



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 13th October 2025 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. Angie Smith (Chair)
Cllr. Karen Bedwell
Cllr. Michael McClafferty
Cllr. Spike Mayhew

Cllr. Bernadette Reed
Cllr. Donna French
Cllr. Chris Macve

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Peter Selby
Two members of the public
Tom Woollard – Countryside 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.

A declaration of personal interest in relation to item 7.3 was made by Councillor C. Macve as he was a representative of the League of Friends for the Bird in Eye hospital, and would leave the room during those discussions.

2.0. STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE CHAIR'S DISCRETION

[Councillor C. Macve left the room at 19:05pm]

Members agreed to suspend standing orders to allow a local resident and allotment rep on the Framfield East allotment site, to speak in relation to agenda item 7.3:

"Myself and another allotment rep have been approached by several tenants over winter over the past couple of years, asking to create a safe and workable access point. This would be installed against the concrete post of image 3 [provided in the report].

The car park has twenty-four designated spaces across sixty metres and the distance between the existing access gate for vehicles and pedestrians can be viewed at image 1 [approximately 20 feet].

The main access point becomes very water logged and unsafe for walking to allotments. Several tenants including myself have slipped and fallen.

The proposed additional access point gate is beyond the last car park space (image 1), giving up to two metres from the kerb line with a knee high fence and four metres in length. The chain link existing boundary fence and post would be reinstalled (image 5).

This whole area of somewhat ‘unsightly’ appearance (image 2) would be cleared and removed from site and ongoing maintenance undertaken by allotment holders. Strict grounds would be established between the League of Friends of the hospital, Uckfield Town Council and allotment holders. For example, no parking permitted on the residential estate, locking the access gate as promoted by Uckfield Town Council on other allotment sites, and any other concerns to be noted and agreed.”

[Councillor C. Macve re-entered the room at 19:08pm]

Members also heard from another local resident in relation to item 8.1, who attended the ‘Our Parks’ sessions:

“I was initially advised of this [Our Parks initiative] when I started and have been attending for about three years. Wealden District Council receive similar advice of current sessions although there are more who turn up on the day. The feedback from attendees is excellent, who enjoy doing the exercise and building up a community spirit. The physical trainer has been there for some time and is very professional; encouraging what activities can be done safely with muscle, core strength and balance. Attendance is from a wide range of levels and age groups, with some retirees and younger mums, so this has potential to increase even further.”

The Chair thanked both residents for discussing these matters which would be considered later on under items 7.3 and 8.1, respectively. Members agreed to reinstate standing orders.

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 1 September 2025

EL.26.10.25 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 1 September 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 the following items to be removed from the action list:

EL28.10.23 – External contractors had completed the installation of a gate to restrict public access to the Grounds work area next to Victoria Pavilion. The yard would be closed for safety purposes, including a press release.

EL35.01.25 – The Fees and Charges Working Group reviewed income and expenditure for Snatts Road Cemetery at their meeting on 30 September, and confirmed that no substantial review was required. The Estates team met on site on 26 September, to discuss any health and safety concerns and future management of the whole area with a report submitted.

It was decided that item EL20.09.25 should remain on the action list whilst staff continued to look into more radical ideas to fix the Ridgewood Village Hall car park in the longer term.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report – no further updates.

- 4.4 Forward plan – for information only
Members noted the report.

5.0. FINANCE

- 5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report, with no comments made.

- 5.2 To note the income and expenditure report ending 30 June 2025

Members noted the report. The Chair announced that she was pleased again to note that the expenditure was reduced, and sales had risen since the previous update.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

- 6.1 To note the minutes of the Allotment Conference held on 10 September 2025

Members noted the report and thanked the Clerk for preparing this event for the allotment tenants and growing community.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Several members had attended the opening of the new play area at Victoria on 10 October, and remarked on how lovely it looked, including the new play equipment at Hempstead Recreation Ground.

The new seesaw at Victoria Play Area needed some minor attention, which was being referred back to the company to look into.

The Ranger managed to salvage an older piece of equipment, a pink elephant, which was thought to undoubtedly hold quite a few fond memories for many local residents over the years. Since this could not be a part of the play area itself for safety reasons, members decided that it should be auctioned off instead, to a charity of choice.

The absence of a chain link fence that used to exist between the football pitch and adjacent land owned by developers, was mentioned as a potential safety concern. The Town Clerk would approach the adjacent developer or landowner to arrange a meeting, to check their proposed next steps on the site as a whole, and to establish boundary lines, and any works currently being undertaken on the boundary.

Members were subsequently happy to note the report.

- 7.2 To receive an update on a management plan for Snatts Road Cemetery

The Town Council had received some positive comments in relation to the south side of the cemetery. This report stemmed from some negative feedback in relation to the north side of the cemetery. The Town Council was determined to move forward in response and to tidy up certain areas to enable the grounds team to mow the lawns more effectively, as they were contracted to do.

Overall, members regarded the cemetery as a lovely space to visit, and the grounds staff were recently praised for their work cutting the grass where they were able to, especially on the south side of the cemetery.

However, this task was becoming increasingly difficult in some areas on the north side of the cemetery, hampered by small memorials and trinkets made of materials that were either not permitted within the cemetery rules and regulations, or outside of the areas allowed.

It was important to remember that this was a sensitive area for loved ones to visit and pay their respects, and that some memorial items were not always placed on graves by those who signed up to the Deed contracts.

Members recognised that this may cause some initial disconcertment. It was therefore vital that any work around this be effectively communicated with the reasons behind the management plan.

Prior notification would need to be given to visitors to the cemetery and where contact couldn't be made with Deed owners, any items left on a plot would need to be carefully removed and stored for collection by the owner. The Grounds staff would be asked to act with upmost care.

Information could be placed on the Town Council website and new signage updated to highlight what was not permitted, ahead of this first move for cemetery improvements. If anyone wished to view a copy of the latest Cemetery Rules and Regulations, copies could be obtained via the Town Council offices.

An external contractor was also employed to collect some of the overgrown vegetation to the north west of the cemetery, as part of the tidy up.

Going forward, the Estates team decided that it would be beneficial to ensure at least one member of the grounds team be based on the north side of the cemetery once a week, to carry out various maintenance work, until further notice.

Other ideas included tidying up the memorial wall section and woodland area. Members felt that the idea of a pet cemetery, may invite some objection to sharing cemetery space with loved ones, so this would be need further considered and consulted upon.

EL.27.10.25 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to this management plan for Snatts Road Cemetery, as detailed above, ensuring any communications were dealt with tactfully and managed with care.

7.3 To consider an additional access point to allotments via an area of land owned by the League of Friends of the hospital
[Councillor C. Macve left the room at 7:50pm]

Further to hearing from the allotment rep on the Framfield East allotment site, the Chair asked members for their views, with mixed feelings.

The overall concern was offering a piece of land that could be taken away, as well as the costs of a solicitor for an easement and potential for liability on the Town Council under those terms and conditions. For example, if a wheelbarrow were to cause damage to a car.

The proposed site for the additional entrance was only a short distance away from the existing access gate, and there were concerns about cars parking in the layby on the Harlands development and hospital car park spaces, although tenants normally parked early enough for this not to raise any concerns.

An issue was raised about the existing entrance being in a relatively poor state of repair due to water ingress in winter months. This made it unsafe to walk upon. This would need to be addressed separately, as several people had apparently slipped and fallen on the existing pathway.

Members felt that repairs should be made to the existing entrance as this decision could not just be based on the convenience of tenants. Repairs needed to be made to the main gate entrance.

Members were undecided without knowing the costs involved, especially as this would all rely on Town Council funding.

EL.28.10.25 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree for staff to look into the costings involved in creating a new entrance onto the Framfield East allotments site.

[Councillor C. Macve returned to the room].

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To receive an update on the Our Parks initiative in 2025

The Chair thanked the attendee from 'Our Parks' again for providing a short talk on the benefits of these sessions for the community.

Wealden District Council were working in close partnership with 'Our Parks' to expand this model and make sure we could make all of our sessions sustainable, but also to make sure they were given funding options going forward.

This had previously been fully funded by the East Sussex Public Health (ESPH) 'Tackling Inequalities through Physical Activity' fund, although Wealden District Council had reacted quickly since this funding ended in September and took steps to continue to fund this project until the end of December.

In the meantime, Uckfield Town Council would continue to promote and encourage residents to take advantage of these free sessions via our posts on social media, posters and issuing leaflets and hope to see this grow even further.

The Wealden Wellbeing team were keen to see if they could encourage a 'Coach Parker' programme with a free, accredited qualification exercise certificate, enabling local volunteers to deliver outdoor group fitness sessions independently, whilst retaining the support of Our Parks.

For further information on the 'Coach Parker' programme and the Our Parks model please go to www.coachparker.org.uk or email info@ourparks.org.uk

Members noted subsequently noted the report.

8.2 To receive an initial update on an application to the Football Foundation for a new 3G Pitch in Uckfield

Members acknowledged the report and agreed that this was an excellent scheme for the community, as there was already one 3G next to Uckfield College that was oversubscribed.

A few issues were raised regarding some of the financial proposals and liability to the Town Council, which were mainly in relation to step eight of the proposal, regarding costs yet to be confirmed, and fees to be paid by the client.

It would be good to determine a bit more about those expectations, so the Town Clerk would look into that.

Another query raised was about the safeguarding of the hedgerow and whether or not this would require dormouse monitoring.

EL.29.10.25 Members were happy to note the progress with the application for a new 3G pitch in Uckfield, and;
(i) to provide the Town Clerk with authority to give permission for the Football Foundation to proceed past Step 4 (Stage 2);

- (ii) with the Town Council taking on liability for any client costs incurred in addition to the projected £30,245 for Step 5 and beyond, seek further information on those costings and queries raised, and;
- (iv) perhaps look to explore charitable funds to help with any additional costs.

- 8.3 To receive an update on the installation of new play area equipment
Uckfield Town Council were proud to record the achievement of the completion of this large-scale project which was already being utilised by many local school children.

Members noted the report and hoped that this would be enjoyed by many local residents for years to come.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

- 9.1 To receive a progress update from the Fees and Charges Working Group
Members noted the report. The Working Group were due to meet again before setting out their recommendations at the next meeting.

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
A late submission was provided by Councillor Reed regarding the latest Parish Liaison Meeting on 24 September, which provided team updates, forest operations and winter works being carried out. The West Park Local Nature Reserve had also been added to the Weald to Waves pledge, which was good to hear.
- 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
Members noted the report with thanks to Councillor C. Macve.
- 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

The Chair wished to give thanks to all the team on behalf of a local resident and ornithologist who was grateful for the bench the team put together, at Ridgewood orchard.

[Both local residents who attended to speak earlier left the meeting at 8:17pm]

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.30.10.25 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 8:24pm.