

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2023

Present

Chairman: Cllr S. Cockerell

Members: Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr P. May, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr B. Larcombe

Officers: A. Mullins (support services manager), K. Newman (administrative and community engagement assistant), P. Williams (acting operations manager), J. Wright (town clerk)

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

23/27/ENV Public Forum

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

23/28/ENV Apologies

Cllr C. Aldridge – holiday
Cllr D. Ruffle – illness
Cllr G. Stammers – illness
Cllr R. Smith – holiday

23/29/ENV Minutes

Cllr B. Larcombe said Cllr G. Stammers was recorded as being present at the previous meeting and sending apologies. It was agreed she would be removed from the attendance list.

Cllr B. Bawden felt minute 23/18/ENV didn't accurately represent what she had said and it was agreed 'rather than' would be replaced with 'rather than just'.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, the minutes of the meeting 4 October, with the above amendments, were **ADOPTED**.

23/30/ENV Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr P. May declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9, River Lim Action Group Report, as he was a member of the group.

Cllr B. Bawden declared a non-pecuniary interest in the same agenda item and agenda item 15, Carbon Literacy Training as she was a river monitor for the River Lim Action Group and a carbon literacy facilitator.

23/31/ENV Dispensations

There were none.

23/32/ENV Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 4 October 2023

Members noted the report.

23/33/ENV Update Report

Members noted the report.

23/34/ENV Environment Policy

The town clerk said the wording in paragraph 11.2 should be changed to 'reviews' instead of 'audit'.

Cllr P. May said an amendment was required to paragraph 4.2 to change 'minimising' to 'minimise'.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. May, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the Environment Policy, with an amendment to paragraph 11.2 to replace 'audit' and 'reviews' and an amendment to paragraph 4.2 to replace 'minimising' with 'minimise'.

23/34/ENV River Lim Action Group Report

The chairman invited V. Elcoate, G. Roberts and R. Thomas from the River Lim Action Group (RLAG) to speak and present the findings from the most recent ecological survey to the council.

G. Roberts said the RLAG had received a copy of the ecological survey but weren't quite happy with the layout as they wanted it to be easy reading and logical in certain sections as it would be valuable for everyone to work from. They hoped to have the final report before Christmas so the group could look over it and then share it with the council.

G. Roberts explained how they planned to remove invasive Himalayan balsam and Japanese Knotweed with the help of local volunteers and specialist contractors and how they were liaising with affected landowners.

Cllr S. Cockerell asked what was done with the weeds once they had been pulled up.

G. Roberts said Himalayan balsam was good for compost but Japanese knotweed needed contractors to assist because it was very labour intensive.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked how the RLAG were engaging with landowners and property owners.

G. Roberts said they had 90% coverage between the group but had little access to housing that backed onto the river. With the requested funding, they would like to deliver literature via volunteers to these houses.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the group had managed to get to the bottom of why the most polluted area was the lower mill and if it had been resolved yet.

G. Roberts said this was one of the monitoring sites and five surveys had been done there, which showed the number of invertebrates was very low. He said RLAG's view was South West Water was discharging there way beyond its licensing consents and they were working in partnership to address this.

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if any monitoring was being carried out at the gully, which used to be a natural area of the town.

G. Roberts said it was an area they were interested in and they suspected there had been a discharge feeding into it, although it wasn't easy to access. He said they were hoping to purchase waders to gain better access.

V. Elcoate said South West Water's £20 million transition funding to improve the whole infrastructure in Lyme Regis had now been improved. She said RLAG had asked for an update but had not received a reply and said it would be helpful if the council could also ask for an update.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the town council writes to South West Water asking them what has happened to the £20 million funding for the Lyme Regis improvement plan.

Members considered the funding request from RLAG.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve the funding request of £8,036 from the River Lim Action Group from the 2023-24 environment budget.

23/35/ENV Environment Budget 2023-2024

The town clerk said there was £2,901 left in the budget after the allocation of £8,036 to RLAG, without taking into consideration the funding request from Little Green Change and the proposed biodiversity baseline assessment testing later in the agenda.

Cllr P. May said some of the weed clearance activity by RLAG would have to be done after April and asked if the council could make provision that the funding given to the group could be carried over to next year and specifically allocated for that purpose.

The town clerk said it was important expenditure was identified against a project and profiled. He said the finance manager could profile the £8,036 to get a sense of how much would need to be carried over to the next year.

Cllr B. Bawden said £1,500 had already been approved for carbon literacy accreditation but there would be a fee of £10 per head for the accreditation and certification process, and asked whether this should be included in the environment or training budget.

The town clerk said this could be reviewed at the time.

Cllr P. May asked what the latest expenditure was on the Plan Bee project as some of it was just a contingency and he believed there was some budget remaining.

The town clerk said he would check with the finance manager and let members know.

23/36/ENV Biodiversity Baseline Assessment

Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the assessment would be a one-off information gathering exercise to allow the council to carry out the assessment itself in future.

The acting operations manager agreed council staff could learn from the exercise and do it themselves in future.

Cllr. B Bawden said it was a good idea to have a starting point and then learn from it, so the council could then start to look at the recovery targets. She said RLAG might be willing to help with the assessments.

The town clerk suggested there was a winter and spring assessment. He suggested committing funding from this year's budget for a winter assessment and earmarking funds from next year's budget for a spring assessment. If at the end of the year the environment budget hadn't been spent, the council could identify it as a continuum of this project and carry the funds across.

The acting operational manager said the cost would potentially be higher than the proposed £1,200 due to the size of the council's green spaces.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to undertake a biodiversity baseline assessment in the town council's public gardens and green spaces, to be paid for from the 2023-24 environment budget.

23/37/ENV Motion for the Ocean

Cllr B. Larcombe said although he agreed the ocean needed to be maintained and assessed, he didn't fully understand what was behind this initiative. He said

the council needed to understand what it was paying for, how it was measured, and how it made a difference.

Cllr S. Cockerell suggested defer this item when the chairman was present as he had put this motion forward.

Cllr B. Bawden Dorset Council were going to pledge to the motion straight away but was seriously looking into it and what it entailed. She said she couldn't see any reference to any costs associated with the initiative.

The town clerk said this initiative needed to come from a councillor and not an officer. He said behind the motion sat funding pledges and sponsorship so the council needed to be clear on what was involved. He believed it would take Dorset Council some months to produce anything and advised members to wait for this before considering anything.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to defer the Motion for the Ocean item to a future meeting of the Environment Committee when there is more information available from Dorset Council.

23/38/ENV Funding Request from Little Green Change

The chairman invited C. Matheson to speak.

C. Matheson said since requesting funding from the council, she had secured funding from two local companies and was no longer in need of funding for this particular event.

It was proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden to approve a funding request of £350 from Little Green Change Ltd to run a Children's Christmas Give or Take event.

The support services manager said the event had already been funded and didn't require funding from the council.

However, members were keen to support the principle and discussed how they could support the organisation.

C. Matheson said she was intending to run another Give and Take event in the summer and suggested the council could fund this.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to provide £350 from the environment budget for a future children's 'Give or Take' event/s in the next 12 months, run by Little Green Change.

23/39/ENV Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The town clerk said given the current economic situation, the council needed to make sure it covered its costs in providing electric vehicle charging points. He said the current policy decision was to charge an additional 10p on top of the purchase price for administration so if the council charged users 70p, it would just about cover costs with very little surplus. He added that the council would be on the current two-year fixed rate until November 2024.

Cllr B. Larcombe felt the council should have a charge for users to pay, rather than having a policy of adding a premium on top for administration.

Cllr P. May agreed it would be better to charge the equivalent of what the council pays for electricity until November 2024 so it was only charging what it was paying.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by B. Larcombe, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the council revises its current policy for electric vehicle charging and in future charges for the KWhs of electricity at the equivalent cost that it pays to its provider until November 2024.

23/40/ENV Carbon Literacy Training

The town clerk the council was now able to move forward with the carbon literacy training and had all the necessary documentation that was needed to proceed. He said Cllr B. Bawden had agreed to do some training and it had been clarified with the Carbon Literacy Organisation that this would follow the town and parish councils' toolkit.

Cllr B. Bawden said as part of the submission, members who had already done the training were asked to provide feedback on how it impacted on the way they fulfilled their role as a councillor.

Members discussed whether this feedback should be individual or collective feedback but the town clerk said as members couldn't make individual decisions, it would have to be collective.

The meeting closed at 8.37pm.