

Environment Committee

Monday 18th November 2019 at 7.30pm

All Saints Room, Civic Hall



Minutes

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

PRESENT

Councillors: D Macdonald (Chairman) A Sandiford
 A Macdonald (Vice-Chair) E Hards
 P Siggers (subs C Wilson) A Hudson
 M Walsh
 D Rouane
 A Thompson (part)

Officers: Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)
 Mr T Rudge (Outdoor Services Manager)
 Ms C Lordan (Environment and Events Officer)
 Mr G Langton (Planning and Environment Officer)

Others: Two members of the public
 One non-Committee member of Council- Cllr P Davies

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two members of the public and one non-Committee member Councillor who addressed the Committee:

The first addressed the Committee on two matters:

- She was concerned about the lack of bus shelters across Didcot, with parts of the town not having identified bus stops or shelters. She requested that the Council use funds available in the budget to provide more shelters across the town. She also brought the Council's attention to a damaged shelter and sought clarity on the installation of a shelter as previously resolved.
- She addressed the Council regarding the maintenance of the trees and verges along Tyne Avenue. She was concerned with the state of the trees, which she considered to be dangerous and sought clarity on the ownership of the land.

The second informed the Committee that Didcot Town Youth Football Club had expanded and now numbered 23 teams. This had brought the condition of the pavilion at Edmonds Park to the fore, with players and spectators being advised to make use of the facilities at Didcot Wave. He understood that the Council had been considering a replacement pavilion for a number of years but it appeared that little or no progress had been made and that funds had not been allocated to the project. He requested that the Committee address the matter and resolve a way forward at the meeting.

The Councillor asked if the location of the planned splash park could be installed at the future development at Ladygrove north, rather than using funds which could be allocated to other projects. He asked that the Council should not seek to use section 106 allocated Public Arts funds to meet the costs of a splash park but to use it to enhance the environment.

He asked the Committee if he would be able to speak to the motion referred from Council at item 5. The Chairman ruled that he would not be able to take part in the Committee's discussions, not being a member of the Committee.

49. APOLOGIES

Cllr C Wilson tendered her apologies.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No member declared a pecuniary interest in any item on the agenda. Cllrs D Macdonald and A Thompson declared that they were allotment holders and thus had an interest in item 51 (parking on the allotments).

51. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 16th September 2019 as a true and correct record and that the Chairman sign them. DM (p), MW (s).

52. QUESTIONS ON THE MINUTES AS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANY ITEM

Item 35: Cllr Walsh sought an update on the overspend of the Depot project. The Clerk reported that it had been reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and accepted.

Item 35: Cllr Rouane sought a decision on the reallocation of the underspend of the allocation of funds to ensure the Council met its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (2016). The Clerk considered that the budget could be halved and the remainder of the work related to GDPR could be undertaken by the Council staff.

Item 39: Cllr Walsh sought an update on the progress of contacting the allotment holder who had requested that they be allowed to site a hive of bees at their allotment. The Clerk reported that the insurance company had reiterated that it would be a risk and that the Council would be liable for injury or damage caused. The Outdoor Services Manager would make contact with the individual that had made the request and invite them to address the Committee.

Items 42&43: Cllr Hudson asked about accessing funds from the Public Works Loans Board to support the costs of the pavilion project. The Clerk reported that there had been a recent increase in interest of 1% but the rate could vary daily. The Council would need to be aware of all its PWLB commitments. The Committee discussed the matter, noting that clear plans would need to be agreed before any detailed funding was sought and that a professional bid writer or project planner could be engaged.

53. TO CONSIDER THE DETAILS OF THE MOTION REGARDING SINGLE USE PLASTICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (MOTION 48 REFERRED FROM FULL COUNCIL 2ND SEPTEMBER 2019)

The Chairman noted that the motion had been amended subsequent to its referral from full Council and it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee would consider the motion as referred. DM[p], MW[s]. The Committee **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders for 2 minutes to allow Cllr Davies to introduce the motion. DR[p], MW[s].

The Clerk read the motion for the Committee, reporting that full Council had unanimously supported points A&B (copied below) and referred points C-F to the Committee.

Motion Proposed by Cllr Phil Davies: that Didcot Town Council phase out the provision and use of single use plastics in all its activities and also in properties and events over which it may exert some control.

The council notes that:

1. The council unanimously resolved to declare a Climate Emergency on the 24th June 2019 and set targets to achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2030 and Carbon Zero by 2050.
2. Many single use plastic items are convenient yet easily avoidable.
3. The European Parliament has already voted to back a ban on plastic cutlery, plates straws and drinks stirrers from next April.
4. Suitable, readily available, plant based alternatives exist. For example: see Vegware.com.

In light of the above, the Council agrees to:

- A. Move towards a ban on all avoidable single use plastics.
- B. Immediately ban the further purchase of any avoidable single use plastic item by the Town Council. i.e. to not replenish with single use plastic items once existing stocks held by the Town Council and Civic Hall are used up.
- C. Prohibit the future supply of any single use plastic items at events hosted at the Civic Centre and to amend the lettings terms to include such a restriction upon hirers.
- D. Request all Council owned, leased or operated establishments throughout the Town to also introduce a prohibition on single use plastics.
- E. Write to all public facilities in the Town to also request they stop providing any single use plastics and to include such a restriction in their letting terms: such as, Community Centres; Leisure Centres; Sports Facilities; schools; and Cornerstone Arts Centre.
- F. Write to all takeaway food outlets in the Town to also request they stop providing any single use plastics as soon as possible.

Cllr Davies addressed the Committee, detailing the background to and ambition of his motion.

The Chairman noted that the Council would only be able to directly affect change in premises over which it had control.

The Council considered each point C-F in turn, noting that at C and D the Council could ask for compliance rather than prohibit the use of single-use plastics; at E and

F the Chairman noted that a plastic-free initiative was currently being undertaken by Sustainable Didcot and that the Town Council could work with that group.

The Council **RESOLVED** to refer point C to the Civic Hall Management Committee; to request users of its owned, leased or operated establishments use alternatives to single use plastics and to support Sustainable Didcot in its plastic-free initiative. DM [p], MW [s].

54. TO CONSIDER AND NOTE THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND BUDGETS

Cllr Thompson sought clarity regarding line 3180, which showed a negative spend. The Clerk clarified that this reflected a refund.

Cllr A Macdonald asked what money was spent on maintaining the millennium wood. The Outdoor Services Manager confirmed that the work was undertaken by the Council's grounds team.

The Council sought clarity on the installation location of the bus shelter previously ordered. The Clerk confirmed this would be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee. Cllrs Rouane and Walsh noted that clarity on which bus routes would remain and favoured the Bus Companies being invited to speak to the Council. Cllr Walsh noted that Cllr L Price was involved in the community bus service in Witney Town (West Oxfordshire).

The Council noted that 32597 allocated funds for professional fees in respect of the pavilion build and the splash park installation. The Council heard from the Outdoor Services Manager regarding the condition of the current building on Edmonds Park, which had been deemed unsafe at a recent inspection. The Council was concerned with regard to what it was to be replaced with, the Outdoor Services Manager reported that temporary buildings or converted containers could be rented to ensure changing rooms and facilities were available.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to condemn the building. DM [p], AH [s].

The Committee **RESOLVED** to hire temporary buildings or converted containers to ensure facilities remained available to use. DR [p], DM[s].

Cllr A Thompson left the meeting.

55. TO NOTE THE OUTDOOR SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

The Council considered the report.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to restrict car parking at Mereland Road and New Road allotments to the first car park of both sites. DM [p], MW [s].

The Committee **RESOLVED** to allow dogs onto the allotments following a successful trial period. DM [p], MW [s].

Cllr A Macdonald requested the possibility of moving the war memorial to the larger part of the recreation space could be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

The request made by the spouse of a former Mayor to scatter his ashes near the memorial was approved.

The Committee heard that an educational notice board was to be installed at the site of the wildflower bank at the Ladygrove mounds.

The Outdoor Services Manager confirmed it was his belief that the football club owned and were responsible for the maintenance of the land bordering Tyne Avenue and therefore the Council could not legally maintain it and its workforce would not be insured if working on it. The Committee **RESOLVED** to write to the owners of the land to request it was properly maintained, the letter would be signed by the Chairman of the Committee. DM [p], PS [s].

56. TO NOTE THE REPORT AND CONSIDER A POTENTIAL LASER SHOW

Cllr Macdonald noted that the Committee had thought that the report would be for permission for such a show to be granted rather than to be staged by the Council. The Committee requested that the report was passed to other organisations in the town that may be interested in holding such a display.

57. TO NOTE THE REPORT AND CONSIDER THE FINDINGS FROM THE LAKES WORKING GROUP

The Outdoor Services Manager reported that the Council had a contract with Thames Water to pump water from the land drains to maintain the level in the large lake for 2 hours per day and that work along with the recent rains had increased the water depth by approximately 150mm. This would be increased further should more water be diverted to the lake from the drain. This would necessitate the purchase and installation of a pump. The fish would be restocked when the water level had stabilised and the aerator installed, the anglers understood that there would be no fishing in the 2020 season. The small lake would remain as it was until works had been completed at the large lake. The Committee heard that the Wildlife Trust had expressed an interest in maintaining the small lake as a wetland area.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to seek permission from Thames Water to increase the time that water could be abstracted and install a suitable pump, to be protected by an extension of the existing fencing. DR [p], MW [s].

The Committee **RESOLVED** to purchase a second aerator, to be solar powered (backup up by an LPG generator). DR [p], MW [s].

The Committee **RESOLVED** to discuss with the Wildlife Trust the development of the small lake into a wetland area. DR [p], DM [s].

The Committee heard that the wooden staging was in an unsafe condition and the Outdoor Services Manager recommended it be removed, to be replaced at a future date. The Committee **RESOLVED** to remove the staging. MW [p], DM [s].

58. TO NOTE THE REPORT AND CONSIDER PROGRESSION OF A SPLASH PARK IN EDMONDS PARK

The Committee considered the possible change of location to Ladygrove North, Cllr Rouane noted that the development may take many years to complete and that existing residents should have access to improved facilities. The Committee

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considered the location of the splash park within Edmonds Park, noting that the position currently planned would place the splash park between the two existing play areas and close to the facilities offered by The Wave Leisure Centre. The Council officers would progress the plans and identify grants and funding available.

59. FUTURE PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

The Committee considered and approved the proposal. The Council officers would progress the plans and identify funding available.

The meeting ended at 10:15 pm

Signed _____ Chairman

Date: _____