



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 4th March 2024 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

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

Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. D. French
Cllr. M. McClafferty
Cllr. D. Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

An apology was received from the Chair, Cllr Mayhew due to a personal commitment.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 22 January 2024

EL.46.03.24 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 22 January 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2. Action list

Members noted the report - no items were removed.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report - no items were removed.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report.

One query was raised about a skip hire and mattress collection in January. It was believed that the skip was hired by the Grounds team but a mattress was dumped by a fly tipper into the skip prior to collection.

5.2 To note the Income & Expenditure report ending 31 December 2023

One member had asked if the woodland management plan and ash die back works were still underway in Boothland Wood and Nightingale Wood, and if this was something that was due to continue. The Town Clerk explained that the second year of the ash dieback works were undertaken in November 2023, in line with the Town Council's woodland management plan, which had been created with assistance from the Forestry Commission. There was one more year of the three year programme of works which would be carried out in winter 2024/25, and funding had been approved for this in the reallocation of reserves at Full Council on 15 January 2024. The Ranger would be starting to plant new trees in March/April 2024, in line with the re-stocking requirements.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1 To note the draft minutes of the Strengthening Local Relations (SLR) meeting held on 12 February 2024

This meeting was held every six months and provided a platform for any ongoing issues to be addressed with East Sussex Highways.

One item was flagged up in relation to the ongoing flooding issues, at the junction of London Road/ Snatts Road as well as Budletts Roundabout and Bird in Eye Hill. These areas had encountered ongoing ground/surface water issues over the years and it was thought that these issues were not only because of the overflowing gulleys but that the drainage systems needed looking at.

This item needed to be raised before the next SLR meeting on 15th July 2024, although some of these areas were already being looked into by East Sussex County Council under planning applications.

Another member expressed his concerns about the ongoing flooding issue at the bottom of the High Street during wet weather. This had also been raised whilst the carriageway reconstruction works were underway in 2016 and they felt strongly that this was not just about the tree pits and filtration of run off before reaching the River Uck, as the tree pits were not designed to collect water. The drainage system capacity was not adequate enough for the amount of water and this should have been increased at the time.

Another flooding issue was raised at Fernley Park, where it was heard that a SuD system was struggling. The Town Clerk advised that this matter should be reported to the management company for that estate.

The road works that had been completed at Southview Drive were well received.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

A member recognised that again, it was a shame to hear about more vandalism around the town, this time about a litter bin at the skate park. This had to be paid for by residents out of their local taxes.

A litter bin liner had to be restored from the Bell Lane allotment site, although it was not certain if this had been used to burn garden waste material. This was discovered after local dog walkers had been emptying their dog bags at the litter bin location, although without the liner this was not sufficient enough to hold rubbish or dog waste. This area had to be cleared and the liner put back.

- 7.2 To note an update for future options for rural grass cutting
Members noted the report and update from East Sussex Highways, although they were disappointed that the 'No Mow May' initiative was not being supported.

8.0 LEISURE

- 8.1 To consider the 'We Grow' Initiative – a Sussex based gardening co-operative
This scheme had been raised at a recent Uckfield Green Partnership meeting and by the Allotment Working Group who asked Officers and Grounds staff to consider if there were any suitable areas available.

There were a couple of possibilities, such as a proposed piece of scrubland on the left-hand side, at the top of Hospital Approach and possibly near The Dene, although this would need to be carefully considered.

There were some concerns such as how the produce would be divided up between volunteers and how those rules would tie in with the allotments Rules and Regulations, if the allotments had not been ruled out.

One member also reminded members to be mindful and considerate about not disturbing local habitats.

Some positive suggestions included:

To maybe consider offering a licence to grow, which would mean that the responsibilities would rest with them and for them to manage and cultivate the land themselves. Members were keen to visit Forest Row and look at how the initiative worked, which is where the project began.

There were already a couple of community gardens in Uckfield, so the community could look into having a community grow scheme like this, rather than a cooperative idea.

Tablehurst Farm cultivated its own organic food production and Wealden 3VA also had involvement with food partnerships, so it would be useful to find out how they operated.

Members could also raise this request at the Local Plans committee and with developers.

Lastly, if not our own land, we could maybe look into leasing agricultural land to develop, although the Town Council should prioritise its funds on its current priorities and service provision in the first instance.

EL47.03.24 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to:

- (i) Request officers to investigate whether there were sites owned by the Town Council which could be utilised as community gardens;
- (ii) Investigate whether a co-operative gardening approach would be feasible within the Town Council's Allotment Rules and Regulations;
- (iii) bring these findings to a future meeting for further consideration by members.

- 8.2 To consider initial quotations received for play area improvements
The Town Clerk presented this report to members by Powerpoint.

Town Council staff had started to seek quotations for the upgrade of Victoria Play Area and to replace the damaged zip-line at Hempstead Play Area.

This presentation focused on the replacement of the damaged zip-line at Hempstead Play Area. One company did suggest it was cheaper to purchase and maintain a vipor swing and they also saw less health and safety implications.

Members were shown two quotations for a replacement zip-line, to compare with the vipor swing. The quotations for supplying and installing a vipor swing fell in the region of £17k - £18k, compared with the zip-line at between £18-20k. There were five quotations with different surface options to compare, although only three would be required for comparison.

One member was reassured that we would also look into eco and specialist equipment too for the upgrade at Victoria Play Area.

Members were presented with the many reasons why officers would prefer to select a different piece of equipment from the zip line, including ground erosion, maintenance and inspection issues, concerns of theft and vandalism and usage issues. Also, the zip-line tended to attract older children naturally than younger ones and the vipor swing was also a more solid mechanism for this purpose.

EL48.03.24 Members **RESOLVED** to agree:

- (i) for Officers to proceed with seeking designs for the upgrade of Victoria Play Area, and;
- (ii) to seek a quotation at the same time for the installation of a piece of play area equipment to replace the zip-line at Hempstead Play Area (providing an alternative to a zip-line for all the reasons outlined).

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 To note an update from the Allotment Working Group and with proposed amendments to the Allotment Rules and Regulations

Members noted the report and accepted the minor amendments to the Allotment Rules and Regulations.

The next allotment group meeting would be held on 25th March 2024 with members of the Allotment Association and allotment reps, who had been invited to attend. If allotment tenants had any questions to ask they were advised to speak to their rep or contact Rachel at the council offices.

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

Members noted the report.

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
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 Vice Chair requested asked members who were due to attend the next Climate Emergency steering group meeting, to stay behind after the meeting briefly to arrange a date.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.49.03.24 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 and were very pleased with the layout and content given by the Marketing and Community Engagement Officer.

Our events were getting increasingly popular, so ideas were being explored if event holders could be flexible about seating, as this was about trying to find the right balance for our customers.

There had been some innovative ideas in relation to the blue plaque scheme that might be worth looking at. Initial conversations had taken place with Uckfield Heritage and once more information had been sought, a report would be presented to Environment & Leisure Committee in due course.

12.2 To received the results of survey works at Snatts Road Cemetery
Members noted the report with one committee member kindly offering to help with overlaying the mapping.

The meeting finished at 19:53pm.