



Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment and Leisure Committee** held on  
**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 at 7.00pm**  
**Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield**

**PRESENT:**

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

Cllr. Bernadette Reed (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr. Duncan Bennett  
Cllr. Val Frost  
Cllr. Chris Macve

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor Peter Selby

Holly Goring – Town Clerk  
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. No declarations of interest were provided at this stage in the meeting.

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

None.

**3.0. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**4.0. MINUTES**

4.1. Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 8 July 2024

**EL.13.09.24** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Committee held on the 8 July 2024 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2. Action list

Members noted the report - no items to remove.

Councillor Reed was due to meet with a contact from the Nature Space partnership and the Ranger to talk about a pond in our asset register, which could be restored and adapted for Great Crested Newt habitats. Nature Space may offer conservation grants but this would need to be the right environment first, so they would show them the pond and seek some advice.

4.3. Project Monitoring List – for information only

Members noted the report – no items to remove.

## **5.0. FINANCE**

### **5.1. To note bills paid**

Members noted the report. A member enquired about the expenditure on tree works. The Town Clerk confirmed that this related to the removal of a road side ash near the Highlands roundabout.

### **5.2. Income & Expenditure report**

Members agreed this report was generally on target. A further question was raised about expenditure on tree works. It was advised that staff were working with a tree surgeon on a retainer basis to survey and handle tree works. Any works on ash trees would be covered by the reserves set aside for ash dieback, and the third year of the woodland management plan works in Boothland and Nightingale Woods would be undertaken this November.

Councillor Reed flagged up an item in relation to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and sites of interest, which had a current working budget of £1,500. For future spending plans and budget setting, she was keen to find out what assets we had and to look at habitat plans. Further to the Town Council pledge to 'Weald to Waves' she advised that you could also become a potential working partner, which may provide a source of income for the conservation of great crested newts and freshwater biodiversity. The Ranger was also currently looking into habitat and species surveys for our natural habitats.

## **6.0. ADMINISTRATION**

### **6.1. To note the draft minutes from the Strengthening Local Relations (SLR) meeting held on 15 July 2024**

Members noted the draft minutes and raised a couple of issues not yet resolved.

Air quality monitoring was requested nearer the traffic lights in the centre of town and at the Church Street junction. There was concern raised about the amount of traffic and standing traffic in this area with school children walking past it.

Also, there were still concerns about the signage not being clear enough for lorries coming from the direction of Snatts Road and Rocks Road towards the High Street. This request was not strictly about just putting a bollard in, it was about the lack of clear signage. Members mentioned one sign on an Estate Agents but this was not prominent enough.

The Town Clerk re-iterated the problem with satnavs that sometimes took lorries in the wrong direction, although where the lorries were coming from was the main concern. It was suggested that perhaps signage was needed on the main roads such as the A272 or A26, as you drove into the lanes of Shortbridge and Piltdown to warn HGVs in advance.

Members were asked for an indication of areas for better signage for East Sussex Highways to look at this again.

Another member raised her concerns about the sad fatalities on our roads this year and felt that the issues we were facing with reckless drivers and the condition of our roads did not seem to be understood.

### **6.2. To consider a review of the notification period for interments at Snatts Road Cemetery**

**EL.14.09.24** Members **RESOLVED** to accept the proposed amendments (in red) at item 14. within the Cemetery Rules and Regulations, for all applications for interments to be submitted within five working days.

6.3 To note an update on the Allotment Competition 2024

The Allotment Working Group committee met earlier to discuss the agenda for the forthcoming Allotment Conference on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September at 7pm. This would include any recent updates, the results of the Allotment competition and to receive any questions and answers on the day.

6.4 To review the updated streetlighting maintenance and energy agreement with ESCC for 2024-25.

One member asked if we were comparing prices with other energy companies, and if we were able to negotiate a better rate ourselves. This was a difficult one, as the contract consisted of both maintenance and power. Another member explained that being an employee of East Sussex County Council, he was also being presented with bills yet had no control over purchasing.

A question was also raised in relation to the efficiency of replacement light bulbs and if these were eco friendly. These bulbs were changing to LED and would be compliant with any future upgrades with columns and lighting standards, and they were also replacing lamp columns with smart technology. The Town Council would be reviewing the street lighting maintenance contract at some point and there were a few other companies who could provide similar lighting options, to compare costs and efficiency.

**EL15.09.24** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agree to sign the agreement for maintenance and energy supply for 2024-25.

**7.0 ENVIRONMENT**

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

A concern was raised about the knee high fencing at Elizabeth Gardens and whether there was an alternative option as this was a potential trip hazard. Members considered replacing with a 1.1m length fence, although this would remove its appeal as an open green space.

One member asked to consider talking to the Rotary Club about this too, as they gave the land to the Town Council in the first place.

This was not a play park either, so members agreed that it would be acceptable to have no boundary rather than a trip hazard, with a low fence. Most of the boundary was unfenced already.

For fencing at Victoria Pleasure Ground and skatepark, one member recommended that we should approach the National Grid sub-station to see if they had any grants available, as they had offered funding to Little Horsted parish for works, so it might be available to us. However, another member said that unfortunately, he had applied for a grant but they did not give them to local authorities.

A member also requested for us to be mindful about the buffer status in relation the ancient woodland at Paygate Wood, whilst allocating any new burial spaces. This report was only for adhoc spaces within the cemetery and was not about creating new space, although there were plans in place for the next 'Y' section, so this would be factored in nearer the time.

**EL16.09.24** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to agreed:

- (i) not to replace the fencing at Elizabeth Gardens and to ask the Head Groundsman to look at natural hedging in places if required, without fully enclosing the site, and;
- (ii) to remove any existing fencing in Hempstead Rise.

7.2 To consider a request to install a gate onto Town Council land from Fernley Park

It had been a long standing policy of this council not to agree to allowing gates and access routes onto council property unless there were ancient rights. This would also set a precedent to other requests and create new issues.

There were also concerns that Nightingale Wood was a little bit forgotten and children trampled through here to get to school from the development nearby. The wood had seen a lot of ash die back and breaking up of the hedgerows generally.. Members agreed this area needed to be protected.

**EL17.09.24** Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to object to the request submitted by a local resident to install a gate in the hedge opposite 66 Baxendale Way for access to Nightingale Wood.

## **8.0 LEISURE**

### **8.1 Update on the Our Parks Initiative 2024-25**

There had been some really good feedback for Uckfield, although Our Parks needed to ensure that the sessions were confirmed with regularity, as there had been a turnover of instructors in 2024.

Members wholly supported this initiative if it was working for the residents although the committee could not make any further comment until they received an update about a new instructor.

After contacting Our Parks, the Senior Wellbeing Officer reassured us this matter had been resolved and the sessions would now resume.

**8.2 To initially consider the proposed re-routing of the Public Right of Way from Ridgewood Farm into Boothland Wood as part of the development of this site**  
The Town Clerk provided a Powerpoint Presentation and an update from Redrow Homes about the potential re-route of a new pathway across the new site that would follow to the north and create a bit more of a barrier away from the ancient woodland. Although we owned the woodlands, East Sussex were responsible for the right of way.

Although this proposal had not been submitted by Wealden DC as yet, members were asked for any comments or adjustments that could be saved as a separate resubmission by us in the future.

Due to the impact of the increased footfall over the years in Boothland Wood members agreed that this ancient woodland needed to be preserved as much as possible, as this would be irreplaceable, especially with the new developments, as it was felt that not all, but some people did not always understand the impact they were having on this historical landscape.

In practice, there were a couple of substantial access points frequently used into and out of the woods, which had varied substantially since the Ridgewood Farm site development, particularly to the western side of Boothland Wood. Also, ash die back works had created new access points which did not help. However, it was evident that residents were walking through the woods and creating new routes, including dog walkers, which was not good for the soil, and needed to be managed. Our Ranger was keen to guide people to specific routes in future to reduce the footfall and improve the flora and fauna.

During the preparation of the Ridgewood Farm site for development and during the construction process would be a good time to block off smaller access points and control access into the woods.

One useful comment was to try to mitigate the mud as walkers tried to avoid this and made new tracks, so this would minimise any incursions into the rest of the woods. Also, a suggestion was made to completely re-route the pathway and not access Boothland Wood at all and maybe plant some natural hedging as a deterrent. It was suggested that Redrow be asked to assist, and see if they could help by educating new residents.

It would be a good idea to invite experts from Wealden DC, the Tree council and ancient woodland experts, to give advice and make a decision. There was a mapping site called 'Open Street' mentioned which showed desired lines within the woodland. It would also be interesting to get any further tips from the Forestry Commission.

We may also be able to obtain grant funding to assist through Lund grant application or other avenues.

Members were also reminded that when making planning decisions, this was not just about conserving and enhancing biodiversity. We needed to be mindful of protection during construction, such as avoiding damage to tree roots, the timing and to erect fencing during the construction works. There was also an appeal process.

**EL18.09.24** Members noted the report and **RESOLVED** to initially agree to the proposal from Redrow, to re-route the Public Right of Way from Ridgewood Farm away from Boothland Wood as part of the development of this site but it further consideration of routes needed to be explored.

## **9.0 REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

Nothing to report.

## **10.0 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

### **10.1 All Weather Pitch Operationsl 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.

### **10.5 Luxford Centre Management Committee**

Nothing to report at this time.

### **10.6 Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee**

Members thanked Councillor C. Macve and noted this report.

### **10.7 Uckfield Youth Club Board**

Nothing to report at this time.

### **10.8 Wealden Bus Alliance/Weald Link**

Nothing to report at this time. Councillor Smith provided a verbal report in relation to the 262 Saturday service, which unfortunately was not going to continue past the end of October due to low passenger numbers and some issues around funding. This was a shame because this was a good service as a shopper service for the villages and for tourists to the Ashdown Forest. Councillor Bennett asked if we were able to request any details of promotion before the decision was taken. As the Weald link rep for the council, Cllr Smith was aware of some efforts being made by Wealdlink to publicise the bus service.

10.9 Wealden Food Partnership Advisory Group  
Nothing to report at this time.

10.10 Uckfield and District Twinning Association (AGM and events only)  
Nothing to report at this time.

**11.0 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
Nothing to report.

**12.0 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**EL.19.09.24** 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 thanked the Marketing and Community Engagement Officer for the excellent content once again, and asked to try to get more subscribers wherever possible.

The meeting finished at 20:45pm.