



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 22nd January 2024 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Mayhew	Cllr. A. Smith
Cllr. K. Bedwell	Cllr. D. Bennett
Cllr. D. French	Cllr. V. Frost
Cllr. M. McClafferty	Cllr. B. Reed
Cllr. D. Ward	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Peter Selby
Councillor Chris Macve
Councillor Ben Cox

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

Standing orders did not need to be suspended to enable Councillor Chris Macve and Councillor Ben Cox to speak for two minutes apart, although neither were members of this committee.

Councillor Macve identified a slight typographical error in the second paragraph of item 10.2 which was noted.

In relation to agenda item 7.5, Councillor Ben Cox pointed out that there had been a lot of antisocial behaviour and vandalism in and around the Community Fridge recently and that discussions were ongoing at local meetings held with Sussex Police. It was also noted that the police wanted to get across that Facebook was not the correct platform for local residents to raise any problems or reporting incidents.

Those discussions had also led to a recommendation to restrict the use of alcohol to within the area of Luxford Field, and this was something that could be imposed by a Public Space Protection Order.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All present.

4.0. MINUTES

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

EL.38.01.24 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 13 November 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 action on:

16.09.22 – To consider street lighting repairs.

All the street lamps on the list were raised for repair or replacement lamps.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report and ongoing actions.

It was agreed to remove items:

FC86.01.23 – Victoria Rainwater Tank Clean and Service.

FC86.01.23 – Wildflower areas.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

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

Members noted the report.

In relation to ash dieback, one member asked if the Forestry Commission had been approached to see if they would be able to subsidise this. The Town Clerk explained that members had previously set aside money for this as part of our woodland management plan, and that we were already working with the Forestry Commission who were helping us with any applications for High Tier Grant funding from Defra, although just to note this funding was minimal. There may be other grants available over the next year or so.

A question was raised in relation to cemetery land and whether we needed to accelerate our plans to increase capacity. With higher plot sales than interments booked more recently, members were informed that we had started to look into the process of consecration for a section of cemetery land already within the north west side of Snatts Road Cemetery. One member asked to take into account that ancient woodlands such as Paygate Wood (northern part of the cemetery) would need to have a buffer zone for the purpose of conservation.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1. To request any items for the next Strengthening Local Relations in February (date to be confirmed)

One member helpfully provided further information in relation to a water leak at Regency Close and Manor House Court.

Items raised included sinking in New Road, the gulleys outside Hartfields, dislodging of curb stones and paving slabs, parking issues and any matters arising from the last meeting.

The next meeting was provisionally booked to be held on 12th February 2024, pending confirmation by attendees.

EL.39.01.24 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to raise any further items other than those mentioned above for the next Strengthening Local Relations meeting by 31st January 2024

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Members noted that they had received a quotation for the replacement of the zip line with a viper swing. The quote provided showed that this equipment, to supply and install with surfacing, would cost around £18k. The Town Clerk explained that the zip line had either been vandalised, causing a lot of maintainance or had large sections of the mechanisms stolen, so this piece of equipment was not really condusive to staying there long term. Although slightly more expensive, it would be more cost effective in the long term as it was a more solid mechanism.

Councillor McClafferty, asked if a cost could be obtained for the replacement of the zip line as well.

The committee were grateful to the Grounds team since it was clear from the report that they were really proactive and reacted quickly to any issues that arose.

Replacement nets:

Although we did not have funds set aside specifically for this project, the Town Clerk advised that since the setting of the budget for 2024/25 she could review earmarked reserves and current expenditure to see whether funds were available. It desperately needed doing.

It was a real shame to keep seeing vandalism in the town. It would be good to ask those doing this to stop or clean the graffiti off themselves, rather than our Groundstaff who keep having to do this. This was also raised in the 'Soap Box' edition of 'The Voice' at the end of last year.

EL.40.01.24 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to a proposal to get a quotation for a like for like replacement of the zip wire to compare costs and consider which option would be better.

7.2 To provide an update on Grant Funding from Wealden Community Spaces Programme

Members noted the report.

7.3 To consider potential funding announced for Wealden orchards

Three areas were initially considered for potential funding should this opportunity arise, to include an area between Ridgewood MUGA and the allotments, behind the basketball court at Victoria and with a contribution towards an orchard already planned at West Park.

The area next to Ridgewood MUGA would show the allotment holders that we were trying to help them with the noise concerns.

The boundary of Luxford Field was also mentioned, although this area was considered unsafe for someone who maybe unsteady on their feet as the tree roots could lift the adjacent footpaths.

It was not thought that Hempstead Meadows, being a flood area would be suitable for fruit trees, planting native black poplar trees would be better, although the bottom area of Hempstead Playing Field was a possibility.

There was some concern raised that fruit trees would not be considered suitable for children with particular allergies, although one member was allergic to fruit and bees

but agreed with any proposal to plant fruit trees, as this was not a good enough reason.

EL.41.01.24 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to this funding opportunity, should it arise and to the four areas suggested; next to Ridgewood MUGA and Victoria basketball court, an orchard already planned at West Park and maybe the bottom of Hempstead Field.

7.4 To receive an update on street lighting repairs

Members noted the report. There was a six-month backlog although all the street lights within the report had been authorised for repairs or replacement lamps.

7.5 To consider proposals to improve safety at the lower end of Luxford Field

One member advised that at the latest Wealden District Association of Local Councils (WDALC) meeting last week, members had been informed that local meetings with the police were going to end, and that members wanted them to be reinstated.

For clarity, The Town Clerk pointed out that the six-monthly Focus Groups were going to continue which were arranged by the Police & Crime Commissioner's office. It was just the local Community Safety Action Group meetings that had come to an end with the Wealden Neighbourhood Policing Team. Those meetings had included local council representatives and the Chamber of Commerce, although they were often about more localised issues in surrounding areas, including issues with play area equipment and speeding on roads, despite the intention of the meetings being strategic and thematic.

The focus group meetings with Sussex Police had specific questions for all the police and crime commissioners there, to find out about current views on policing in Sussex and this was a platform where we could talk more widely about any more pressing issues with anti-social behaviour and problems with our assets in the town. Also, the Town Clerk made it clear that all issues in the surrounding areas would still be tackled, this was just going to be looked at differently.

Members raised their concerns with this change in engagement.

With the same reoccurring issues, a member was keen for the council to set up a town based working group to look at a strategy with the new police coming through, with an aim for local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce. This could include compiling a four-year plan together, that was multifaceted with other groups to focus on how to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Wildlife camera operations

Members asked to see if the police could offer to lend us a wildlife camera, temporarily. We could fund this ourselves otherwise, as they were not too expensive. This could be used in different areas too, as and when needed.

Metal Youth Shelter

Members were also keen to remove the metal youth shelter, as this did not look appealing nor serve the purpose intended. It might have been better to manage the location than to get rid of it, with improved lighting and camera coverage, although moving the bollard to another location would only mean going to a less visible corner.

This was an ongoing issue with anti-social behaviour and even though the town council often say how important it was to report anything to the police, this did not always happen.

Councillor Cox re-iterated that the police wanted to have a more strategic team put together, to work with us.

Councillor Ward requested for more information when those meetings were taking place, although respected some of the conversations would be confidential.

With regard to the security lighting on the Community Fridge, one member asked for bat friendly lighting.

EL.42.01.24 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to:

- (i) the lone or purchase of a wildlife camera;
- (ii) to remove the metal youth shelter, and;
- (iii) employ the electrician to explore costs for pillar lighting at the bottom of Luxford Field.

7.6 To consider future options for Rural Grass Cutting – Wild Life Corridors (ESCC)
Members approved option two being more environmentally friendly but asked not to do this during ‘No Mow May’.

Also, to ask for them to be mindful of entrances into town, to cut around the planters and not to leave grass behind either, as this could cause clogging of the gulleys and drainage issues.

Being against woodland with a bramble type habitat there would be dormice located here, so one member also asked for this to be made aware of.

EL.43.01.24 Members **RESOLVED** to accept option 2 for the reduced rural service with the added comments from councillors about the ‘No Mow May’ and dormouse locations highlighted.

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To note a further update on the Our Parks Initiative in 2024
Members noted the report.

8.2 To note an update from Urban Tennis Foundation
Members noted the report.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 To note an update from the Allotment Working Group
Members noted the report. One member pointed out that developers were being pushed for more allotment space which would have to be managed by the local council as a statutory duty.

The next joint allotment group meeting would be held on 26th February 2024 with the Allotment Association.

9.2 To note an update from the Sports Fees & Charges Working Group
Members noted the verbal update.

The Town Clerk announced that the last meeting was productive. The group set the scene, with quite a bit of work to do prior to the follow-up meeting.

The group looked at how the fees and charges were set up for pitch hire in other local towns, sometimes seasonal, match fixtures or by team. Research was also needed to provide a breakdown of our current income, as well as our expenditure on the weekly maintenance of our pitches.

An open survey of the clubs was also proposed in order to see what the clubs’ needs were now and in the future.

As Grasshoppers leased the West Park pavilion on a five-year basis, this would be explored further to accommodate them and to focus on separate costs for the pitches.

The group would continue to work on those items. The next meeting was due to be held on 1 February 2024.

[20:14 Councillor Bennett had made a declaration of interest at this point as he was a committee member of one of the local football clubs]

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.

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

Members noted the report.

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 Chairman wished everyone a happy new year and members were asked to consider an item provided by the Town Clerk:

In the act of fairness, with regard to nominations for Assets of Community Value within the Town, members at Full Council in December had suggested the Rugby Club be included in the next list of applications. It was therefore questioned whether the Uckfield AFC site (The Oaks) should be nominated as well.

EL.44.01.24 Members **RESOLVED** to request for the Town Clerk to make a nomination to Wealden District Council for the AFC Uckfield Town Football Club site (The Oaks) as an Asset of Community Value.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.45.01.24 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.
- 12.2 To provide an update on survey works at Snatts Road Cemetery
Members noted the report.
- 12.3 To consider a proposal by the Uckfield Grasshoppers Junior Football Club
Members noted the proposal, but did not wish to proceed at this time.

The meeting finished at 20:43pm.