



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Tuesday 26 May 2026 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. Bernadette Reed (Vice-Chair) Cllr. Karen Bedwell
Cllr. Kathy Butler Cllr. Donna French
Cllr. Mike McClafferty Cllr. Chris Macve

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Peter Selby

Thomas Woollard – Estates Manager
TJ – Countryside Ranger
Rachel Newton – Senior Administrative Officer
Minutes taken by Rachel Newton

Before the meeting began, the Vice-Chair, Councillor B. Reed, advised that she would chair the meeting due to the unforeseen absence of Councillor A. Smith, who was required to attend a work-related Board meeting.

The Vice-Chair also advised that the Town Clerk remained absent due to illness and, on behalf of members of the Environment and Leisure Committee, extended continued best wishes for her full recovery.

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. None were forthcoming.

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

A belated apology was received from the Chair, Councillor A. Smith, due to a work related board meeting. Councillor B. Reed chaired the meeting on her behalf. Apologies were also received before the meeting from Councillors S. Mayhew and D. Bennett due to personal commitments.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 13 April 2026

EL.03.05.26 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on 13 April 2026, be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2. Action list

Members noted the report. The Chair then raised concerns in relation to the proposed re-routing of the Public Right of Way from Ridgewood Farm into Boothland Wood under item 18.09.24, as part of the site development.

The Chair referred to the Ancient Woodland Standing Advice and noted, following a recent walk around the area, that the Public Right of Way had not been connected to the diversion at the Boothland Wood end.

The Chair also raised concerns regarding serious trip hazards and two large holes at the bottom of the Redrow development area, which required fencing off. Possible asbestos was also mentioned.

It was confirmed that all matters raised would be investigated.

EL21.09.25 – Update on the Uckfield Station Car Park and electric charging. This item was no longer being pursued and was removed.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only
Members noted the report with no items to be removed.

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

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

The Estates Manager reported that a new Ferris mower had been purchased. While a seasonal mower was generally hired, the purchase was considered beneficial in improving operational efficiency.

Members were informed that the Clerk had been asked to arrange a demonstration day to allow all Councillors to view and trial the mowers and related equipment.

The Estates Manager also reported positively on the use of the robot markers, which had been used during the Sussex Sixes event the previous year. Although the initial cost had been substantial, the equipment had proven to be productive and cost-effective over time.

Members noted the report.

6.0 ADMINISTRATION

6.1 To note the extension to the Wealden District Council Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) – Dog Fouling

Members considered the ongoing issue of dog fouling within certain areas of the town and the proposed extension of the Wealden District Council Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) relating to dog fouling.

It was noted that the current Order did not extend to woodland areas. Members expressed concern that there had been a perceived increase in dog fouling in certain locations, with limited evidence of active monitoring or enforcement. Instances were cited, including dog waste being marked but not subsequently removed, raising concerns about the effectiveness of current response arrangements.

A Member reported regularly encountering dog fouling left by dog walkers, particularly in areas surrounding the new housing development at Mallard Drive, and proposed that Wealden District Council be requested to increase their presence in affected areas or, at a minimum, engage in discussions regarding clearer information on the frequency and timing of dog warden patrols. This proposal was seconded.

It was further noted that previous feedback gathered at the “Weald on the Field” event last year had indicated minimal concern from attendees at that time, suggesting that earlier reporting may have underrepresented current issues.

The Estates Manager advised that a list of designated local dog walks, including mapped routes and inclusion of dog bin locations, could be developed for publication on the Council’s website. The Clerk supported this suggestion and added that it would complement future “Tourism” content being developed for the site.

A further proposal was made to engage with local schools to improve education around responsible dog ownership, particularly given population changes and new residents moving into the area. It was felt that greater awareness was needed, especially among children, to address gaps in understanding of the impacts of dog fouling on public health, the environment, and community spaces.

Councillor K. Bedwell, speaking as a dog walker, stated that it was regrettable that such issues persisted and emphasised the reputational damage caused to public spaces in Uckfield, including ancient woodland areas. It was noted that dog waste bags were available at Harlands Farm Recreation Ground, although tackling the issue required more than the provision of facilities and routine clean-up.

Members concluded that while the problem may be attributable to a small number of individuals, there was a need to raise the matter again with Wealden District Council, including a request that woodland areas be brought within the scope of the PSPO, and that enforcement presence and communication be strengthened.

It was further agreed to request that Wealden District Council attend and provide targeted leafleting to residents at the next “Weald on the Field” event in order to raise awareness of responsible dog ownership and reporting mechanisms.

EL.04.05.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to:

- (i) Request that Wealden DC extend the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to include woodland areas, and;
- (ii) Request that Wealden DC increase enforcement presence in affected areas, and;
- (iii) Seek clearer communication from Wealden DC regarding the frequency and timing of dog warden patrols, and;
- (iv) Invite Wealden DC to attend the next ‘Weald on the Field’ event on Saturday 8th August (10th Anniversary edition!) and provide targeted leafleting to promote responsible dog ownership and reporting mechanisms, and;
- (v) Request that staff look into the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and explore its potential relevance in addressing local concerns regarding dog fouling and community support.

6.2 To appoint members to Outside Bodies (Local Nature Reserve Supporter Group)

EL.05.05.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree for Councillors D. French and B. Reed to continue as the representatives (one and one substitute) for the Local Nature Reserve Supporters Group. Councillor K. Butler also supported this group.

6.3 To appoint members to the Conservators of Ashdown Forest and ‘Weald to Waves’ initiative

EL.06.05.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to agree to agree for Councillors D. French and B. Reed and to continue, and Councillor M. McClafferty as the representatives for link roles ‘Weald to Waves’ and Biodiversity.

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

EL.07.05.26 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.

6.5 To request any items for the Strengthening Local Relationships meeting with East Sussex Highways (date to be confirmed)

The Clerk provided an overview for a new councillor explaining the purpose of Strengthening Local Relations (SLR) meetings. Members were invited to submit items for inclusion at the forthcoming meeting with East Sussex Highways, provisionally scheduled for Monday 22nd June 2026.

The following items were proposed for discussion:

- Reported leaking drain on Lewes Road, immediately beyond the Post Office, requiring investigation and repair;
- Traffic congestion occurring where vehicles exit New Road onto Lewes Road, with concerns about safety and queuing;
- Disabled parking bay markings outside Superdrug, which members considered to be insufficiently clear and in need of remarking or enhancement to improve visibility and compliance;
- Concerns regarding the A22 between Blackdown Roundabout and the surrounding areas, including reports of inappropriate vehicular access into ancient woodland, requiring monitoring and enforcement where appropriate; and
- Condition of Budletts Roundabout, where the tarmac surface is reported to be fractured and deteriorating, posing a potential hazard to road users, particularly motorcyclists. A member also referenced a recent serious injury collision at Batts Bridge in highlighting wider safety concerns on similar road infrastructure.

It was also agreed that invitations should be extended to the new County Councillors, Councillor Peter Griffiths (Uckfield South) and Councillor Kelvin Williams (Uckfield North), to encourage their attendance at the meeting.

7.0 **ENVIRONMENT**

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

The Committee welcomed the new Ranger, who was reported to be settling into the role well. His current focus was on the control of Himalayan balsam and rhododendron/barberry growth at Hempstead Meadows. Members also noted positive comments from the Associate Lecturer at the University of Sussex, regarding the management of the nature reserves.

The Estates Manager provided an update on priority projects for the coming year, including park improvements, ASB issues in Nightingale Wood and West Park, the skate park, and table tennis facilities.

Members received an update on the proposed 3G pitch at Victoria Recreation Ground, with surveys due to take place the following week and planning consultancy commencing next month. Parking and surrounding infrastructure were discussed, with members advised that parking capacity formed part of the wider review. Councillors would have an opportunity to review proposals before submission to the Planning Committee. It was noted that the Football Foundation wished to progress funding arrangements by September.

Suggestions for the skate park included consulting local schools, creating separate areas for younger and older users, and incorporating a pump track and temporary bike track. Members also suggested consulting directly with young people on desired facilities.

The Estates Manager expressed interest in revisiting proposals for a River Walk. Members discussed a historic route identified on a 1888 map linking Hempstead Lane and the old railway line, although concerns remained regarding land ownership, liability, and river levels. It was agreed that Councillors B. Reed, A. Smith, K. Bedwell, C. Macve and D. French would undertake a site visit with the Estates Manager.

Bracken control at West Park Recreation Ground remained ongoing, and the Estates Manager agreed to investigate suitable seed mixes for the area. Members discussed encouraging native species and supporting “Back from the Brink” habitats where possible.

Members noted the success of the community orchard at West Park and encouraged residents to make use of the fruit produced.

At Snatts Road Cemetery, multiple silver birch trees had been removed due to Green Elfcup Fungus. One member also requested care when coppicing in Paygate Wood due to the presence of hibernating dormice.

The Estates Manager reported that play area inspections had identified only four major repairs out of 469 pieces of equipment from the last quarterly inspection. Two bins also required lock adjustments.

Members were advised that an incorrect vehicle specification had previously been supplied and a replacement was being sought. A new tractor and mower had since been received, resulting in improved grass cutting standards.

Councillor K. Bedwell thanked the Estates Team for their continued hard work and high standards.

Finally, a member requested that Oakwood Drive Park be added to the marketing map on the Council website and reviewed in due course.

7.2 To consider Uckfield Bonfire and Carnival Society 200th Anniversary Commemoration Proposal for Elizabeth Gardens

Members welcomed the proposal and recognised the significant contribution the Uckfield Bonfire and Carnival Society had made to the town over its 200-year history.

Whilst Members acknowledged that Elizabeth Gardens was an appropriate location to consider, given its long-standing association with the Society’s annual celebrations and assembly point, several members felt that a commemorative bench alone may not fully reflect the scale and importance of the anniversary.

Suggestions raised during discussion included exploring whether the commemoration could form part of a larger community legacy project, such as contributing towards wider town initiatives and community recreation. Ideas for thought included the proposed skate park, beacon lighting, future improvements linked to the River Walk extension, outdoor chess, draughts and backgammon tables, and possibly table tennis facilities at Victoria Pleasure Ground.

Members agreed that there was merit in encouraging the Society to think more broadly and ambitiously about how the anniversary could be commemorated, whilst still retaining a connection to Elizabeth Gardens, if appropriate.

It was noted that the anniversary will not take place until 2027, allowing approximately eighteen months for further consideration, development of ideas, and engagement with the Town Council to ensure that any proposal is meaningful, sustainable, and reflective of the Society's importance to the town.

Members therefore agreed that officers should invite the Uckfield Bonfire and Carnival Society to develop and submit more detailed proposals for consideration at a future meeting. Members also indicated that they would be happy to meet with representatives of the Society to discuss ideas and potential options further.

EL.08.05.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to:

- (i) note and welcome the Uckfield Bonfire and Carnival Society's 200th Anniversary Commemoration proposal and acknowledge the Society's significant contribution to the town over its 200-year history, and;
- (ii) invite the Uckfield Bonfire and Carnival Society to further develop and submit more detailed proposals for consideration at a future meeting, with members welcoming the opportunity to meet collaboratively with representatives of the Society to support the development of a meaningful and lasting commemoration.

7.3 To review the impact of illegal Off-Road motorised vehicle activity and anti-social behaviour in our Local Nature Reserves and ancient woodlands

Members discussed ongoing anti-social behaviour involving off-road motorised vehicles, fires, informal bike trails, and damage within Budletts Common, Hempstead Meadows and Nightingale Wood.

Councillor J. Love reported recording an incident of illegal off-road vehicle activity, which had been shared with Sussex Police. Members noted that an abandoned motorbike had recently been recovered from Hempstead Meadows and discussed mixed public reaction on social media regarding recreational provision for young people.

Concern was raised regarding environmental damage and disturbance within Nightingale Wood, including fires, digging, damage to vegetation, and inappropriate use of the woodland area.

Members agreed on the importance of improving the protection and management of local woodlands and acknowledged the Town Council's role in supporting conservation efforts. Suggestions included engagement with local schools, a potential consultation with young people, investigation into a Neighbourhood Watch-style scheme for woodland areas, and consideration of measures to restrict access to Nightingale Wood.

It was proposed that members undertake a site visit to Nightingale Wood to assess the damage and inform the development of a future Management Plan.

The Chair requested that Ancient Woodland Standing Advice be included within a future committee report to highlight the importance of protecting these sensitive environments.

EL.09.05.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree to:

- (i) undertake a site visit to Nightingale Wood to assess the reported damage and to create a future Management Plan for this area, and;

(ii) request the Clerk investigate the potential establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme style scheme covering local woodland areas.

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

Members noted the report, with thanks to Councillor B. Reed who wished to add that this group had met for a meeting on the Wednesday beforehand, although it was too late to submit a report.

It was noted that £2,500 has been awarded for the installation of wildlife boxes under the "Wilder Uckfield" initiative. The Estates Manager advised that remotely operated wildlife cameras could be used in place of live monitoring, and confirmed that installation would require careful mapping and ongoing monitoring.

Members discussed the need to manage spending pace to allow budgets to be brought up to date, and acknowledged potential wildlife boxes from the Men's Shed via Wealden District Council funding. Concerns were raised regarding the scale of installations, with agreement that numbers should be reviewed to ensure they are managed to resources.

Alternative approaches, including selling the bird boxes or using them as raffle prizes at the Weald on Field event, were suggested.

EL.10.05.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree for the Chair and Estates Manager to meet with the Men's Shed to develop an action plan, aimed at minimising disruption to routine operations, with winter identified as a suitable period for installation due to reduced maintenance activity.

10.3 Local Nature Reserve Supporters Group

Nothing to report at this time.

10.4 Luxford Centre Management Committee

Members noted the report, with thanks to Councillor C. Macve.

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 agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow Councillor P. Selby to speak in relation to parking issues in Mill Drove.

Councillor Peter Selby raised concerns about long-term parking in Mill Drove, noting that several vehicles, including three opposite his residence, appeared to be parked continuously despite double yellow line restrictions. He expressed concern that this could present a safety issue.

Members noted the concerns with parking enforcement in Uckfield and that Police had indicated it was not a priority. Further concerns were raised about misuse of disabled bays and the Church Street layby, affecting resident access.

Discussion took place on potential future changes under a unitary authority and the possibility of paid parking in the town, although Members expressed support for maintaining free parking to protect potential impacts on local businesses.

EL.11.05.26 It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to the local MP seeking clarification on future enforcement responsibility and referencing recent government announcements regarding local powers to keep pavements clear.

Members agreed to re-instate Standing Orders.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.12.05.26 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 and updates and giving thanks to the Marketing and Community Engagement Officer.

The meeting finished at 8:47 pm.