



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. Angie Smith (Chair)	Cllr. Bernadette Reed (Vice Chair)
Cllr. Karen Bedwell	Cllr. Duncan Bennett
Cllr. Donna French	Cllr. Michael McClafferty
Cllr. Chris Macve	Cllr. Spike Mayhew

IN ATTENDANCE:

Three members of the public
Councillor Peter Selby
Tom Woollard - Ranger

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 CHAIR'S DISCRETION

Standing orders were suspended in order to enable two local residents who both lived in New Road, to speak in relation to item 7.3 on the agenda.

Resident 1 wished to address her concerns about dog fouling in this area. She had observed some dog walkers in the evenings on New Road who did not pick up dog faeces or were leaving dog poo bags on the pavement. She wanted to record her dissatisfaction about this kind of behaviour and on behalf of other residents who felt the same. Some dogs were not being kept on a lead and their owners were not paying attention to what their dogs were doing.

Resident 2 expressed her concerns that as these were terraced houses, if the gates were left open dog faeces was often found on front pathways, which was thoroughly unpleasant. She had contacted an officer at Wealden District Council who advised her that this matter would be referred to a Dog Warden, although she had not received any further feedback. She was informed that this happened more in winter months.

The resident asked if more visual signage could be used to raise awareness and to target dog walkers who also used the allotments, as this was unhealthy for growing food.

Cllr. P. Selby thanked the Chair for their support and to the residents for providing their concerns about the increased evidence of unattended dog excrement in town,

which he stressed was plaguing our town. It was evident that this was becoming a serious problem and one that could lead to dangerous consequences to health.

Members resolved to reinstate standing orders and this item was discussed in further detail at item 7.3.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 20 January 2025

An apology was given to Cllr. M. McClafferty and a minor amendment was made to the minutes from the meeting on 20 January, as he had in fact sent an apology prior to the meeting for not being able to attend due to feeling unwell.

EL.40.03.25 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 20 January 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2. Action list

Members considered the action list previously circulated and noted that all the items were either ongoing or were due to be considered at the meeting.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report and agreed to remove the following action on:
FC.91.01.24 – Tree for a tree planting programme. This project was at completion.

The Ranger stated that since he started his role in September 2023, for this period alone they had planted an estimated six hundred and fifty trees for the Tree for tree scheme, which was amazing.

4.4. Forward plan – for information only

Members noted the report.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report. The Ranger confirmed that there were five new lecterns and four interpretation boards installed at the local nature reserves.

5.2. To note the Income & Expenditure report ending 31 December 2024

The Chair asked to seek clarity on whether savings had been offset from one budget to another to help pay for new equipment and hire. This was double checked and found to be the case. Members noted the remaining items in the report.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1. To note the draft minutes from the Strengthening Local Relations (SLR) meeting held on 13 January 2025

Members noted the report and the Chair asked if members had any comments. Cllr. K. Bedwell was disappointed there had been no direct notification about a road closure on New Road recently and the entrance to Ridgewood Village Hall had been blocked off for almost two weeks. This kind of issue was raised at the meeting, with discussions on how to find more effective and consistent ways in which to communicate directly to the Town Council, and to find a way to access their services better without having to go through District Councillors. However, it was felt that nothing had changed in this regard and that our town was not a priority for them.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

The Chair had noticed the slide had been fenced off at Hempstead Recreation Ground, although this was only a temporary measure.

The Ranger was thanked for his enthusiasm on the successful bulb planting day. A stage one ecology survey was due for Boothland Wood and Hempstead Meadows LNR and a dormouse survey would be included in that. The bat survey would be more costly at this stage.

Councillors were impressed with the new vehicles and substantial discounts due to the delays.

7.2 To consider the consecration of a section of land at Snatts Road Cemetery to be named the new Y-section.

A query was raised in relation to the ecological aspects and root protection of trees following the mapping. This would be investigated further. The Ranger pointed out that the trees had been surveyed towards the north west with works for removal due to oak decline. The tree surveys were recorded for perusal.

Members asked to look into having both natural and consecrated land for burials and asked to consider how much space would be intended for non-consecrated burials and different faiths.

As the town was becoming more diverse it would also be useful to understand any alternative procedures of burials for different faiths and if we could accommodate this.

A proposal was also seconded for staff to approach the Head of Planning at Wealden District Council to request more cemetery space in the Local Plan and to make them aware of little cemetery land we had left compared with new developments coming into the town. Staff were also asked to actively talk to local residents about this for their views.

EL.41.03.25 Members **RESOLVED** to note the report before requesting, that officers:

- (i) look into those points raised before deciding on the consecration of the new Y-section, and bring these points to the next meeting, and;
- (ii) seek advice from the Town Clerk in relation to writing a letter to the Head of Planning with a request for additional cemetery land in line with the amount of housing opportunities coming our way.

7.3 To note a new litter campaign to address dog fouling in public spaces

This item was brought forward ahead of item 5.1, so that the residents did not have to sit through the whole meeting.

Lots of ideas were discussed with the aim of tackling dog fouling in our town and raising an awareness of this anti-social behaviour. Over the last few months, it was clear that local residents were becoming increasingly fed up of irresponsible dog owners.

Members reiterated that this issue was happening in our parks and pavements, including ancient woodlands such as Boothland Wood, which caused problems with birds nesting and contaminating the nutrients in the soil.

A concern was raised in relation to the growth of our town over the next decade, and that this would almost certainly necessitate the employment of Dog Wardens in the future.

On the Harlands Farm Estate, one councillor reported having to pick up discarded dog poo bags left on pavements and tree branches on a daily basis.

Staff working for the toddler group at Ridgewood Village Hall were having to carry out a complete check of the Ridgewood Recreation Ground before letting the children play outside.

This problem also posed a serious threat to public health as some diseases were transmitted through dog faeces, which was an issue for pregnant women, and the general public.

Further action to be taken:

The residents had been asked if they were able to provide any evidence from ring doorbells, although we would need to find out how that could be evidenced, and for any photographic evidence of dog faeces which we could use to display on social media.

Members requested:

(i) a poster campaign where roads and pavements were worst affected, and for staff to ensure that these were a substantial size and quite emphatic about the consequences of letting dogs foul on our pavements.

(ii) An advertising campaign on social media to educate people about the diseases that dog faeces carried.

(iii) To look into reinstating a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

(iv) Wealden DC had extended their Public Protection Spaces for Dog Fouling in 2023, so staff were asked to find out if there were any figures they could share in respect of any anyone receiving a fine. This may also provide some insight into the most popular dog walking areas in the town.

(v) Members were keen to find out exactly how to get this problem under control since our town was increasing and to ask about the role of the Dog Warden, and maybe inviting them to a council meeting to discuss this matter with them. This could include a clause in planning applications for developers to help with this.

(vi) The Ranger suggested looking into combination locks on all of the allotment access gates. This had been done before and the cost was minimal so may help in the short term to deter dog walkers onto the allotments.

The Ranger was looking at fencing in Boothland Wood due to anti-social social behaviour and to regenerate the area, which could also help prevent dog walkers.

In Spain, all dogs had to be registered with the council and any dog faeces left on pavements was a criminal offence and would be DNA tested.

Waste collection costs were under review.

The provision of Dog poo bag dispensers with Eco Green Communities was now in progress.

On a separate issue not relating to dog fouling, one member had noticed staff smoking outside a retail business at the top end of Belmont Lane and that a large amount of cigarette ends had accumulated on the ground outside the office building. This was adjacent to Holy Cross Church and was very unsightly, especially for people attending wedding ceremonies at the church. Staff were asked if they could

contact the business owner and to find out if they could install a cigarette box on the wall.

EL.42.03.25 Members **RESOLVED** to note the report and to investigate all those ideas raised for further investigation to address dog fouling in public spaces.

(the residents left the meeting at 19:33pm)

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To note an update on the 'Our Parks' Fitness sessions

The move to Ridgewood was noted to be a success and there were ten attendees at the sessions last week. Residents were encouraged to give this a try!

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 To note an update from the Climate Emergency Steering Group

Members noted the report with thanks to those who helped with the Green Shoots Upcycled Fashion Show and the bulb planting day at Harlands pond.

10.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

10.1 All Weather Pitch Operational Group

Nothing to report at this time.

10.2 Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Members noted the report and thanked Councillor B. Reed.

10.3 Local Nature Reserve Supporters Group

Nothing to report at this time.

10.4 Luxford Centre Management Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

10.5 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee

Nothing to report at this time.

10.6 Uckfield Youth Club Board

Nothing to report at this time.

10.7 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link

Nothing to report at this time.

10.8 Wealden Food Partnership Advisory Group

Nothing to report at this time.

11.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

EL.43.03.25 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to the revision of a minor tweak to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations, which would be shared with local Funeral Directors.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.44.03.25 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 provided some feedback on the recent ticketing system to look at.

The meeting finished at 20:12pm.