



Minutes of the meeting of ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP
Tuesday, 22nd November 2022, at 7.30pm
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Present

Cllrs Liz Child (from Item 5), Mike Elliott (from Item 5), Rob Green (Chair), Naomi Seffar and Megan Sheer

In attendance

Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Kate Montgomery (Deputy Clerk), Pete Bradshaw (Acting Green Spaces Manager)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Susan Fenton and Mark Graham (personal)

2. Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations

None

3. Questions from members of the public

None

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the council meeting on 27th September 2022 were **approved** by the members present and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair at the next opportunity.

5. Green Spaces Manager Report

Members received the report. Questions were put to the Acting Green Spaces Manager (GSM) regarding planting and the number of trees lost during the period of drought over the summer period. It was confirmed that a higher number than usual perished in the hot weather, with a survival rate of around 60%. Members noted that drought resistant planting will need to be considered in the future.

The Chair asked if further losses were expected due to the outbreak of Honey Fungus in Park Gardens, the Acting GSM confirmed that the Oak previously hit by lightning was also infected and was being monitored.

Councillors thanked the Acting GSM for the report.

6. Budget Monitoring

The Chair noted that the Agenda incorrectly showed that Councillors were due to receive the Budget Monitoring up to the end of August. The Budget Monitoring report up to the end of October was received.

The Chair enquired if officers could produce a fuel use element into the budget monitoring to show if the usage is going down in line with expectations. The Clerk confirmed that this was possible and could be presented to the Working Group at the next meeting.

Action: KM Fuel Usage Comparison
Date: 24th January Environment Working Group Meeting

The agenda was re-ordered as follows.

9. Ash die-back

The Acting GSM reported that the latest tree survey revealed two trees which require felling and further works were likely in the coming years. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the revised budget was an over-estimate of 10% to allow excess funds to be added to an Ash Tree Die-Back reserve which would fund additional works. Predicting costs for this type of work is complex due to the risk of unexpected additional costs which may have very serious health and safety consequences.

The Working Group recommended that the outlined costs were **approved** and added to the overall Environment Committee budget.

10. Play Equipment Repair Schedule

The Chair introduced the report regarding the repair of Council owned play equipment. Cllr Sheer noted that the play equipment in Park Gardens is in a poor state and offered assistance with public consultation.

The Clerk recommended to members that consideration be given to involving girls and young women and cited the charity 'Make Space for Girls' as a good reference for how to engage this group.

The Chair questioned the repair of the slide in Daisy Bank. The Acting GSM confirmed that this had been welded in eleven places, but due to its ongoing use by older and therefore heavier children, this was a temporary measure.

Members noted that the sites have potential for more creative and natural play facilities.

The Working Group recommended the play equipment budget was **approved** as outlined.

11. SLA Stroud Nature Festival

The Chair enquired if the SLA could be awarded and monitored by the Environment Working Group. The Clerk confirmed that it could.

The Deputy Clerk introduced the report and outlined the case for supporting Stroud Nature Festival for the promotion of biodiversity and nature recover for residents of the town.

The Chair noted that Stroud Nature Festival make a significant contribution to community engagement around nature conservation and have been instrumental in organising partners to work together on projects with a wide impact.

The Working Group recommended that the SLA was approved and added to the overall Council budget from the Carbon Reduction Fund for three years from 2023-24.

Action: KM

12. Draft Committee Budget for 2023-24

The Chair introduced the draft budget. The Clerk outlined key elements and answered questions relating to expenditure and projected costs.

The Chair invited members to prioritise projects as outlined in the budget should further cuts be required by Full Council on 16th January 2023, but the Working Group concluded that if a reduction was required when setting overall council budget, some adjustment could be found from the project budget. It was agreed to keep as is and revisit if necessary.

The Working Group recommended that the draft budget was **approved** for consideration at the next Full Council meeting on 16th January 2023.

Action: HB

The Clerk left the meeting.

The Agenda was re-ordered

7. Depot Lease

The Working Group recommended the **approval** of the new lease as outlined and in agreement with the landlord with an addition of a longer break-clause (9 months).

Action: KM

8. Drone Flying Policy

The Working Group recommended that the policy was **approved** with the re-wording as outlined.

The Agenda was re-ordered

13. Reports from Grants awarded 2021-22

The Working Group received the report from Sladebank Woods.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Chair

Date