

Notice of a meeting of the

Environment and Climate Committee
Monday 16th September 2024 at 7.30pm
All Saints Room, Civic Hall



Members of the Environment and Climate Committee are summoned to attend a meeting on Monday 16th September 2024 at 7.30pm, in the All Saints Room, Didcot Civic Hall.

Admission of the public and media

The Council welcomes members of the public to its meetings in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meeting) Act 1960.

Reports and minutes

We add reports and minutes to our website.

Recording, photographs, and filming

The press or public may audio-record, photograph or film meetings, or report from the meeting using social media. As such members of the public may be recorded or photographed during the meeting.

We ask that anyone wishing to record or photograph the meeting notifies the Deputy Town Clerk before the start of the meeting.

Public participation

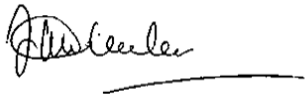
The Council welcomes the public's involvement in meetings, which must be in accordance with our rules (Standing Orders 30 - 32 on a matter before the Council).

At the relevant time during the meeting, the Chair will invite members of the public to present their questions, statements, or petitions.

To find out about participation, please email Lucy Blake, the Deputy Town Clerk, at lblake@didcot.gov.uk

Agenda

1. To receive apologies
2. To receive declarations of interests
Members are reminded to declare any interests they may have on any item on this agenda in accordance with Didcot Town Council's Code of Conduct
3. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2024 as a true and correct record **(attached)**
4. Questions on the minutes and review the progress report **(attached)**
5. To note the Income and Expenditure to date for the Environment and Climate Committee report, as updated on 5th September 2024 **(attached)**
6. To note the Outdoor Services Manager's report and recommendations to the Committee **(attached)**
7. To consider the purchase of a Playground App to aid the outdoor team with inspections report and the recommendations to the Committee **(attached)**
8. To consider the report on a potential 'Community Planting' area at New Road allotments and the recommendations to the Committee **(attached)**
9. To consider the report to permanently ban the use of chemicals by tenants, on all allotment sites, and the recommendations to the Committee **(attached)**
10. To consider the first round of budget considerations for the 2024-2025 financial year
11. To note the draft Ladygrove Management Working Group meeting notes from the meeting held on 11th July 2024 **(attached)**
12. To note the draft meeting notes from the Allotment Liaison Group meeting on 22nd August (item 12) and the recommendations to the Committee (item 12a) and to approve the proposed 2024-2025 Rent letter (item 12b) to accompany this year's invoices **(attached)**



Janet Wheeler
Town Clerk
10th September 2024

Voting members:

Cllr Gavin Roberts (Chair)
Cllr Kelly Morrison (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Stephen Cole
Cllr Zia Mohammed
Cllr Anthony Hudson
Cllr James Broadbent
Cllr Axel Macdonald

Nominated Substitute Members:

Cllr Chris Jennings
Cllr David Aragao
Cllr Hugh Macdonald
Cllr David Rouane
Cllr Denise Macdonald
Cllr Luke Hislop
Cllr George Ryall

Didcot Town Council

Environment & Climate Committee Monday 15th July 2024 at 7.30pm All Saints Room, Civic Hall



DRAFT Minutes

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

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cllr G Roberts (Chair)
Cllr K Morrison (Deputy Chair)
Cllr A Macdonald
Cllr A Hudson
Cllr S Cole

Officers:

Mrs L Blake (Deputy Town Clerk - DC)
Mr M Blake (Outdoor Services Manager - OSM)

Four members of the public attended.

11. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr J Broadbent. Cllr Z Mohammed was absent.

12. To receive declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

13. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2024 as a true and correct record

It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Cllr S Cole, and **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting, and note them as such. All members agreed.

14. Questions on the minutes and review the progress report

The Committee noted the progress report – shown on the next page.

There were no questions.

Action	Responsible	Rating	Meeting 15.05.2024	Meeting 15.07.2024
Smokefree play park signs	Officers	Amber	OCC had been contacted again at the beginning of January 2024. Schools would be contacted again to see if there was any more interest.	No more interest had been received.
Investigate costs to install chicanes/bollards at Stubbings Land	Officers	Amber	The developer confirmed in an email dated 08.05.2024 that their "Adoptions Team will need to check this with the Council due to adopt the land as we would like to help but unfortunately it is not as simple as installing something on land that won't belong to us long term". Further updates would be available in the next few weeks.	It was further confirmed by email on 4 th July 2024, that Taylor Wimpey's Technical Team would "open a discussion" if DTC's proposal "included covering all costs associated with drawing changes and ensuring areas are put back to OCC highways adoptable standards". Costings for the 'changes' would need to be factored in to any decision - these are unknown. However, it would probably be a more financially viable option to look at installing bollards on the DTC owned path, and signs on the perimeter fence – no response on this has been received yet.
CIL Grant Fund application	Officers	Amber	The Deputy Clerk received an email on 23.04.2024 to inform her that DTC had been invited to submit a full application for the sum of £175,000. The application would be sent in the near future.	The application was submitted on 28 th June 2024, before the deadline.
Fence installation by DTYFC	DTYFC	Green	No further update had been received.	This had been completed.
Dog signs for the open green spaces/parks	Officers	Amber	It was agreed to purchase signs to remind dog owners that their dogs need to be kept under control.	Signs had been ordered.

The progress report was omitted from the agenda, but the DC gave a verbal update on most items as listed.

It was proposed by Cllr G Roberts, seconded by Cllr K Morrison, and RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow a member of the public to address the Committee. All members agreed.

The member of the public addressed the Committee on their decision-making process. They wanted to ensure that members considered environmental and mental health impacts when making decisions, as opposed to just financial.

Members responded to this and confirmed that many factors are considered when decisions are made. This could be made clearer in the minutes of each meeting.

The Chair thanked the member of the public for their participation and Standing Orders were re-instated.

15. To consider the Outdoor Services Manager's report

The Committee noted the Outdoor Services Manager's report, noted the updates, and considered the recommendations.

Parks – General

The OSM updated the Committee on the progress of the new teen area in Edmonds Park – this is ahead of schedule and is due to be completed and signed off by w/c 22nd July 2024.

The newly installed sandpit and castle is already very popular and being well used. The outdoor team will continue to inspect the sand, as they do with the other sandpits, to ensure that it poses no risks to visitors.

14. Cemetery

The Committee considered the memorial bench application for the Kynaston Road cemetery. Although the bench is very different to the usual wooden style benches already in place at the cemetery, members would approve it on the condition that suitable anchors could be found.

It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Cllr S Cole and RESOLVED to approve the wood and iron bench, provided it could be securely installed at the cemetery. All members agreed.

17. Ladygrove Mounds

The OSM asked the Committee to consider hiring a robotic grass cutting machine to cut the grass on the mounds in Ladygrove. This would cost £950 (+ VAT) per week, as opposed to £1,950 (+ VAT) to hire a contractor to carry out the work.

It was proposed by Cllr G Roberts, seconded by Cllr A Macdonald, and **RESOLVED** to approve the hire of the robotic grass cutting machine at £950 (+ VAT) per week – to be taken from cost centre 332/4041 ‘Grounds Maintenance’. All members agreed.

18. Marsh Rec

The OSM confirmed that the roundabout in Marsh Recreation Ground had stopped working and needed to be repaired.

It was proposed by Cllr A Hudson, seconded by Cllr K Morrison, and **RESOLVED** to approve the £1,876 (+ VAT) cost to carry out these repairs. All members agreed.

This cost will come from cost centre 341/4045 ‘Grounds Maintenance’.

The OSM informed the Committee that the urgent remedial works taking place at the Skate Park, had been completed.

16. To consider the applications to hold events on Town Council owned and managed land report, and the recommendations to the Committee

The Committee noted the pre-approved applications and considered one application for Ladygrove Lakes.

Smallbone Rec:

a. Event Name	Ladybird Pre-School Summer Fete - APPROVED
Organiser(s)	Ladybird Pre-School
Charity or not-for-profit organisation?	Yes
Date	Saturday 13 th July 2024
Time	11am-5pm
Details	Summer fete to raise funds for the preschool to support low income and disadvantaged children.
Decision	It was RESOLVED to APPROVE this event application via email, prior to the meeting. There would be no charge.
b. Event Name	
	Picnic - APPROVED
Organiser(s)	Sustainable Didcot
Charity or not-for-profit organisation?	Yes
Date	Tuesday 23 rd July 2024
Time	12.30pm – 2.00pm (time on site – 90 minutes)
Details	Small picnic in Smallbone Park with a focus of being plastic free and environmentally sustainable. All participants will bring their own food.
Decision	It was RESOLVED to APPROVE this event application via email, prior to the meeting. There would be no charge.

Ladygrove Park:

a. Event Name	Litter bug trail - APPROVED
Organiser(s)	SODC's waste team
Charity or not-for-profit organisation?	
Date	20 th July – 11 th August 2024
Time	Anytime
Details	Open to anyone – A trail of 13 posters with waste themed questions, the answers spell out a special word that can be emailed to the waste team and the participant receives a certificate.
Decision	It was RESOLVED to APPROVE this event application via email, prior to the meeting. There would be no charge.

Ladygrove Lakes:

a. Event Name	Wildlife Trusts educational display
Organiser(s)	The Wildlife Trusts
Charity or not-for-profit organisation?	Yes
Date	Saturday 3 rd – Sunday 4 th August 2024
Time	10am – 4pm
Details	Will use display boards to promote Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. This will include advice on wildlife gardening, volunteering and membership with the Trust. They will also have information on their Childrens Wildlife Watch Club.
Decision	It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to approve this event. All members agreed. There would be no charged.

17. To consider future options for the Ladygrove Skate Park report and recommendations to the Committee

The Committee considered the options for the Skate Park.

Every member agreed that the Skate Park was a wonderful asset for the town and is very popular with Didcot residents, as well as those from the surrounding areas and felt that the facility should be replaced in the coming years.

The OSM suggested a long-term option: relocating and replacing the play equipment in the park (due to flooding in the winter months), relocating and replacing the skate park to within the play area, whilst at the same time fixing any drainage issues, then potentially look at constructing a bike track in the open green space. This work would be subject to agreement by Full Council, successful funding, planning permissions and agreement with SODC as the land is leased from the District Council.

Cllr A Macdonald suggested that any new facility should be made inclusive.

It was proposed by Cllr A Hudson, seconded by Cllr K Morrison, and RESOLVED to recommend that Full Council consider a replacement of the skate park and investigate options for the area in more detail. This will include location options, consultations, costs, and funding opportunities. Cllr K Morrison was happy to provide support on this.

All members agreed.

18. To note the Ladygrove Management Working Group meeting notes from the meeting held on 18th April 2024

The Committee noted the meeting notes.

The OSM confirmed that the outdoor team had already carried out a lot of work cutting back vegetation at the lakes, which, in his opinion, has helped the lake maintain its own oxygen levels.

The repairs to the aerator will be carried out on 31st July 2024.

19. To discuss what the Committee might wish to achieve this year and suggest ideas for future projects – deferred from last meeting

The Committee considered future project ideas:

- Bumble Bee Pods

Cllr A Macdonald asked the Committee to consider installing these on the allotment sites to encourage biodiversity.

- Investigate water for the Ladygrove Lakes

Cllr A Macdonald explained that additional water at the lakes had been an issue in the past and it was important that this continued to be investigated.

- Do not feed Geese signs for the lakes

Cllr S Cole explained that he has witnessed families feeding bread to the geese, between the lakes and this should be discouraged.

It was confirmed that there already 'do not feed the duck' signs installed at the lake, but more could be placed.

- Ideas brought forward from the Ladygrove Management Working Group

- Art Grants – to create a lake feature and/or literary trail for children
- Hedges – cut back the trees to hedge height
- Skate Park – cut back the hedges in the top corner
- Specific Ladygrove events, or events which can 'travel around' other parks

- Walking Trail to Wittenham Clumps

Cllr J Broadbent had asked for this trail to be enhanced and made clearer, at the last meeting of the Ladygrove Management Working Group.

- Pears Mapping

Ensure the software is up and running so that land ownership is clear. The Council will need to consider how to make this information readily available to residents (Long Term Plan).

- Clearing the vegetation at the polytunnel

The group discussed this and felt it could be a suitable area for community planting but would require a lot of work. Cllr K Morrison suggested asking for volunteers on social media, when the outdoor team is read to commence work.

All future projects would be tracked using the 'progress report'.

The meeting closed at 8.23pm

Signed: _____ (Chair)

Date: _____

Environment & Climate Committee Meeting 16.09.2024
Agenda Item 4 - Progress Report

Progress report			
Meeting	Item	Comments	Review date/meeting
-	Smokefree play park signs	To be 'picked back up' in September	New Estate Administrator to pick this up
-	Investigate chicanes/bollards at Stubbings Land	Taylor Wimpey will not pay for the work but may allow DTC to install at their cost (to include associated drawing costs). Should DTC consider putting something on DTC land or wait for the land to be transferred and work with the landowner?	No update received
-	Dog signs for the open green spaces/parks	Signs have been installed	N/A
-	CIL Grant Fun application	Application submitted on 28 th June 2024	When decision has been made
15.07.2024 – min 15 (17)	Hiring the robotic mower to cut the mounds	Delayed due to the outdoor team taking on the cutting of some of the verges	Due to commence mid-September
15.07.2024 – min 17	Recommend the potential relocation, replacement and investigations into the skate park and adjacent area in Ladygrove, to Full Council	Will be discussed at Full Council on 2 nd September 2024	At FC meeting 2 nd September 2024
15.07.2024 – min 18	Repair to the aerator due 31 st July 2024	This work has now been completed	N/A
Future Projects			
	Investigate water supply at the lakes	The Council investigated this in the past and many ideas were looked into	On-going
	'Do not feed ducks/geese' signs	The OSM will investigate the costs	
	Art grants to potentially create a lake feature and/or literary trail for children		
	Hedges – to be cut back at the lakes and skate park	Already part of the outdoor team's work – will be done in the winter months	
	Investigate specific Ladygrove events, or		

Environment & Climate Committee Meeting 16.09.2024
 Agenda Item 4 - Progress Report

	events that can ‘travel around’ other parks		
	Walking Trail to Wittenham Clumps	Been confirmed there is already a trail but maybe this could be improved?	
	Pears Mapping	Staff to investigate when this will become ‘live’ – additional training will be needed	New Estate Administrator to take on?
	Clearing the vegetation at the community polytunnel	Long term idea. This area could be cleared to create ‘community planting’ areas as per the motion approved by Full Council 24 th June 2024	16.09.2024 – agenda item

10/09/2024

Didcot Town Council

Page 1

09:14

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 10/09/2024

Month No: 5

Committee Report

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
<u>Environment and Climate</u>							
<u>300 Outside Services</u>							
4000 Staff Costs (Re-allocated)	23,801	128,782	328,021	199,239		199,239	39.3%
4008 Travel & Expenses	141	804	1,500	696		696	53.6%
4014 Light and Heat	120	(1,101)	0	1,101		1,101	0.0%
4015 Cleaning and Hygiene	0	137	0	(137)		(137)	0.0%
4016 Uniform/Protective Clothing	210	1,677	2,000	323		323	83.8%
4018 Waste Disposal	0	225	0	(225)		(225)	0.0%
4020 Equipment Purchase (Minor)	4	103	0	(103)		(103)	0.0%
4025 Subscriptions	0	0	150	150		150	0.0%
4042 Equipment/Vehicle Hire	615	1,774	0	(1,774)		(1,774)	0.0%
4043 Property Repairs & Maintenance	0	310	0	(310)		(310)	0.0%
4044 Maintenance Contracts	0	1,331	0	(1,331)		(1,331)	0.0%
4045 Equipment/Vehicle Maintenance	1,514	9,906	32,000	22,094		22,094	31.0%
4047 Vehicle Fuel	536	2,370	6,000	3,630		3,630	39.5%
4048 Vehicle Insurance/Licence	0	0	2,800	2,800		2,800	0.0%
Outside Services :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>26,941</u>	<u>146,318</u>	<u>372,471</u>	<u>226,153</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>226,153</u>	<u>39.3%</u>
Net Expenditure	<u>(26,941)</u>	<u>(146,318)</u>	<u>(372,471)</u>	<u>(226,153)</u>			
<u>307 Environmental Services</u>							
1061 Ground Hire Income	0	0	2,000	2,000			0.0%
1063 Sports Pitch Hire	0	0	5,000	5,000			0.0%
1180 Grass Cutting Income (OCC)	0	13,424	0	(13,424)			0.0%
1183 Bowls Club Rent	0	0	50	50			0.0%
1192 Bus Shelter Income	0	0	10,000	10,000			0.0%
Environmental Services :- Income	<u>0</u>	<u>13,424</u>	<u>17,050</u>	<u>3,626</u>			<u>78.7%</u>
4036 Grass Cutting	0	17,604	0	(17,604)		(17,604)	0.0%
4038 Hanging Baskets	0	5,248	0	(5,248)		(5,248)	0.0%
4040 Tree Management Contract	0	0	5,000	5,000		5,000	0.0%
4041 Grounds Maintenance	0	216	22,500	22,284		22,284	1.0%
4192 Bus Shelter Contract	0	0	10,000	10,000		10,000	0.0%
4193 Dog Fouling Services	569	1,907	3,200	1,293		1,293	59.6%
4194 Street Furniture Maintenance	0	814	7,000	6,186		6,186	11.6%
4195 CCTV Contributions	1,777	1,777	10,000	8,223		8,223	17.8%
99156 Tfr from EMR Grass Cutting	0	(17,600)	0	17,600		17,600	0.0%
Environmental Services :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>2,346</u>	<u>9,966</u>	<u>57,700</u>	<u>47,734</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>47,734</u>	<u>17.3%</u>
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>(2,346)</u>	<u>3,458</u>	<u>(40,650)</u>	<u>(44,108)</u>			

Continued over page

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 10/09/2024

Month No: 5

Committee Report

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
311 Allotments							
1181 Allotment Rents	118	709	15,500	14,791			4.6%
Allotments :- Income	<u>118</u>	<u>709</u>	<u>15,500</u>	<u>14,791</u>			<u>4.6%</u>
4012 Water Charges	43	(119)	2,500	2,619		2,619	(4.8%)
4018 Waste Disposal	236	236	0	(236)		(236)	0.0%
4020 Equipment Purchase (Minor)	0	23	0	(23)		(23)	0.0%
4041 Grounds Maintenance	16	260	6,000	5,740		5,740	4.3%
4043 Property Repairs & Maintenance	0	2,877	0	(2,877)		(2,877)	0.0%
4411 Allotment Competition	0	0	350	350		350	0.0%
99120 Tfr from EMR Building Repair	0	(2,877)	0	2,877		2,877	0.0%
Allotments :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>295</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>8,850</u>	<u>8,450</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,450</u>	<u>4.5%</u>
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>(176)</u>	<u>309</u>	<u>6,650</u>	<u>6,341</u>			
321 Cemetery							
1182 Cemetery Income	2,505	17,055	18,000	945			94.8%
Cemetery :- Income	<u>2,505</u>	<u>17,055</u>	<u>18,000</u>	<u>945</u>			<u>94.8%</u>
4011 Business Rates	190	946	1,950	1,004		1,004	48.5%
4012 Water Charges	0	12	1,000	988		988	1.2%
4041 Grounds Maintenance	224	447	5,000	4,553		4,553	8.9%
Cemetery :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>414</u>	<u>1,406</u>	<u>7,950</u>	<u>6,544</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6,544</u>	<u>17.7%</u>
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>2,091</u>	<u>15,649</u>	<u>10,050</u>	<u>(5,599)</u>			
330 Edmonds Park							
1061 Ground Hire Income	0	4,560	0	(4,560)			0.0%
Edmonds Park :- Income	<u>0</u>	<u>4,560</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(4,560)</u>			
4012 Water Charges	6	174	1,200	1,026		1,026	14.5%
4014 Light and Heat	89	(1,484)	1,800	3,284		3,284	(82.5%)
4018 Waste Disposal	1,981	5,354	9,500	4,146		4,146	56.4%
4041 Grounds Maintenance	1,086	5,791	10,000	4,209		4,209	57.9%
4043 Property Repairs & Maintenance	0	300	0	(300)		(300)	0.0%
4049 Security	0	0	6,000	6,000		6,000	0.0%
99138 Tfr from EMR Play Areas	(1,068)	(2,919)	0	2,919		2,919	0.0%
Edmonds Park :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>2,095</u>	<u>7,216</u>	<u>28,500</u>	<u>21,284</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>21,284</u>	<u>25.3%</u>
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>(2,095)</u>	<u>(2,656)</u>	<u>(28,500)</u>	<u>(25,844)</u>			

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 10/09/2024

Month No: 5

Committee Report

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
331 Splash Park							
4009 Training & Conferences	0	2,013	0	(2,013)		(2,013)	0.0%
4015 Cleaning and Hygiene	269	269	0	(269)		(269)	0.0%
4016 Uniform/Protective Clothing	25	223	0	(223)		(223)	0.0%
4020 Equipment Purchase (Minor)	48	431	0	(431)		(431)	0.0%
4044 Maintenance Contracts	180	180	0	(180)		(180)	0.0%
4045 Equipment/Vehicle Maintenance	0	650	0	(650)		(650)	0.0%
Splash Park :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>521</u>	<u>3,766</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(3,766)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(3,766)</u>	
Net Expenditure	<u>(521)</u>	<u>(3,766)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,766</u>			
332 Ladygrove Park							
1061 Ground Hire Income	0	0	3,000	3,000			0.0%
1062 Fishing/Lakes Income	(18)	2,231	2,500	269			89.2%
Ladygrove Park :- Income	<u>(18)</u>	<u>2,231</u>	<u>5,500</u>	<u>3,269</u>			<u>40.6%</u>
4041 Grounds Maintenance	0	3,359	12,000	8,641		8,641	28.0%
4045 Equipment/Vehicle Maintenance	0	13,300	0	(13,300)		(13,300)	0.0%
4058 Legal Fees	0	300	0	(300)		(300)	0.0%
99123 Tfr from EMR Skatepark	0	(13,300)	0	13,300		13,300	0.0%
Ladygrove Park :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>0</u>	<u>3,659</u>	<u>12,000</u>	<u>8,341</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,341</u>	<u>30.5%</u>
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>(18)</u>	<u>(1,429)</u>	<u>(6,500)</u>	<u>(5,071)</u>			
333 Loyd Park							
1063 Sports Pitch Hire	1,500	1,500	0	(1,500)			0.0%
Loyd Park :- Income	<u>1,500</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(1,500)</u>			
4012 Water Charges	0	0	500	500		500	0.0%
4014 Light and Heat	40	80	150	70		70	53.6%
4044 Maintenance Contracts	0	311	0	(311)		(311)	0.0%
Loyd Park :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>40</u>	<u>391</u>	<u>650</u>	<u>259</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>259</u>	<u>60.2%</u>
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>1,460</u>	<u>1,109</u>	<u>(650)</u>	<u>(1,759)</u>			
338 Other Parks & Recreation Areas							
4040 Tree Management Contract	0	2,600	0	(2,600)		(2,600)	0.0%
4041 Grounds Maintenance	257	727	12,000	11,273		11,273	6.1%
Other Parks & Recreation Areas :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>257</u>	<u>3,327</u>	<u>12,000</u>	<u>8,673</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,673</u>	<u>27.7%</u>
Net Expenditure	<u>(257)</u>	<u>(3,327)</u>	<u>(12,000)</u>	<u>(8,673)</u>			

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 10/09/2024

Month No: 5

Committee Report

	Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent
<u>341 Play Areas</u>							
4041 Grounds Maintenance	0	54	4,000	3,946		3,946	1.4%
4045 Equipment/Vehicle Maintenance	910	3,116	30,000	26,884		26,884	10.4%
Play Areas :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>910</u>	<u>3,170</u>	<u>34,000</u>	<u>30,830</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>30,830</u>	<u>9.3%</u>
Net Expenditure	<u>(910)</u>	<u>(3,170)</u>	<u>(34,000)</u>	<u>(30,830)</u>			
Environment and Climate :- Income	4,105	39,479	56,050	16,571			70.4%
Expenditure	33,819	179,619	534,121	354,502	0	354,502	33.6%
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(29,714)</u>	<u>(140,140)</u>					
Grand Totals:- Income	4,105	39,479	56,050	16,571			70.4%
Expenditure	33,819	179,619	534,121	354,502	0	354,502	33.6%
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>(29,714)</u>	<u>(140,140)</u>	<u>(478,071)</u>	<u>(337,931)</u>			
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(29,714)</u>	<u>(140,140)</u>					

Environment and Climate Committee 16th September 2024 at 7.30pm



Report author: Mike Blake

Outdoor Services Manager's Report

Introduction

1. This report updates the Committee on all matters regarding the Outdoor Services.

Recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to review the report, note any updates, and consider decisions and actions to be made, where required.

Allotments – General

3. The 2024-2025 allotments rents are due on 1st October 2024. Invoices will be made available a few days before this date. Staff have advertised that invoices will not be sent out again this year but have received a lot of email requests for the invoices to be emailed.
4. 8 plots across all sites have failed the annual inspection and further action will be taken. This has now gone to the termination stage.

New Road allotments

5. Unfortunately, the gate on this site has still not been fixed due to the company who were appointed not coming back to me. I will be looking for a new company to come to site and look to repairing this as soon as possible.

Broadway allotments

6. This site is the only site that is not secure and has not had a gate on it for at least 5 years. The gate was removed, I believe, due to cars blocking the pathway when gaining access to the allotment.

To ensure the site is secure in future and to deter illegal access, the solution to this would be to step a new gate a bit further back from the entrance and add a small fence for pedestrian access. I have received a quote for this work which has come in at £1,936.00 (+ VAT).

Recommendation

7. It is my recommendation to accept the quote of £1,936.00 to secure this site. The cost for this would come from cost centre 311/4041.

Cemetery

8. There have been four full coffin burials since the last meeting of the Environment and Climate Committee.
9. All the hedges have been trimmed and will get trimmed again later in the year.
10. The bench approved at the last meeting has been installed. The owner of the bench made some anchors which has enabled the team to secure it in the cemetery.

Ladygrove mounds

11. A new bench has been installed at the top of Ladygrove mound, this was done under the OSM's spending power.
12. The mower to cut the mounds has been booked in. Unfortunately, it is a bit later than we would have liked due the availability of the machine. This will be undertaken by the outdoor team and should take a week to complete. Work should commence mid-September.

Marsh Rec

13. The roundabout repair has been authorised and awaiting the part. The lead time on this was 8 weeks.

Smallbone Recreation Park

14. Travelers set up camp in Smallbone at the end of July; despite only staying a few days the clean up was still quite a large job which was carried out by the outdoor team, a

local resident and Shield who we used to dispose of the hazardous waste. At least a van full of hazardous waste (black bags full) and 5 tipper loads of green waste were removed from this site. The cost to get rid of the rubbish was under £300 but also took the entire outdoor team a day to get this site open. The playground had to also have a deep clean.

Edmonds Park

15. The newly laid turf linking the splash pad to the field and around the building has taken well. A lot of watering went into this to ensure it was ready for the splash pad opening. The rest of the ground has been seeded and we will seed again when the splash pad shuts for the season.
16. Three new picnic benches have been installed around the splash pad area.
17. The Ninja trail was completed by the end of May and has been very popular especially opening alongside the splash pad.
18. The outdoor team installed four signs warning people of the uneven surfaces of the newly uncovered memorial cross at the park, but these have been vandalised. Two are now missing, with the remaining two being stored at the depot. The team will investigate different ways to secure these.
19. Emergency tree work had to be carried out in Edmonds park due to a broken limb hanging over the pathway. The cost of this work came in at £828.00 incl vat and was authorised by the Town Clerk due to health and safety concerns.
20. The football pitches have been marked and are now ready for the coming football season. The work was carried out by an outdoor company using a GPS robot which was approved by the F&GP Committee. The Committee asked me to consider future marking and look to train more staff on the initial marking ready for next season.

The company came in and painted all the pitches across both sites in under five hours. The marking of all the required pitches takes our team a week to do. I was personally very impressed with this machine and feel that DTC should be using this in the future. The pitch plans are stored on the system so will not need to be remeasured again. Whilst I agree that it is important to train younger members of the team, which I am more than willing to do, I genuinely feel that the time saved marking these pitches using this machine, is well worth the spend. The pitches are marked with accuracy and efficiency.

Recommendation

21. It is my recommendation to use these robotic GPS machines to initially mark all the pitches each season. Other members of the team will be trained in case of urgent marking needs, however, the time saved using these machines meant that the team were able to carry out their duties, even with a skeleton crew. It is always difficult to

find the time and staff to mark the pitches at the start of the season due to staff on annual leave.

Quotes will follow.

Ladygrove Park

22. Surfacing repairs were made to the swing this is probably the last patch work that can be done. The next time were looking at a complete resurface.
23. Work to remove some of the bramble around the perimeter of the park has started to take place. This is an ongoing project that we will continue throughout the autumn.

Ladygrove Lakes

24. The work to fix the aerator has been completed. New pumps have been installed which team members can turn on and off from the bank. We have also replaced the broken solar panel.
25. I met with a resident at the lakes a few weeks back regarding their garden being overshadowed by a few trees. These will need pollarding back over the winter, and I am currently getting quotes for this work.
26. Our emergency aerator broke around the same time the solar aerator stopped working. As the solar aerator is back up and running it would make sense to have an emergency aerator to hand to use in case we have issues in the future. Investigations have proven these to be expensive, and our previous aerator was purchased from Italy. The company repairing the solar aerator informed me that they were creating their own version which would be available for purchasing soon. These would retail at £749.00 + VAT with a £30 delivery fee.

Recommendation

27. The Committee is asked to consider the price to purchase a new, emergency aerator at a cost £749+ VAT and a £30.00 delivery charge. This would be taken from cost centre 332/4041. This would be used when the oxygen level at the lakes is low (to aid the solar aerator) and in needs of an emergency.

Millenium woods

28. The fence along the back of millennium woods has been repaired this was done in house at a cost of £400.
29. I have applied to the woodland trust for 420 free tree saplings to plant around Millenium woods to replace some of the trees that have been affected by ash die back. I should

get confirmation in the next couple of weeks to let us know if we have been successful.

Other parks

30. ROSPA have been and carried out the Town Council's annual inspections. The only site to have any issues was the Skate Park, the future of which is due to be discussed at Full Council on 2nd September.

Vehicles

31. The Wessex mower has been delivered and is being used across the sites. The team are still getting to grips with using it however, so far, I believe it has saved a third of the cutting time. We have also saved money on the use of fuel as well.

32. The Alke has required more repairs due to the track rod becoming loose. It would be a good idea to seriously consider what to do with this vehicle in the future.

Staffing

33. I completed a pest course for the control of wasps and hornet's nests. I can now manage the nests personally, which will save the Town Council £80 per visit for an outside company to deal with each incident. Since completing the course, which cost £60, I have dealt with three nests.

34. Our apprentice has passed his PA1 qualification and is working towards gaining his PA6 qualification.

35. Two members of the outdoor team have completed their chainsaw cross cutting course and will hopefully move on to the tree felling course soon.

36. We are once again advertising for another Grounds person to join the outdoor team.

37. Three members of the outdoor team have been booked onto the routine play inspection course. This is taking place late September.

Environment and Climate Committee

16th September 2024

Report Author: Mike Blake



To consider the purchase of an app to aid the Outdoor Team with Playground Inspections

Introduction

1. This report asks the Committee to consider the purchase of an app to aid the outdoor team with carrying out detailed inspections of all DTC owned play equipment.

Background

2. Legally the outdoor team must carry out routine playground checks once a month which includes a visual check whenever they are in the vicinity, usually once a week whilst clearing the litter. The visual checks involve the team looking over the sites and reporting any issues to the OSM.
3. The more in depth monthly routine inspections are more in depth and involve the team going out and actively testing the equipment to make sure this is in safe, working order.
4. At the present time these checks are recorded on paper and then stored before being scanned into the system.
5. The hard paper copies are difficult for some of the team to follow as it only describes the equipment and doesn't show any visual aids. Having an app on the teams work phones would be extremely beneficial as not only would this cut down the use of paper but it would also cut down the workload and time spent on these checks. The app will show the staff a visual picture of the equipment which will ensure the right description is added to the correct piece and it also stores all the information in one space.

6. Having the app on their work phones would also enable the team to record sporadic issues. If they happen to notice something whilst carrying out other tasks, it is easy to add additional issues on the app. This is then stored and recorded and will require attention. The app will notify the OSM as soon as an item is added so that repairs can be carried out in a timely manner.
7. The app also informs staff who produces each piece of equipment, which will speed up the process of sourcing and purchasing replacement parts.
8. The phones the outdoor team members have been provided with will be able to download the app and will ensure playground checks are more efficient and accurate.
9. The app can also record the annual inspections.

Legal Implications

10. Those responsible for the management of play areas have a legal responsibility to make sure those using the sites are safe. With this in mind, playground and safety surface inspections should be carried out to EN1176 and 1177 standards.
11. DTC has the responsibility to check and maintain its parks and open spaces. The app will aid Council staff in doing this.

Financial Implications

12. The current monetary cost for the outdoor team carrying out playground inspections using pen and paper is not a lot. However, it is time consuming, and a lot of paper is used. DTC declared support for the Climate Emergency in 2019 and cutting down on paper use will help this.
13. The annual licence fee for this inspection app is £1,500.00 per year which will allow DTC to register up to 15 sites. This means we will have the option of adding to it in the future for no additional charge. It is a rolling contract with no automatic renewal.
14. In person training for using this app will be £895.00. The trainers will come to the Civic Hall and train the whole outdoor team for this price.
15. To initially set all sites up on the app could be done by the company. The cost for this will be available at the meeting. However, DTC staff can look to doing this 'in-house'.

Risk Implications

16. There is a risk with anything digital however all data will be backed up in the cloud. Risks to potential loss of documentation will be limited due to not having numerous pieces of paper.

Recommendation

17. The Committee is asked to consider the purchase of this app to aid the outdoor team with the playground checks by making them more efficient and accurate. This will be for £1,500 (+ VAT) per year. This will come from cost centre 341/4045 'Equipment Maintenance'.
18. The Committee is also asked to approve the training costs of £895.00 (+ VAT) which will come from cost centre 100/4009 'Training & Conferences'.

Environment and Climate Committee

16th September 2024

Report Author: Lucy Blake



To consider a potential Community Planting area at New Road allotments

Introduction

1. This report asks the Committee to consider potential Community Planting areas on DTC owned and managed land, specifically at New Road allotments.

Background

2. Cllr D Macdonald presented a motion to Full Council on 24th June 2024 which asked elected members to support investigations into areas which could be suitable for community planting mainly due to the cost of living crisis.
3. This motion was fully supported by all Councillors and it was resolved to agree the scheme in principle, subject to further work being undertaken by the Environment and Climate Committee and possibly the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
4. The Community Polytunnel was installed at New Road allotments and was officially opened on 19th June 2024. It is hoped this polytunnel will help the outdoor team grow plants for planting across the town and vegetables to donate to local charities, with the help of volunteers.
5. The area is available to 'hire' (free of charge) where groups can hold sessions, such as the recent 'Plant Swap' arranged by one resident on 28th July 2024. This event was very well attended and the resident has many ideas of holding similar events at the polytunnel.
6. As it stands currently, the polytunnel itself does not have a dedicated space for community groups to 'own'. The tunnel is for growing things for the town and anyone

can help with this. However, there is an area adjacent to the polytunnel which could be suitable for a community planting area.



7. A lot of work will be needed to clear this area. It would be better to install raised beds as the overgrowth would mean the soil would not be in the best condition for planting for quite some time.
8. DTC could ask for volunteers to lead the clear up, especially those who would like to benefit from the community planting area. The Council's outdoor team are currently extremely busy and the clearance could be delayed if we relied solely on them. It is hoped that should the Committee agree to this, work could be undertaken throughout the winter, ready for planting in the spring.
9. A community group could 'manage' a raised bed (plot) which would be just for them. In order to help as many of the community as possible, the beds would be a medium size so that many people can benefit – sizing and locations of these plots will be decided by the Outdoor Services Manager and Supervisor.
10. Each community group would need to maintain their plot and follow a set of rules, similar to those for the allotments. Should the plots not be managed to a decent standard, the plot could then be offered to the next community group, or interested organisation to ensure they are well worked, looked after and of maximum benefit to the community and residents.
11. Another potential area at the New Road allotment site which could be utilised for community planting is Restore's unused allotment sites.

12. Chilton Garden Centre has very kindly donated seeds for this project and they can be made available for the community groups to use on their plots. They have also confirmed that they could possibly provide compost when the need arises. A request for unwanted pallets could be made to Chilton Garden Centre to be made into the raised beds. Other companies have been approached for donations of seeds too.
13. The Events and Communications Officer is investigating constructing a 'fairy garden' in the fruit orchard which will include insect hotels. This will encourage biodiversity at the site.

Legal Implications

14. Didcot Town Council has the power to manage and control recreation grounds, public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces – Local Government Act 1972, Sched 14, para 27 and the Open Spaces Act 1906, ss9 and 10.
15. DTC has the duty and power to provide allotments – Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23.
16. Concerns were raised regarding potential usage agreements, insurance complications and liability over the protection of food at the Full Council meeting in June, so DTC would have to be mindful of this when entering any agreements.
17. DTC has a duty to consider biodiversity in decision-making – Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, s.40.

Financial Implications

18. If volunteers did help with the clearing of this area, some staff may still be needed to oversee this work and as such, it may mean staff work overtime (depending on agreed days for the work).
19. There will be costs involved with the removal of the green waste created by the clearing. However, some of this could be 'chipped' and eventually used across the allotment sites which should only cost staff time. A 'green skip' may be required to be hired to dispose of the waste. This would be a cost of approximately £300.
20. There will be costs involved for the materials needed for the creation of the raised beds. DTC could reach out to the community and local companies for donations of wood and pallets which could be used to make these. Any costs for this project can be taken from 199/4906 'Green Projects'. Fencing will be required to secure the area.
21. A peppercorn rent may need to be charged per community group, per plot.

Risk Implications

22. Cllrs have already raised their concerns regarding usage agreements, insurance and liabilities which will need to be considered.
23. Any agreements would need to be written in such a way as to make clear that there would be no transfer of the ownership of any land used for the purpose of community planting.
24. The outdoor team are extremely busy so their time will need to be factored into any decision made for this area.

Recommendation

25. The Committee is asked to consider whether this area at New Road allotments could be considered for a community planting area, and if so, allow Officers to start the initial process of planning to clear the site later this year.
26. Work on suitable agreements and plans for the creation of the beds will continue to be worked on. The Committee should decide whether Officers should approach certain community groups to gauge interest and if so, which ones.

Environment and Climate Committee

16th September 2024

Report Author: Lucy Blake



To consider implementing a permanent ban on all allotment tenants using pesticides and herbicides that require a PA1 or a PA6 licence to be sprayed on all allotment sites

Introduction

1. This report asks the Committee to consider a permanent ban on allotment holders using chemicals (pesticides and herbicides that require a PA1 and PA6 licence to be sprayed) for weed control purposes, on the allotments.

Background

2. Item 20 on the current rules for the allotments state:

Although plot holders are not required to use totally organic methods on their plots, they are to note the instructions below on the use of weed killers:

- *Where a plot is totally weed infested and the tenant wishes to deal with the problem by spraying, the tenant must contact the Council which will undertake the spraying for a fee.*
- *Limited use of shop bought weedkiller (pre-mixed, unconcentrated) is permitted to be undertaken by tenants where a limited amount of weed exists. No chemicals may be applied using a knapsack backpack sprayer or a 5-10 litre pressurised pump. If the tenant holds the PA1 and PA6 qualification and can provide proof of this to the Town Council, permission may be granted for that tenant to undertake the work themselves, provided it is not used near to any freshwater courses.*
- *All chemicals must be stored securely, in original packaging and kept in a locked shed, if left on site.*

To consider permanently banning chemicals at the allotments

3. There is one member of the outdoor team who is PA1 and PA6 qualified, with the apprentice PA1 qualified. These staff members could offer spraying of allotment plots for tenants, for an additional fee but this would be subject to staff availability. More members of the team will need to obtain these qualifications to make this service available.
4. When spraying is undertaken by a member of DTC, vigorous records are required by HSE. They include the date, exact location and amount of chemical used, time of day and weather conditions, what type of chemical was used and the name of the person using the chemicals. DTC does not have any policies which state that an allotment tenant needs to provide this information when they plan to carry out spraying work on the allotment sites.
5. On 22nd August 2024 members of the outdoor team were strimming Cockcroft allotments. On completion of the work, one member of staff turned the strimmer off, and was about to put the equipment away when a gust of wind blew something into his eye (he was still wearing eye protection at this time). He was met with immediate pain and sought first aid. His eye was washed out with saline numerous times but the pain intensified.
6. The member of staff sought professional advice from a GP who referred him to an Optometrist on the same day. The optometrist checked the eye and was of the opinion that the damage had not been caused by a foreign object, but by a chemical burn. She diagnosed him with a vast amount of surface damage and inflammation and he was prescribed two types of eye medication. He was also due to attend a follow-up appointment within a week to check the damage was healing and his sight was not permanently affected.
7. The incident was investigated. The team were not using any chemicals on the site so the only possible cause could be that a tenant had used chemicals on the site prior to the team carrying out their work, although this can not be proven.
8. Following this incident it was decided to implement a temporary ban on tenants using any pesticide or herbicide that requires a PA1 or PA6 licence to be sprayed across all sites on health and safety grounds so that the rules and policies could be re-considered. Garden Centre products will not be included in any ban.

Recommendation

9. The Committee is asked to consider the permanent ban on chemicals (pesticides and herbicides that require the PA1 and PA6 licences to be sprayed) at the allotments (for tenants) and amend the rules accordingly.

To consider permanently banning chemicals at the allotments

It is the Officer's recommendation that a note should be added to state "If anyone is found to be in breach of this rule, their tenancy may be terminated with immediate effect".

10. The Committee should also consider the charge for DTC staff to spray problematic allotment plots for tenants, once further team members have obtained the PA1 and PA6 qualifications.

Legal Implications

11. By law, all users of professional pesticides must be adequately trained.
12. DTC have a duty of care to all staff and allotment tenants.

- *It is important to note that the cause of this specific incident cannot be proven. The report only asks members to consider minimising any future risks.*

Financial Implications

13. There will be no financial implications in amending the allotment rules, but further income will be generated if DTC staff charge to undertake additional spraying for tenants.

Risk Implications

14. The improper use of any chemicals can pose a risk not only to the individual using it, but to anyone who has access to area it is being used in.
15. Not knowing when areas have been treated can pose a risk to staff and other tenants.

Didcot Town Council

Ladygrove Management Working Group Thursday 11th July 2024 6pm All Saints Room, Civic Hall



Meeting notes

Working Group Members Present:

Councillor J Broadbent (Chair)
Councillor K Morrison
Councillor C Jennings
Mr P Davies – Ladygrove Resident's Association representative (Deputy Chair)
Mr N Thompson – Ladygrove Fishing Association representative

Officers:

L Blake (Deputy Town Clerk - DC)
M Blake (Outdoor Services Manager - OSM)
D Furby (Outdoor Services Supervisor – OSS)

1. To elect a Chair and Deputy Chair for the Working Group

It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Mr N Thompson, and agreed to appoint Cllr J Broadbent as Chair of the Working Group.
It was proposed by Cllr J Broadbent, seconded by Cllr K Morrison, and agreed to appoint Mr P Davies as Deputy Chair of the Working Group.

2. Apologies

Apologies were tendered from Cllrs O Glover, T Worgan, Z Mohammed and D Rouane.

3. To agree the notes from the meeting held on 18th April 2024

The group agreed the meeting notes.

4. Questions on the meeting notes and review of the progress report

The group reviewed the progress report. There were a few comments on the following:

To note the draft notes of the LGMWG 11.07.2024

- Letter sent to DTFC regarding the issues with the parking along Tyne Avenue at their firework event

It was confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Football Club and they also raised their own concerns on the issue. A Meeting will be held to discuss how this could potentially be managed going forward.

5. Update from the Outdoor Services Manager/Supervisor on recent progress and issues

- Mounds

The OSM confirmed that the hemlock on the mounds has been treated twice this year and the cutting of the mounds will be decided at the Environment and Climate Committee on Monday 15th July 2024.

- Playground surfacing repairs

It was confirmed that some work on surfacing repairs had been carried out at the play park for health and safety reasons.

- Skate Park

The OSM informed the group of the remedial repairs which had almost been completed at the skate park. Mr P Davies asked for the outdoor team to clear the corner of vegetation, like in previous years and create a berm.

He also asked for the Council to revisit clearing the brambles surrounding the trees, at the Northeast corner of the open green space, where the area could potentially be used for an avenue of trees or memorial planting. The DC confirmed that the Town Council does already have a policy in place, should residents wish to plant trees on Town Council owned or managed land.

The topic of maintenance in Ladygrove was discussed at length. Ideas included working alongside/with SODC and OCC on this, and potentially 'mapping out' areas to make it clear what land is the responsibility of the Town Council.

The need for short-, medium- and long-term plans for the whole area were discussed.

- New benches at the lake

Mr N Thompson confirmed that the newly installed inclusive picnic bench at the small lake is already being used.

- Lakes

The OSM confirmed that work to repair the aerator will be taking place on 31st July 2024.

6. To note the most recent water testing results

The group noted the water testing results which were carried out by the OSS. Cllr K Morrison thanked him for the report and the explanation into each test.

7. Verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the CIL Grant application

The DC confirmed that the full application had been submitted to SODC for the inclusive paths in Ladygrove and at Millennium Woods. There was no confirmation

on how long the decision would take, but the DC would update members as soon as she received any information.

Open discussion

There was a period of open discussion where members discussed the ongoing maintenance issues surrounding ownership of land in Ladygrove. Due to the 'red tape' associated with working on land with no permission, the outdoor team are reluctant to do so. All DTC owned and managed land is routinely and regularly maintained in the area. It is hoped that other landowners can work with DTC to ensure all areas are regularly maintained.

The OSM explained his idea for the area which could involve a bike track, new skate park and relocation of play equipment due to the flooding issues during the winter months – this would involve having to apply for funding. Other ideas from members included music events.

The vegetation at the lakes would be cut back again, so that the lakes become a visual amenity – lots of positive feedback has been received regarding the work at the lakes.

A clear walking trail from Didcot to Wittenham Clumps was also discussed.

Cllr C Jennings suggested that the Communications and Events Officer, work with the outdoor team to showcase the work in which the team undertake. Pictures and videos will be displayed across all DTC's social media platforms.

Mr N Thompson suggested that everyone promotes the work of each other.

All members agreed that short, medium and long terms need to be implemented for the area in Ladygrove, to include maintenance and potential projects. This would be recommended to the Environment and Climate Committee.

The meeting finished at 7.20pm.

Didcot Town Council

Allotment Liaison Group

Thursday 22nd August 2024 at 7pm

All Saints Room, Didcot Civic Hall



Minutes

Councillors:

Cllr A Jones

Cllr N Hards

Cllr D Rouane

Allotment Representatives:

Mr A Feest

Mrs T Feest

Mr T Morey

Mr T Bray

Broadway

Broadway

New Road

Cockcroft

Officers:

Mr M Blake

Mrs T Tye

Outdoor Services Manager

Mayor's Secretary & Admin Assistant

1. Apologies

Apologies were tendered from: -

Ms A Pitts

Cllr G Ryall

2. Agree the minutes of 22nd February 2024

It was **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting and note them as such.

3. Questions from the minutes and matters arising

None.

4. To note the progress report

The group noted the progress report.

The Outdoor Services Manager read through the progress report and explained each item. Everything is still in hand.

5. To note the outdoor services report

The Outdoor Services Manager gave a brief update on the current team and gave a brief update on the current projects and key tasks of the Outdoor Team.

It was noted that there had been a few staffing issues which had slowed some work of the work across the sites, down.

At present this year we have welcomed 39 new tenants since 1st October 2023:

- Broadway – 9 previously 5
- Mereland Road – 5 previously 1
- Cockcroft – 9 previously 9
- New Road – 15 previously 0
- Wantage Road – 1 previously 3

The following plots are available:

- Broadway – 2 (1 needs clearing & 1 offered out)
- Mereland Road – 1 (needs clearing got metal on)
- Cockcroft – 2 (1 offered out & 1 needs clearing)
- New Road – 1 (needs clearing a lot)
- Wantage Road – 0

We have the following people on the waiting list: -

- Broadway – 49 (+ 3 who already have plots)
- Mereland Road – 6 (+ 1 co-tenant & 3 already have a plot)
- Cockcroft – 7 (+ 2 already have a plot & want specific plots)
- New Road – 41 (+ 2 who already have plots)
- Wantage Road – 48 (a lot want half plots)

Work planned for this autumn/winter is as follows:

Broadway – Due to where the gate pillars sit it wouldn't be sensible to hang the gate on the existing pillars this will need to be stepped back with a fence and possibly a pedestrian gate leading up to this. This would also mean that we could lock the gate throughout the winter and wet weather (not that we have issues with this on this site)

Cockcroft – The gate at Cockcroft allotment site will need looking at again we have adjusted this for now but there is no adjustment left. Whilst we fix this issue there is potential of putting in a pedestrian gate to this site. This again means that we could lock the vehicle gate from late October this would stop unnecessary damage in the wet months.

Mereland road – Lots of tree work to be done over the Autumn. To stop cars getting onto the site over the winter we could restrict the main gates so pedestrian access is granted but vehicle access is restricted.

New Road – The gate on this site has been pencilled in and cancelled twice this has since been rescheduled. The brambles in the corner near fleet meadow hall will be cleared and clearance of the ditch will also be looked at. There is also a big push to clear the back end of this site for a big community planting project to run alongside the polytunnel this will be done over the autumn and winter months. We also have a drainage trench to look at, but we have decided to get expert advice with this in case we flood fleet meadow hall.

Wantage Road – The two sites representatives have stepped down as reps. In the interim the Outdoor Services Manager will be overseeing site visits for new tenants. Only a bit of tree work needs to be done.

Across all sites – We will look at extra water troughs if needed. Plots will be inspected throughout the year not just in May this will be done by the outdoor team when they have a bit of down time. This will be done whenever we see fit and should help with getting people to work the plots more.

Any plot that becomes available next to any of the entrances on site could be used as an accessible site with raised beds installed on them.

Allotment sites only have a budget of £6,000 per year this must cover all work, repairs, removal of rubbish and the green waste skips. We need to start being realistic with what we can do for this money, and we must start talking prices for plots for 2026. As it stands now plots are projected to be £41.00 that works out at £3.15 per month. Which means we're still running these at a loss. Potentially the plots could be charged more i.e. £45-£50 per plot as one of our neighbouring councils are already charging this.

Recommendation – Is for the E&C Committee to consider increasing the allotment rents in 2026 by a larger increase i.e. £45/50 per 5 pole plots.

6. Water troughs (NR)

We will investigate getting extra water troughs on all sites. Reps to give details of where they think we need them on the sites. We could take the very large trough from NR and place elsewhere.

Recommendation – to ask the E&C Committee to consider purchasing extra water troughs for all sites.

7. The trench to be dug out to release water that's collected (NR)

Ditch to be extended, brambles removed during the winter months.

8. Plots that are not being worked (NR)

Allotment reps to send list of plots not being worked to the admin assistant who will make contact asking if they still want the plot.

9. Cllr Representative Vacancies

The following sites have vacancies for Cllr representative positions:

- Cockcroft
- Mereland Road.

10. Any other business

Plot numbers – will give numbered pegs to new tenants starting from September. Encourage people to number any structures they may have on their plots.

Rats – only BR affected might be because of the new development being built next door. Create a rat guidance policy.

Community planting – to consider planting flowers/vegetables in unused land but this will need a group of people to manage the project – *this has already been passed as motion at Full Council.*

Fruit Trees on sites – was suggested that local groups could come and pick the fruit from the trees – maybe the community kitchen but would be open to all groups – *this can be included with the details mentioned in the above motion.*

GWP allotments – DTC may be taking over the site off Diamond Drive, which consists of approximately 14 plots, in the near future.

Green waste system not working properly, some people wanted the burning back but lots of items were brought in that could not be burned. Will continue with the green waste system. Sweetcorn and sunflowers waste will be picked up and taken away?

Dan to do drone shot of each site

Meeting closed at 8.08pm

DRAFT



Allotment Liaison Group Actions and Recommendations 29th of August 2024

Report authors: Arek Guzinski and Teresa Tye

Following the Allotment Liaison Group meeting on the 22nd of August 2024, the following recommendations or actions were proposed to be considered by the Environment and Climate Committee:

Minute 5:

Recommendation 1: The Environment and Climate Committee should consider increasing the Allotment Rent to approximately £45 / £50 for a 5-pole plot from the 2026/2027 season, to ensure that enough funds are available for the upkeep and maintenance of all allotment sites.

Minute 6:

Recommendation 1: The Environment and Climate Committee should consider purchasing extra water troughs for all five allotment sites, subject to appropriate location being identified.

Minute 10 (AOB):

Recommendation 1: The Environment and Climate Committee should discuss and consider giving out numbered pegs to new tenants - these pegs have been purchased a few years ago, however numbering will have to be added onto them.

Recommendation 2: The Environment and Climate Committee should discuss and agree a draft version of a "Rat Guidance Policy"

Recommendation 3: The Environment and Climate Committee should consider allowing community groups to visit some of the allotment sites to pick fruit from plots which are currently vacant but have fruit trees on them - at least two sites have plots which are only used for fruit trees, and have been vacated, with no one to pick or prune the trees.

- This would need to be overseen by either a site rep or staff member.

Didcot Town Council



Dear Allotment Holder

As the growing season continues, and rents become due, we wanted to write to you to keep you abreast on changes, issues, and other important information across our allotment sites.

Rent payments for 2024/2025 – 5 pole £39.00, Concessions 5 pole £27.00

Attached to this letter is an invoice for your allotment.

Payment can be made by cash, cheque, or BACS. Payment is due on **1st of October**, and you have 40 days or 28 days, depending on what is stated in your agreement, afterwards to pay. Please note if you do not pay on time, you are liable to pay a £15.50 late payment fee. Please also note that we **will not** accept payments prior to **October 1st, 2024**.

When paying by BACS, please do the following:

- Make a payment to:
 - o **Didcot Town Council**
 - o **Unity Trust Bank**
 - o **Account Number: 20459521**
 - o **Sort Code: 60-83-01**
- **Use your plot reference number written on your invoice (for example, BR999) as the payment reference or we will not know which plot is being paid for. If you have multiple plots please make a separate payment for each plot, changing the plot reference for each so that the payments can be accurately recorded.**

Rent payments for 2025/2026

The annual rental charge for the 2025/2026 period (due on 1st October 2025) has been agreed by the Council and will be:

- Non-Concessions 5 pole - £41
- Concessions 5 pole - £28
- Deposit - £95
- Late payment fee - £16

Council Contact

Mike Blake is the Outdoor Services Manager for Didcot Town Council, and he continues to oversee the allotments. Since the departure of the Allotment and Community Officer, Teresa Tye, the Administration and Mayor's Secretary has taken on the administrative side of the allotments. Together they are working hard on ensuring plots are reallocated in a timely manner and all policies and procedures are adhered to.

Contact Details

If you have recently changed your contact details, such as your address, email, or phone number, please contact the Administration and Mayor's Secretary via email, in writing, or phone to make the Council aware of these changes. If you are unsure of whether your details are up to date, please contact the Council office – council@didcot.gov.uk.

Chemicals on the allotments

The Town Council has decided to ban the use of chemicals (pesticides and herbicides that require a PA1 and PA6 licence to sprayed), across all sites. The current allotment rules have been updated to reflect this. The ban does not include shop brought weedkillers from Garden Centres.

If anyone is found to be in breach of this amended rule, their tenancy may be terminated with immediate effect.

Allotment Documents

The Council continues to monitor the allotment rules.

We are trying to cut down our use of paper and as such, the rules are available to view on our website here as well as all other policies:

<https://www.didcot.gov.uk/uploads/3d-rules-approved-july-2023.pdf>

If you would like a 'hard' copy, please contact us.

Long-term illness

It is the responsibility of every allotment holder to assess their health and whether they are physically capable of working their plots. Didcot Town Council are happy to work with all allotment holders who may have health issues, but the bottom line is that the plots MUST be worked – or relinquished to the next person on the waiting list.

Waiting lists

Our waiting lists across all sites continues to rise. We continue to accept applications but do warn applicants that there could be a long wait.

If you do feel that you would like to give up your allotment plot, please inform us as soon as you can by sending an email to council@didcot.gov.uk . This will enable us to offer the plot to another person efficiently.

If you know you will be terminating your tenancy in the near future, please do inform the Town Council so that plans can be put in place to reallocate the plot to the next person on the waiting list. This will ensure the plot is handed over in a good condition and will minimise the time the plot is spent, empty.

Councillor site representatives

We have Councillor representatives for all our allotment sites. Currently they are:

- Councillor N Hards for Broadway
- Councillor D Rouane for New Road
- *Position vacant for Mereland Road*
- Councillor A Jones for Wantage Road
- *Position vacant for Cockcroft Road*

Your site representatives are always there to support and help you, but if you do feel you need to contact your Councillor representatives, you can find their details on our website:

<https://www.didcot.gov.uk/councillors.html>

As always, please feel free to contact the Council anytime you need too.

Insurance

As a tenant of an allotment plot you do hold what is called a 'duty of care' towards people coming onto your plot. This means that in the event that somebody comes onto your plot and suffers injury due to 'negligence' you can be held legally liable for any damages caused. The Town Council encourages all plot holders to consider getting third party insurance to protect against any such liability. This can be done through a number of external insurance companies, but cover is also available automatically through the National Allotment Society via membership of Didcot Allotment Society. Membership of Didcot Allotment Society also provides the following benefits:

- Automatic membership of the National Allotment Society
- Regular DAS newsletter

Agenda item 12b

- Discounts on gardening supplies and seeds
- Opportunity to participate in DAS events such as seed swaps and plant sales.

See www.didcotallotments.com or contact das@didcotallotments.com for more details.

Privacy Notice

Under the General Data Protection Regulations, the Town Council continues to hold personal data on you as an allotment holder. The legal basis on which we do this is due to it being a contractual necessity. If you would like to know what information we hold and how to make a subject access request, please contact the Town Clerk.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued hard work on the allotments.

As always if you have any questions or issues, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With best wishes,

Didcot Town Council