

Didcot Town Council

Environment Committee

Monday 18th January 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:

P Davies.

A Hudson.

A Macdonald.

D Macdonald (Chair).

D Rouane.

A Thompson.

C Wilson.

Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler (Town Clerk)

Mr T Rudge (Outdoor Services Manager)

Mr R Harris (Outdoor Services Manager)

Mr G Langton (Planning and Environment Officer)

Mrs L Blake (Office Services Manager [minutes])

Others:

Philip Mousley (guest and co-chair of Sustainable Didcot)

Philip Mousley addressed the Committee as co-chair of Sustainable Didcot.

Sustainable Didcot would like to increase the amount of renewable energy used in Didcot and would like to propose that Didcot Town Council endorse the 'Solar Streets Initiative' and allow them to use the Town Council's logo on advertising the scheme.

Solar streets is a community project partnership with IDDEA delivering low cost solar photovoltaic installations to whole communities. It requires orders from groups of 10 homes within Didcot, to install solar panels. The idea is 'bulk' buying is cheaper. One energy supplier had already signed up to the scheme. Sustainable Didcot had already had 18 people show interest.

£50 from each installation is returned to the community through a Community Benefit Fund. This could be used by community groups or the Town Council, to the benefit of the residents in Didcot.

Other Councils have supported the initiative in the past.

Mr Mousley confirmed that Sustainable Didcot would proceed with the initiative regardless of endorsement from Didcot Town Council.

Cllr P Davies asked what financial commitment the endorsement would cost Didcot Town Council. Mr Mousely confirmed there would be no financial commitment.

Cllr A Thompson spoke of his reluctance at endorsing private firms.

The Town Clerk said that the Town Council could endorse the initiative in principle as part of its declaration to support the climate emergency.

It was agreed to discuss further at minute 83.

77. To receive apologies.

No member tendered their apologies for the meeting.

78. To receive declarations of interest.

Cllr D Macdonald declared that as a member of Sustainable Didcot, she had an interest in agenda item 7 (minute 83), the green strategy of Didcot, which would include the request from Philip Mousely regarding the Solar Streets Initiative, in the discussions.

79. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th November 2020.

Cllr D Macdonald proposed, Cllr A Hudson seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to the following amendments:

- To add the action 'remove temporary fencing at Ladygrove Lakes' to the action progress report from M12, item 74.
- Remove 'Thame Parish Council' and add 'Thame Town Council' to item 69.

All members agreed.

80. Questions on the minutes and review the progress report.

Cllr C Wilson informed the Committee that she had not purchased duck food for the Ladygrove Lakes but would do so as soon as possible.

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

Action	Topic	Responsible	Rating	Minute 16.11.2020	Minute 18.01.2021
Bus shelters	Installation of an end panel following petition	Officers	Amber	No progress although the Town Clerk is liaising with Clear Channel.	The Town Clerk and Planning & Environment Officer reported that pressure had been maintained on Clear Channel, the owners of the shelter.
Tyne Avenue		Councillors	Amber	Cllrs D Rouane, A Thompson and A Macdonald, drew up a draft terms of reference for the Tyne Avenue/DTFC working group.	The matter was on the agenda for consideration.
Edmonds Park Play equipment		Councillors	Amber		The matter was addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's Report.
Edmonds Park Pavilion (demolition)		Officers	Amber	The item was in the OSM's report for consideration.	The matter was addressed in the Outdoor Services Manager's Report.
Edmonds Park Pavilion (construction)		Officers	Amber	Working towards stage 4, Development design. Once agreed, Planning permission will be need – item in the OSM's report.	The Planning & Environment Officer reported that a topographical survey had been undertaken in early December 2020 and that the Officers awaited revised detailed drawings.
Edmonds Park Splash Pad		Officers	Amber	No progress to report.	There was no further progress to report.

Ladygrove Sandpit		Officers	Amber	Funds have been agreed	There was no further progress to report.
Tree planting in Didcot		Officers	Amber	Agreed that any 'leftover trees' from Cllr C Wilson's donation to Sustainable Didcot, be planted on DTC land.	The matter was on the agenda for consideration. It was resolved and the action completed for this Committee.
Community Transport (Cllr L Price)		Officers and Councillors	Amber	No progress to report	There was no further progress to report.
Bus Shelter adoption		Officers	Amber	No progress to report.	There was no further progress to report.
Metal Shelters in Edmonds Park		Councillors	Amber	No progress to report.	There was no further progress to report.
Creation of 'wild' areas of the Town Council's parks		Councillors	Amber	To be added to a future agenda.	This matter was on the agenda for consideration.
Changing colour of the dog bins in the area, to green		Officers	Amber	No progress to report.	There was no further progress to report.
Completing the path on Stubbings Land		Councillors	Amber	The matter was on the agenda.	This matter was on the agenda for consideration.

Implementing or improving the knowledge of recycling via Terracycle		Officers	Amber	Will progress once restrictions have been lifted. No progress to report.	There was no further progress to report.
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81. To consider the draft terms of reference of the Tyne Avenue/DTFC working group.

Cllrs A Thompson, D Rouane and A Macdonald had met to produce the draft terms of reference.

Cllr D Rouane proposed, Cllr A Macdonald seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the terms of reference of the Tyne Avenue/Didcot Town Football Club working group (appendix 1).

82. To consider the locations suitable to be planted with trees provided by Councillor Wilson.

The Committee heard that Cllr Wilson's District Councillor grant had been extended to the end of 2021. It was hoped the donation made to Sustainable Didcot to plant harvestable trees and bushes, primarily in Didcot South, would soon be used.

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald, seconded by Cllrs D Rouane and P Davies, and **RESOLVED** to allow any outstanding trees to be planted on DTC owned land.

83. To consider the green strategy paper provided by Councillor D Rouane (appendix 2).

Cllr D Rouane explained that it was important that Didcot Town Council has a Climate Strategy and Plan which should be made available for residents to view on the website, to show what Didcot Town Council are currently doing to address Climate Change. The Planning & Environment Officer explained that one of the town's officers was in the process of drafting a climate section on the website.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee of the current projects being undertaken by the Town Council. These included work at the Civic Hall; installation of solar panels, LED lights and a destratification fan. The progress of these can be shown to both members and residents.

Cllr D Rouane recommended that this approach is adopted.

Cllr D Rouane proposed, Cllr P Davies seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to present the strategy paper to Full Council and recommend it for adoption.

Cllr D Macdonald proposed, Cllr P Davies seconded, and it was **RESOLVED** to invite representatives of Sustainable Didcot and the Solar Streets initiative to present to the next meeting of the Full Council for adoption.

84. To consider the Outdoor Services Manager's report.

The Committee noted the contents of the report, as follows:

Allotments

Car parking is being restricted on New Road, Mereland Road and Cockcroft sites due to wet ground conditions. Notices have been erected to notify plot holders not to drive onto the sites.

Damage has been caused at Cockcroft where a vehicle delivering manure has left large ruts in the grass roadway. This will be filled in and made safe once the weather improves.

Play Areas

Play areas are currently open for use, subject to lockdown rules. Tennis courts and outside gyms are to remain closed. Signs are in place in the playgrounds advising compliance with 2 metre spacing.

The large climbing frame at the junior play area in Edmonds Park has been totally removed. Parts were not available to repair the equipment. The climbing frame has been out of use since March 2020, and although fenced off, children continued to climb on it, putting themselves in danger.

Cemetery

Between 1st January and 31st December 2020, we have had 31 full burials and 25 cremated remains burials.

Currently 30 mourners plus funeral staff, can attend a graveside service.

Edmonds Park

Junior football returned briefly to Edmonds Park and Loyd Park in mid-November but has stopped again during the current lockdown.

Edmonds Park Pavilion

The old building is currently fenced off for safety reasons. Demolition is being held up, due to the need to apply for planning permission for both the demolition and for placing temporary changing facilities on site.

A bat survey may also be needed due to the location of the pavilion. The electricity supply has still not been removed due to problems with Opus Energy who must remove the meter before SSE can disconnect the supply.

Ladygrove Park

Work has been carried out on the field between the tennis courts and the skate park and it will now be possible to mark out 2 junior football pitches in the area.

These pitches have not yet been allocated to any football club.

Events

Hatwell Funfair have requested the following dates for 2021, these dates are subject to Government allowing funfairs to operate:

- Ladygrove Park
Arrive Tuesday 4th May 2020
Open Friday 7th-Monday 10th May
Close Tuesday 11th-Wednesday 12th for cleaning and assessment of safety measures
Open Thursday 13th-Sunday 16th May
Leave Monday 17 May 2021

Total trading days = 8 - Income to DTC £2,000

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

Total trading days = 8 – Income to DTC £2,000

Tree Works

Oak Tree, Wheatfields, Stubbings Land. – This tree lost a bough on the 12th August 2020; emergency works were carried out to ensure broken branches were cleared away and the tree made safe. The District Council's tree officer inspected the tree and has allowed a reduction to take place and this work has now been completed at a cost of £1185. All Oak trees on Didcot Town Council parks have Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and any pruning work must be approved by the District Council's tree officer.

Staffing

The outdoor services team are currently working reduced hours and some staff are self-isolating due to either age or medical conditions.

All essential works are being carried out by the team.

85. To receive the 2021-2022 budget update.

The budget was approved at the January Full Council meeting.

86. To consider the work to maintain water quality at Ladygrove Lakes.

The generator used at the lakes, had been stolen but the Outdoor Services Manager explained that the larger lake was improving, probably because of the weather. The cost of using the generator was £6,240 annually, the cost of the gas cylinders. Due to the loss of the generator, there was no aeration activity at the lakes.

There had been some trouble with the original company who were to install the solar panel island on the lake, but a second company had been identified to carry out the work.

The company would provide a bespoke Solar Powered Diffused Aeration System using floating solar panels system, (reducing the risk of theft and vandalism) at a cost of **£17,174**. It was noted that the original quote had been £7,684.

The Committee heard that the funds could be vired from other cost centres, £10,000 could be taken from the 'Ladygrove Park and Lakes' cost centre, while the remaining could be taken from the 'Ladygrove Lake staging budget'. The staging will not be replaced in this financial year.

Cllr P Davies asked if the fencing can be moved towards the lake. The Outdoor Services Manager agreed this could be done in future.

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald, seconded by Cllr C Wilson, and **RESOLVED** to vire the money between the cost centres, as mentioned above.

87. To consider the report on the installation of a path at Stubbings Land.

The Outdoor Services Manager reported the progress on this item.

Estimates have been received for laying a path to the following specification:

120m length x 1.8m wide Bituminous base and surface course

100mm deep subbase granular material

240m concrete edging kerbs

All 3 estimates have come in above £25,000 and therefore this project has been put out to tender on the Government Contracts Finder website with a closing date of 12th February 2021.

The report was noted.

88. To consider the 'wild areas' at Town Council parks and on Council owned or controlled land.

Mr Robert Harris, the new Outdoor Services Manager, reported that progress on a new 'wildflower area' on the Broadway has been started. This would be completed in stages; Stage 1 - lift the soil and remove, Stage 2 – Rotavate and Stage 3 – Seed (usually planted in April-May). He explained that there has been positive feedback from members of the public. Cllr D Macdonald agreed reporting she had seen positive comments on social media.

Mr Harris was asked to suggest more areas to become wild areas and he gave the flower beds next to Broadway allotments as a suggestion but would consider other areas too as his knowledge of the town developed.

89. To consider the report on the Council's sourcing and use of electric vehicles and tools for the Outside Services Team.

The Outdoor Services Manager recommended that the Committee review the report, note the options available and recognise the report as an interim report into vehicle options available.

Currently the Outdoor Services have 3 vehicles and 2 tractors to addition to various mowing machine. They vehicles are:

- Nissan Cabstar (Diesel – leased)
- Ford Ranger (Diesel – leased)
- John Deere Gator (petrol – lease purchase)

The 2 tractors are owned, one a Ford with a loader bucket which is over 20 years old and will need replacing soon, and a 5-year-old Iseki. Both are diesel.

The lease on the Nissan Cabstar was originally for 4 years. This has been extended and can be extended by a further 6 months. The current lease cost is £323.36 per month, which includes maintenance and annual MOT. This totals £3880.32 per year. DTC may be able to purchase the vehicle outright, although the OSM has been waiting since mid-December for a price.

A demonstration of the electric vehicle will be shown in Edmonds Park carpark Tuesday 19th January. The members were invited to attend. The decision on whether to seek to purchase or lease an electric vehicle would be made after demonstration. This matter would return to the March 2021 meeting of the Committee.

The Outdoor Services Manager explained that Didcot Town Council are looking at replacing some of the equipment, for electric versions. This would involve the

Outdoor Team wearing a battery on their backs to power them. This means they will no longer need to carry excess fuel.

A demonstration of an electric strimmer will take place in Edmonds Park on Friday 22nd January. The members were also invited to attend. The cost of one strimmer is £3,570.

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald, seconded by Cllr A Hudson and **RESOLVED** to recommend a commitment to the purchase of at least one electrical tool, subject to successful demonstrations.

90. To consider the provision and installation of picnic benches at social distance in Council owned and controlled parks, to facilitate residents use of those green spaces.

The Planning & Environment Officer reported on this.

The Council has been contacted by residents of Didcot, asking for more socially distanced picnic benches be provided for residents use, given the ongoing restrictions related to the Coronavirus Pandemic. This would enable them to eat outside and not have to sit on grass. It was noted that Didcot did not have any benches of the type the resident described.

Cllr P Davies considered that while it was a sensible idea and the benches in the report provided wheelchair access, a pandemic was not the right time to be considering the matter. Cllr A Macdonald and Cllr A Hudson agreed.

It was agreed to bring back to a future meeting.

91. To consider the report on metal detecting on Council owned or controlled land.

The Committee was asked to consider its response to requests from residents to metal- detect on Town Council owned or controlled land.

Cllr P Davies explained that item 10 of the report (potential problems with metal detecting on any land) are easily rectified. Anyone wishing to metal detect on land owned or controlled by the Town Council, should be a member of the National Council for Metal Detecting, follow the Code of Conduct and have insurance. The National Code specifically states the rules regarding digging flaps in the soil and leaving holes. Any finds will be covered by the Treasure Act of 1996.

Areas such as Playgrounds and Football pitches were mentioned as areas to avoid.

Cllr C Wilson suggested a 'trial period' of approximately one year.

Agreements would need to be signed and the Outdoor Services Team would need to check on the detectors once they have permission. Specific dates and locations would need to be approved beforehand and a Model Search Agreement would need to be signed.

It was proposed by Cllr P Davies, seconded by Cllr D Rouane and **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that a Metal Detecting Policy be considered for adoption, which should include membership to the National Council of Metal Detecting, a Model Search Agreement and be restricted to only certain areas of Town Council land, to be agreed at a later date.

The meeting closed at 21:45.

Signed _____ Chairman Date: _____

Appendix 1 - Working Group on issues which can be addressed with Didcot Town Football Club

Draft Terms of Reference

The purpose of the working group is to communicate with DTFC to establish a good working relationship between the two bodies. In the first instance this should be limited to whether agreement can be reached on the following matters of common interest:

1. Tyne Avenue – to establish the precise area of land which could be transferred from DTFC to DTC and on what terms, and to establish the costs to the council of the transfer and maintenance of the land.
2. Access via the public footpath across DTFC land linking Ladygrove Park and Willowbrook.

Actions required:

1. Establish with the Outdoor Services Manager the estimated costs of the transfer and maintaining the land:
 - a. Fixing drain cover
 - b. Making safe the steps (e.g. fitting a handrail)
 - c. Ongoing maintenance
 - d. Tree maintenance when required
2. Gain approval from F&GP for these costs
3. Contact the football club to begin discussions

Appendix 2 - An approach to a climate strategy

Climate change is a huge issue and it is difficult to know where to start. An approach used by the climate charity Possible is to cut the problem down into 5 challenges and then think of examples of work we could do to address that challenge.

We have used the 5 challenge heading that they used but we need to refine them to fit our purposes and come up with our own examples to build into a work programme. This is best done as a collaborative exercise, say at an open session the Environment & Climate Change Committee.

Audit				
Where are we in terms of carbon usage now. We asked for an audit previously, can we see it?				
What have we already done?				
We need a list of what we have already done, or are planning to do and encourage others to do (current status)				
The challenges we face				
Where can we make the most difference				
Nature	Energy	Travel	Consumption	Planning/construction
How can we work with nature to capture carbon and mitigate the effects of climate change	How can we reduce the energy we consume and ensure that the energy use is low carbon	How can we promote low carbon travel	How can we change what we eat or buy to reduce the climate impact	How can we influence planning application process to make it more climate friendly
Things we should do				
Is it something that we have to do, can do, or should inspire others to do?				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Plant trees, hedgerows, wild plants on the land that we own Promote tree planting by residents in their gardens Set up community gardens 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Insulate our own buildings Buy our energy from green suppliers Fit solar panels Fit heat pumps Invest in community energy schemes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promote active travel within the town Promote the use of EV 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure councils purchasing policy supports reduced carbon Promote shopping locally 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Request solar panels and EV charging on all applications.

Specific Projects				
How are ideas raised, discussed and authorised?				
<p>What do we need to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important is it? • How urgent is it? When does it need to be done by? • How much does it cost? • How much work is involved? • What is the benefit (to the town and to the environment)? <p>Devise, on the basis of the answers and any contemporary issues, a system of assigning priority to each project, which will inform and monitor the progress of each programme.</p> <p>How does this get approved</p>				