



Minutes of the meeting of
Environment Working Group
Tuesday 23rd January 2024, at 7.30pm
At Thanet House, London Road, Stroud GL5 2AD

Present

Cllrs Child, Fenton, Graham (Chair from item 5), R Green (Deputy Chair) and Fealty

In attendance

Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Pete Bradshaw (Green Spaces Manager, (GSM))

Cllr R Green took the Chair in the absence of Cllr Graham

1. Apologies

Kate Montgomery (Deputy Town Clerk)

2. Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations

Cllr Graham declared an interest as a Trustee of Stroud Valleys Project, with regard to a grant application – item 13.

3. Questions from members of the public

None

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee on 21st November 2023 were **approved** by the members present and were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

Cllr Graham joined the meeting and took the Chair.

5. To receive the Green Spaces Manager Report

The Green Spaces Manager presented his report.

The GSM confirmed that a permit had now been granted for working on Lansdown to install new railings on the Bank Gardens wall. Work would start at the end of February. It was noted that lighting installations had been completed in Bank Gardens.

The GSM was pleased to report that volunteers had found the nationally scarce Rugged Oil Beetle in the cemetery. A trial of a moss removal machine had worked well on flat surfaces, but not so well on slopes.

The team had completed several training courses, including safe working on roadsides.

A multi-stakeholder meeting was being arranged to discuss flooding at the Long Ground. It was suggested that grills could potentially be added underneath manhole covers to prevent people falling into holes when the covers have lifted off.

The Town Clerk reported on the outcomes of joint patrols with Prospects in Park Gardens. Feedback from young people would be considered by the Community Committee and reported back to the Environment Committee for consideration of any infrastructure improvements.

**Actions: Communications and Engagement Officer to prepare public communications about work on railings
 GSM to introduce the idea of grills during discussions about the Long Ground flooding
 Deputy Clerk to report on infrastructure improvements at Park Gardens**

Cllr R Green reported an area of scrub encroachment at the Old Cemetery.

Action: GSM to address scrub encroachment

The Chair thanked the GSM for the report.

6. To receive the Budget Monitoring report to end of December 20023

The report was noted by the Committee.

7. To consider a draft Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan

The Committee reviewed revised drafts of the Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan and made several changes. The updated documents were **approved**.

Action: Deputy Clerk to circulate adopted policy and action plan, and publish on website

8. To review the Environment Committee Strategic Action Plan

The Town Clerk introduced the strategic action plan report.

The following updates were noted:

- 3f – Interpretation – noted that the budget had been amended
- 7n – Accessibility Improvements

Action: Town Clerk to provide timescales

- 5u – Green Flag

Action: Deputy Clerk to add to agenda for next meeting

- 5b – Fennels View residents had suggest a wide range of different views on potential improvements.

Action: GSM to review the consultation report and report back

- 9b – Stroud Town CAN

Action: Town Clerk to remove from plan and reintroduce if needed.

The Committee requested a 5-year plan to support future decision making.

Action: Town Clerk to review and amend as outlined

9. To receive a report on replacement of Cherry Trees at the new Cemetery

The GSM reported that the avenues of cherry trees in the new cemetery were falling victim to canker. Several had already been felled for safety reasons and the rest would need to be removed before they die.

The Committee considered options for either immediate or phased felling of the trees and looked at potential replacement plans. It was felt that replanting should attempt to replicate the existing layout in avenues.

It was noted that any replacement trees need to be suited to the unimproved limestone grassland habitat in the cemetery. More durable, native species were preferred, taking into consideration connections to the wider landscape and habitat connections to the site. Small trees with high wildlife values were preferred.

It was **agreed** to adopt a proactive programme for felling and replacement with trees suitable to the location. The Arboricultural Association were suggested as a potential source of advice.

Actions: GSM to programme in felling as required, and to research and report back on potentially suitable tree species.

10. To receive a report on replacement of trees at Park Gardens

The GSM presented a report on a proposal to plant four oak saplings as future replacements for existing trees in Park Gardens. Two locations were considered: either in between the current trees or on the opposite side of the path, so that they would be further away from known honey fungus infected trees.

It was **agreed** to plant saplings opposite the current oak trees on the other side of the path, and to relocate the boundary fence for the play area fence, when the play equipment is replaced to accommodate them.

Action: GSM to research and report back on potentially suitable tree species.

11. To note that transfer of freehold of the Leazes has been completed

The transfer was noted. The GSM reported that Stroud District Council had visited the site to measure up for the fencing required as a condition of the transfer.

12. To receive Grant reports for activities funded via the Carbon Reduction Fund

No reports received.

13. To consider Grant Applications to the Carbon Reduction Fund

Creative Sustainability CIC

Application **declined**. The Committee were concerned about the high proportion of costs in the project budget relating to general operating costs. It was also felt that the business case for the project was unclear and there was a lack of certainty that there will be adequate funding in place to renew the lease of the property.

Stroud Valleys Project

Application **approved**. The Committee felt that the application represented a positive development of the Service Level Agreement previously awarded to Stroud Nature.

It was noted that the applicants were collaborating with Transition Stroud's "GreenSeen" project, which had previously been funded by a Carbon Reduction Fund grant. It was noted that as the award would support a wide range of local organisations, the applicants would not be exempted from the normal rule that previous applicants may not apply again within the same year.

Cllr Graham did not vote.

14. To resolve to exclude the press and public in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed

It was **resolved** to exclude the press and public.

15. To consider a request from the Heavens Valley Action Group

Cllrs Fenton and Graham explained the establishment of the Heavens Valley Action Group. It was felt that the group's aims were consistent with the Council's strategy, so it was **agreed** that the Council would be a co-signatory to a letter to the owners of the land. Cllr R Green agreed to join the group.

It was noted that the Council would be able to provide advice, support, and potentially funding to the Group. It was suggested that CPRE be invited to join the Group.

Action: Town Clerk to sign letter

The meeting closed at 9.43pm

Chair

Date