

Didcot Town Council

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## **Environment & Climate Committee (acting as a Working Group)**

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 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:**

A Macdonald (Chair)  
C Wilson (Vice Chair)  
P Davies  
A Hudson

M Walsh  
A Thompson  
P Giesberg

#### **Officers:**

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)  
Mr R Harris (Outdoor Services Manager)  
Mrs L Blake (Planning and Environment Officer [minutes])

#### **Others:**

2 members of the public attended.

### **1. To Elect the Chair of the Committee for the 2021-2022 civic year.**

Cllr A Macdonald opened the meeting and was proposed by Cllr C Wilson as the Chair of the Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Hudson and unanimously agreed.

**2. To Elect the Vice Chair of the Committee for the 2021-2022 civic year.**

Cllr A Macdonald proposed Cllr C Wilson, which was seconded by Cllr A Hudson. Cllr P Davies nominated himself as vice-chair and was seconded by Cllr P Giesberg.

The Committee voted on the two proposed vice-chairs as follows:

- Cllr C Wilson's proposal received 4 votes in favour,
- Cllr P Davies' proposal received 2 votes in favour.

Cllr C Wilson was duly elected as vice-chair of the Committee.

**3. To receive apologies.**

No member tendered their apologies for the meeting. All were present.

**4. To receive declarations of interest.**

No declarations of interest were received.

**5. To review the Environment and Climate Committee Terms of Reference.**

Cllr C Wilson and Cllr P Davies suggested changes to points 9d, 9i and 10e.

Cllr A Macdonald proposed to APPROVE the terms of reference as they currently stand, with suggested amendments due by the next meeting.

All members agreed.

**6. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2021.**

Cllr C Wilson gave an update on the Solar Streets Initiative. 6 installations have been completed in Didcot so far, producing a 4.7 tonne carbon saving. This has resulted in a £300 donation into the Community fund. Appleford and Culham are due to join the Initiative.

Cllr C Wilson requested an update on page M13, item 103, the Table Tennis Tables. The Town Clerk confirmed that these had been delayed but that SODC had confirmed installation before the Summer Holidays in the following locations: Edmonds Park, Ladygrove Park and Great Western Drive opposite the barracks.

Cllr A Macdonald proposed, Cllr A Hudson seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting and note them as such.


All members agreed.

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

The Committee heard the updates for each item as listed on the following 3 pages.

Action	Topic	Responsible	Rating	Meeting 15.03.2021	Meeting 17.05.2021
Bus shelters	Installation of an end panel following petition	Officers	Green	The end panel has been promised to happen very shortly, but we do not have a date yet.	<p>The end panel has been installed.</p> 

Tyne Avenue		Councillors	Amber	Cllr Hudson was confirmed as a member of the working group.	There has been no further progress to report.
Bus Shelter on Avon Way		Officers	Amber	It was confirmed to investigate suitable locations along Avon Way.	The PEO will be meeting a representative from Externiture 13 <sup>th</sup> May – an update will be available prior to the meeting.
Edmonds Park Play equipment		Councillors	Amber	The matter was addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's Report.	The matter is addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's report.
Edmonds Park Pavilion (demolition)		Officers	Amber	The matter was addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's Report.	The matter is on the agenda for information.
Edmonds Park Pavilion (construction)		Officers	Amber	The matter was on the agenda to be considered.	Working group needs to be set up.
Edmonds Park Splash Pad		Officers	Amber	There was no further progress to report.	Working group needs to be set up.
Ladygrove Sandpit		Officers	Amber	There was no further progress to report.	The matter is addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's report.
Community Transport (Cllr L Price)		Officers and Councillors	Amber	There was no further progress to report.	There has been no further progress to report.
Bus Shelter adoption		Officers	Amber	There was no further progress to report.	There has been no further progress to report.
Metal Shelters		Councillors	Amber	No progress to report.	There was no further progress to

in Edmonds Park					report.
Creation of 'wild' areas of the Town Council's parks		Councillors	Amber	This matter was addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's report.	The matter is addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's report.
Changing colour of the dog bins in the area, to green		Officers	Amber	No progress to report.	There has been no further progress to report.
Installation of Notice board at Cornber Stone		Officers and Councillors	Amber		License has been granted to fix the notice board to the wall.
Completing the path on Stubbings Land		Councillors	Amber	The matter was addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's report.	<p>The path has been completed.</p> 

As agreed at the last Committee meeting a Working Group was suggested to be set up to investigate and explore all the reports, plans and quotes for various groundworks, which had been received for the new pavilion. The group would consist of 2 members from the Environment and Climate Committee, 2 members from the Property and Facilities Committee and 2 members from the Finance and General Purposes Committee (with a maximum of 8 members in total – depending on skill set). One of the main tasks of the group would be to determine if there could be savings made by combining the groundworks for both the pavilion and the splash park.

The Town Clerk explained that the working group would benefit from the professional knowledge of members who have experience in this matter.

Cllrs A Macdonald, A Hudson and P Davies expressed their interest in joining this working group.

Cllr M Walsh proposed that each Committee select their members to be put forward for the working group. Cllr P Giesberg suggested that Full Council make the final decision on members, depending on the skill set.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr P Davies, and **RESOLVED** to submit the members names to Full Council to join the Pavilion and Splash Park Working Group.

Cllr C Wilson suggested taking the 'Community Transport (Cllr L Price)' from the Environment and Climate Committee and give it to the Traffic Advisory Group at their next meeting. This was agreed.

The Town Clerk confirmed that a licence had been granted to fix a notice board to the wall by Cornerstone Theatre, which should mean that no planning permission is needed. She informed the Committee that they would need to research what type of board is needed and work in partnership with Sustainable Didcot, who will be using the notice board to publicise their green projects. She also said that Didcot Garden Town could be interested in the notice board space too.

## **8. To consider the Outdoor Services Manager's report.**

The committee noted the Outdoor Services Manager's report, as follows:

### Allotments

Vehicles are now permitted onto the allotments if the conditions remain dry.

Damage had been caused on the Cockcroft allotment site and requests had been received to repair the area using gravel and stone. This would cost £1200.

Allotment rules state that drivers will be held responsible for any damage caused to the grass on the allotments.

Cllr P Davies confirmed that the new allotment rules hold allotment tenants responsible for the damage caused to the ground by their vehicles.

The Committee decided to use materials already at hand and not pay out for the repairs. All members AGREED.

Plots have been cleared as quickly as possible and relet to new tenants.

The OSM requested that the Committee consider allowing his team to install compost 'bays' on the New Road allotment at a cost of £2200 plus VAT, which will save on green waste disposal fees.

Cllrs M Walsh and C Wilson fully supported the idea.

Cllr A Macdonald proposed, Cllr A Hudson seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to allow the Outdoor Team to install the compost bays at a cost of **£2200 plus VAT**.

An allotment tenant had requested to be allowed to keep quails on his allotment.

Cllr A Macdonald suggested that the number of quails be limited to the same as hens (maximum of 6). All members AGREED.

The subject of keeping bees on the allotments was discussed again. Many Councillors agreed that it was sensible to allow bees, due to Didcot Town Council declaring a Climate Emergency, although strict rules and regulations would need to be in place first, but alternative locations within the town should be considered.

Cllr M Walsh suggested looking into the different type of bees and the qualifications that beekeepers should hold before Didcot Town Council allow them on the allotments. Cllr C Wilson suggested using the 'tiny forest' locations as potential sites and the OSM suggested the wild meadow area at Mowbray Fields (agenda item 11) would be a more suitable location to keep bees.

It was proposed by Cllr P Davies, seconded by Cllr A Macdonald, and **RESOLVED** to submit a draft Bee Policy to the next Committee meeting for consideration.

Installation of insect hotels were also discussed for the allotments and other appropriate sites.

A New Road allotment tenant had been evicted from the site. Didcot Town Council had to employ a Hazardous Waste Team from Grundons, to clear the allotment due to corrugated roofing sheets containing asbestos being left on the plot. This resulted in a cost to the Council of £783 plus VAT.

### Edmonds Park

Football has returned to Edmonds Park.



Complaints had been received from residents regarding anti-social behaviour from teenagers near to the pavilion. The OSM filed a complaint on behalf of the Town Council, to Thames Valley Police ref: INC/20210409/0811 for damage and vandalism to the pavilion. This prompted the Police to carry out extra patrols around the park.

### Loyds Rec

The pitches have been marked for football to re start.

### Edmonds Park Pavilion

The old building is still fenced off for safety reasons.

Demolition has been approved and the contract has been awarded. The work is due to start from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

### Play Areas

ROSPA Inspections have been carried out. Quotes for repairs which cannot be undertaken by the Outdoor Team have been requested. The Zip wire in Ladygrove Park needs replacing and has been dismantled for the time being due to it being unsafe. The quote received to replace this, was £1589.40 (plus VAT).

The climbing tower needs relocating due to excessive flooding when it rains. The cost of removing and relocating the HAGS MPU TOWER to higher ground, had been quoted at £14940.10. The base of the tower will be a bonded rubber mulch, quoted at £7450.19.

The sandpit also needs to be installed. The same company has quoted for the sandpit at £6379.38 (plus VAT) with an additional cost for the train.

The OSM suggested combining the 3 projects to potentially make a saving.

Cllr A Macdonald and Cllr P Davies suggested the OSM investigate external funding for this, in particular from FCC Community Action Fund (formally WREN) [www.leapwithus.org.uk/funding](http://www.leapwithus.org.uk/funding).

It was **RESOLVED** to carry on asking companies for quotes individually and as a group project and to put the project out on to the Government Contract Finder, as it would exceed £25,000.

The Committee agreed to the safety training as long as it is within budget.

### Cemetery

The restriction on 30 mourners allowed at a graveside was lifted on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

A memorial application had been received for a 120cm in length Acaia Wooden bench, which was APPROVED by the Committee.

Cemetery Rules and Regulations will be reviewed this year.

### Ladygrove Park open space

The OSM provided the Committee with a Football Pitch Drainage Assessment Report for Ladygrove Park, written by the Grounds Management Association.

The report consisted of options to bring the ground up to playing standard. The quotes ranged from £40,000-£194,000.

Cllr P Davies explained that the idea of creating pitches on Ladygrove was to give the teams who play at Edmonds Park somewhere to play, while the new pavilion was being constructed.

The option of installing a 5G pitch was discussed but members did not like the idea of fencing the area off, as it is frequently used by residents for many types of sports and socialising.

Cllr A Macdonald suggested the decision as to whether to 'make good' Ladygrove Park should be decided at Full Council.

It was proposed by Cllr A Thompson, seconded by Cllr P Davies, and **RESOLVED** to postpone this item until the next Committee meeting, in order for Officers to gather more information.

### Ladygrove Mounds

It was **AGREED** by the Committee to allow the Outdoor Team to continue to treat the hemlock on the mounds at a cost of £1080 (plus VAT).

### Ladygrove Lakes

Areas have been cut back around the lakes in preparation for the spring/summer season.

Chicken wire has been installed around the island to restrict Canadian gees from settling and laying eggs.

The Diffused Aeration System has been slightly delayed, due to the Suez Canal blockage. The Heathland Group have reordered the parts needed and they will be flown over to complete the platform, ready to be installed mid-May.

### Broadway Flower bed

The seeds have been spread in the Wildflower beds on the Broadway.

### Sustainable Didcot

The OSM informed the Committee that he had found 5 possible locations in the town for a potential Tiny Forest. These were 3 locations in Edmonds Park, 1 in Loyd Recreation Ground and 1 in Ladygrove Park. He had received quotes of £250 for maps of these locations by external companies.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the Council does have a licence with Pears Mapping. It was agreed that training could be undertaken on this software by Officers, to utilise this service.

The OSM explained that the forests are planted for free by Earth Watch, however, the Town Council would need to follow their guidelines.

### Stubbings Land Footpath

The footpath at Stubbings Land has been completed.

Members of the public had contacted Didcot Town Council requesting that a gate or barriers be installed to deter motorcycles using the path.

Cllr P Davies explained that installing staggered barriers and other blocking contraptions would be illegal when considered with Section 20 of the Equalities Act and that a simple bollard would be the only option.

Cllr C Wilson agreed and suggested that the OSM contact the residents that had been in contact, to explain the reasoning behind the decision.

Cllr A Macdonald suggested putting signs up to say motorcycles are prohibited from using the pathway.

The Committee **AGREED** to installing signs at Stubbings Land.

### Willowbrook Centre

The Outdoor Team continued to maintain the outside of the building.

The Team noticed graffiti on the building, which could not be removed with the usual graffiti wipes used by the Team. A new graffiti removal kit had been ordered.

### Tyne Avenue

The ownership of Tyne Avenue is questionable, and Didcot Town Council will need to decide if they want to take on the land.

The OSM had received quotes for the works needed at Tyne Avenue. These were:

- Tree Works - £1500 plus VAT and this will need to be carried out every 3-5 years

- Drain cover work and repairs - £2704.99 plus VAT
- Repairing the steps and to fix a handrail - £9484.00 plus VAT
- Repair the Macadam (tarmac) - £415.25 plus VAT

Cllr P Davies expressed his concern as the quotes seemed high in his opinion. He suggested the OSM try to gather more quotes. The OSM explained only one out of the five companies he had contacted, had returned with a quote.

Cllr A Macdonald suggested that the decision whether to take on the land at Tyne Avenue or not, should be made by Full Council. All members **AGREED**.

### Events

Hatwell Funfair had requested the following dates for 2021:

- Edmonds Park  
Arrive Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021  
Open Friday 9<sup>th</sup>- Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July  
Close Tuesday & Wednesday for deep cleaning and assessment of measures  
Open Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>-Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July  
Leave Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Total trading days = 8

Income to DTC £2,000

The Committee noted that this event would conflict with the 'Play in the Park' event already organised for the same weekend, by Sustainable Didcot and Play to Give.

It was **AGREED** to not allow Hatwell Funfair the use of Edmonds Park that weekend.

### Tree Works

The OSM was awaiting quotes for the removal of a Cherry Tree in Mereland Road allotments. Two other trees in the Cemetery need work carrying out, but due to nesting birds, this has been delayed.

### Staffing

The Outdoor Team have had their appraisals.

The Team have undertaken Health and Safety at Work, Manual Lifting at heights and First Aid at work training.

ROSPA training needed updating. The Committee **AGREED** this could be carried out.

The OSM explained that to temporarily close the roads for the Remembrance Parade in November, two members of staff (ideally) would need to be Highway trained to do so.

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council does have a Royal British Legion budget that this cost could be taken from. It was AGREED to investigate the cost of the training.

The OSM had attended a ICCM Cemetery Management and Compliance course.

The Outdoor Team have been supplied with new uniform.

### Tools

Hand tools had been purchased for the 2021 season.

The OSM had not managed to find the correct size for the Yard Door Mat online but will continue to look for one.

### Vehicles

The OSM explained that the DVLA are still delaying the trial of the second electric vehicle, from Etesia, due to not being able to categorise it yet.

Once that has been completed, the Outdoor Team will be able to trial this vehicle.

## **9. To note the update of the demolition of the pavilion in Edmonds Park.**

The PEO confirmed that official approval had been received from South Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of the old pavilion to take place from 1<sup>st</sup> June, providing that:

- No works audible beyond the site boundary are to take place other than between the hours of 0730 and 1800 (Monday to Friday), 0800 to 1300 (Saturday) and at no time on Sundays or public holidays.
- That a Tree Protection Zone is erected around the large Oak tree next to the pavilion, prior to commencement of work. No personnel, equipment or machinery is allowed within the zone.

Clarification would need to be sought from SODC regarding the provision 'Bats Informative – Short' at the end of the delegated report from SODC.

## **10. To consider whether to formally request that OCC and SODC consider installing extra rubbish bins in 2 locations in Didcot.**

The Town Council had received a request from Cllr P Davies to ask the Committee to formally request that OCC and SODC consider installing extra rubbish bins in 2 locations in Didcot.

Position 1. Thames Water had removed a bin from its location on Mersey Way/Plym Drive whilst work was carried out. Cllr P Davies had requested the company reposition the bin nearer to the bus stop, without any success.

Position 2. During the lockdown steps allowing children to meet again outside, local children had taken to using the 'Informal Play Area – Plym Drive/Ray Court/Jordan & Foudry Close' to play football. Cllr P Davies explained that while it is positive to see children making use of the space, litter can accumulate due to there being no bins in the area.

It was proposed by Cllr P Davies, seconded by Cllr A Macdonald, and **RESOLVED** to formally request that OCC and/or SODC consider installing new bins in these two locations, or to consider relocating the existing bins in the areas.

All members agreed.

**11. To consider the request from Sustainable Didcot to support extending the wild meadow area in Mowbray Fields, Didcot.**

A request had been received from Sustainable Didcot and HUGS asking for Didcot Town Council's support in requesting that SODC consider extending their Wild Meadow area in Mowbray Fields.

Cllr A Macdonald proposed, Cllr M Walsh seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to support the proposal.

**12. To consider a potential encroachment on Town Council owned allotment land.**

The Committee considered the report.

Under the Allotments Act of 1925 and 1950, a local authority cannot sell, or dispose of allotment land, for any purpose other than use for allotments. It was agreed that the Town Council would fully investigate the boundaries starting with the HM Land Registry.

The Committee noted that allotment land cannot be disposed of without the consent from the Secretary of State.

It was **AGREED** that Officers would investigate the ownership of the land by contacting the Land Registry. It was **AGREED** that legal advice would be sought.

**13. To note the proposed locations for new bus stops on Park Road, Didcot – in relation to the introduction of a new services once the Larch Drive Bus Gate is available.**

The Committee noted the proposed locations for the new bus stops on Park Road.

**14. To note the update on the suitability of the locations for a Bus Shelter along Avon Way, Didcot.**

The Committee considered the locations shown in the report.

Ownership of the land would need to be clarified and permission granted.

Cllr P Davies stated he had copies of the ownership of the land which showed that the land at this location belongs to SODC in his opinion and would forward the plans he had to the PEO.

Cllr M Walsh suggested the Committee confirm the location and shelter prior to any investigations.

The Committee agreed that the most central, sensible, and beneficial location for Ladygrove residents, would be the bus stop location at Avon Way/Brunstock Beck

The Committee **RESOLVED** to install a 2 full panel bus shelter with additional seating, off the pavement at a cost of **£5393.36** plus the extra cost of the seating **£340.20** exc. VAT.

It was **RESOLVED** that the PEO apply for permission from the landowner once verified, to install this new bus shelter.

**15. To consider potential climate related improvements to Willowbrook**

Cllr P Davies explained that Didcot Town Council needs to act to support the Climate Emergency already declared. The Willowbrook building would be a sensible place to implement changes to help climate change, for example, as it has a large, southern facing roof which would be ideal for solar panels.

Cllr A Macdonald suggested that the Properties and Facilities be the best Committee to drive these actions forward. Cllr P Davies asked that the Committee consider recommendations to the other Committees.

Cllr M Walsh suggested that the Environment and Climate Committee recommend that the Properties and Facilities Committee and this as an item to their next agenda, when looking at Willowbrook.

All members agreed.

**16. To discuss the circular economy principle of buying with limited embedded transport miles in products**

Cllr P Davies requested that the Committee agrees to the Town Council promoting the circular economy principle, by advertising local shops, such as local farm shops, local vineyards, the Etsy shop, and Oxfordshire Wood Recycling as some examples.

It was **AGREED** that the PEO would work with the Events and Communications Officer to advertise local businesses on the website.

**17. To consider promoting active travel to Didcot**

Cllr P Davies expressed his desire for the Town Council to promote active travel to and in Didcot. He suggested asking Developers, Didcot Garden Town, the District and County Council to actively seek opportunities to involve and improve walkways,

Cllr M Walsh suggested requesting an update from Didcot Garden Town on their plans to improving bus routes, cycle paths and walking routes. Cllr A Macdonald agreed.

Cllr P Davies informed the Committee that the Didcot Garden Town were holding an open forum on 24<sup>th</sup> May. Members were invited to attend as Didcot residents.

Cllr C Wilson informed members of the Committee of the upcoming Town & Parish forum meeting which was due to be held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May 6-8pm.

**The meeting closed at 21:55**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_