



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Monday 5 June 2023 at 7.00pm**  
**Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield**

**PRESENT:**

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

Cllr. A. Smith (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr. D. Bennett  
Cllr. V. Frost  
Cllr. B. Reed

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor Chris Macve  
Councillor Peter Selby

Holly Goring – Town Clerk  
Rachel Newton – Senior Administrative Officer  
Minutes taken by Rachel Newton

Before the meeting began, the Chairman announced the sad passing of the Chief Executive Officer at Ashdown Forest, James Adler, followed by a minutes silence.

Three new members were welcomed to the committee, Councillors Val Frost, Michael McClafferty and Bernadette Reed.

**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**

Standing orders did not need to be suspended to enable Councillor Peter Selby to speak for two minutes, although he was not a member of this committee.

Cllr. Selby wished to speak in relation to item 4.1 in the minutes of a previous Committee meeting held on 13 February 2023, and about the gate at Ridgewood Recreation Ground:

The minute of the item relating to the MUGA (Multi-use games area) at Ridgewood Recreation Ground did not clarify if any councillor had in fact spoken with the resident who originally raised the matter, nor indeed the extent of the noise generated by the two panels mentioned. As a new councillor, Cllr Selby had assumed that once the period of six months had passed after the previous councillors had made their decision (13 February 2023) the matter could be reconsidered. The earliest date being at the Environment and Leisure meeting on 29 August (Tuesday) by which time those concerned, especially the other ward councillors would have obtained more information.

Whilst dealing with Ridgewood Recreation Ground it was noticed this weekend that the latch to the pedestrian gate onto New Road had broken again from intense use. The outer support post (non-hinged) needed to be replaced with a much stronger and bigger unit similar to the post which was hinged (a new latch may not be an essential need).

The Ground staff were already aware that the latch had broken and it was in need of repair.

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

An apology was received in advance of the meeting from Councillor D. Ward.

### **4.0. MINUTES**

#### **4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 20 March 2023**

**EL.03.06.23** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 20 March 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.15.09.22 – Temporary bench removal - Hempstead Meadows

EL.35.02.23 – The Celebration for King Charles III's Coronation - Victoria Pleasure Ground

The Chairman wished to thank all those who were involved in the Coronation weekend activities and members subsequently noted the report.

#### **4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only**

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

FC.86.01.23 – ESCC Grass Verge Cutting Contribution

FC.86.01.23 – Expenditure for the King's Coronation

### **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 March 2023**

Members noted the report.

### **6.0. ADMINISTRATION**

#### **6.1 To appoint members to the Outside Body – Local Nature Reserve Supporters Group**

**EL.04.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor D. French and Councillor A. Smith as Town Council representatives of the Local Nature Reserve Supporters Group

#### **6.2 To confirm members for the working groups of Environment and Leisure Committee**

Councillor A. Smith was happy to remain on the Climate Emergency Steering Group and was also prepared to sit on a combined working group for allotments and fees and charges (for the provision of all our open spaces). Councillors S. Mayhew and K. Bedwell also volunteered to put themselves forward, since they had been involved on the joint working group committee last year.

**EL.05.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to confirm to continue with the existing councillors K. Bedwell, D. French, A. Smith for the Climate Change Steering Group.

**EL.06.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to confirm the members for the Allotment Working Group - K. Bedwell, S. Mayhew with some support from A. Smith and for the Allotment Working Group.

**EL.07.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillors K. Bedwell, S. Mayhew, M. McClafferty and A. Smith to the combined Fees and Charges working group.

## **7.0 ENVIRONMENT**

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

Councillor Reed asked about the location of our local green spaces, as she had previously worked on some of them. The Town Clerk announced that all councillors would be provided with a new information pack shortly, which would include an asset management plan and summary of our nature reserves and ancient woodlands, sports pitches and play areas.

Councillor Bennett thanked the Estates and Facilities Manager for all his hard work. He also heard about some theft of memorial displays at the cemetery and possible damage to headstones. The Senior Administrative Officer would enquire with the Head Groundsman to check this.

Members noted the report.

### **7.2 To consider a proposal from Fuse Energy**

Members had been asked if they wished to express an interest in this company and discuss potential sites for alternative technologies, although a solar powered electric vehicle station had been approved to the west of the A22 Uckfield bypass.

It was felt that some of the claims in this report did not appear to be substantiated at all and one member urged real caution of this kind of proposal coming out of the blue.

However, members agreed that it would be a great idea to supply cheaper electricity to the town and saving green energy should be encouraged where possible.

One member suggested utilising our large roof spaces, as this would be considered more brown field than green space. This was also something that East Sussex County Council was keen on providing in schools and colleges for their energy consumption.

Another proposal was maybe using local car parks (collaboration with Wealden District Council as they owned most of the car parks in Wealden District), as in Europe these were used to put solar in and get shade over the cars in the heat whilst solar was being generated.

A member on the Climate Emergency steering group had already proposed looking into 'Solar Together' which was a group buying scheme to enable residents to buy solar PV panels for their roof at a lower rate than if you buy them on your own.

On the flip side, one member highlighted the need to be wary of utilising any fields as this could turn into brown field site later on.

It was also agreed that any green open spaces owned by the town council were for recreational use only, and we needed more of this, and private land owners may be more willing to sell their land for this purpose.

Generating renewable energy from sources such as wind turbines was considered unfeasible, as the size of one of these alone would be surmountable and it would need to be positioned well away from any other building or structure. Solar farms were also considered to be suitable on an agricultural scale, on a farm for instance. A number of our large open spaces had designations such as the local nature reserves

as local wildlife sites and our woodlands being ancient woodlands. The biodiversity would need to be protected.

**EL.08.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to refrain from liaising with Fuse Energy but agreed to delegate the project to the Climate Emergency Steering Group to look into suitable options for the future supply of green energy.

- 7.3 To nominate two members to work with the Estates team, to review the open space grass cutting schedule and future support towards 'no mow May'  
The Chair asked for two councillors to work alongside the Head Groundsman and Estates team in relation to the 'no mow May' initiative, and to review the current grass cutting schedule to understand what areas could be left for pollination and what areas needed to be cut.

Not every resident would know about this initiative and so members agreed that it would be good to maybe show designated areas for this purpose and to relay details of this national campaign to our residents for the good of the environment.

Councillor Bennett volunteered to work with the grounds team. He believed that grass cutting was good for some open spaces, but not others.

Councillor Reed remarked on the use of the small yellow flower signs by East Sussex Highways that had helped to show residents where this initiative was being used in previous years. These had been removed but could be seen strategically placed along our local grass verges such as Southview Drive to allow more pollinators and insects to flourish.

The Town Clerk updated new members with details of our grass cutting schedules, with East Sussex County Council being responsible for the urban and rural grass verges in and around Uckfield, and the open spaces now being cut in-house from the end of March 2022, including the allotments, cemetery and sports pitches and all routes into reserves, for instance, by Calvert Close and Bridge Farm Wood.

There were also larger areas such as near Harlands Pond (Fin Field) which had seen mixed views from residents. Staff thought that this would have been a perfect place to leave to grow wild, but the office received a handful of complaints.

**EL.09.06.23** Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Bennett and Councillor Reed to work alongside the Estates team to review the open space grass cutting schedule and plan towards the national 'no mow May' initiative in 2024.

## **8.0 LEISURE**

- 8.1 To note an update on the Allotment Competition  
Members noted the 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  
Members noted the report – with thanks to Councillor Macve.

- 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  
Members noted the report – with thanks to Councillor Macve.
- 10.6 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee  
Members noted the report – with thanks to Councillor Macve.
- 10.7 Uckfield Youth Club Board  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.8 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link  
Nothing to report at this time.
- 10.9 Uckfield and District Twinning Association (AGM and events only)  
Nothing to report at this time.

#### **11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed new councillors to the committee and asked out of courtesy, for any members who wished to volunteer on working groups, such as allotment inspections, to let Rachel know if they could no longer attend or assist with those arrangements. He also reminded councillors that working groups needed to provide written updates to the committee in time for the meeting, and the same for those representing the outside bodies.

#### **12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**EL.10.06.23** 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 19.58pm.