



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 7th July 2025 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. Angie Smith (Chair)
Cllr. Karen Bedwell
Cllr. Val Frost
Cllr. Chris Macve

Cllr. Bernadette Reed (Vice Chair)
Cllr. Donna French
Cllr. Michael McClafferty
Cllr. Spike Mayhew

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Peter Selby
One member of the public
Tom Woollard – Countryside Ranger
James Hollingdale – Estates and Facilities Manager

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

None received.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received in advance of the meeting from Councillor D. Bennett who was unable to attend due to personal reasons.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 27 May 2025

EL.13.07.25 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 27 May 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2. Action list

Members noted the report and asked for the following items to be removed from the action list:

EL06.05.25 – To consider the design of a new bus shelter to be installed on London Road.

The Town Clerk had been in contact with Vine Consulting Engineers. The initial siting of the bus shelter had been moved just south of the layby and gate, so this matter had already been addressed. The Town Clerk advised the consultants of the preferred bus shelter design, and support for a litter bin and information would be sent on the location of signage in due course.

EL08.05.25 – To consider a request from a local resident in relation to coppiced trees to rear of property.

The Tree Policy had been revised by the Ranger and submitted to this meeting for approval.

EL09.05.25 – To consider the feedback for the Ashdown Woodland Management Plan Consultation.

Members had supported the expertise of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest in managing the forest.

EL10.05.25 – To consider the feedback from service users for Victoria Play Area and initial designs.

The working group met on 16 June 2025, to undertake detailed scoring and analysis of the submissions and a report was submitted to this meeting to select the winning design.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

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

FC.90.01.25 – Football Pitch Manoeuvrable posts.

These were purchased in time for the new season in July/August 2025. The Estates & Facilities Manager was working on storage facilities with Uckfield Grasshoppers.

FC.90.01.25 – Full football pitch renovations.

These works had commenced on Monday 19 May 2025.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

A query was raised in relation to the seasonal pitch renovations as there was a marked difference in the approximate figures shown in the Project Monitoring report and Bills Paid, one at £29k and the latter £35k. This was due to the inclusion of VAT where applied.

The Estates and Facilities Manager confirmed that due to the weather, there were still some follow up works scheduled for completion. This included last minute additional drainage works from the pitch users.

Members subsequently noted the report.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1 To award the contract for the upgrade of Victoria Play Area and replacement of the zip line at Hempstead Recreation Ground.

On the advice of the Estates and Facilities Manager and further information being provided at the meeting, members were asked to select the winning design and to award the contract for the upgrade of Victoria Play Area, and replacement of the zip line at Hempstead Recreation Ground.

A further update was presented on the final two designs and along with additional modifications that had been discussed with both companies, which were HAGS and KOMPAN.

The budget had been increased with a request to include a pathway adjoining the car park to the first piece of equipment, the addition of an inclusive roundabout, mirrored detailing on the floor and the inclusion of a tunnel on both designs.

This was not just about the overall costs or completion of works involved, since both companies were comparable.

A question was raised about after care and post-maintenance rather than just the build itself, highlighting the need to ensure that there was a definitive system for quotes to repair.

The Grounds team had experienced some long delays when ordering replacement parts for some of the current play areas in the past, which had resulted in equipment being unusable and a health and safety issue. The company that was previously selected for these play areas did not always adhere to their warranty agreement either and it was felt that they had become complacent with their customer focus.

A refreshing conversation was held with KOMPAN as to what they wanted to provide for the council and they were very proactive on climate issues. They were also the most proactive of the two companies with new ideas and the difference in their suppliers interactions was evident as they had stock parts and ordered in a bulk. This impetus would mean fewer delays which was much better for the environment.

Members were impressed that their equipment was mostly inclusive too, such as not having to take a child out of a wheelchair to use the trampoline or roundabout.

The zip wire was going to be replaced with a much more affordable but equally attractive CocoWave Swing. This was a large rope swing and would provide the same fun although it was less likely to be vandalised.

It may also be worth looking to see if there were any funding options or contributions through Wealden District Council prior to agreeing the go ahead, since the town was expanding which may also help support Wealden.

EL.14.07.25 Members noted the report and voted unanimously to:

- (i) award the contract for the upgrade of Victoria Play Area and replacement of the zip line at Hempstead Recreation Ground to KOMPAN, and;
- (ii) agree with a request by the Chair for officers to advise HAGS, the unsuccessful contractor, that issues with maintenance in other play areas had been a key deciding factor in the Committee's decisions making.

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

EL.15.07.25 Members noted the report and confirmed the appointment of:

- (i) Councillors A. Smith, K. Bedwell and S. Mayhew as members of the Allotment Working Group, and;
- (ii) Councillors A. Smith, K. Bedwell, S. Mayhew and M. McClafferty as members of the Joint Sports Facilities and Cemetery Work Group, and;
- (iii) Councillors A. Smith, B. Reed, D. French, K. Bedwell and M. McClafferty as members of the Climate Emergency Steering Group.

6.3 To consider the revised Tree Policy no. 48 (with comments).

Members discussed the tree policy and made some additional suggestions:

Requests for tree works on Town Council land may be declined and are subject to approval first and the works are organised by the resident.

The works would be arranged through the resident making this request, although no works could begin without permission given in writing.

Any costs payable to the Town Council must be paid in advance of any approved tree works.

EL.16.07.25 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree and adopt the Tree Policy no 48 subject to the additional items raised.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

There was a consensus that something needed to be done about off-road bikes crossing through Boothland Wood. We also needed to be mindful of accessibility for disabled residents, e.g. those using mobility scooters.

One idea was to maybe use large tree logs or tree trunks to navigate people to a footpath instead. The Ranger agreed that the wood could stay for this purpose, although the long term goal was to apply for funding for more secure fencing, which would cost £12-15k. There may be funding available from the Forestry Commission.

Signage would also be considered with a suggestion made for 'no off-road biking'. The ancient woodlands were an irreplaceable habitat and whilst there was more awareness people were still not taking this seriously enough.

Councillors requested that local schools be advised to pause educational activities in our woodland in the short term, in the light of a recent incident where a child was killed by a falling branch.

Nightingale Wood was thought to be in need of attention due to bike tracks and lots of wooden logs and branches blocking the stream, and the pathways needing clearing. The Ranger confirmed that there had been more spent in this area however, having been surveyed three times but he would add this to his list. He added that this council were ahead of other local councils with tree surveying.

Members subsequently noted the report.

7.2 To receive an update on the provision of future burial space at Snatts Road Cemetery and memorial inspections.

Members noted the report with no comments prior to the arrangements for the consecration of land in the Y-section later this year.

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To consider installing a bench at the Ridgewood Recreation Ground Orchard

Councillor Reed was pleased that the bench could be installed within the Ridgewood orchard on a trial basis. If this caused any issues for local residents or anti-social behaviour, the bench would be removed.

EL.17.07.25 Members noted the report and agreed for this bench to be renovated and placed at the Ridgewood orchard, on a trial basis. This would be placed on the asset mapping software and be monitored as usual.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 To receive an update from the Allotment Working Group

Members noted the report and were very pleased to hear that the administration of the allotments was going well and that the waiting list had gone down by a third since last April.

Five new members had joined the Allotment Association with some new members, which was great news and some bright ideas were already coming forward for change, including the hut.

The Town Council were planning to have a 'Veg Swap Fest' in the coming weeks to help support the Allotment Association and a Scarecrow Competition townwide for the whole community, so there were lots to look forward to.

The Allotment Checks and Allotment Competition were also due this week.

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
Nothing to report at this time.
- 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

Members were made aware of a gate entrance that had been installed at the rear of a bungalow property onto Selby Meadow side, although access had not been granted for this.

Uckfield Town Council should have been contacted about this although members felt that this was something that needed further investigation in regards to gate access in other areas too, notices and restrictions and rights of way. This would be raised at a future meeting.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.18.07.25 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.

The meeting finished at 8:45pm