

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 MAY 2023

Present

Chairman: Cllr R. Smith

Members: Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr B. Larcombe, Cllr P. May, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr G. Stammers

Officers: M. Adamson-Drage (operations manager), A. Mullins (support services manager)

Guests: L. Davis and V. Elcoate (River Lim Action Group)

22/62/ENV Public Forum

There were no members of the public present.

22/63/ENV Apologies

Cllr G. Turner

22/64/ENV Minutes

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. May, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023, were **ADOPTED**.

22/65/ENV Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr P. May declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 10, River Lim Action Group Report, as he was a member of the group.

Cllr B. Bawden declared non-pecuniary interests in the same agenda item for the same reason.

22/66/ENV Dispensations

There were none.

22/67/ENV Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 15 March 2023

Proposed budget for Invertebrate Garden

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if it was necessary to wait until next year to plant the garden and if it could be done in the autumn this year.

Cllr P. May said it had been agreed with the operations supervisor to plant wildflower seeds this year because they could go in before the growing season.

Designation of Church Cliff Beach as a Bathing Beach

V. Elcoate and L. Davis, from the River Lim Action Group (RLAG), were invited to speak.

V. Elcoate said RLAG had launched its redesignation campaign. They had held a meeting with seafront businesses and watersports' associations to discuss with them a number of issues, including drains and water quality, and asked them to get behind the campaign, of which they were very supportive. She said they had to get support from all the associated landowners and Dorset Council (DC) had formally given its support.

V. Elcoate said the group had to do a water users' survey from 15 May 2023, when they would be counting people on the beach on the busy days and then submitting data for 20 days over the bathing season to demonstrate the water use requirement. She said they had opened a public consultation to seek support for the application and asked if the town council could help publicise the link to the online survey.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he supported the redesignation but he was concerned dogs were allowed on Church Cliff Beach, so the group may need to think about the impact of this. He said the beach was also the least safe beach in Lyme Regis, especially if people swam around the corner, and he suggested this was taken up with the RNLI lifeguard service by the council.

The operations manager said the RNLI would be attending the next Town Management and Highways Committee meeting so this could be raised then.

L. Davis said the group had spoken to three swimming groups, the RNLI and the harbour users' group and despite any concerns, people still felt on balance redesignation should be pursued.

Members agreed the council would publicise the link RLAG's public consultation and circulate the link in any communications sent out to the community.

22/68/ENV Update Report

Front Beach

L. Davis was invited to speak.

Cllr R. Smith asked if the drains behind and in front of the Royal Standard could be unblocked.

L. Davis said the drains were blocked when the sandy beach was created, so the storm water went into the gullies and blocked them up. She said the problem had been identified so this was a start and gullies were the responsibility of DC Highways.

Cllr B. Bawden said she would follow this up with DC Highways.

Cllr R. Smith asked if anyone was doing anything to resolve the sewage drain cracks at the Cobb Arms.

L. Davis said following a CCTV camera survey in front of the Royal Standard and SWiM, this would hopefully establish where sewage was leaking further down. Once this had been identified, she said someone would have to take responsibility for it.

Cllr R. Smith asked what the discharge system for storm water drains in this area would be.

L. Davis said as the storm water drains were blocked, the only solution might be to put them into sewage pipes so it would go back to the Cobb pumping station. She said she couldn't see where else it could discharge to.

Cllr S. Cockerell said it sounded like a re-design of the whole system was needed as since the drains were put in, hundreds more houses had been built.

Cllr D. Sarson asked if the results of the tests on the dredged sediment from the harbour were available yet.

L. Davis said she had been in correspondence with the DC engineer responsible for this and he confirmed they did get the results on 28 April 2023. He said the results looked satisfactory but he needed further clarification and would then share them.

Updates from Community Organisations

Cllr B. Bawden gave the following updates:

- The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) had set up a new climate emergency network and she was involved in the place-based initiative.
- The Community Energy Champions were hosting a workshop on Friday 5 May 2023 about energy efficiency in partnership with the Centre for Sustainable Energy.
- The Community Energy Champions and the champions from the Citizens' Advice Bureau had a joint stall at the May Fete in Lyme Regis.
- NALC were hosting a webinar on 24 May 2023 on what town and parish councils can do on climate action.
- The Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils were continuing their Working Together webinars, including one with Dorset Council about natural environment, climate and ecology and the recording was available.
- Recordings would be available from planning webinars, which included information about latest decisions and best practice on things like street design and incorporating green and blue infrastructure.

22/69/ENV Bathing Water Quality Meeting

The chairman moved this item forward on the agenda.

Cllr R. Smith asked if the Fats, Oils and Greases (FOG) environmental compliance campaign was underway and if there had been any feedback from local businesses.

The operations manager said this would be followed up at the next meeting.

Cllr P. May said the bathing water quality meetings were a very important initiative and the council should continue to participate in any way it can because it was in its interests to have a successful outcome.

Cllr R. Smith asked if the council had had a reply from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the letter supporting the Church Cliff Beach redesignation.

Cllr P. May said a response wasn't expected; it would just be noted the council was in support of the redesignation.

22/70/ENV River Lim Action Group Report

The chairman moved this item forward on the agenda and invited V. Elcoate to speak.

V. Elcoate said the RLAG had received the sewage data for 2022, showing discharge into the River Lim had tripled, which wasn't what they were expecting. Most of the sewage was coming from the Uplyme sewage station works' overflow and at Jericho where a small pipe was putting untreated sewage into the river. She said they had questioned the data as the overflow at Cobb Gate had shown a massive decrease and the Environment Agency was looking into it.

V. Elcoate said there had been a lot of activity from South West Water; they had resolved the issue at Windsor Terrace and were still trying to resolve the issue at Woodmead Road where there were high levels of ammonia. She said there were serious problems at the Town Mill and the trustees had taken this up with South West Water, who would send CCTV contractors to find out what the issue was.

V. Elcoate said South West Water had put £20million in their budget for 2025 to spend on the River Lim and sewage treatment works but she felt the funding could be brought forward to 2024 as they were clearly in breach of their legal obligations. She said the RLAG had written to them asking questions under the Freedom of Information Act but as a town council could request that the funding is brought forward, this would add more weight.

Cllr R. Smith asked if there was a mechanism for making the request to South West Water.

V. Elcoate said local communities could put ideas forward through South West Water's WaterFit scheme but the council could also write to the chief executive. She suggested the council could also write to the communications team and cite the WaterFit initiative.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the council writes to South West Water to urge them to invest in 2024-25 to help solve the severe impacts caused by sewage in the River Lim at the earliest possible opportunity.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if South West Water's investment included work on the seafront.

V. Elcoate said she believed the investment was only for the river. She also updated on the Riverfly training, which the council said it would pay for if funding could not be found elsewhere; the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty had provided funding and the training would start on 25 May 2023.

22/71/ENV Environment Policy Review

Cllr P. May suggested a working group was set up to look at other policies and formulate a policy to be brought back to this committee for consideration.

Cllr B. Larcombe said he didn't see a lot wrong with the current policy as all it needed to do was set out the council's aims and any details and timescales would then be outlined in separate documents and tied in with the council's objectives.

Cllr P. May felt the current policy was lacking as it didn't mention the path to zero carbon or carbon literacy training or the kinds of things other councils comparable to this council had included in theirs. He said the policy needed to be relevant to Lyme Regis,

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to set up a working group to formulate an Environment Policy for consideration by the Environment Committee and to appoint Cllrs P. May, B. Larcombe, B. Bawden, D. Ruffle and S. Cockerell to the working group.

22/72/ENV Local Energy Clubs

Cllr R. Smith said if the town council was putting solar panels on assets, he would like members to be aware of the Energy Local Club model. He explained the concept to members and said Totnes Town Council was in the process of launching this by putting solar panels on its town hall with a view to launching an Energy Local Club in its community. He said he would like to see how it goes in Totnes and then this council could discuss it further.

Cllr R. Smith clarified that an Energy Local Club was different to a community energy project.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm.