

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2022

Present

Chairman: Cllr R. Smith

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

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

Guests: L. Davis (River Lim Monitoring Group), V. Elcoate (River Lim Monitoring Group), J. Leah (Dorset Climate Action Network)

22/24/ENV Public Forum

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

22/25/ENV Apologies

Cllr J. Broom – illness
Cllr B. Larcombe – illness
Cllr D. Sarson – holiday
Cllr G. Turner

22/26/ENV Minutes

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022 were **ADOPTED**.

22/27/ENV Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr P. May declared non-pecuniary interests in agenda item 9, River Lim Action Group Report as he was a member of the group, in item 10, Big Hedge, as he was a member of the Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN), and in item 11, Community Energy Champions Progress Report, as he was a community energy champion.

Cllr B. Bawden declared non-pecuniary interests in the same agenda items for the same reasons.

22/28/ENV Dispensations

There were none.

Water quality

The operations manager said the meeting between the Environment Agency, South West Water, Dorset Council and the town council had been arranged for 14 December 2022.

Mares Tail treatment

Cllr P. May asked if the alternative to glyphosate had been used yet and whether it had been successful in treating Mares Tail.

The operations manager said it was currently in use and he understood it wasn't as effective as hoped but the gardeners were giving it more time before making a decision to use an alternative.

Carbon Literate Organisation Accreditation

Cllr R. Smith asked if there was any update on progressing the council to achieve silver level accreditation.

Cllr B. Bawden said she had met with the town clerk to discuss how to incorporate carbon literacy into the organisation's performance management systems, as this was one of the requirements to attain silver accreditation, and discussions were ongoing.

eRIB Round Britain

The operations manager said the team was happy to give this committee regular updates from the January 2023 meeting onwards.

Cllr R. Smith asked that the council's logo was displayed on their website to publicise its sponsorship.

22/30/ENV Update on Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan

The chairman brought this item forward on the agenda and invited Cllr B. Bawden to give a presentation to the committee as the Dorset Council (DC) ward member.

Cllr B. Bawden said DC had implemented its climate and ecological emergency strategy and action plan on its own estate, e.g. schools, DC sites, and was now ready to share what it had been doing with town and parish councils and community groups.

Cllr B. Bawden said DC had adopted a three pillars approach; an ecological emergency, which involved a nature recovery plan; a climate emergency, which involved a climate and ecological emergency plan; and environmental adaptation. Cllr B. Bawden explained the scale of the challenge in terms of where DC felt it was now and where it needed to be by 2050, including a roadmap for delivery.

Cllr B. Bawden reported on DC's progress with its climate and ecological emergency strategy and action plan and what was still to be done. She referred to the areas DC

could control and guide, the areas it could enable through funding and the areas it could influence and how it could influence, for example through communications.

22/31/ENV Update Report

Car Club and E Bikes

Cllr B. Bawden said she and the operations manager had recently met with Co Cars and they had agreed to supply further information for the council to consider.

The operations manager said until the council was in a position to have three-phase supply in its car parks, this would be an initiative for DC to pursue.

22/32/ENV 2030 Lyme Vision – Community Conversation Update

The chairman invited Cllr B. Bawden to give an update on the 2030 Lyme Vision.

Cllr B. Bawden outlined some of the key ideas which had been suggested at the face-to-face consultation events, which included clean rivers and beaches, wildlife friendly green spaces, warm, affordable and well-insulated homes, better public transport, and cooking workshops for children.

Cllr B. Bawden explained how the Climate Heatmap had been used to gather responses, with 183 comments made so far and the platform was still open. She said those who had responded were a good spread of ages and employment statuses and the biggest issue raised was transport and air quality.

Cllr B. Bawden said the next stage of the project would be presentations to community groups with round table discussions and she hoped to involve local schools with a time travel animation and climate assembly. There would also need to be an analysis of additional comments, followed by project proposals and a Net Zero report for Lyme Regis.

22/33/ENV River Lim Action Group Report

The chairman invited V. Elcoate and L. Davis from the River Lim Monitoring Group to present their report.

V. Elcoate said they had followed up with J. Flory from the Environment Agency (EA) following his attendance at the previous committee meeting to try to firm up his action points. She said he had agreed to look into the source of the sewage pollution in the river and J. Flory had now confirmed it was human sewage but next year the EA would do an additional set of tests to properly track the source of the pollution. She said they would then have the evidence to be able to lobby the people who could change the situation.

V. Elcoate said the EA had also agreed it would start monitoring the river before the bathing season started and would be putting an additional monitoring point at Woodmead Road bridge where there had been a problem with sewage this year. However, the EA was not going to monitor over the winter. She said all the data gathering would help inform the Church Beach re-designation project because by cleaning up the river, the beach would also be cleaned up.

V. Elcoate said they believed South West Water (SWW) had dealt with some of the illegal pollution coming out of pipes at Windsor Terrace and Woodmead Road, although not all of it, but there had been a definite improvement. She said SWW were going to help with a beach clean in Charmouth because bio beads had been travelling over there. She said SWW had made it clear it wasn't a regular thing to flush bio beads into the river, but there was an incident and they would help to clear them up.

V. Elcoate said the river monitors, Blue Tits swimming group and representatives of other groups were meeting with SWW at Gun Cliff pumping station to discuss how pumping stations work, the various problems with them and how they planned to cut the legal discharges into the river.

L. Davis said at Front Beach, there was a groyne that went out on the east side, a storm water drain, which had been shown by the EA to have sewage coming out of it. She said there was a holding tank by the amusement arcade and it should be storm water but there was definitely sewage coming onto the beach, which seemed to be happening quite regularly.

L. Davis said at the harbour, sewage was also coming out of the storm drains and this had been reported. She said she had concerns that very heavy pumping out could fracture the pipe.

L. Davis said they were getting bathing water alerts for the Front Beach in the summer when it was being monitored between 15 May and 15 September, but for the rest of the year it was not being monitored and therefore there were no alerts. She said the town council should be publicising the alerts and the noticeboard for this purpose was opposite the food kiosks, but it hadn't been updated since 2019.

The operations manager said DC was responsible for publicising the alerts on the noticeboard; although it used to be the town council, it was handed back to the harbour team. He said there hadn't been an alert through the last season.

L. Noel from the River Lim Monitoring Group was invited to speak. She said she understood the beach controller was the local council, which was responsible for publicising the notices. She said there had been several alerts in the last season and that the noticeboard was inaccessible; she suggested it was put on the beach and she also understood there also used to be a noticeboard at Cobb Gate.

However, it was clarified the alerts were short term pollution notices and were linked to the weather, which were not part of the same reporting system which had shown spikes in E-Coli during the last season.

L. Davis said the council should be pushing for the EA to do year-round monitoring because there were lots of swimmers who were not aware of sewage in the water. She also suggested the storm drains were observed because sewage was coming up in front of the food outlets.

L. Davis spoke about the Monmouth Beach outflow pipe, which was shortened to the end of the Cobb in 2018 because it was malfunctioning, which meant every time the pumping station released sewage legally, it was on Monmouth Beach. She suggested the EA carried out an assessment at Monmouth Beach because there hadn't been one since 2018 and although it wasn't designated as a bathing beach, lots of people swam there.

L. Davis also gave an update on Horn Bridge, where there had been three pumps fitted since April. She said it was constantly being upgraded and was pumping the sewage from Gun Cliff up to the sewage works, but it was getting stuck at Horn Bridge. As a result, the sewage was being pumped into the river and it was backing up at Gun Cliff and discharging into the sea. She said the pump was due to be upgraded in 2025 but she felt it needed to be looked at a lot more urgently.

The operations manager thanked V. Elcoate and L. Davis for their report and said all the issues they mentioned could be raised at the meeting on 14 December 2022.

Cllr B. Bawden said Chris Loder MP was taking an active interest in this matter but he would only be engaged when necessary.

Members discussed the River Lim Monitoring Group's request for funding to carry out an ecological survey of the river, to purchase test kits and to carry out publicity and communications.

Cllr P. May said the amount of work the group had done and the evidence they had gathered was substantial and if the EA was not prepared to monitor the river during the winter, but the group was prepared to do it with volunteer labour, he felt the council should be supporting them.

The operations manager said there was a budget allocated to carry out the council's climate action plan, but funding requests would normally go through the grants' process. However, he said the council had declared a climate emergency so it would be reasonable to fund this request from the climate action plan budget. He said if the money allocated in 2022-23 was not spent this year, it would not be rolled over to the next year.

Cllr G. Stammers asked if members would need to see more information about who would be appointed to carry out the ecological survey. She felt it would require a proper submission so members were clear exactly what they were allocating funding to.

The support services manager said when an organisation submitted a grant application, they were asked to provide quotes or evidence of the expenditure so they could demonstrate to the council that the money would be spent as intended. As such, it would be reasonable to request the same kind of evidence in this instance.

Cllr G. Stammers felt the committee could approve the request to fund the test kits as the committee had funded kits previously, but she suggested the committee approved in principle the funding for an ecological survey, subject to further evidence of the expenditure being submitted before the Full Council meeting.

Cllr R. Smith suggested the request could be separated into two parts; the first part was a request for £5,000 for the ecological survey, and the second part was a request for £1,044 for monitoring and public engagement.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve funding of £1,044 to the River Lim Monitoring Group to carry out monitoring of the river and public engagement.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to agree in principle a sum of up to £5,000 to pay for a freshwater ecological survey of the River Lim, subject to a formal quotation being received.

22/34/ENV Big Hedge

The chairman invited J. Leah from DCAN to speak to her report.

J. Leah said the project was aiming to enhance Dorset hedges and they were hoping to start a pilot scheme in Lyme Regis. She said in a semi-urban area like Lyme Regis, it would enable the spread of biodiversity into other areas, connecting a core area to the outskirts. She said the project took a lot of management time and they wouldn't be able to promote it in Lyme Regis without external funding.

Cllr G. Stammers said as a large proportion of the requested funding would be to pay people to manage the project and it extended beyond the boundary of Lyme Regis into Uplyme, she wasn't sure where the council stood with providing a grant. She was also concerned the job was not going to be advertised so the grant would effectively pay the salary of someone already in post. She queried whether it should come from the climate action plan budget or the grants' budget.

Cllr B. Bawden said the project had a lot of community benefits, it involved people doing something active and gaining knowledge, as well as linking wildlife together.

J. Leah said the funding would include a fee for a person's services for a two-month period and that person already ran the administration of DCAN; the funding would allow them to focus more hours on this project.

The support services manager said community grants were specifically for capital projects but could be used to pay for someone to provide services as part of a project.

Cllr R. Smith asked if there was scope for the council's gardening team to work on the project.

The operations manager said there was the potential for the gardening team to help with gardening and some surveying.

Cllr P. May felt the council should support the funding request as it was tapping into something residents already felt was a good concept and it had had national press coverage so being associated with it as a town council would be good for community engagement.

Cllr R. Smith said he could see there was a lot of community benefit but he felt the specific benefit to Lyme Regis needed to be demonstrated.

The support services manager said it was clear members supported the principle of the Big Hedge and wanted to be able to support it, but there were obviously some concerns about the council's position in funding the project and where the funding should come from. As such, she suggested DCAN could instead be invited to apply for a community grant when they would be asked to provide detailed costings and evidence of expenditure and their application would be considered alongside applications from other local groups.

Cllr B. Bawden said further information about costings could be taken to Full Council so an earlier decision could be made and if the funding was not approved at that point, DCAN would then have the opportunity to apply for a community grant.

Proposed by Cllr B. Bawden and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to approve a funding request of £2,340 to Dorset Climate Action Network for the Big Hedge project, subject to further clarification to Full Council including detailed costings and how the project specifically benefits Lyme Regis and the community.

22/35/ENV Community Energy Champions Progress report

The chairman invited Cllr P. May to speak to the report as one of the community energy champions.

Cllr P. May said they had a list of residents who had asked the champions to carry out a thermal imaging survey of their properties and they were about to advertise this service so expected to see an increase in demand, especially as it was getting colder. He said the champions were trained to use the cameras and they were talking about refresher training with the Centre for Sustainable Energy.

Cllr P. May said they were working with Bridport community energy champions to re-purpose and re-brand some of their literature and creating their own check sheet of all the things they should think about to save energy. They were planning a home energy workshop in January and had been approached by Charmouth Parish Council and Char Valley Parish Council to help them with thermal image monitoring services.

Cllr P. May said they could obtain funding from the 2030 Vision project for a third thermal imaging camera so it could be used by Charmouth and Char Valley. He said although they had made a request to the council to fund another camera, there wasn't an urgent need for one; there was already one camera for Lyme Regis and two others that could be used in Lyme Regis and the surrounding areas but only three active surveyors so all the cameras would be in use. However, if they recruited further volunteers, more cameras would be needed at that point.

Members agreed it would be better to commit the funding at this point so they could recruit more volunteers knowing the equipment would be available if or when required.

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to allocate a budget of £450 to purchase a thermal imaging camera in the expectation it will be needed for additional community energy champions.

22/36/ENV Budget Update

Cllr B. Bawden clarified the community energy champion training totalled £2,000, not the £2,750 approved, and the £10,000 allocated to 2030 Vision would not be spent.

Members asked for clarification of whether any of the £25,000 climate action plan budget for 2022-23 would be rolled over to 2023-24 if it was unspent. Clarification was also needed on which three years the funding applied to as it was unclear if the funding started in 2021-22 and therefore ended in 2023-24 or if it started in 2022-23 and therefore ended in 2024-25, which would be one year into the new council administration.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to ask the Strategy and Finance Committee to

clarify if the climate action plan budget would be rolled over from one year to the next if any was unspent and to clarify the start and end dates of the funding.

The meeting closed at 9.54pm.