



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 24th November 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

Holly Goring – Town Clerk
Tom Woollard – Estates 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.

Two declarations of interest were declared:

Councillor K. Bedwell declared a prejudicial interest in relation to the Ridgewood Village Hall car park on the action list at item 4.2, and although there were no further updates the Chair suggested that she be asked to leave the room if anything did come up in relation to this item.

Councillor B. Reed in relation item 7.3 as she was previously a member of The Woodland Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust, but has been working on the local nature recovery strategies project with Sussex Wildlife Trust.

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

None.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 13 October 2025

EL.31.11.25 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 13 October 2025 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2. Action list

There were no items to remove, with just an update on **EL20.09.25** that sections (i) to (iii) had been completed. Members subsequently noted the report.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only
Members noted the report.

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 Chair raised one minor query in relation to a penny difference in the comments (the Hempstead CocoSwing) between the supplier invoice and Bankline. The Town Clerk confirmed that this had been identified and would be rectified as a credit in the next payment to the company.

5.2 To note the income and expenditure report ending 30 September 2025

There was an income line listed for repairs to Holy Cross Churchyard, although this did not have any allocation or money spent against it. The Town Clerk provided clarity in that the Town Council was responsible for the maintenance of the closed churchyard, holding an agreement that went back historically. The nominal code was kept within the report, in case further repairs were required. There was no budget set against this, however.

5.3 To consider budget priorities and initiatives for 2026-27

The Chair asked if any members had any additions other than those proposed in the report. Members provided a few more ideas for consideration, including:

- Adding to, or complementing the River Uck adaptation project and other aspects of the Hempstead Meadows Nature Reserve. There was a Himalayan Balsam programme already in place, which would largely fall into Hempstead Meadows.
- The footpath consultation and re-direction for Boothland Wood, which may incur additional costs.
- Some of our green spaces were under severe pressure with visitor impacts, including West Park nature reserve and development plans surrounding Bird in Eye North were of concern within the east of the town. This could require visitor management mitigation through community infrastructure levy funding.

The Estates Manager mentioned that the budget for consultation and habitat improvements would increase significantly this year, along with professional fees.

- To look into providing Christmas lighting on the trees in the High Street.
 - Along with the potential approval of the Bird in Eye north line planning application, it may also be prudent to put a contingency in place to look further into the idea of an extension to the riverside walk in the future. This would require exploring initial costs, such as legal fees and land registry searches, although this would not be achievable for the next financial year, it may be worth considering building up a sinking fund for this project if this went ahead.
- The idea of having a gate at Hempstead Meadow to deter fly tipping. The Estates Manager agreed that this was a good idea and was looking into a suitable replacement, as there was a gate there previously.

EL.32.11.25 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree to all those ideas for consideration mentioned above.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1 To review the fees and charges for Allotments in 2026-27

A member asked why the working group opted for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Price Index (RPI). The Chair of the Fees and Charges working group explained that by and large, the ONS regarded the CPI to be a fairer assessment of inflation over the RPI, and was actively working to remove the RPI, as this tended to overestimate inflation, so rather than putting prices up, this was the right approach.

EL.33.11.25 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to the proposed increase to the Allotment fees and charges in April 2027-28, of the rate of CPI at that point in time plus 1% and an admin fee of £16.

6.2 To review the fees and charges for Snatts Road Cemetery in 2026-27

EL.34.11.25 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to the proposed increase to the Cemetery fees and charges for April 2026 – March 2027, to be based on the rate of CPI at year end (March 2026) plus 1%. Figures would be rounded to the nearest £5.

6.3 To review the fees and charges for the provision of Sports Hire in 2026-27

EL.35.11.25 Members **RESOLVED** to unanimously agree to the proposed increase to the Sports Hire fees and charges for 2026-27, to include:

- (i) For Cricket seasonal hire: rate of CPI at year end plus 1%, and;
- (ii) For the hire of community space or off-pitch hire: rate of CPI at year end plus 1%, and;
- (iii) For Football seasonal hire – the stepped percentage increase as set out last year (25% compounded increase based on previous year's figures), and;
- (iv) To offer a licence agreement to Uckfield Grasshoppers Junior Football Club for the exclusive use of West Park pitches initially for one season (August 2026 to May 2027), with scope to extend for two thereafter.

The Chair also pointed out that local football clubs had fully understood the reasons behind the decision for the costings plan for football seasonal hire, and what was needed for the provision of football.

6.4 To review the 2026-27 proposal from East Sussex County Council on their Urban Grass Verge Cutting contract

The Chair asked if we were still able to continue to manage with the two cuts per year, as chosen last year. The Town Clerk confirmed that because we had a dry summer, the weather was on our side, although we tended to get the usual queries in relation to visibility at West Park on the junction with Bell Farm Road, or the The Drive which were the worst areas affected.

Regardless of the two cuts, East Sussex Highways were still required to ensure visibility splays at key junctions. We had received one complaint from a resident in Coopers Green, although this fell outside of our boundary, although when the Town Clerk went to have a look, it was not one of concern.

The Estates Manager agreed concurred that this was weather dependent and hard to predict, whilst this could affect the pressures on the grounds staff and their workload in the future.

Members still preferred to stick with the option of two basic cuts per year, with the aim of putting aside any savings for future needs.

One member asked on behalf of a local resident which areas we were responsible for in relation to the entrance to West Park. The Town Clerk pointed out that at the moment, we had no legal standing to undertake grass verge cuts at this junction, as well as for the safety of our grounds staff, and that this should be carried out by East

Sussex Highways and their appointed contractors. Also, this area was currently regarded as a rural verge. An enquiry had been submitted to designate this space correctly to urban, as with any verges owned by East Sussex Highways this would be their responsibility.

Members agreed that Option 1 did not cause any issues last year members proposed to carry on with this.

EL.36.11.25 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to Option 1 – two cuts over the course of a year to be carried out by ESCC at no cost to the Parish/Town Council. Urban grass will be managed for safety purposes only.

6.5 To request any items for the Strengthening Local Relationships meeting with East Sussex Highways in early January 2026

One member only recently noticed whilst driving into Queens Approach on Manor Park that the kerb stones were raised, and that this probably wasn't the only issues with kerb stones on this particular estate.

Also, the state of the pavements at the bottom of Lewes Road. It was felt that this required a proper management and a repair scheme, rather than being carried out by piecemeal.

The bollard and sign designed for the purpose of traffic calming, at the lower end of Lewes Road, was still considered to be dangerous for vehicles coming from both directions. Vehicles had to navigate when it was safe to manoeuvre around the bollard heading north into town, whilst traffic coming from around the other direction had no indication about this and did not slow down. Also, it was not clear for vehicles exiting the Ridgewood Place development and drivers ready to manoeuvre around the bollard on Lewes Road, who had the right of way.

Church Street could do with resurfacing. The area at the end of Regency Close was like a minefield, which was very uneven from Holy Cross back to Dawson Hart. Some resurfacing was also required at Budletts Roundabout and Blackdown roundabout with concern for motorbikes.

EL37.11.25 Members noted the report and agreed for any other ongoing items (received no later than the Christmas period) to be raised at the Strengthening Local Relationships meeting with East Sussex Highways on 15 January 2026.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Members noted the report – no comments made.

7.2 To consider suggestions from Uckfield Rotary Club for their 75th Anniversary

Members were grateful to the Rotary Club for approaching the Town Council with the offer to contribute to an item for the town. They had suggested perhaps the potential to upgrade or replace the bus shelter.

Other ideas raised, included:

- To replace one of the statues along Bell Farm Road.
- A statue within Elizabeth Gardens to keep the context of this area as a rotary funded place since they originally provided this to commemorate an anniversary celebration.
- A Town Noticeboard on the lamp post outside Hartfields, as this would be an ideal position for our advertising and information.

EL.38.11.25 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to all of the suggestions raised above and to offer those ideas to the Rotary Club.

7.3 To consider a response to the East Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation

Due thanks were given to Councillor Reed and the Town Clerk for their time and input into their preparation of a response. This was an impressive piece of work. This was a Sussex wide nature recovery programme and being delivered within four parts, with additional habitat maps provided.

The overall submission looked constructive except that quite a big gap analysis had been undertaken whilst looking at each of these documents to see how this related to Uckfield and the work that they were doing within the parishes and nature pledge. They also identified species not mentioned.

Members had been asked to view the draft response and approve its submission.

EL.39.11.25 Members noted the report and approved the draft response and submission to the East Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Consultation. This was submitted within the set time frame provided, by 26th November 2025.

8.0 LEISURE

Nothing to report.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Nothing to report.

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

[Councillor S. Mayhew left the room at 7:40pm prior to discussing the request below]

EL.40.11.25 Members noted the report with thanks for Councillor C. Macve and approved the purpose of the letter from Crowborough Town Council in Appendix A, and for the Town Clerk to prepare a similar draft letter to Southern Railway, on behalf of Uckfield Town Council.

[Cllr Mayhew re-entered the room at 7:46pm].

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 announced a couple of events coming up in 2026:
The Green shoots Fashion Show on 26 February 2026 with a shout out for helpers,
and, to invite stall holders for the Eco Expo event happening on 21 March 2026.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.40.11.25 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 were pleased to see an increase in event ticket sales.

12.2 To consider proposals for CCTV improvements
EL.41.11.25 Members noted the report and **RESOLVED to** agree to proceed with the proposals set out in the report.

The meeting finished at 7:52pm.