

## Didcot Town Council

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### **Environment Committee** Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 7.30pm Online at Zoom.us



### **Minutes**

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this committee.

#### PRESENT

##### Councillors:

P Davies.  
A Hudson.  
A Macdonald.  
D Macdonald (Chair).  
D Rouane.  
A Thompson.  
C Wilson.

##### Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk).  
T Rudge (Outdoor Services Manager)  
Mr G Langton (Planning and Environment Officer [minutes]).

##### Others:

Two members of the public attended the meeting.

#### **Public participation**

GL addressed the Committee regarding the project to reduce energy use in Didcot (project RED), he provided a written copy of his address, which is copied here:

*Good evening, my name is Gareth Lewis, and I am here representing and publicising Project RED for Sustainable Didcot. For those who don't recollect the initiative, which as a newly joined member includes me, here is a summary of the situation thus far.*

*Following the Town Council declaration of the climate emergency, Sustainable Didcot applied for, and received, a grant from the Low Carbon Hub to help us ascertain the*

*priorities of transitioning to zero carbon within the next decade, and provide recommendations for the local community. We have engaged the Environment Information Exchange group of Oxford Brookes University, to help us with this aim following their good work on the Civic Centre report.*

*We had outlined a brief for them; existing high energy usage areas, areas of poor insulation, potential areas for installation of or assistance to micro-generation of energy, future car charging points and so on. We would then use their report to hold a public meeting to show their results, run workshops, basically anything that would help the community engage more and get things moving along.*

*We recently held a meeting the EiE to discuss next steps, and whether COVID has affected the plan to be complete by April 2021. It was agreed by all that the sooner the better; as post-COVID life returns to 'normal'. It was important to try and take this opportunity for a new start in a better way. Plus the recent governmental announcement of potential assistance to homeowners with badly insulated homes is something to make the most of.*

*The next phase for EiE is analysis of Didcot's energy data, which may take a while. In the interim, they have provided us with a questionnaire that we are looking to share with as many residents as possible. It is 6 questions that help EiE get an idea of known issues and define expectations and future projects; it is currently in an early revision, but we want to get it out there and potentially fine-tune it in-life. Any assistance the Town Council can give in this would be very welcome.*

Cllr Wilson asked when the questionnaires would be ready to be circulated and if they would be available in electronic copy, paper copy or both?

GL responded saying that the questionnaires would be online, but could also be paper. He noted that the revised wording improve accessibility was being drafted. He confirmed that the Environment Information Exchange would analyse the results.

Cllr D Macdonald asked if this would be a stand-alone survey or the start of a more detailed piece?

GL noted that it would be stand-alone but the analysis would provide areas on which more detail could be sought in the future.

Cllr Rouane suggested that the Council could share the links to the survey on its website and through social media channels. GL thanked the Committee for the offer. Cllr D Macdonald noted that the Council had offered a venue for the group to hold the public consultation exercise.

Cllr Wilson commented that the 'Cozy Homes Oxfordshire' initiative had developed a heatmap of the area, with a traffic-light rating for homes.

GL noted that once the data had been analysed, there would need to be a solutions fair to get people together and establish ways forward.

The Chair thanked GL for addressing the Committee.

JC addresses the Committee on behalf of the Ladygrove Lakes fishing club, as its new Chairman. He noted that the Lakes had once again been opened for fishing. He asked that season and day tickets be put back on sale as he had received many requests for both. He suggested that 100 season tickets be provided and 10 day tickets for any one day.

Cllr D Macdonald noted that the matter was in the Outdoor Services Manager's report to consider.

Cllr Davies proposed, Cllr D Macdonald seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to consider this request at this stage in the meeting.

Cllr Wilson asked how many people could fish at the Lakes and if the number of tickets suggested could cause problems of 'congestion'.

JC responded stating that the fishing club was comfortable with the proposed numbers and were confident that there would be sufficient space on any given day.

Cllr Hudson asked where the tickets could be purchased.

JC confirmed that they were sold through the angling supply store on the Wantage Road in Didcot, who were open for business again.

The Outdoor Services Manager (OSM) confirmed that the Council had offered to provide all those that could prove a current season membership with free membership this coming year. He confirmed that both day and season tickets were provided by the Council, and that day ticket revenue was collected by the fishing club.

It was proposed by Cllr Rouane, seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and **RESOLVED** to agree with the request to provide 100 season tickets and 10 day tickets for any given day.

## **27. To receive apologies.**

No member tendered their apologies.

## **28. To receive declarations of interest.**

Cllr Rouane declared that he was friends with the plot holders making the request to keep bees on their land so would not take part in the discussion or vote on that matter.

Cllr Thompson declared that he was an allotment holder at the site where the bees were proposed.

**29. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held online at Zoom.us on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020.**

Cllr Wilson commented that the sentence at item 24, reading” Cllr Davies noted that term of reference 10, bullet 4 enabled the Committee to” needed to be completed. The Committee agreed to amend the sentence to read “Cllr Davies noted that term of reference 10, bullet 4 enabled the Committee to so do”.

Cllr Davies noted concern that the resolutions agreed at the meeting had been amended to recommendations to Full Council. The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that it could not make policy and therefore the amendments to the terms of reference and standing orders were recommendations to Full Council for approval.

Cllr D Macdonald proposed, Cllr Wilson seconded and it was **resolved** to approve the minutes with the noted amendment. All members agreed. The PEO would send the amended minutes to the Chair for signature.

**30. Questions on the minutes and review the progress report.**

The minute for each matter is annotated in the table overleaf.

Action	Progress – July 2020	Next steps	Responsible	Rating	Minute 20.07.2020
Bus Shelters (including petition). <sup>1</sup>	<p>July 2020 update: No suitable planning proposal has been considered in the meantime.</p> <p>Clear Channel have informed the Officer that new end panels were no longer available, the shelter design being discontinued, the company that produced them went out of business late in 2019. A good used end panel would be sought. With the installation backlog caused by the Covid-19 restrictions, Clear Channel advise the Council that it was likely no panel would be available until Autumn 2020. Hammersons have confirmed that they would have no issue with street furniture being relocated to enable the end panel installation if</p>	<p>Consider making a request that RTI unit funding forms part of a future section 106 agreement.</p> <p>Continue to press Clear Channel for an installation date.</p>	<p>Councillors</p> <p>Officers</p>	Amber	<p>Then Committee noted that this would provide public funds to place a unit in a privately owned shelter.</p> <p>Cllr Rouane noted that bus shelters with electronic screens were high power users, with some reports giving their use as equivalent to a house. The Committee would consider the matter on renewal of the contract.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the positive communication with Hammersons and would continue to pursue the panel's installation.</p>

<sup>1</sup> The following petition was considered by Council on 3rd September 2018 and referred to the Environment Committee for consideration:

“We, the undersigned request that the existing bus shelter S1 alongside the Cinema in the Orchard Centre be replaced with a shelter the same standard and size as the S2 shelter situated at the South End of Station Road, Didcot by The Broadway pub.

The current S1 bus shelter is situated at the bottom end of a wind funnel and provides no shelter from the strong winds and rain. There are no side panels and inadequate seating. All bus passengers find it is not fit for purpose.”

	<p>required. The street furniture would need to remain close to its current location and Hammersons would not bear the cost of relocation.</p>				
	<p>No cost has yet been forthcoming. Clear Channel indicate any such works would not yet be scheduled due to the work currently being undertaken to complete the installation backlog caused by the Covid-19 restrictions. The Officer notes that OCC have advised that moving the shelter would include moving the electrical feed for the advertising panels. The installation works had been postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The contractor completed the works on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020.</p>	<p>Consider the need to undertake the work when the time comes.</p> <p>Project complete</p>	<p>Officers and Councillors.</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>	<p>The Committee considered the moving of street furniture as discussed above to be a more effective approach than moving the shelter.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the shelters had been installed as agreed.</p>

Minutes  
Environment and Climate Committee 20.07.2020

Action	Progress - July 2020	Next steps	Responsible	Rating	Minute 20.07.2020
Beekeeping at Mereland Road allotments.	Holders have been written to at their known addresses.	Confirm the views holders of allotments at Mereland Road.	Officers	Green	(see item 37)
Tyne Avenue	<p>Full Council agreed to re-establish the working group to talk to Didcot Town FC to discuss ongoing and future maintenance of the land.</p> <p>The drain cover has been confirmed as on DTFC's land. Thames water had repaired a different cover along Tyne Avenue.</p>	Open communication with DTFC.	Councillors	Amber	<p>The Committee heard that Full Council had approved the continuation of the working group liaising with Didcot Town Football Club, comprising Cllrs Hudson, Rouane and Thompson, all members of this Committee.</p> <p>The OSM reported that the trees had remained safe after the work undertaken by a third party earlier in the year.</p> <p>The Officer reported that contrary to the previous report, the drain cover was not the property of Thames Water. It had been confirmed that it was not on SODC or OCC land and functioned as a soak-away drain for the football club's pitch.</p>
Ladygrove Lakes.	-	On the agenda.	Councillors	Amber	(see item 36)
Edmonds Park Play equipment.	The company that is planned to do the repair is in lockdown and as such unable to carry out the work at present.	On the agenda	Councillors	Amber	(see item 33)
Edmonds Park Pavilion.	Finance and General Purposes Committee approved the instruction of	Await the receipt of the revised drawings. In the OSM's report.	Officers	Amber	(see item 34)

Minutes  
Environment and Climate Committee 20.07.2020

	RPA Architecture to redraw the plans in line with the recommendations of the Committee. There will be an asbestos inspection undertaken to inform the cost of the demolition. To retain the services for uses such as the Town Fair would need a box installing and would form a separate quote.				
Edmonds Park Splash pad.	Officers met with providers and installers of Splash Pads. An updated report is on the agenda.	On the agenda.	Councillors	Amber	(see item 39)
Ladygrove Sand Pit.	The fixed play equipment could not be purchased due to lockdown and will be addressed in due course.	Ongoing.	Officers	Amber	The OSM reported that work was due to start in August 2020.
Tree planting in Didcot.	The Committee postponed the item to its September meeting.	Ongoing.	Officers	Amber	Cllr Wilson reported that SODC were due to undertake a study on trees and note the best places to plant them across the district. The result of this survey was to be published in September and the Committee expressed the hope that it would be in time for consideration at the meeting.

Minutes  
Environment and Climate Committee 20.07.2020

Action	Progress - July 2020	Next steps	Responsible	Rating	
Community Transport (Cllr L Price).	The meeting is postponed while the Covid-19 restrictions remain.	Ongoing.	Officers and Councillors.	Amber	Cllr D Macdonald proposed, Cllr Wilson seconded and it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to request that Cllr Laura Price meet with the Committee and interested members of the Council by Zoom.
Bus Shelter adoption.	Taylor Wimpey have reported to the Officer that their understanding is that DTC would have to be an additional signatory to the S38 Agreement for the spine roads between Taylor Wimpey and OCC. Their legal department is reviewing the required process.	Completion of adoption. Instruct insurers.	Officers	Amber	Cllr Davies proposed, Cllr D Macdonald seconded and it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to request a contribution towards their maintenance from the developer on the transfer of the shelters.
Bee-friendly bus shelters	Both providers of bus shelters in the Town, Clear Channel and Externiture, have started to provide this style of shelter.	On the agenda	Councillors	Amber	(see item 40)
Metal shelters in Edmonds Park	The Officers require further detail before research can be undertaken.	Ongoing	Councillors	Red	Cllr Thompson agreed to liaise with the PEO to confirm the details.
Creation of 'wild' areas in each of the Town Council's parks	The Officers require further detail before research can be undertaken.	Ongoing	Councillors	Red	The Committee members agreed to suggest locations to the OSM to check floor suitability.
Changing the colour of the dog bins in the area to green	-	Ongoing	Officers	Red	The Committee noted that this would happen as and when these bins were acquired or replaced.
Reports on verge cutting and whether	All the verges belong to Oxfordshire	Ongoing	Councillors	Red	The Committee heard that through lockdown,

Minutes  
Environment and Climate Committee 20.07.2020

there can be pollinator planting instead	County Council. The Town Council contracts for their cutting eight times a year. The Council receives a grant that pays part of the cost of cutting. The Officers note that maintenance for wildflowers has a cost.				residents had been contacting them regarding the cutting of verges, with many commenting that the verges should be left to flower and a similar number asking that the verges be cut more often. The OSM reported that DTC cut the verges on behalf of OCC, from whom a grant was received. This grant covered approximately half the cost of cutting the verge eight times a year. It was noted that wildflower management would also incur a cost.
Completing the paths on Stubbings Land	The result of the feedback sought and indicative quotes are reported to this meeting.	On the agenda	Councillors	Amber	(see item 38)
Paving 'desire lines' in Ladygrove	The Officers require further detail before research can be undertaken.	Ongoing	Councillors	Red	Cllr Davies advised the Committee he had informed the Officer of the detail behind this request.
Footpath widening in Ladygrove	The Officers require further detail before research can be undertaken.	Ongoing	Councillors	Red	Cllr Davies, who raised the issue stated that it was directly related to the issue above. The Officer would combine these two items for future meetings.
Solar panels on the Civic Hall	A report has been drafted for consideration at the meeting of the Civic Hall Management Committee on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2020	Complete for this Committee	Councillors on CHMC	-	The Committee noted that this item was complete.
Implementing or improving	The Council has taken	Ongoing	Officers	Amber	The Committee heard that the

the knowledge of recycling via Terracycle	delivery of a 'Fabreze' recycling box, which will be placed in the foyer once the Hall is once again open to the public. A second box is expected and will be in place when received and the Hall open. The location of these boxes will be publicised in the Town.				provision would be advertised when the Civic Hall was able to reopen following the Covid-19 restrictions.
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- 31. To receive and consider proposals for clearing footpath vegetation across the town to promote active travel opportunities for all residents.**
- 32. To receive and consider proposals for supporting resident-organised litter picks**

The Committee considered these matters together.

The Committee heard that following the presentation from Mr D Reeves to Full Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020, Cllr Rouane considered that the Council could seed volunteer groups to maintain their local area by litter-picking and light maintenance duties.

The OSM noted that footpaths and alleyways were not normally the responsibility of DTC and that if reported to OCC via the Fix-my-Street portal, the issue would be attended to if their responsibility or the person be advised it was not. He further noted that DTC did not have the staff resource to maintain all the paths and alleyways.

Cllr Davies requested DTC maintain the paths on the Ladygrove mounds. The OSM would include it in the work plan.

Cllr Wilson considered there was a need to empower residents and promote reporting through portals such as Fix-my-Street.

- 33. To consider the Outdoor Services Manager's Report.**

The Committee noted the report.

The OSM reported that the officers would progress with the road closures for Remembrance Day and await advice from Government or other outside bodies on how to proceed with the event.

Cllr Wilson proposed, Cllr A Macdonald seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to await the gate-keeper's return to work in August and then resume locking the gates as had previously been the case.

**34. To consider the pavilion demolition report.**

The OSM reported that there may be asbestos in the old pavilion and that a report was awaited from a specialist contractor, which would be circulated to all members once received.

**35. To consider the Edmonds Park access barrier report.**

Cllr D Macdonald proposed, Cllr T Hudson seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to recommend that a height barrier be purchased and installed to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

**36. To consider the report on hemlock management at Ladygrove park.**

It was noted that there were funds available in the Ladygrove maintenance budget but that at a cost of over £1,000, it would need to be approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Cllr D Macdonald proposed, Cllr A Macdonald seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the action outlined in the report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

**37. To consider the report on beekeeping at Mereland Road allotments.**

Cllr A Macdonald noted that the allotment site in question was bordered by private housing and close to a neighbourhood shopping area and primary school.

Cllr Wilson noted that a previous report had indicated a mentor would be needed to oversee the novice beekeeper. She considered that there may be other places on DTC-owned land that could be more suitable.

Cllr D Macdonald noted that the presence of bees would help with pollination.

The PEO advised the Council that a honey bee would fly up to 3 miles to forage for nectar or pollen. Honey bee colonies, being numerous, seek the most valuable forage, that which giving the greatest amount of food in a small area. Honey bees are also short-tongued insects, so are not able to pollinate all flowering plants. Allotments have a wide variety of plants, some being suitable for honey bee pollination and others not. Common bees in gardens and on allotments would be bumble and carder bees. These are long-tongued insects which were supporting smaller colonies, so would seek less dense food sources.

Cllr Davies proposed, Cllr Macdonald seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to not give permission for bees to be kept on Mereland road allotments but to keep in mind where hives may be sited on Town Council land.

**38. To consider the report on paths at Stubbings Land.**

Cllr Davies noted that any barriers installed to prevent cycle or motorcycle access would need to be DDA compliant.

The OSM confirmed that an outside contractor would be needed to install any path.

Cllr A Macdonald proposed, Cllr Davies seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to install a path to connect Reed Street public open space to the entrance at Wheatfields.

*The Chair asked the members if were willing to carry on as the meeting had reached the two-hour stage. The members agreed to continue the meeting.*

**39. To consider the report on the Edmonds Park Splash Park project.**

The Committee noted the contents of the report. The PEO highlighted the cost of running the services (water and power) to the location of the park.

Cllr A Macdonald and Cllr Rouane noted a preference for placing any facility in the correct place for use and access rather than the cheapest place.

Cllr Davies proposed, Cllr A Macdonald seconded and it was **RESOLVED** to seek alternative quotes from utility companies for a comparator.

**40. To note the report on Green Roof bus shelters.**

The Committee noted the contents of the report and considered that any future installation should include costs of such shelters in the report paper.

**41. To note the report into Oxfordshire County Council-provided cycle racks.**

The Committee noted the contents of the report. The PEO confirmed that OCC would commence installation on the Broadway week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

The meeting closed at 21:43.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairman                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_