

Environment Committee

Monday 20th January 2020 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 Macdonald (Vice-Chair)
C Wilson
M Walsh
D Rouane
A Thompson (part)
A Hudson

Officers: Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)
Mr T Rudge (Outdoor Services Manager, OSM)
Mr G Langton (Planning and Environment Officer, PEO)

Others: Nine members of the public
Two Councillors who were not members of the Committee

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

JH address the Committee on the subject of beekeeping, initially, a hive of bees at the Mereland Road allotment site. She reported that she had been an allotment holder since 2006 at the Mereland Road site, currently working 2 plots and would plan to install to have one hive only, in spring 2021. This timescale was to allow her to undertake training and to source the equipment and colony of bees. JH noted the decline in pollinator populations and her reasons for the installation were to support these populations and thereby improve pollination for crops on the allotment and the wild areas locally. JH was aware of the requirements for beekeepers to be insured and of the risks associated with keeping bees in urban areas close to houses, businesses and schools. JH

further noted that consultation would have to be undertaken with all allotment holders at that site and with local residents.

Cllr Davies addressed the Committee on a number of matters. He opened his comments requesting that the Committee defer agreeing the minutes until a future meeting. He noted that the progress report at item 4 contained a number of inaccuracies, specific to items on the agenda, as follows:

Regarding the Splash Park. He had not said the Council should request L&G install a splash park at Ladygrove North but establish what the developer planned to install in the way of leisure and play facilities to ascertain if a splash park was to be installed.

Regarding working at Tyne Avenue, he noted the reason given for not undertaking the landscape and grounds works was that the Council's staff would not be insured. He requested that the Officers establish if staff could be insured for this work, and if they could to include this on the Council's insurance.

Regarding the bus shelter on Station Road, adjacent to the cinema he asked if the Committee could consider relocating it closer to the road edge so the addition of end panels would not require the removal of any of the cycle racks currently installed, so improving the accessibility of one form of green transport at the expense of another.

Cllr Haval addressed the Committee regarding Tyne Avenue maintenance. She reported that she was a resident of that area and that at present Tyne Avenue was very tidy. In 2016, it had become impassable, with pedestrians having to walk on the road to avoid the overgrown vegetation. She noted that Tyne Avenue was the access road for Ladygrove Primary School and a playpark. To address the issue, in 2016 a working party was formed by the Minister of the local Church, many local people attended with their garden tools and whilst making some progress they did not have a big impact, lacking professional tools and machinery. She was concerned that without action, the previous state of the land would return.

Cllr Haval was aware that the land in question was not the property of either Didcot Town or South Oxford District Councils and as such she could not grant money to maintain it from her SODC fund, but asked the Committee to adopt an open mind and positive attitude to what can be done at Tyne Avenue. She hoped that in the future the land could become an attractive green space, possibly landscaped with design input from the school and local residents.

AP addressed the Committee on a number of matters, opening with the verge along Tyne Avenue. She asked if Council Officers had been in communication with Didcot Town Football Club, noting this information had not been included in the reports for the meeting. She noted that it was a shame to stop cutting the land and that the problems caused by a lack of insurance were unfortunate, asking if SODC, who cut verges at Bowmont Water, could simply continue down Tyne Avenue and made the Committee aware she had a solution to the issues caused by the trees, if members would like to hear it at a later date.

Regarding the General Power of Competence, which had been the subject of communication with Councillors and Officers, AP asked if a way to use this to give the Town Council the power to undertake work on the land had been found? If it hadn't, she asked if the Town Council could require either Oxfordshire County Council or SODC to carry out the work.

Regarding the progress report, AP noted concerns that it was incomplete and incorrect in certain aspects, detailing these as follows:

She was concerned that no report updating the Committee on progress with the matters at Tyne Avenue was included.

That the Officers were not clear which the first bus shelter to be installed by the Town Council had been, she clarified that it was on Cow Lane in Ladygrove.

That one item on the progress report regarding bus shelter installation referred to the wrong agenda item.

That no date had been included for the installation of the end panel to the bus shelter adjacent to the cinema on Station Road, making the statement unclear. She also requested that this item refer to it being the subject of a residents' petition.

That the location of the bus stops as provided to the Council Officers by Oxfordshire County Council was incorrect.

Further AP asked if the reason for the removal/deactivation of the real time indicator signs on Clear Channel owned/operated bus shelters could be established by the Council.

Finally, she requested that the Committee alter the order of the agenda to take agenda items 6 (the Outdoor Services Manager's report), 11 (Bus stop locations) and 14 (the report into the installation of bus shelters) before other items.

EB had asked to address the Committee but reported that she had discussed the matter with the Clerk and OSM outside the meeting and was content the matter was being dealt with.

60. APOLOGIES

None were received.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No member declared a pecuniary interest in any item on the agenda.

62. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald, seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and **RESOLVED** to agree the minutes of the 18th November 2019 as a true and correct record and that the Chairman sign them as such.

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr D Rouane to amend the order of the agenda items in line with the request from the member of the public.

63. TO NOTE THE OSM'S REPORT

The OSM (OSM) reported that it appeared one of the New Road allotment holders was sleeping rough at the site, either in a van parked in the carpark or in the shed erected on his plot. This had been brought to the attention of the Housing Needs Manager at SODC. The vehicle had been reported as abandoned to SODC and they would remove it within 14 days of the report. Further, the OSM reported that he had informed the individual that to retain his rented allotment plot, he would have to provide proof he was a Didcot resident with a fixed address, as required by the regulations.

A broken piece of play equipment at Edmonds Park was highlighted. The equipment had been in place for approximately 12 years. It had been cordoned off and repair/replacement of the affected parts had been investigated. The OSM had also investigated a like-for-like replacement. He reported that manufacturer replacement parts or a like-for-like replacement were not available, the supplier no longer trading in the UK. A similar replacement piece of equipment would cost up to £16,000.

Cllr A Macdonald asked if there was a timescale for this work to be completed. The OSM reported that investigation of parts were ongoing and that progress would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

Cllr A Hudson stated he considered a full replacement to be the best option. The OSM noted that no budget had been allocated specifically for this work. It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Hudson to consider the cost of replacement at the next meeting of the Committee.

Cllr A Thompson requested that bee-friendly flowers be included in the item on wild-flower planting at the next Allotment Liaison meeting.

The Committee approved the following events:

- Perry Hatwell fun fair at Ladygrove Park from 3rd to 15th March 2020. The fair would be open for 7 days only, from, 6th-8th and 12th-16th March 2020, all members agreed.
- The Great Western Society's use of Ladygrove Park for car parking on the 31st May 2020, all members agreed, noting that if the ground was waterlogged, the Society would need to be told permission had been withdrawn.
- Armed Forces Playday, Edmonds Park 20th June 2020. Cllr M Walsh noted her objections to the event in principle, Cllr A Macdonald reported that the event had been well attended in previous years. The OSM reported that the event was operated in conjunction with the Oxfordshire Play Association. Five members voted in favour of the event taking place, one member against and one abstained.
- DTFC Youth Annual tournament, Edmonds Park 13th and 14th June 2020, all members agreed.

- Annual charity 5 mile charity run, Ladygrove Park, Sun 5th July 2020, all members agreed.
- Perry Hatwell funfair at Edmonds Park from 15th to 19th July 2020, with the fun fair being dismantled on the 20th July 2020, all members agreed. Cllr D Macdonald noted that conditions regarding night-time closure of the fair should be in place.
- 21. Town Fair Edmonds Park 1st August.

Ladygrove Lakes: Cllr D Rouane sought an update on the possibility of working with the local wildlife trust. The OSM reported that the surface of the large lake was still approximately half a metre low and that the solar powered pumps had not yet been received, though they had been despatched.

Cllr D Macdonald noted that the Working Group were planning on reopening the lakes to fishing in 2020, Cllr C Wilson considered the issue was safe access but that the Fishing Club were willing to use the remaining pegs and the bank, on the understanding that the work to improve water quality and levels would have to be complete first. Cllr A Macdonald noted that fish stocks would have to be checked and the lake restocked if necessary.

It was proposed by Cllr M Walsh, seconded by Cllr C Wilson and **resolved** to request the Environment Agency assess the lake.

Cllr C Wilson proposed and Cllr A Macdonald seconded the suspension of standing orders to enable Cllr Davies to contribute. Cllr Davies noted that the fish would need to be fed if fishermen were not ground-baiting the lake. The OSM understood this need and feeding would commence in due course.

Tyne Avenue: Cllr D Rouane proposed, Cllr A Hudson seconded and it was **resolved** to establish a working group comprising Cllrs D Rouane, A Thompson and A Hudson to investigate and where possible progress work at Tyne Avenue and report back to the May 2020 meeting of this Committee.

Cllr C Wilson noted the question of ownership was central to the issues raised.

Cllr M Walsh noted that the safety issues (the loose manhole cover and protruding metal rods at the edge of the steps by DTFC) were separate from the amenity work issues and should be dealt with immediately by contacting the relevant authorities.

All members agreed.

64. TO CONSIDER REPORT ON BUS SHELTER INSTALLATION

Cllr A Macdonald noted that, continuing from earlier reports, two locations had been identified and that there were funds in the budget in the financial years 2019-20 and 2020-21. Cllr D Rouane noted that in the future, further sites could be investigated and funds allocated annually through the budget setting process.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr D Rouane and the Committee **resolved** to, subject to the caveats set out in the report, contact Externiture to install bus shelters at the two locations as follows:

At Barnes Road, a two-bay half-sided bus shelter with seats.
 At Trent Road, a two-bay full sided bus shelter with seats.

Barnes Road

Shelter	Ends	Seat	Cost
2-bay	Half	full width with handles	£3,958 plus Civils Estimated total: £4,698

Trent Road

Shelter	Ends	Seat	Cost
2-bay	Full	full width with handles	£4,188 plus Civils Estimated total: £5,373

65. TO NOTE BUS SHELTER LOCATIONS

The PEO reported that the map was provided to the Town Council by OCC late in 2019 and gave the locations of known bus stops. Members of the public noted that it did not reflect the actual routes operated and would provide the detail for the Officers.

Cllr M Walsh noted that the hail and ride approach used across the residential areas in the south of the town was well-used and successful and it would not be progress to replace it with shelters and location-specific stops.

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

Pavilion: Cllr D Roaune requested an update on the temporary structures installed to provide storage and changing facilities for the football club at Edmonds Park. The OSM confirmed that one storage container and one container providing toilet and changing facilities had been sited on the car park.

Cllr A Hudson welcomed the re-engagement with an architect to progress the designs for a pavilion. The Town Clerk reported that a meeting had been arranged with the architect for the 23rd January 2020, the outcomes of which would be reported to members of the Committee.

Bee-keeping on allotment sites: Cllr M Walsh proposed and Cllr D Macdonald seconded a request to the Town Council Officers to research any rules and policies other small authorities or allotment associations may have regarding beekeeping at their allotment sites and provide a report for the next meeting of the Committee.

67. TO CONSIDER FORMING A TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO DRAW UP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIDCOT TOWN COUNCIL'S MARKING OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARIES OF VE DAY & VJ DAY (8TH MAY AND 15TH AUGUST RESPECTIVELY)

Cllr A Macdonald proposed, Cllr A Hudson seconded and it was resolved to establish a task and finish group to undertake this work. Cllr A Thompson offered to be in the Group. It was reported that Cllrs E Hards and P Siggers had also expressed an interest in being part of the Group. The Town Clerk noted that any funds required would need the approval of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, with £3,000 in the budget (9051).

68. TO NOTE THE SPLASH PARK PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee thanked the Officer for her comprehensive report. Cllr A Hudson commented that the planned facility was a more involved project than he first envisaged. The Committee noted that a progress update would be taken at a future meeting of the Committee.

Cllr A Thompson left the meeting (20:51).

It was proposed by Cllr M Walsh, seconded by Cllr C Wilson and **resolved** to make contact with L&G Homes as requested by Cllr Davies from the public gallery to establish what the developer planned to install in the way of leisure and play facilities and the timescales of this work.

Cllr A Macdonald believed Didcot to be a large enough town, especially with the current and proposed development, to sustain two play areas that included splash pads and whatever the outcome from the communication with L&G Homes, this project should be progressed.

69. TO NOTE PUBLIC ART DELIVERY GROUP REPORT

The Committee noted the report. Cllr A Macdonald welcomed the idea of installing information boards and mapping in or close to the Orchard Centre. Cllr C Wilson noted that this had also been planned by Sustainable Didcot. Cllr A Macdonald agreed to contact Sustainable Didcot to confirm the plans.

The Committee noted the updates to the terms of reference, which clarified the voting rights of non-elected members of the group and agreed the changes.

70. TO CONSIDER SANDPIT INSTALLATION

The Committee welcomed the report, noting that whilst the design detail had evolved from the ideas provided by the young resident, the Officer had worked with his family for approval of the ideas outlined in the report.

Cllr M Walsh noted that the edge of the sandpit could be made to resemble train tracks, a suggestion the OSM agreed with.

Cllr A Macdonald sought clarity on the available budget, which was confirmed by the OSM as being £5,000, which was available for projects at Ladygrove Park.

It was proposed by Cllr D Rouane, seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and **resolved** to seek public feedback over a two-week period, to start before the end of January 2020, as to the preferred piece of equipment. The pieces chosen by the Committee from the report were the *Wicksteed Toddler Express* and the *Wicksteed Flyer*, with a carriage provided whichever was chosen. All members agreed.

71. TO CONSIDER THE 'TREES LEAFLET'

Cllr D Rouane introduced the item to the Committee, reporting that a local Town Council had sourced a tree pack from a body such as the Woodland Trust and distributed them amongst local people at the Town's market place or other convenient location to plant in their gardens. Recipients would be asked to send pictures of the planting to the Council for a future newsletter.

Cllr Rouane proposed, Cllr A Macdonald seconded and it was **resolved** to research which organisations were still offering this service for spring 2020 delivery. All members were in favour.

72. TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY BUS SERVICE REPORT

The Committee noted the report. It was proposed by Cllr M Walsh, seconded by Cllr A Hudson and **resolved** to ask County Councillor Laura Price to address the Committee on Community Transport Projects.

73. TO CONSIDER REPORT ON BUS SHELTER ADOPTION

The Committee noted the report. The Town Clerk confirmed that there would be a cost implication to the insurance premium, which the PEO detailed as an approximately a £120 increase. Cllr A Macdonald noted that to be adopted, the shelters should be in good order. Cllr A Macdonald proposed, it was seconded by Cllr D Rouane and the Committee **resolved** to adopt the eight shelters located within the Civil Parish of Didcot.

74. FUTURE PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

It was proposed by Cllr D Rouane and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald to hold future project suggestions until the next meeting of the Committee in recognition of the current workload.

The meeting ended at 21:22 pm

Signed _____ Chairman

Date: _____