



Environment and Green Spaces committee minutes

Minutes

From the committee meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 13 June 2023

At St. Margaret's Hall, Bradford on Avon

Decision making

The **decisions** made by the committee at this meeting are at minutes [11](#), [18](#) & [19](#).

Present

Councillors:

- Kate Bessant
- Emma Franklin
- Alex Kay
- Jennie Parker
- Alison Potter
- Katie Vigar
- Jack Vittles

Town Council Officers:

- Ian Brown - Chief Executive & Town Clerk
- Chris Stringer – Deputy Town Clerk
- Matthew McLaughlin – Communications Officer
- Chris Hogg – Green Spaces Officer

Meeting clerk:

- Sarah Howe – Committee Clerk
-

Apologies

From Councillors unable to attend the meeting:

- Sarah Gibson
 - Tim Trimble
-



11. Agenda item 2 - Election of Vice Chair

The Chair of the committee took nominations for the vice-chair. Councillor Katie Vigar nominated Councillor Sarah Gibson which was seconded by Councillor Kate Bessant. As there were no further nominations the Chair confirmed Councillor Gibson was happy to be nominated in absentia and moved to the vote and with all in favour; **Resolved:** Councillor Sarah Gibson was elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the current year.

12. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

13. Minutes from the previous meeting of the committee

Proposed by Councillor Katie Vigar.

Seconded by Councillor Kate Bessant.

And with all in favour it was **resolved:** that the Minutes of the last committee meeting held on 25th April 2023 be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

14. Matters arising

None.

15. Agenda item 7 – Chair’s Update

The Chair summarised her update which was supplied with the agenda. Additionally, a Running Out of Time Relay event banner was displayed at the meeting (made out of sustainable materials) which will also be displayed at the event itself on the 5 July 2023.

The Sustainable Food and Drink Group (SFADG) have a display on in the town library as part of the Great Big Green Week (GBGW) events running from the 10-18 June. Further GBGW events: Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon (CFBOA) and the SFADG are holding an event about ultra-processed food on 19 June starting at 7pm at the Hub with Jo Lewis from the Soil Association speaking and on 14 June at St Nicholas Church in Winsley the film ‘Kiss the Ground’ will be shown.

The Chair expanded on the biodiversity grants which have been awarded recently. Discover Christ Church! held a biodiversity event at Christ Church churchyard to inspire children and others.



16. Agenda item 8 – Project Updates

The Communications Officer read out his update as supplied with the agenda. The Chair confirmed that the opening times for the TerraCycling centre at the Youth Centre are Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am – 4pm and that the details are published on the website and via social media.

Councillor Vigar thanked the Communications Officer for his update and the Co-op for the food which supplies the Community Fridge and asked if there had been any investigations to source food from other outlets. The Communications Officer confirmed that he has spoken to Sainsbury's and is hoping to have their involvement in the near future. It was pointed out that the Hub do make recommendations to their clients to make use of the Community fridge but that invariably the fridge is emptied very promptly leading to disappointment.

17. Agenda item 9 – Play Bradford on Avon Project Update

The Deputy Town Clerk referred to his update as supplied with the agenda and added that tenders for the first few parks at Poulton and Aldhelm are due in next week. He offered to take any questions. Councillor Bessant asked about the setting up of a crowd funding bank account for the Poulton park play area as a lot of residents are keen to make a contribution. It was confirmed that the matter is in hand and the town council are waiting for the bank to get to back to them.

18. Agenda item 10 – Barbeques on Town Council owned land

The Deputy Town Clerk referred to his report and proposal as supplied with the agenda and the Chair confirmed that besides the risk of wildfires and damage to the green spaces and their wildlife that prohibiting the use of barbeques should improve the enjoyment of the town's green spaces for all visitors and residents. It was proposed by Councillor Franklin and seconded by Councillor Bessant, **resolved:** to confirm the Town Council's position that we do not allow barbeques in the parks and green spaces that we look after at this time.



19. Agenda item 11 – Low Energy Cooking Initiative

The Chair introduced the item set out in her proposal. The proposal stated that the town council will provide £250, to be match funded by CFBoA, for the purchase of a range of low energy cooking appliances to be loaned out to residents on a short-term basis. Individuals could then decide whether such appliances are useful before any serious financial outlay. The scheme would increase the profile of low energy cooking and its cost saving benefits. The town council would organise the PAT testing of appliances as needed and promote the scheme through the usual channels. A Domestic Energy session in September could launch the scheme with cookery demonstrations. Ros from CFBoA confirmed that such a scheme would: encourage the sustainable food ethos, encourage home cooking which can be discouraged by high energy and food costs, encourage the purchase of healthier foods by low-income families and provide cookery sessions and demos. A venue with cooking facilities was being sought to host the launch event, possibly St Laurence School.

Councillor Vigar supported the idea and thought demonstrations for these appliances would be better received than just general economical cookery demonstrations and would allow people to learn how to cook with cheaper foods, which are less processed and a smaller carbon footprint. She also suggested Wallington Hall as a possible venue. Councillor Franklin asked how the scheme could attract the residents who could benefit most. The Chair suggested advertising through the usual channels, involve the Hub and possibly Selwood Housing who have been supportive of domestic heating events in the past.

It was proposed by Councillor Kay and seconded by Councillor Vittles and with all in favour, **resolved:** to provide £250 to support the low energy cooking initiative with CFBoA and the purchase of eco friendly cooking appliances.

20. Agenda item 12 – Healthy Rivers Project

The Chair introduced the item and supplied an update on the healthy rivers project where in-principle approval was agreed by the town council in October 2022 and £2000 was set aside for the River Detectives scheme. The scheme itself is to train 5 to 8 volunteers to sample a section of river and provides sample kits. Sampling can then continue for several months to a year to provide plenty of data to be entered onto a



regional database. The Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) who have organised the scheme are attempting to raise more funding to reduce the outlay of participants but as yet do not have any firm commitments of offers of money so the cost to participants is yet to be determined. The Chair is hoping the council can join the scheme at the end of the summer and would like to increase the money ringfenced for the project to £5000 which is the latest cost estimate to take part if no further funding is obtained by BART.

The second proposal is to acquire a commitment from fellow members to help organise an evening event promoting the healthy rivers project and launch the River Detectives scheme locally, recruiting volunteers for the scheme, and highlight other projects such as the River Blitz (a one off sampling project due to take place in July).

Members were concerned the potential costs to join the River Detectives scheme has more than doubled since October 2022 and a firm cost is still not forthcoming but were happy to commit to helping with the healthy rivers evening event to launch and highlight the various projects and try and recruit volunteers.

It was proposed by Councillor Kay and seconded by Councillor Franklin, **resolved:** that proposal 1 is deferred until firm information on the cost to the council of the River Detectives Scheme is determined but proceed with proposal 2 that all members will help set up an evening over the summer to launch the healthy rivers project.

21. Agenda item 13 – Green Spaces Officer Update

The Green Spaces Officer gave a verbal update on the management of green spaces across the town. Grass cutting is in full swing including more wildlife friendly cuts in areas such as Bearfield and elsewhere. The improvements in biodiversity are already apparent with orchids appearing in the cemetery and a greater diversity of wildflowers around the library and bowling green than previously seen under more rigorous cutting regimes. Town Wardens are also beginning path clearances of leaf litter and overhanging vegetation.

The Nature Volunteers have been helping secure tree guards, orchard maintenance in Victory Fields and are still hoping to recruit further volunteers. The council hosted Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Wellbeing group



to help out in Barton Country Park which is now being managed in an agroforestry manner in part with sheep grazing and further trees planted. All the newly planted trees are being watered regularly and tree gators, which release water into the ground slowly around trees, are in use.

A high court order has allowed the council to clear a fallen tree in Becky Addy Wood which has blocked the footpath and volunteer bat surveys have also recommenced. The town council is now preparing the ground for the internment of Ashes itself and only using a contractor for burials. The SkatePark construction is on track and finally Town Wardens are also supporting events around the town with litter collections and clearing away fly tipping.

Both the Chair and Councillor Vigar led the thanks to the Wardens for all their hard work, were pleased to see the barrow litter sweeping has restarted around the centre of town and Councillor Vigar also fed back that residents are stopping her around town to express how lovely the town is looking.

22. Agenda item 14 – Low Carbon SkatePark?

The Chair referred to her statement, sent to the resident concerned and circulated to members previously, in response to a previous question at the town gathering asking the town council to consider using low carbon concrete in the construction of the new SkatePark. The statement in full is at the end of the minutes under Appendix B.

23. Agenda item 15 – Carbon/Environmental Audit

The Chair referred to her report supplied with the agenda. Due to the recent increase in assets and interests for which the town council is now responsible she feels now is the time to begin the process of an environmental audit and is introducing the plan at this time with a full proposal in due course.

24. Next meeting

The next committee meeting is arranged for Tuesday 29 August 2023.

End of the meeting

The meeting finished at 8.05 pm



Appendix A: Comments and questions from the public

There was one question from a member of the public at the meeting. There were around 10 members of the public in total.

Question on flooding

A resident asked about latest on flood prevention for the town. She believed the town narrowly missed a flooding episode this winter.

The Environment Agency and other bodies were due to meet this year to consider a plan for Bradford on Avon with regards flooding and reconsider the barriers which had been deemed unsafe by the Environment Agency. Funding and other pressures have delayed the meeting but the use of the flooding prevention barriers is still actively under consideration.

Meanwhile Wessex Water are planning to do some work very soon to reduce sewage output into the river during heavy rain episodes.



Appendix B: Response from the Chair of the Committee to the Low Carbon SkatePark question.

Thank you for your detail emailed about the skatepark concrete. I have sympathy for your concerns for Climate Emergency. We need to consider this in all our actions and very especially in construction and transport (which are not within TC remit).

From the outset of this Skatepark project nearly six years' ago, I pushed for it to be as environmental as reasonable. I assure you, every project we discuss, environmental issues are included.

I do not recall that I promised to research this issue and get back. Apologies if I misremember. I responded at the meeting and then, with Russ and other Cllrs at Full Council when you asked again. I find it hard to believe that I mentioned either funding or timing, as these do not seem to be issues that I would focus on. I believe I mentioned a degree of off-setting should be considered and agreeing that is not ideal. It does depend what is actually done though. The overarching landscaping and large-scale tree planting are part of that. Many of the fund-raising projects have also been focused on waste-reduction and other climate issues.

A Town Council has a wide range of commitments and the health and safety of the residents is a very high priority. There are trade-offs and delicate balances in everything we do. Providing quality, long-lasting outdoor facilities for young people goes much deeper than enjoyment of wheeled sports. It encompasses a massive problem of mental health issues of young people, tackling obesity, loneliness and antisocial behaviour. Young teens have few places to go socially, outside of school. I would argue that there is a crisis for young people and they have to be provided with hope and facilities to flourish in many ways. I have witnessed these young people on BoA exhibit terrific public-speaking, organisational and diplomatic skills as well as patience.

Playing outdoors is of paramount importance and helps young people take an interest in their environment. This is why we also are putting much effort and investment into all the play areas across BoA.



When we do have a quality, central facility, it will reduce the transport impact of taking children to other towns to find suitable ramps as happens currently. It will be available for generations of young people. After it is built, the concrete does not release CO₂, but continues absorbing CO₂ to some extent.

Over the last 6 years children and young people (some of whom may have left home by now!) have engaged with the TC on this project with their parents, families and friends, in a way they may not have otherwise. This will include involvement in Climate school strike, GBWG events, E&GS meetings ... there are always intangible but real side-benefits in any positive engagement.

Russ from Maverick has made it very clear that the longevity and utility of the skatepark, a very specific mix is required. Reduction of carbon can be made in other ways, including local provision minimising transport costs.

I feel the comparison with Folkestone F51 skatepark is somewhat disingenuous. It is a massive, multistorey, indoor commercial venture costing £9 for 2 hours. It has much more building infrastructure, much of which could be Eco-cement whilst not impairing the ramp quality. Being indoors, the weatherproofing longevity is also a different issue.

I cannot argue with your CO₂ statistics and the mounting global problems. I have personally worked tirelessly with many unpaid hours of projects, meetings, events, in attempt to some difference to the incredible climate and ecological problems we are seeing. There are almost no TC projects that I don't raise the issue and my fellow Cllrs and Council officers are ALWAYS in supportive. I am frustrated when we do not act as quickly as I would like sometimes, but there are many pulls on all our time and we have achieved much over these few years.