

**LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2024**

**Present**

**Chairman:** Cllr R. Smith

**Members:** Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr P. May

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

**Guests:** V. Elcoate (River Lim Action Group)

**24/41/ENV Public Forum**

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

**24/42/ENV Apologies**

Cllr S. Cockerell – holiday  
Cllr B. Larcombe  
Cllr D. Ruffle  
Cllr G. Stammers  
Cllr G. Turner

**24/43/ENV Minutes**

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 were **ADOPTED**.

**24/44/ENV Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Cllr P. May declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8, 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 as she as she was a river monitor for the River Lim Action Group and a carbon literacy facilitator.

**24/45/ENV Dispensations**

There were none.

**24/46/ENV Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 22 November 2023**

## **River Lim Action Group Report**

Cllr P May asked for feedback on the meeting that was held on 15 January 2024 with South West Water and what the response was to the email from the council requesting information on what had happened to the £20 million transition funding.

The town clerk said South West Water were going to get back to the council separately in terms of their interim business plan and the status of the £20 million funding for works that were discussed.

## **Carbon Literacy Training**

Cllr B. Bawden said the first Carbon Literacy training workshop had been delivered online that day and involved Weymouth Town Council staff, two members and town council staff.

## **Biodiversity Baseline Assessment**

The acting operations manager said Abbas Ecology would hopefully be coming out the following week to see and get to know the site a little better and would then go away and compile the report.

## **Environment Budget 2023-2024**

The town clerk said that he would bring a report to the next meeting on the environment budget.

Cllr C. Aldridge asked what was happening with the planting for next year, with regards to the Plan Bee project.

The acting operations manager said the groundworks team were in the process of removing grass in all locations, which had to be removed to create space for wildflowers to grow. Planting would commence in the spring, similar to last year.

## **24/47/ENV Update Report**

### **eRib**

Cllr P. May said he was dismayed the town council didn't have three-phase power supply suitable for fast charging of the eRib and this might mean the project didn't start and finish in Lyme, which was a driver in the decision to agree funding.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if this was due to a grid capacity issue or if it was a Dorset Council issue. She said she had raised it with Dorset Council months ago and although it had put the infrastructure in so that the ducting could go on the mooring points, which were going to be capable of supporting electric charging, it was not part of its active proposal. She added that she was due to meet with the harbourmaster and would raise the issue with him.

## **Community energy champions**

Cllr P. May said the community energy champions had no website of its own, but they were a group of volunteers who had been trained and were now delivering energy saving tips to residents of Lyme Regis and the surrounding areas. They had a few thermal cameras, one of which had been purchased with funds from the town council, and they could be used to visit residents' homes and give them tips on how to improve their energy usage.

Cllr P. May said the group relied on the town council to publicise their presence. They had conducted around 40+ visits to residents, approximately 10 of which have been done this year and they expected to conduct another 10 to 20 visits this year.

Cllr R. Smith asked if the community energy champions were maxed out or under-utilised.

Cllr P. May said that they were about right for the number of people, but they had lost two members and gained one over the last 12 months which had limited their capability to do things. However, if they had more enquiries, they would be unable to cope.

Cllr B. Bawden said the community energy champions were promoted in the Community Café, and it was mostly word of mouth and via the leaflets that the word got around.

## **24/48/ENV River Lim Action Group Report**

The chairman invited V. Elcoate from the River Lim Action Group (RLAG) to speak.

V. Elcoate said RLAG were taking forward the main recommendations of the ecological survey report and would present the final version to the council as soon as it was finished. She said the first recommendation was the clearance of the Himalayan Balsam, which was a long-term project, but they felt that with enough volunteers, they could succeed over a period of years. Their plan was to launch year one in May with teams going out every month and she asked if the council could help publicise the dates so they could recruit more volunteers.

The town clerk said the town council would be more than happy to publicise the efforts if RLAG gave them all the information they needed to do so.

V. Elcoate said the person organising the clear-up wasn't very happy about the health and safety aspects of clearing the area below Gosling Bridge.

The acting operations manager said Dorset Council would be doing the clearing up in this area but if they couldn't, the town council could pick it up. He said it would have to be burned as it was an invasive weed and could only be transported by a registered waste carrier. He suggested using the electric

vehicle and loading it up in bulk bags to be burnt off site to prevent the spread of seeds.

V. Elcoate said Himalayan Balsam could also be composted. She asked if the town council would still be able to assist if the majority of the clearance took place in Uplyme.

The acting operations manager confirmed the town council would still be able to help. It was agreed he would discuss the details directly with V. Elcoate.

V. Elcoate spoke about the RLAG's request for the council to provide up front funds for the monitoring kit it had already agreed to fund. She said an up front payment would be preferred as it required a monthly payment to a laboratory.

The town clerk said it wasn't normal policy to give funding up front but the RLAG could write to him with the rationale and amount requested and he would discuss it with the finance manager.

V. Elcoate said RLAG were losing ground with South West Water so it was crucial to get a date in the diary for the next partnership meeting.

The acting operations manager said he would try to get a date booked in the diary in March when the official bathing season started.

V. Elcoate said once an initial meeting had been held with the Wild Trout Trust to discuss the barriers to fish passage, they would come and speak to the council.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr B. Bawden, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the town council supports the River Lim Action Group with the removal of Himalayan Balsam in the river, in accordance with the regulations.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that subject to agreement by the town clerk and finance manager, having had correspondence from the River Lim Action Group, the council allows funds to be paid up front to purchase monitoring kit.

## **24/50/ENV Low Carbon Dorset Roadshow**

Cllr B. Bawden said Low Carbon Dorset would be bringing an exhibition made up largely of displays but it would not be manned. She said she had asked if local groups could also have a display and there was the possibility of sharing the display with the town council. She suggested there could be a day when members were available to meet the public.

Cllr P. May asked for clarification of what was being asked of the town council other than to support the initiative itself.

Cllr B. Bawden said the town council could have a presence, displaying all the environmental initiatives it had supported in the town. She suggested the council set aside a budget for display boards, which were around £35 each.

The town clerk said officers could find out what boards the council already had and there was still money left in the environment budget to purchase more if necessary. He said the council could extend the exhibition into the performance or market areas and that it was a great opportunity for community groups to talk about what they were doing.

**24/51/ENV COP-28**

Cllr P. May said the council should concentrate on making sure that it did as much as it could to reduce its carbon footprint actively, and that would be the most important role it could play.

Cllr B. Bawden said the more the council could do locally, the better and that it did not have to wait for government or even Dorset Council to do the right thing.

Cllr R. Smith said it would be good if there was a way to educate and reach out to the wider public in a way that the town council could not do.

Cllr B. Bawden said that she didn't feel it was the town council's role to talk about personal behaviour change, but rather an understanding of why emissions needed to drop, and quickly.

The town clerk suggested Cllr B. Bawden invited Dorset Council to come to the Low Carbon Dorset event in June to tell the public what it's doing for the environment.

*The meeting closed at 7.51pm.*