



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on
Monday 12 October 2026 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield

PRESENT:

Cllr. Angie Smith (Chair)
Cllr. Karen Bedwell
Cllr. Mike McClafferty

Cllr. Bernadette Reed (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. Kathy Butler
Cllr. Chris Macve

IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor Peter Griffiths
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.

Cllr. Reed declared an interest in agenda item 8.4 (Victoria Tennis Courts), explaining that she had previously used the services of the individual involved and that her children had attended tennis coaching. Having clarified that she was not a friend of the individual and had used the services in the past, the Chair confirmed that she could participate.

Cllr. Bedwell declared an interest in agenda item 6.2 (priority setting) in case Ridgewood Village Hall/car park was discussed. The Chair confirmed that she could remain, as Ridgewood Village Hall and the car park were not matters for the Environment and Leisure Committee.

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

Apologies were received from Cllrs. D. French and S. Mayhew, who were on annual leave, and Cllr. D. Bennett, who was absent due to sickness.

4.0. MINUTES

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 1 September 2026

EL.29.10.26 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on 1 September 2026, be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4.2. Action list

Members agreed that the following matters could be removed from the list:

EL.20.09.26 – Water ingress at Ridgewood Village Hall: progress was being made and a report was due to be submitted to the next General Purposes Committee meeting.

EL.22.09.26 and 23.09.26 – Snatts Road Cemetery Y section and policy: members of the Cemetery Working Group were due to meet on 29 October to discuss outstanding actions and policy details. A ground-penetrating radar survey was planned for the next financial year, with provision to be considered in the budget.

EL.26.09.26 – Tree works at 7 Streatfield Road: A follow-up meeting with the resident had taken place. The matter was handled in accordance with the Tree Policy, and the resident was happy with the communication received.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the list. No items were identified for removal.

4.4. Forward Plan – for information only

Members noted the Forward Plan.

5.0. FINANCE

5.1. To note bills paid

Members noted the report. No queries were raised.

5.2. To note the income and expenditure report to 31 August 2026

Members noted the report. In response to a query about lower-than-budgeted income from events, officers agreed to investigate and report back. The Chair also noted that lower-than-anticipated interments had reduced income within the cemetery, while recognising that this was difficult to predict.

The reduction in events income has since been clarified, there were very few Civic Centre arranged events within the Weald Hall in the first half of the year. The profiling for the nominal code has since been updated to reflect this better.

Parking at Victoria by Flexibus minibuses generated income of £100 per minibus per month.

Members acknowledged the work undertaken by the Estates Manager to secure grant funding, including substantial receipts from football-related funding bodies.

6.0 ADMINISTRATION

6.1. To note the minutes from the Allotment Conference held on 10 September 2026

Members noted the report and photographs. They praised the event, the community participation and the work of the officers and councillors involved, including the contribution of the guest speaker from Glyndebourne. It was noted that the Allotment Association hoped to build on the event in future years.

6.2. Initial consideration of priorities for budget setting in 2027-28

Members considered the proposed list of potential budget priorities. Discussion included a programme of activities during school holidays, particularly for young people over twelve years old; cemetery improvements; signage and access at nature reserves; a possible river walk and bridge links; mapping of twittens and public footpaths; and other active-travel and infrastructure aspirations.

Members recognised the importance of recording longer-term aspirations but noted that substantial officer time would be required to develop and cost major projects. It was suggested that consultant support may be needed and that some proposals might be more appropriately considered by Full Council or through the

Neighbourhood Plan. Officers confirmed that the suggestions had been recorded for consideration at the relevant budget-setting discussions.

The proposed AdvantEDGE cemetery and playground management software was discussed. The Estates Manager explained that it could improve memorial testing, playground inspections, cemetery records and other processes, with potential to consolidate some existing systems over time. Members raised the need to understand the Town Council's current software subscriptions and identify possible savings or duplication.

EL.30.10.26 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) approve the purchase of appropriate software to manage compliance inspections relating to the cemetery and play areas, as well as wider support to council services. This could be funded within existing budgets in the current financial year, and;
- (ii) request Officers to compile a list of relevant existing software packages and their costs, identifying which functions might be consolidated, and report back to General Purposes Committee.

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

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

Members noted the report. The Estates Manager reported that drainage works at the Victoria Pleasure Grounds skate park had been completed and were working well. A replacement sign had been quoted at £816. However, the Estates Manager would consider a more economical option given the risk of future damage.

The proposed replacement gates at Boothland Wood would be slightly wider and have an adapted handle to improve access for mobility scooters while restricting access by motorised vehicles.

7.2 To review the Town Council's Litter Bin policy – Policy No. 78

Members discussed the ongoing trial of bin locations to improve collection efficiency and considered amendments to the policy. Members supported giving greater weight to evidence of actual need alongside the existing scoring criteria, while retaining discretion where the score did not fully reflect local circumstances. They also discussed the need to establish whether a responsible authority, management company or landowner could provide and maintain bins before the Town Council committed to doing so.

EL.31.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to agree that the proposed amendments to the Litter Bin Policy be approved, including reference to management companies in the relevant provision, retention of the existing scoring system with greater weight given to evidence of need, and consideration of locations outside new developments where justified.

Members also supported relocating an existing litter bin to the rockery area on Browns Lane, subject to the arrangements discussed.

8.0 LEISURE

8.1 To consider a review of play area gates for child safety

Members considered the report in light of concerns about child safety at play-area entrances. They approved the recommendation that officers review gates and entrance arrangements at the Town Council's play areas and identify any necessary improvements and associated costs.

EL.32.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to note the report and agreed that the Estates Manager would undertake a review of gates and entrance arrangements at the Town Council's play areas, reporting any recommendations and associated costs.

8.2 Update on proposals for a new 3G Pitch

Members noted the update. Officers confirmed that the relevant verification was still awaited. Members requested a plan showing the proposed site and biodiversity net gain area. The Estates Manager explained that the proposal sought to deliver ten per cent biodiversity net gain on site.

8.3 Update on events programme for 2027-28

Members considered whether to mark Sussex Day on 16 June 2027, the 1,550th anniversary of Sussex, following an approach regarding a county-wide beacon lighting.

Members supported recognising the occasion but noted that the proposed 3G pitch construction could affect access to the usual beacon location and that the event required considerable officer time and practical support. It was suggested that alternative ways of marking the day could be considered.

It was agreed that the proposal should be referred to Full Council for wider consideration. If supported, a suitable plan would be developed, taking account of the construction programme, resources and councillor involvement. A provisional sum of £1,500 had been suggested for budget-setting purposes.

EL.33.10.26 Members **RESOLVED** to refer the proposal to mark Sussex Day on 16 June 2027 to Full Council for consideration, with a provisional sum of £1,500 to be considered during budget setting.

8.4 To consider a draft licence for the Victoria Tennis Courts with Maresfield LTC

Members discussed the draft licence, including the named organisation, proposed twenty-year term, peppercorn rent, condition of the courts and public access.

The Estates Manager clarified that Urban Tennis operated the courts separately from Maresfield Lawn Tennis Club, and that the organisation had previously helped secure funding to restore them. The tennis courts required further investment, with resurfacing estimated at around £60,000.

Members expressed differing views on whether the courts should remain under licence or return to Town Council management. A proposal was raised for the Town Council to reclaim one court for public use and offer a five-year licence for the remaining two courts. The six-month break clause in the draft licence was also noted.

Further work was considered necessary before a final decision could be made. Officers would investigate the history of the arrangement, any previous agreements or undertakings, the legal status of the organisations and options for improving public access. The Sports Facilities Working Group would consider the options, and the draft twenty-year licence was not approved as presented.

Officers would also check whether any agreement or undertaking had been made when the tennis courts were originally made available to Urban Tennis.

EL.34.10.26 Members **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) halt any signing of agreement for the proposed licence, and;
- (ii) refer the matter to the Sports Facilities Working Group, to arrange a meeting with Urban Tennis to fully understand the current operating arrangements, before considering ideas for changing the current structure of management.

9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

9.1 To receive a progress update and initial proposals from the Fees and Charges working group 2027-28

Members considered the Working Group's proposals for football pitch and pavilion hire charges, together with arrangements for cancellations and adverse weather.

EL.35.10.26 Members **RESOLVED** that the recommendations of the Fees and Charges Working Group for 2027–28 be approved, as follows:

- (i) Football pitch charges would move from seasonal rates to session-based charges of £17.50 per junior pitch and £35.00 per senior pitch per half-day session, and;
- (ii) Pavilion and changing-facility charges would be finalised following further benchmarking, applying a fifty per cent discount to the applicable non-commercial pavilion hire rate for sports pitch users, and;
- (iii) Officers would monitor pitch utilisation and income during the first full season and adjust the charges accordingly. Cancellation, booking and invoicing arrangements would be updated to reflect the agreed approach that no refund would be payable where a hirer cancelled, but a refund would be issued where the Town Council cancelled.

10.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

10.1 All Weather Pitch Operational Group

Nothing to report at this time.

10.2 Biodiversity links – Ashdown Forest and Climate Change

Nothing to report at this time.

10.3 Local Nature Reserve Supporters Group

Cllr. Reed updated members on discussions with East Sussex County Council officers regarding the Hempstead Meadows Habitat Management Plan and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The importance of ensuring that the lowland fen and other important habitats were accurately recorded on relevant mapping was highlighted.

Members were encouraged to familiarise themselves with Natural England and Forestry Commission standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees.

Members supported aligning the Hempstead Meadows Habitat Management Plan with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and contacting Natural England and relevant ecological records bodies to ensure that important habitats were accurately mapped. Members also agreed in principle that the Town Council should seek a fifty-metre buffer around ancient woodland, where feasible and appropriate, when commenting on relevant planning applications.

10.4 Luxford Centre Management Committee

Members noted the report and thanked Cllr Butler for the update. The extension project was progressing, with those involved awaiting the next phase of works.

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

The Chair made no announcements.

12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

EL.36.10.26 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

The Committee noted the Marketing Programme report and congratulated Will, the Marketing and Community Engagement Officer, on completing his apprenticeship, subject to confirmation of the result.

It was agreed that Will be invited to attend a future Committee meeting to present the marketing analytics and discuss what further information would be helpful to members.

The meeting finished at 8:55 pm.