

Didcot Town Council

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



Minutes

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

PRESENT

Councillors:

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

Officers:

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

Non-voting Councillors:

Cllr A Jones

20. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Hudson and Cllr Z Mohammed.

21. To receive declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

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

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

23. Questions on the minutes and review the progress report

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

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 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

Cllr K Morrison asked if progress had been made regarding investigating options for the potential relocation and replacement of the skate park. The OSM confirmed that he had visited Henley Town Council, alongside the Outdoor Services Supervisor and looked at their skate park. The Henley skate park is well used and extremely popular and cost in the region of £300,000 in 2017. Officers will continue to investigate options for the skate park.

24. To note the Income and Expenditure to date for the Environment and Climate Committee report, as updated on 5th September 2024

Cllr J Broadbent queried the grass verge cutting cost centre, as it was in brackets. The Town Clerk (TC) confirmed that this was because the funds are being transferred from the ear marked reserves.

Cllr A Macdonald was impressed with the cost of the hanging baskets in the town as this included watering. The TC confirmed that she would investigate options for the future.

25. To consider the Outdoor Services Manager's report

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

7. Broadway allotments

Members considered the recommendation to approve the cost of installing new gates at the Broadway allotment site to help with security, unauthorised vehicular access and limit the risk of vandalism.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to approve the £1,936 cost to install gates from C & B Brickworks and Fencing, at the site. This would come from cost centre 311/4041. All members agreed.

21. Initial marking of the football pitches

The OSM explained how it usually takes two members of the outdoor team one whole week to initially mark all the football pitches at both Edmonds Park and Loyd Recreation Ground. However, the recent marking was undertaken by a GPS robotic machine and was completed in four hours. This freed up the staff so that their everyday asks could be completed even when staff were away on annual leave.

Members agreed with the OSM that the initial marking of the pitches should be undertaken by the GPS robot in future and would consider the quotes for next year, when available.

27. Ladygrove Lakes

The emergency aerator used to help aerate the lakes in urgent situations needs replacing. It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr S Cole, and RESOLVED to approve the purchase of a new, emergency aerator at a cost of £749 (+ VAT) with an additional £30 delivery charge, from Solar Aerations Systems. All members agreed.

29. Millennium Woods

It was confirmed by the OSM that the application for 420 tree saplings from the Earth Trust had been successful. Cllr A Macdonald asked the Committee to consider a planting scheme, which would be done. The saplings would, in the first instance, be planted at the polytunnel to allow them time to establish.

34. Staffing

It was confirmed that the Horticultural Apprentice had recently passed both his PA1 and PA6 qualifications.

26. To consider the purchase of a Playground App to aid the outdoor team with inspections report and the recommendations to the Committee

The Committee considered the report, and the additional brochure provided by the OSM. The OSM had spoken with the staff at Henley Town Council on his recent visit, and they confirmed how easy the app is to use and how efficient it makes the playground inspection process. All inspections are kept securely within the app and any urgent, dangerous or emergency works can be sent directly to the OSM by the officer on site.

It was proposed by Cllr J Broadbent, seconded by Cllr K Morrison, and RESOLVED to purchase the Playground Inspection App from The Play Inspection Company at a cost of £1500 (+ VAT) for one year. All members agreed.

The £895 initial in-person set up training quote to train the staff in how to use and set up the app could be lowered by using the staff at Henley. This will be investigated.

27. To consider the report on a potential 'Community Planting' area at New Road allotments and the recommendations to the Committee

The Committee considered the report and noted the previously passed motion to investigate areas which could be suitable for community planting.

All members expressed their support for this project. It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to dedicate the area adjacent to the polytunnel at the New Road allotments as a Community Planting area and allow Officers to start clearing the site. All members agreed.

The Earth Trust and Sustainable Didcot were two groups suggested to contact.

28. To consider the report to permanently ban the use of chemicals by tenants, on all allotment sites, and the recommendations to the Committee

The Committee considered the report, and the potential severity of the incident mentioned.

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to permanently ban the use of chemicals that require a PA1 and PA6 qualification to be sprayed, by all allotment tenants across all allotment sites. The vote was unanimous.

The current allotment rules would be amended to reflect this change.

29. To consider the first round of budget considerations for the 2025-2026 financial year (*dates amended as incorrect dates included on agenda*)

The Committee considered capital projects for the first round of budget considerations for the 2025-2026 financial year. The potential relocation and replacement of the skate park, along with relocating some of the play equipment due to flooding was the main project ideas from members. Public consultation will be needed, and funding will need to be investigated. Officers would start to investigate this further.

Cllr J Broadbent explained that land ownership needs to be made clear, and it would be a good idea to encourage families to enjoy the lakes and the local walking trails.

30. To note the draft Ladygrove Management Working Group meeting notes from the meeting held on 11th July 2024

The Committee noted the draft meeting notes.

31. To note the draft meetings 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

The Committee noted the draft meeting notes, considered the recommendations and considered the draft allotment rent letter.

Minute 5, recommendation 1:

It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to increase the allotment rent to £50 for a 5-pole allotment plot, for the 2026/2027 season. All members agreed – *this will need to be approved by Full Council.*

Minute 6, recommendation 1:

The OSM was asked to identify which sites needed extra water troughs and bring this information back to the Committee along with costings to enable members to make an informed decision on whether to install more water troughs across the sites.

Minute 10, recommendation 1:

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr K Morrison, and RESOLVED to number all allotment plots with a wooden, numbered peg, once they are vacated and before they are re-let. All members agreed.

Minute 10, recommendation 2:

Officers will draft a 'Rat Guidance Policy' for members to consider at a future meeting.

Minute 10, recommendation 3:

It was proposed by Cllr A Macdonald, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to allow Community groups to pick the surplus fruit from trees on allotment plots which are vacant, provided they are either accompanied by a site representative, or an Officer of the Council.

Members discussed the draft allotment rent letter. It was agreed to add a sentence informing tenants that if they need help on their plot, due to injury or ill health, a temporary co-tenant may be found (from applicants on the waiting list).

It was proposed by Cllr K Morrison, seconded by Cllr A Macdonald, and RESOLVED to approve the 2024-2025 allotment rent letter, subject to this amendment. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting closed at 8.37pm

Signed: _____ (Chair) Date: _____

