



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 2nd March 2026 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:

Councillor Peter Selby

Thomas 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.

A declaration of interest was made by Councillor B. Reed and Councillor C. Macve in relation to Item 6.2. Both councillors declared a prejudicial interest concerning White House Farm. The Chair confirmed that, should any discussion regarding this site arise during the meeting, they would be required to leave the room.

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

None received.

Councillor D. Bennett suggested increasing the Council's social media presence to promote Uckfield Town Council meetings and encourage greater resident attendance. While agendas were already published on social media and the Council's website, consideration could be given to issuing targeted invitations for specific agenda items and making greater use of community newsletters. Providing earlier notice might enable residents to engage in discussions before decisions were made; supporting the Council's interest in representing the views of the community.

3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received. The committee approved the absence of Councillor V. Frost on health grounds and extended their best wishes for her full and speedy recovery.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 19 January 2026

EL.47.03.26 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on 19 January 2026, be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2. Action list

Members noted the report and the following items to be removed:

EL27.10.25 – To receive an update on a management plan for Snatts Road Cemetery. In progress.

EL20.09.25 – To receive a progress update on water ingress into Ridgewood Village Hall. The Chair asked for this item to be amended to reflect the outstanding works not yet completed, rather than being removed.

Councillor B. Reed wished to add an item in relation to Boothland Wood. As this could not be added to the action list at this stage, it would be discussed under item 7.1.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report. One item would be removed:

FC.90.01.25 – Conservation and wildlife facilities. Wildlife appraisals had been commissioned, and the reports had been submitted to this meeting. No further action for this stage of the 2025/26.

4.4 Forward plan – for information only

Members noted the report.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report. It was also noted that some of the Town Crier's clothing would be replaced, including new trousers, braces, and a shirt, as he had not had an updated uniform since he commenced duties in 2018.

5.2 To note the income and expenditure report ending 31 December 2025

Members noted that the left-hand column of each heading was missing from the income and expenditure report. The Clerk would re-circulate a corrected version to enable full review and comment, if required.

6.0. ADMINISTRATION

6.1 To consider options for a replacement vehicle for the Vauxhall Movano van

Members were asked to consider quotations and options for replacing the existing flat-bed van used for refuse collection and green waste removal, with procurement proposed for 2026–27.

This van was the most frequently used of all vehicles. Although electric vehicles were considered, towing capacity, and operational demands made diesel the most suitable option.

The van would be serviced annually, extending warranty options up to ten years, with additional insurance cover available.

EL.48.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to unanimously agree to the procurement of a replacement flat-bed vehicle via hire purchase agreement, and the preference given to the Toyota Proace Diesel.

6.2 To review the relevant sections of the Draft Wealden Local Plan 2025-2042

The Chair wished to thank Councillor B. Reed for her considerable time and effort invested in preparing the document.

Councillor Reed thanked members of the Plans Committee for their work on preparing a response to the Local Plan Consultation.

Members discussed how this committee could support the Plans Committee and protect the Town Council's open spaces and nature reserves impacted by proposals within the Local Plan.

Based on one member's experience in opposing housing developments, it was noted that the process would be challenging, although members were determined to assist.

Members noted that observing the substation provided a clear indication of the scale of proposed housing and site connectivity.

It was further noted that Fletching Parish Council were preparing a response, and it was proposed that other local parish councils be invited to submit representations.

The Environmental Sustainability Grid had been updated by Councillor Reed to reflect all of the Committee's views.

The Chair noted that the land immediately behind the flats adjacent to Selby Meadows was included in the Local Plan, which could be disruptive, and queried whether the New Town Action Group were aware. This would be followed up via email.

EL.49.03.26 Members noted the report and agreed to create a formal response to the Local Plan and proposed that the feedback of Environment & Leisure Committee be fed through via the Plans Committee.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Members noted that the gaps in the entrance to the field adjacent to the tennis courts at Victoria Pleasure Ground had been filled and planted. The fencing had been repaired, with further planting still required.

Members noted that one of the gateways in Hughes Way had been damaged by a driver, and it was agreed that a letter would be sent to the homeowner to follow up.

Boothland Wood – impact of recent closure of the Public Right of Way across Ridgewood Farm:

Councillors noted health and safety concerns regarding uncontrolled foot traffic through Boothland Wood and the proposed diversion of the footpath in connection with nearby development works.

It was reported that no consultation had taken place with Uckfield Town Council.

The footpath, believed to be a public right of way, had been closed without formal diversion, potentially causing direct and indirect harm to the ancient woodland.

Initially, councillors discussed the possibility of a second consultation to identify an alternative access route for any future closures, allowing public engagement with Redrow and enabling councillors to consider suitable alternatives.

However, safety concerns were highlighted regarding site barriers, noting the risk to the public if these were not properly maintained.

It was proposed that areas of Boothland Wood should be fenced off entirely during soil removal works to prevent further damage, as public access might otherwise circumvent barriers.

This ancient woodland is council-owned land and is not intended for use as a pedestrian shortcut across the woodland areas or for dog walking.

Although fencing and repair works would be a significant outlay, councillors agreed this would be money well spent, given the increased risk to the woodland and public safety.

Temporary closure would also provide the woodland with a period of “breathing space” ahead of the development.

The Estates Manager would measure, cost, and survey the area intended to be blocked off and arrange a consultation with local developers to discuss this closure and diversion plans.

EL50.03.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to the following:

i) Temporarily fence to manage access to and out of Boothland Wood using appropriate fencing and signage, including provision for ongoing maintenance costs, to enable Redrow developers to undertake necessary works and soil removal;

ii) Liaise with East Sussex Rights of Way and seek their advice;

iii) Share key information with the local community via social media and in the Voice pages of *Uckfield Matters*;

iv) Approach Redrow developers through the Plans Committee and arrange a site meeting to discuss the matter and determine any necessary follow-up action;

v) Formally raise concerns with Wealden District Council regarding the failure to notify the Council of the closure of any rights of way affecting Council-owned property within this ancient woodland.

7.2 To note Preliminary Ecology Appraisals and Management Recommendations for Local Nature Reserves in Uckfield

Members noted the reports and were asked if they could provide any feedback to the Estates Manager within the next three weeks.

7.3 To receive an update on the consecration of the new Y-section and various improvements for Snatts Road Cemetery

Members noted the report and thanked the Clerk for her input.

Councillor D. French requested a spare bench that could be donated to Keld Garden on behalf of the New Town Action Group. A bench was currently available and would be offered for this purpose.

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To receive an update on the 3G Pitch application

Members noted the report.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Nothing to report, although Councillor D. French announced that she had attended a recent meeting with the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, although there were no specific updates.

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
Members noted the report and thanked 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 announced that the Eco Expo event was scheduled to take place on Saturday 21st March. The Town Clerk was in the process of contacting local green businesses to encourage participation. The Town Council will also extend an invitation to SLM Toyota to attend the event.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.51.03.26 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 8:25 pm.