

**LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2023**

**Present**

**Chairman:** Cllr R. Smith

**Members:** Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr P. May, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner

**Officers:** M. Green (deputy town clerk), A. Mullins (support services manager), P. Williams (acting operations manager)

**Guests:** V. Elcoate, G. Roberts, R. Thomas (River Lim Action Group), C. Matheson (Little Green Change)

**23/13/ENV Public Forum**

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

**23/14/ENV Apologies**

Cllr B. Larcombe – holiday  
Cllr D. Ruffle – holiday  
Cllr G. Stammers – holiday

**23/15/ENV Minutes**

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 were **ADOPTED**.

**23/16/ENV Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Cllr P. May declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 11, River Lim Action Group Reports, as he was a member of the group and any matters relating to the community energy champions.

Cllr B. Bawden declared a non-pecuniary interest for the same reasons.

**23/17/ENV Dispensations**

There were none.

**23/18/ENV Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 5 July 2023**

**Bathing Water Quality Meeting 3**

Cllr P. May asked what the outcome was of contact to Dorset Council (DC) about the clearing of storm gullies on Front Beach.

The deputy town clerk said some had been cleared and DC had set up an internal working group to look at solutions to issues in the harbour area.

Cllr B. Bawden, the DC ward member, said DC and South West Water were talking to each other about it and she had asked if DC engineers in the harbour area could look at it, rather than the community highways engineer. She said they had agreed to take it on as a project.

## **23/19/ENV Update Report**

### **Carbon Literacy Organisation Accreditation**

Cllr B. Bawden said she and the deputy town clerk had met with someone from the Carbon Literacy Organisation (CLO) dealing with the accreditation process to clarify the status of the council's application for silver accreditation. She said although the council had been invoiced for silver accreditation, it was standard practice to invoice at the start of the process so the accreditation hadn't been awarded and the council still had some way to go.

The deputy town clerk said the case study submitted as part of the application would need to be revisited as it was more about biodiversity net gain, rather than carbon reduction. He said although the council met the criteria for silver accreditation in terms of staff and member training at the time the application was made, there had since been changes in the staff team so the council may no longer meet this requirement.

Cllr R. Smith asked if carbon literacy was covered in the council's personnel training policy.

The deputy town clerk said there was nothing specific in the council's training policies.

Cllr B. Bawden said the CLO was changing the standards for accreditation from 1 January 2024 so the council had been advised to obtain accreditation before then. She suggested the deputy town clerk, the committee chairman and herself met as soon as possible to review everything. She said she was prepared to do another round of training but following on from that, to look at how to develop more focused training for particular functions.

Cllr P. May said the proposed Environment Policy included some ambitions for carbon literacy training and he questioned whether this was sufficient to achieve accreditation.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked how many people in the organisation needed to be trained.

The deputy town clerk said it was 25% of the organisation.

### **Home Energy Grant**

Cllr B. Bawden said she had attended a meeting run by Ridgewater Energy, which did work on behalf of DC, running Healthy Homes Dorset and the Local Energy Advice Partnership. She said a lot of the money DC secured from the government was channelled through these services and there was a new Home Energy Grant available.

She said it was about joining up and seeing how these services could help people in Lyme Regis.

### **Dorset Climate Action Network**

Cllr B. Bawden said Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN) had held the Dorset COP and was the first county in the UK to do such an event. She said the event was fully subscribed and included various workshops.

### **2030 Vision**

Cllr B. Bawden said she had written a report on the project for the National Lottery and she had spoken to schools as part of that.

### **Funding for climate adaptation**

Cllr B. Bawden said the government had announced funding for climate adaptation and Charmouth would be receiving funding. She said there were lots of overlaps where she hoped Lyme Regis could benefit from some of the work.

### **23/20/ENV To receive a presentation on the new environment pages on the town council website**

The support services manager presented the new environment pages on the town council website. She said the pages were expected to go live the following week and asked members to look through the pages and suggest any amendments or additions.

It was suggested links to the following websites could be included: the National Trust, Natural England, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Dorset Coast Forum. It was also suggested businesses with green tourism awards could be included on the 'Green awards' page and the list of invertebrate friendly plants across the town could be included.

### **23/21/ENV Little Green Change**

The chairman invited C. Matheson from Little Green Change to speak.

C. Matheson introduced herself and the organisation, which provided environmental education and opportunities in schools and the community. Events included bulb planting with Weldmar Hospicecare and at Lyme Regis Library and a fashion show to upcycle clothing, and they ran competitions and a grow a tree challenge. They were also working with Axminster Primary School to plant a hedgerow.

C. Matheson said the schools' programme was a free resource for schools in the UK and they worked with three teachers to advise them on the programme. The programme included lesson plans for schools and after the October half term, they would be launching a new environment module.

C. Matheson said they had links with national and regional charities and they wanted to engage and work with local organisations as much as possible. They also had a YouTube channel which featured talks from experts on various subjects.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked if the organisation was a business and how it was funded.

C. Matheson said it was a not-for-profit social enterprise and at the moment it was self-funded but she was looking for business sponsorship and applying for funding from various sources.

Cllr R. Smith asked if the organisation had had contact with any local schools.

C. Matheson said she had not yet contacted Woodroffe School or St Michael's Primary School but she intended to do this.

## **23/22/ENV River Lim Action Group Reports**

The chairman invited V. Elcoate, G. Roberts and R. Thomas from the River Lim Action Group (RLAG) to speak on this item.

V. Elcoate said following the recent repair works near Uplyme sewage treatment works which caused sewage to be moved by tankers from Gun Cliff to Horn Bridge, the Environment Agency had been monitoring and found very high levels of E Coli in the river. She said RLAG would write to South West Water (SWW) about this and said it might help if the town council wrote too.

V. Elcoate said they had uncovered more drains under the gardens that were not on SWW's maps. She said they were damaged and partly responsible for sewage problems at that end of the beach.

V. Elcoate said there were issues with an interceptor trap outside the Boat Building Academy and they believed this was a town council asset. She asked if the town council could look into this and replace it if necessary.

V. Elcoate said she was concerned a date had not yet been set for the next bathing water quality meeting, as all the issues in the report were issues which would be raised at those meetings. She said she understood SWW and the Environment Agency had not provided their availability for a meeting.

The deputy town clerk said he would keep chasing both organisations to set a date.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the council writes to South West Water to ask them about the recent problem requiring the movement of sewage by tankers and high E Coli levels measured by the Environment Agency in the River Lim at that time and to ask for a full explanation for this.

V. Elcoate said the RLAG wanted to offer members and council staff a walk along the river to learn more about the issues. She suggested the office contacted them to arrange a date.

Cllr P. May asked if the interceptor trap at the Boat Building Academy was a town council asset and whether the council had been aware of issues with it in the past.

The deputy town clerk said he was aware there was an issue there and he was aware of the council's responsibilities in the chalet and caravan site and western beach, where pumps were maintained and paid for by the council. However, he was not aware of this responsibility outside the Boat Building Academy but this could be looked into.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the council further investigates the interceptor trap outside the Boat Building Academy, establishes who is responsible for it, and instigates by whatever means necessary any remedial work.

R. Thomas was invited to speak by the chairman.

R. Thomas said as part of the campaign to get Church Cliff Beach redesignated as a bathing beach, the survey of beach users recorded 114 users on one day and 105 on another, so they had met the criteria of 100 bathers. He said the application had to be submitted to Defra by 31 October 2023, although it would be submitted before then, and the outcome would be known by April 2024. He said RLAG was reasonably confident of success.

Cllr P. May asked if the public consultation was still live.

R. Thomas said the public consultation was now closed and it was noted the council was no longer required to publicise it.

Cllr S. Cockerell asked if any potential changes in dog restrictions would affect this beach.

R. Thomas said the dogs on the beach restrictions were separate and had nothing to do with the application.

G. Roberts was invited to speak by the chairman.

G. Roberts outlined the main findings of the ecological survey of the River Lim, which would provide specific evidence of the state of the river. He said the report was currently in draft form but they hoped to have the final report available for the next meeting of this committee. He said recommendations would come from the RLAG of what they felt were the priorities to get the river back to fully sustainable status. He said he hoped they could pull together some affordable options to do this.

G. Roberts referred to the invasive species in the river, primarily Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, and said the group would like to develop a strategy to tackle these. He said once Himalayan Balsam was established in a river, it was nearly impossible to get rid of, but he felt within three years it could be eradicated with volunteer effort and the involvement of the council and perhaps local businesses.

Cllr B. Bawden said DC was going to set up a working group on rivers and was very interested on the work being done on the River Lim.

It was acknowledged the RLAG would require funding at some point to help with some of the improvement projects and that any requests could be funded out of the environment budget.

*Cllr P. May left the meeting at 8.23pm.*

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to thank the River Lim Action Group and associated groups for all the work they do to support the natural environment of the town.

*Cllr P. May returned to the meeting at 8.25pm.*

## **23/23/ENV Environment Policy**

Cllr C. Aldridge suggested paragraph 1.1 specifically referred to businesses and the council's tenants and it was suggested it be amended to 'The council will encourage and influence the public, suppliers, businesses, tenants and other stakeholders'. She also suggested section 7 about transport included a reference to the council's traffic and travel working group.

Cllr P. May said the policy looked at the travel impact as an organisation, rather than the travel issues the working group had been looking at from a town point of view. He said it was intended the policy was reviewed annually so perhaps as a result of the progress made by the working group, the policy could be amended accordingly.

Cllr P. May said the version of the policy included in the agenda was not the version which had been agreed by the working group as several sections had been removed or amended, although he wasn't sure who had made those amendments. He asked about the use of glyphosate products for tackling invasive species as he believed the council had agreed these products should only be used as a last resort.

The acting operations manager said non-glyphosate products had been trialled but they didn't work on Japanese Knotweed or mare's tail so it was agreed with the operations manager glyphosate could be used for these species.

Cllr P. May said the policy asked for staff to be carbon literacy trained during their six-month probation but he understood the standard position was staff would be trained in the area they worked.

The deputy town clerk said there was a view the best use of staff time was that training was focused on the job the employee did rather than just generic training for every employee.

Members discussed the section of the policy which said the council would favour 'green' vehicles where possible. The acting operations manager said the green vehicles already purchased had been satisfactory but were expensive to purchase and to run. He said the council needed to balance the preference for 'green' vehicles with best value for money.

The deputy town clerk suggested the policy could be amended to say 'The council will consider the most suitable green alternative when purchasing vehicles'.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked if section 8 about cleaning, maintenance and waste could include a reference to influencing the council's tenants in these requirements.

Cllr B. Bawden said there was no reference in the policy to influencing and engaging the community and no reference to government targets. She also felt paragraph 3.5 was contradictory when referring to both 'improving and reducing' environmental impacts.

The support services manager suggested as there were so many proposed amendments and there was concern the draft policy was not the one the working group had agreed, it be referred back to the working group for further discussion.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to refer the draft Environment Policy back to the working group for further development, with support from the appropriate officer.

## **23/24/ENV 2024-25 Budget Proposals**

The deputy town clerk said every committee had been asked for its thoughts on objectives to feed into the budget-setting process for 2024-25; however, if members continued to support the office refurbishment, funding for other objectives would be very limited next year and for the following two or three years. He confirmed the dedicated environment budget of £25k was already allocated in the 2024-25 budget.

The deputy town clerk said very little of the environment budget had been spent this year and as it wasn't normal procedure for a budget to roll over to the next financial year, he advised the committee to think about how it could be spent.

Cllr B. Bawden said she wanted the council to think about a residential sports and learning centre at Strawberry Field as one of its objectives. She also suggested a car-free day, which may require some funding, as well as manpower.

Cllr P. May suggested as the environment budget was unspent for this year and was already allocated in the 2024-25 budget, there were no additional objectives from this committee to feed into the budget-setting process.

The deputy town clerk suggested there be an item on the next agenda to allow members to discuss how to spend the 2023-24 environment budget.

Cllr P. May suggested as the community groups who had presented to the meeting had mentioned future projects, the committee could set aside £5,000 of the environment budget to cover those projects.

Cllr R. Smith said it would be preferable to have a specific request for the next meeting.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr P. May, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** not to suggest any Environment Committee objectives for 2024-25 to feed into the budget-setting process.

## **23/25/ENV Promoting Wildlife and Biodiversity**

Cllr P. May asked why the triangle of land near the Mary Anning statue would require more than half of the proposed budget to create a wildflower meadow.

The acting operations manager said this was due to the size of the site and the work required to clear and re-plant it.

Cllr B. Bawden said she understood the Marine Theatre believed it owned that land.

The deputy town clerk said the ownership of the land was complicated but the vast majority was owned by the town council and a small section was owned by DC.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if the costings included signage.

The acting operations manager said the costings only included the plants and manpower.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked if there were any thoughts about further developing the area near the table tennis. She said the land below the gazebo was also suggested as an area for invertebrates.

The acting operations manager said there were no further plans for the area near the table tennis. On land below the gazebo, hardier, all-year-round shrubs would be needed because it was an exposed and windy area.

Cllr B. Bawden asked what the plans were for the wildflower bed below the Alexandra Hotel.

The acting operations manager said as it was such a windy location, the wildflowers looked good for around two weeks but in the winter they looked like weeds. As such, a moon garden had been established with shorter stock and hardier plants, attracting moths and other invertebrates.

Cllr B. Bawden asked about the plans for a sensory garden.

The acting operations manager said it wasn't part of this project. He said a sensory garden could cost around £10k to make it accessible for all disabilities.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if there was a baseline assessment of the gardens and whether any of the planting initiatives had improved biodiversity.

It was agreed this should be an item on the next agenda.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr S. Cockerell, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to introduce further wildlife friendly and biodiversity planting in the Lister Gardens next to the table tennis compound, in the area on the lower side of the gazebo, on land adjacent to the Marine Theatre, and on the bank next to Lyme Regis Football Club, at a total cost of £7,448, to be funded from the environment budget.

## **23/26/ENV Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

The deputy town clerk said he believed there may be an error in the figures as he didn't believe the council made a surplus on the supply of electricity for electric vehicles.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the report on electric vehicle charging points is re-presented to the Environment Committee with more accurate and researched data to outline the true cost of what the council is paying for each kwh on the charging points and to re-emphasise the council's stated policy that it will charge cost plus 10p per kw and not exploit their use.

Cllr B. Bawden asked that the report included an explanation of the arrangement with Pod Point.

*The meeting closed at 9.28pm.*