of the standing committee. Local authorities needed to provide a basic level of service to their local residents and the additional charges for individuals from outside of the local area ensured that a local authority still had appropriate capacity to provide the services required by their own residents. For example, a flat fee was chargeable for the purchase of the Exclusive Right of Burial (by a non-parishioner) in conjunction with a resident discount for the interment itself.

For further clarification, the rules would continue to include a reduction for the interment of an individual who had needed to move into care facilities outside of the area within a discretionary period.

EL.42.03.23 Members **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the renewed Cemetery Rules and Regulations for Snatts Road Cemetery.

6.2 To review the Town Council's Memorial Safety Policy

One member was pleased to note that the new War Grave Commission signs had been installed to the south side of Snatts Road Cemetery to convey the areas where war graves were located. The Town Council also kept a record of the names and grave numbers for anyone who wished to make an enquiry.

EL.43.03.23 Members subsequently **RESOLVED** to agree and accept the updated Memorial Safety Policy.

- 6.3 To approve the Allotment agreement for circulation to all holders for 1 April 2023
Members reviewed the final draft of the allotment agreement which had been reviewed to reflect the changes in the fees and charges from 1 April 2023.

EL.44.03.23 Members noted the suggested amendments and approved the Allotment agreement for circulation to all allotment holders for 1 April 2023.

- 6.4 To approve the Allotment Rules and Regulations for circulation to all holders for 1 April 2023
Councillor D. Bennett declared a personal interest in this agenda item, as an allotment holder.

The Senior Administrative Officer had circulated a copy of the final draft of the rules and regulations for the holding of allotments in Uckfield. This had been thoroughly reviewed to take account of regulations from similar authorities, and external advice and guidance.

One member was curious as to why the limit for having chickens was originally only five, when most people who kept hens would hold them in even numbers. He also raised the idea of omitting the amount of hens allowed altogether, since a standard size coop could be either six, eight or ten so this might prove slightly difficult. This was deemed to be a sensible option, as long as RSPCA guidelines were being followed (hens not exceeding coop capacity) and that tenants were not providing eggs for commercial distribution.

Members discussed giving priority to parishioners of Uckfield, particularly in a time of recent demand, and population growth. Members agreed to add a clause stating that priority would be given to parishioners, subject to the numbers on the waiting list at the time.

Also, in the current rules it stated that allotment tenants would need to relinquish their allotment once they moved out of the area, but this would be changed to be reviewed with the possibility of termination being an option.

EL.45.03.23 Members noted the report and discussions and **RESOLVED** to adopt the renewed and updated Allotment Rules and Regulations, subject to the above changes on keeping hens, and priority to parishioners.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

- 7.1 To note the current position of the Town Council's Estates
Members noted the report – no comments.

- 7.2 To undertake initial consideration of a land transfer request received for a small parcel of land in Olives Meadow
Members were presented with a written summary of the request which had been received, which the Town Clerk added to. Factors for consideration included future works and access routes which could incur longer term costs due to the flood plain and maintenance of the land. One member also noted that they believed that the land might also include a foul drain that could need replacing underneath the brook.

This route was a right of way, so concerns about the land being blocked off was not something to worry about.

Members felt that at this moment in time, it would not be beneficial for the Town Council to adopt this piece of land and with the timing of the request before the election, such a decision could not be taken. It was suggested that the matter be reviewed at a later date.

8.0 LEISURE

Nothing to report.

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 All Weather Pitch Operational Group

Nothing to report at this time.

10.3 Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Nothing to report at this time.

10.4 West Park LNR and Hempstead Meadows LNR – Supporters Group

Nothing to report at this time.

10.5 Luxford Centre Management Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

10.6 Uckfield and District Twinning Association

Nothing to report at this time.

10.7 Uckfield Festival Association

Nothing to report at this time.

10.8 Uckfield Parkrun Board

Nothing to report at this time.

10.9 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

10.10 Uckfield Youth Club Board

Nothing to report at this time.

10.11 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link

Members noted the report.

11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked everyone on the committee for their support and also wished all those standing at the next election (and not standing) the very best of luck. Cllr. James Edwards advised that he was planning to stand down this year and was thanked for all his support and for his long service and involvement in the work of the committee, over the past few years.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.46.03.23 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 19.51pm.