

**CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY SUB MEETING OF  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Wednesday, 6 November 2019**

**At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan A Prosser	R Smith
Officers:	Sharon Groth John Hickman Nicky Cayley	Town Clerk Operations & Estates Officer Democratic Services Officer
Others:	Janice Bamsey – Planning Policy Officer from WODC Rachel Crooks – Project Officer for LWVP Jenny Tricker – Witney Resident Brian Newant – Witney Resident Tim Walker – Witney Resident Toby Swift – Wychwood project Nick Dalby – Landscape and Forestry Officer from WODC Soraya Wooler – WASP Richard Carter – Witney Resident Amanda Stilbrany – Witney Resident Susan Payne – Witney Resident Ben Williams – Programme Manager from Earthwatch 3 additional residents who arrived after the start of the meeting	

429 **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr Bolger be elected as Chair of the Sub Committee for the ensuing municipal year and Cllr Smith be elected as Vice Chair for the ensuing municipal year.

430 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Bolger, Enright and Harvey.

431 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in items to be discussed at the meeting.

432 **MINUTES**

The Sub Committee received and considered the minutes of the Nature and Wildlife Working Party held on 17 July 2019 and the minutes of the Climate Change Working Party held on 11 September 2019.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the minutes of the Nature and Wildlife Working Party held on 17 July 2019 and the minutes of the Climate Change Working Party held on 11 September 2019 and that in the Nature and Wildlife Working Party Minutes, page 2, section 5, third paragraph “biodiversity” be changed to “nature”.

433 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was extensive public participation from both members of the public and invited participants, which is contained in the attached appendix.

434 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Sub Committee received and considered the adopted Terms of Reference for both the Nature and Wildlife Working Party and the Climate Change Working Party. The Town Clerk explained the original intention of the working party which was superseded by the Nature and Wildlife Working was to draw up a vision for the Lake & Country Park. She was concerned that members may lose sight or focus on this, but it was important as there currently was no management plan in place for this asset managed by the Town Council. A member recalled that at the previous Climate Change Working Party it had been felt that this should be kept separate from the Climate Emergency issues.

There was a discussion about various patches of land around the town in terms of ownership and management. Nick Dalby from WODC commented that perhaps focusing on land that was owned by the Town Council would be best and to look at how these could be managed differently.

A member proposed that Halls and Green Spaces Committee should formulate a policy on how the land should be managed. The Operations and Estates Officer commented that it would be very helpful if all three tiers of councils were aware of what they owned as currently WODC always referred a query to the Town Council. There followed a discussion about what might go into such a policy.

The Town Clerk advised that Continental Landscapes had provided an options paper on the management of the Lake and Country Park and that this might be a good starting point. There had been no policy decision on that document.

A member proposed that management of the Lake and Country Park should be managed in terms of biodiversity and not developed for further leisure pursuits. This would retain fishing rights. Members felt that both original sets of Terms of Reference should be kept but just “tidied up”.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the Terms of Reference for both the Climate Working Party and the Nature and Wildlife Working Party are combined to form the Terms of Reference for the Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee – this would ensure that the importance of the Lake and Country Park was not lost;
2. that the Halls and Green Spaces Committee should formulate a policy on how the Town Council owned land should be managed;

3. that management of the Lake and Country Park should be managed in terms of biodiversity and not developed for further leisure pursuits – but retaining fishing rights.

435 **LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK**

The Sub Committee discussed the potential of the Lake and Country Park for education – for example involving Forest Schools and having an outside classroom.

Members felt that to improve biodiversity it would be important to link with partners such as the Grounds Maintenance Contractors.

A member stressed that the Planning Committee would be pushing for paths from new developments (such as the one proposed at Cogges in Witney East) should have footpaths that link to this area.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the vision for the Lake and Country Park places biodiversity at the heart of the management process and that the Town Council works alongside its partners to provide expert advice to achieve an improvement in this.

436 **CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

The Town Clerk advised that the Compliance and Environment Officer would start his role the following Monday. He would support the Sub Committee in terms of drawing up an action plan. A member advised that the Christmas Sub Committee would be looking at timers for Christmas Lights when the contract was up for renewal. She added that also new developers were not exploring the potential to include environmentally friendly housing as this was not a requirement of the Local Plan and she felt that the Town Council could push the concept a little more.

Janice Ramsey from WODC advised that the Local Plan had the option to issue supplementary documents that would include environmental requirements. Nick Dalby from WODC advised that the Town Council should think about how it fitted into what was going on around it.

Members also discussed “Healthy Lines” to encourage people to walk and cycle along set routes. The cost could be around £17,000. A member proposed that a working party be set up to develop this and that this proposal is put to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee be presented with the case study for the Healthy Line Scheme in Bicester together with an outline proposal for a scheme in Witney.

437 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was 26 February 2020 at 4pm.

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The meeting closed at: 5.45 pm

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