



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

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Mayhew

Cllr. D. French

Cllr. Michael McClafferty

Cllr. K. Bedwell

Cllr. Val Frost

Cllr. Diane Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Peter Selby

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

None.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from Councillor A. Smith, Councillor D. Bennett and Councillor Bernadette Reed due to other commitments.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 9 October 2023

EL.31.11.23 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 9 October 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: 13.07.23 – To review Seasonal pitch hire terms and conditions 2023-24.

22.10.23 – To consider applying for funding through the Wealden Community Spaces Grants Programme.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report and ongoing actions.

It was agreed to remove item:

FC86.01.23 – Victoria Rainwater Tank Clean and Service.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

5.2. To note the Income & Expenditure report ending 30 September 2023

Members noted the report – no comments.

5.3. To re-consider budget priorities and initiatives for 2024-25

In relation to continued savings towards the upgrade of the Victoria Play area, Hempstead zip line and West Park Play Area, those figures would be determined once the details of the wider budget setting process were further underway.

It would require a large lump sum of money for these kind of upgrade works, around £40-50k and would depend largely on financial planning aspects and the priority of any of those works required. There would be some Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding available as well earmarked reserves for this, although there may be a slight shortage still.

The Estates and Facilities Manager had met with one company, HAGS UK which we had used before for an initial forecast of costs and that idea would provide a rough idea of how much to put aside and things to consider when going out to tender.

If there were any further ideas or issues, members were asked to contact the Senior Administrative Officer who would then pass them on to the working group.

EL32.11.23 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to support those suggestions for the draft budget 2024/25.

5.4. To confirm the fees and charges for sports facilities for 2024-25

Although members initially considered placing an increase on the fees and charges for sports facilities by 5% in 2024/25, there were various complexities in the charging of sports hire outlined in the report and the structure of the fees and charges would therefore need to be reviewed in further detail to reflect the current circumstances.

Members of the combined working group assigned to review the allotments and wider fees and charges included Councillors Mayhew, Bedwell, Smith, McClafferty and Councillor Selby also offered to assist.

A date would be set for the group to initially meet to discuss and consider a way forward for the provision of sports hire.

This may involve a further meeting with the Uckfield Grasshoppers and Groundstaff to look at the impact of usage on the pitches.

The Town Council's budget needed to be adopted by mid-January, but any new charges would not need to be agreed until April 2024, when the football and cricket seasons began.

EL33.11.23 Members **RESOLVED** to agree for the combined fees and charges working group to meet to consider a way forward and to reflect the current circumstances with regards to sports hire.

5.5. To confirm the fees and charges for allotments in 2024-25

A member of the allotment working group reminded members that although the admin fee was brand new as of 1 April 2023, this would not be increased this year.

Those with two or more adjacent plots had been given priority to request a larger plot so as not to have to pay two admin fees.

Members agreed that it would be prudent for tenants to settle into the changes established this year and that this could be reviewed more substantially next year.

Also, members were keen not to allow more than the proposed percentage increase of 1.5% next year.

The deposit would not be increased as this had been considered reasonable and refundable.

EL34.11.23 Members **RESOLVED** to increase the fees and charges for allotments by 1.5% in 2024/25. This would not include the deposit or the admin fee.

5.6 To confirm the fees and charges for Snatts Road Cemetery in 2024-25
At the previous meeting, members suggested that the Town Council continues with the same percentage increase unless the service was experiencing hardship.

EL35.11.23 Members **RESOLVED** to increase the fees and charges for Snatts Road Cemetery by 1.5% in 2024/25.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION
Nothing to report.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

One member, referenced the vandalism recently experienced and commented that people needed to be aware that the costs of rectifying any damage from vandalism would come out of everyone's council tax.

Members noted the report.

7.2 To consider pathway extension costs around the perimeter of Victoria Pavilion
Members noted the details of costs outlined in the report and were keen for the Grounds staff to carry out this work internally, since the works would be done at a higher standard if carried out locally and the staff would not want to keep coming back in order to fix anything.

As discussed previously, some money was available from earmarked reserves which could be used for this purpose.

EL.36.11.23 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to bring the path around the edge of the fencing up to the car park and for this work to be carried out in-house.

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To note a further update on the Our Parks Initiative

Members noted the report and enquired as to when the sessions would continue, as the attendance was very good so far so it would be good to keep this momentum going.

The Senior Administrative Officer advised that as soon as the Wellbeing Project Officer at Wealden District Council had any further details, they would let them know, although the Town Council was keen to find out sooner so that we could help promote this.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 To note and update from the Allotment Working Group

One member asked on behalf of a couple of local residents if the majority of tenants were happy with the explanation as to why the fees and charges had gone up.

At the Allotment Conference on 20th September, the allotment working group had ascertained that the majority were happy and understood the reasons behind the additional admin fee.

The fees had not been addressed properly over the last few years but the communication about this was now there and things were definitely improving.

There were still some communication issues to iron out although the local allotment holders had also helped to guide the council with local knowledge when it came to understanding the typical year of the allotment plots and to assist with the checks. With the help of the Allotment Association and allotment reps, this was something that had helped enormously.

Allotment tenants were asked to please speak to the Rachel if they had any further concerns at all.

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 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 Railway Line Parishes Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

10.7 Uckfield Youth Club Board

Nothing to report at this time.

10.8 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link

Members noted the report with thanks to Councillor A. Smith.

10.9 Uckfield and District Twinning Association (AGM and events only)

Nothing to report at this time.

11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the new Marketing and Community Engagement Officer to the organisation and wished to relay that they were doing a good job.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.37.11.23 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 19:37pm.