

Environment Committee

Monday 16th September 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 Macdonald (Vice-Chair)
C Wilson
M Walsh
D Rouane
A Thompson
A Hudson

Officers: Mrs J Wheeler
Mr T Rudge (Outdoor Services Manager)

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

Public Participation

No one wished to speak.

31. Apologies

None

32. Declarations of interest

None

33. Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2019

Following a lot of amendments, it was RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the 15th July 2019 as a true and correct record and that the Chairman sign them.

The amendments were as follows:

- The terms “bees” should be changed throughout the minutes to state either “bee-keeping” or “bee hives”.
- Minute 20 - spelling of Cllr D Rouane’s name and spelling of Cllr D Macdonald’s name.
- Minute 28 – delete the word “including”
- Minute 29 – delete the Twin Town Poland from the Flag Flying shedule

34. Questions on the Minutes as to the progress of any item

It was established that information was still awaited regarding the idea of bee-friendly bus shelters. The Councillors comments that the idea was to use a bus shelter owned by the Town Council as Clear Channel were not likely to be interested.

35. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND BUDGETS

- i) The Committee considered a report on the financial statements and budgets to 31st August 2019.
 - It was clarified that the sum of £750,000 on 32524 should be removed as we do not have a grant for this sum. F&GP are likely to do this at their next meeting.
 - Cllr A Macdonald queried 90025 Election Fund and whether this was the right Committee.
 - It was noted that the reason fuel was over-spent was because the fuel could not be purchased in bulk whilst the Depot was being built.
 - Cllr Rouane wished to note that there would be no income from the fishing club due to Ladygrove Lakes being out of action.
 - Clarification was sought for 32597 Pavilions Project with £39,000 – it was confirmed to be monies towards the architect’s or professional fees.
 - Cllr Rouane queried the GDPR monies at £12,460 and whether this could now be released. The Town Clerk would see whether there was any further work planned.
 - The Depot Fund 90015 – it was confirmed that a full report on this over-spend would be considered at the next meeting of F&GP Committee.

The report was **NOTED** by the Committee.

- ii) The Committee considered the draft budget for 2020-2021. A spread sheet had been circulated with most cost centres being increased by a generic 3% as the predicted level of the RPI for December 2019. However other cost centres had been altered by the Town Clerk and detailed in a separate report. The Chairman went through the draft budget:
 - Salaries were discussed but it is difficult to know when the discussions with the unions will be resolved regarding the national pay award.
 - It was noted that now the Depot is finished – fuel costs will be more stable.

- Future costs of Ladygrove Lakes were noted and the Committee assume that the issues of the lakes will be resolved before the end of the financial year.
- The Committee wished to spend more on the Millennium Wood. Tony Rudge confirmed that money needs to be set aside to carry out thinning works in the woodland. A report would be brought to the next meeting. This would be a good project for a volunteer group – “Friends of Millennium Wood”.
- More investment is needed for the up-keep of the play areas. We are also struggling to get parts from Europe.
- The cancellation of the hanging baskets has seen the Council spend far less on plants.
- Cllr Walsh proposed putting in more trees. The wide verges do not belong to the Town Council. Cllr Rouane suggested planting on land owned by DTC first. Tony Rudge reported an increase in vandalism in Edmonds Park at the moment.
- Footpaths are under the jurisdiction of SODC.
- Security in Edmonds Park was needed. The Committee noted that it costs around £500 per tree to remove and around £150 in labour.
- 3159 – new verge cutting contract is increased from the last contract @ £24,400
- 325 projects – bring the list to the next meeting – preferably costed.
- It was confirmed that the £10k for bus shelters is part of a rolling programme.

36. OUTDOOR SERVICES MANAGER’S REPORT

Councillors noted the Outdoor Services Manager’s report including an up-date on the Ladygrove Lakes. A number of issues were raised in relation to the report.

Wildflower planting – it was confirmed that we will need signage for the planting. Cllr Rouane wanted to do some education to show what it will look like.

Ladygrove Lakes

Cllr Wilson spoke to the report prepared by Tony Rudge. The working group has been concentrating on the water in the first instance. A lot of research has been done and various options have been put forward by the SODC engineers. The reality is that someone needs to care for the lakes on a regular, daily basis.

Work on the water quality is on-going. At the present we are pumping from the culvert but only for two hours a day. Tony Rudge has concerns over the safety of the smaller lake which is silt and quite dangerous to children in particular.

Tankers to get water into the small lake would cost around £1k per day. The Committee need to make a decision. Cllr A Macdonald was concerned about the long term viability of buying the water in by tanker to fill the lakes.

Under Standing Order 97g – proposed by Cllr D Macdonald; seconded by Cllr A Macdonald to allow Cllr Davies to speak as he is part of the Working Group. Cllr Davies spoke about the problems over the lake – there is no inlet and so the lakes

dry out very quickly. There are still some fish in the small lake but the majority are now in the large lake. It is possible to move the fish from the small lake to the larger lake because both lakes are afflicted with contamination.

It was agreed that we would continue to pump from one of the manholes; move the fish into the larger lake and authorise a sum to tanker water and see what the result is. This would be for no longer than a few days. If the small lake cannot be rescued – the working group and the Environment Committee would decide what could be done with it.

It was proposed by Councillor D Macdonald; seconded by Councillor D Rouane RESOLVED to release up to £5k to tanker water in the short term to the larger lake.

The Committee agreed to amend the proposal to vire the money from code 32521 to meet the cost. It was noted that this was not considered to be a permanent solution.

Cllr M Walsh mentioned that if the lakes were resolved – a scheme for controlling the geese eggs should be considered.

37. To agree the purchase of a new vehicle and scarifier

It was proposed by Councillor D Macdonald; seconded by Councillor A Thompson RESOLVED to purchase the vehicle and scarifier. It was noted that the vehicle would save the Council money. Tony Rudge had looked at the electric versions but they are not quite ready in terms of reliability. The Council resolved to review this after five years.

38. Allotment up-date and to confirm further site representatives

There was no report on the allotment up-date but it was AGREED that Cllr M Walsh as the site representative for Mereland Road and Cllr A Macdonald would be the rep for New Road allotment.

39. Report on bee-keeping on allotments

There was a discussion on this proposal. New Road allotments have made it clear that they are not in favour. It was felt that the wild flower areas are “bee-friendly”. It was confirmed that DTC would be responsible if we gave permission. Cllr D Rouane felt that the case had not been made and there was a lot of practical work that needed to be done – and who would police it. Tony Rudge said that the preferred spot was next to a public footpath.

It was AGREED to defer this item until we have had a chance to speak to the person who wishes to keep bees and whether they would be prepared to do some of the background work to enable the Councillors to make a decision. It was also AGREED

that the Town Clerk should talk to the insurance company to see what our position is in terms of liability.

40. Up-date on the additional litterpick arrangements – Great Western Park

An up-date would be circulated to all Councillors via email.

41. Confirmation of CIL and S106 monies

The report was noted. Some of the monies need to be spent within the next 5 years. S106 is not necessary guaranteed as County may have other plans.

42. To consider the options relating to ways to progress the new pavilion at Edmonds Park and

43. To review the information about Council-owned splash parks

The Chairman decided to take these two items together. It was noted that the splash parks are not cheap to maintain but are very popular attractions. It would increase the foot fall in Edmonds Park and become a destination for Didcot residents. This would strengthen our bid for a better pavilion. It may mean that residents do not have to go out of Didcot to visit a splash park.

Cllr A Macdonald was in favour of keeping the splash park near The Wave which means residents could use the toilet facilities in The Wave and the car park. It was a conversation to have with SODC. He did not want to tie the two projects together.

There used to be a pool on that side of the park but further investigation would need to be carried out. It was noted that the disabled facilities at The Wave would be complemented by the splash park.

The other side of the park was also considered as the site for the new pavilion would be on the opposite side. Security was possibly better with the pavilion alongside Park Road.

Cllr A Hudson is in favour of the new pavilion alongside Park Road – there is a place for the pavilion and leaves more space for other sports.

It was noted that the current plans would need to be revised. It may be that the Public Works Loans Board would provide a loan to the Council. The Town Clerk spoke about how these loans work.

The Chairman wanted to also consider looking at grants. Cllr A Hudson said that building firms would be prepared to donate to the project. He also had a company that would be prepared to install the café. A tenant for part of the building may also work well in terms of security and income. A modular building would enable the Council to add on at a later stage. The tenant may have access to funding that the Council would not be able to apply for.

Cllr Rouane summarised the five decisions that need to be made:

- Installation of a splash park – yes or no
- Where the splash park would go
- Building of a new Pavilion yes or no
- Up-date of the plan but this may put the project back another year
- £39,000 in budget for preliminary work plus another £4000 from Milton Park
- Fund-raising – could launch a public appeal and fall back on the loans

The current plans are not fit for purpose due to safe-guarding purposes. Crowd-funding and the precept may also help to raise funds.

The Town Clerk suggested using the Contracts Finder website which would require a brief but does open the opportunity to more companies.

It was agreed that both projects should be progressed alongside each other. The splash park would strengthen the case for the pavilion. Cllr Hudson made the point that over ten football teams are using the park now and have a need for the changing facilities.

It may be possible to use the public art fund for the splash park but this may have to be agreed at Council.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald; seconded by Cllr D Macdonald to agree the following:

- That the Council should continue with the splash park
- Progress would take place with the intention of trying to get the park in place by next summer
- The splash park to go near The Wave. Tony registered some concerns over the tree line. Another possibility was between the junior and senior play areas.
- Ask the public art working group if this project would be considered appropriate.
- The Pavilion would progress at the same time.
- The Pavilion would have changing rooms and a multi-use area – a communal area. The café would be intermittent depending on what is happening in the park. One or two break-out rooms. Room to extend.
- The up-dated plans need to be compliant with current standards and disabled use would also be appropriate. Green credentials should also be kept in mind.

It would be worth employing a professional grant-finder. The Councillors also requested costs on a temporary building as the current Pavilion is not fit for use.

44. Response to a request for a sand pit at Ladygrove Park

A letter had been received from a very young resident requesting a sand pit at Ladygrove Park. It was agreed to get costings. It was also agreed to write back to the young resident and suggest that he draws a picture of his favourite sand pit.

45. Firework and laser show for November 2020 and which park

It was AGREED that a laser show was preferred and more environmentally-friendly. It was also AGREED to have the laser show in Brasenose Park.

46. Review of notes from the Public Art Working Group meeting

The notes were noted.

47. To consider how DTC commemorates the 75 years since VE Day in May 2020

It was AGREED that a working group to plan any celebrations.

48. To discuss the environmental tasks from the recent motion and how the work can be implemented

There was confusion as to which motion was deferred. The Chairman stated that A and B were agreed and the rest would come to the Environment Committee. Cllr Davis stated that he had re-worded the motion. There were lots of bodies already achieving sustainable swaps such as the Chamber of Commerce and Sustainable Didcot. Cllr Davies wanted the Town Council staff to write to the food outlets regarding their use of plastics and to encourage a more carbon friendly way of working.

There was concern over doubling up with Sustainable Didcot. It may be possible to link Sustainable Didcot to DTC letters. Many of the proposals were already happening. It was AGREED to put this item at the top of the next Environment Committee agenda to decide the detail.

The meeting ended at 10:20pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date: _____