



Lichfield City Council

Donegal House, Bore Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6LU

Tel: (01543) 250011 e-mail: enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk

Town Clerk: **Anthony Briggs** BA (Hons), CILCA

20 September 2023

To: Members of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee

Councillors R Harvey-Coggins (Chair), and Councillors J Blackman, A Hughes, A Lax, A Rushton and E Strain.

Dear Councillor

Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee to be held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at **6.00pm on Wednesday 27 September 2023** for the transaction of the following business. Any Councillor unable to attend should forward their apologies to the Town Clerk.

Yours sincerely

Tony Briggs
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Cllrs Blackman and Hughes received prior to agenda circulation.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To note the adopted Terms of Reference for the Committee (**APPENDIX 1**, attached)

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted

4. ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN TO DATE

To consider the Town Clerk's report at **APPENDIX 2** (attached).

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

5. COMMITTEE PRIORITIES, SUGGESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This agenda item allows for a full discussion by committee members as to aims and priorities for the committee, and any suggestions put forward by members prior to or at the meeting. To assist with discussions a 'Climate Change Pack' developed by Bolsover District Council which includes several suggestions and checklists is provided as **ENCLOSURE 1**.

On 1 August 2023, the Town Clerk circulated an email to Committee members regarding any discussion items they may wish to submit prior to the meeting for inclusion on the agenda:

Cllr A Lax:

Encourage a reduction in 'engine idling' notably at schools.

The RAC provide a great deal of information on why engine idling is harmful, with the headline figure from The Royal College of Physicians estimating 40,000 deaths a year linked to air pollution as a whole, with engine idling contributing to this. While the issue is being addressed by councils and Government, schools can now draw attention to the issue themselves by purchasing an RAC School Clean Air Zone banner which urges drivers to 'show they care about our air' by turning off their engines.

The banners, which cost £60 including delivery and VAT, are produced for the RAC by Ottimo Digital. The RAC makes no profit from the sale of the banners and Ottimo Digital has agreed to print them at a reduced margin. Cllr Lax's suggestion is that the City Council offer to reimburse any School in the City that purchases one of these banners.



Further information can be found at: <https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/emissions/idling/>

Cllr Lax's other suggestions are:

- Signage with advice regarding appropriate food for ducks and discouraging feeding with bread; the most convenient location for such signage being along Pool Walk as it is owned by LCC.
- Herb Garden areas within designated areas of LCC open space and available to the community.
- Bug hotels – a competition or incentive where schools design and make bug hotels and submit photographs.

Cllr E Strain:

Green Networking Event – November 2023

A co-hosted event by this Committee, Lichfield Re:Cycle and Support Staffordshire, held in the Guildhall in November 2023. Currently envisioned as a one-off event, Lichfield Re:Cycle have stated they have funding for room hire (this Committee could recommend free use of it wished – see Town Clerk's note below), Support Staffordshire to organise invitations to interested groups, and members of this Committee use the event as a 'brainstorming' and networking opportunity.

This would tie in with Support Staffordshire's 'green conversations' and facilitation across the County, designed to assess networking and support needs around this topic. After successful events elsewhere, one in Lichfield District is desired. Support Staffordshire can provide the necessary skills to bring together groups and allow them to network, while gathering information relevant to a funding application to develop this work.

Proposed dates are:

Mon 13th Nov am or pm (room in use from 5pm)

~~Wed 15th Nov am or pm~~

Mon 20th Nov am or pm (room in use from 5pm)

Tues 21st Nov pm

Wed 22nd Nov pm (room in use from 4pm)

Mon 27th Nov am or pm (room in use from 5pm)

Wed 29th Nov am or pm

Town Clerk's note: Given the timeframes it could be worthwhile pushing the event towards the later dates offered. The dates in bold above denote availability of the Guildhall main hall all day, it is strongly recommended that one of these dates is utilised to allow the event to run its course and there be no immediate pressure to turn the room around from or to a previous/subsequent booking. Dates crossed through are unavailable.

Within the emails seen by the Town Clerk regarding this event, there is mention of Guildhall hire for 4 hours costing £100 including refreshments. Assuming the booking is from Support Staffordshire, the charity rate is £19.85/hour – a four hour booking therefore being approximately £80. Refreshments are not provided as standard for any Guildhall hire. If such provision is required it would need to be externally sourced or, in the case of LCC bookings only, arranged and provided by LCC staff.

Membership of Support Staffordshire

Related to the above, the Committee to consider a recommendation that LCC becomes an associate member of Support Staffordshire (at a cost of £25 p.a.) to provide access to their support in any future projects the Committee takes forward.

<https://www.supportstaffordshire.org.uk/>

The Town Clerk is also aware of a suggestion regarding the installation of drinking fountains, a general desire to contact and work with other local environmental groups, and the possibility of utilising Staffordshire County Council's 'Climate Action Fund' for environmental projects. County Councillor support is required for such an application, which is limited to £1,500 per project.

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/Climate-change/Climate-Action-Fund.aspx>

RECOMMENDED: The Committee to agree its next steps and chosen priorities, making corresponding recommendations to council as appropriate.

6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be decided by the Committee.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR

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Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee

27 September 2023: APPENDIX 1

CLIMATE CHANGE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE

BACKGROUND

Following discussions with the Leader of the Council that set out the wishes of the controlling group, the City Council was asked to discuss the appropriateness of establishing a Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee. The aim of the Committee being to examine how the council can reduce its impact on the environment, identifying further ways of supporting biodiversity across the city, and informing the Council in leading behavioural changes to preserve the environment. To assist with those discussions, draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Committee were prepared and subsequently adopted by Council on 24 July 2023.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DESIGNATION

Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee to consist of a maximum of six Councillors with cross-party representation. Additional members may be appointed by resolution of the Committee. Initial membership, Chair and Deputy to be agreed by Council as soon as is practicable. Thereafter, membership, Chair and Deputy Chair appointment to be decided upon by Council resolution and reviewed annually. In the event of a Member or Members resigning from the Committee, new appointments to be confirmed by resolution of the Council.

OBJECTIVES

Though recognising the limitations of a parish council, both in terms of influence and resources, the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee will:

- research, share and adopt best practice on environmental issues
- review and recommend environmentally friendly policies in areas of City Council business and responsibility, notably in regard to reduction of the council's carbon footprint
- examine ways in which the City Council can promote greater biodiversity, notably through the use of green spaces and the promotion of footpaths, cycle tracks and other green transport options
- have a climate focused input into any review of the Lichfield City Neighbourhood Plan or other strategic council policies
- consider projects and possible funding streams which work towards developing a carbon neutral community, including but not limited to recycling and air quality
- work collaboratively with principal authorities and other local groups (where appropriate) to achieve shared goals or to facilitate desired progress
- consider, support and implement appropriate projects that contribute to local environmental improvements
- maintain awareness of the relevant activities/scope of LDC, SCC and external agents as appropriate to ensure a cohesive approach.

DECISION MAKING AND GOVERNANCE

All recommendations of the Committee to be subject to confirmation by resolution of the City Council unless delegated authority has been previously conferred via resolution of the council. Committee meetings will be governed by the City Council's Standing Orders.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Meetings of the Committee are generally informal (though governed by Standing Orders). Members of the public or other individuals/bodies can be invited to participate.

The Committee to meet as often as is considered appropriate for the conduct of its business, but no less than once in any given financial year.

Minutes of each meeting will be taken by the Clerk or nominated representative and circulated as soon as is practicable. Any formal recommendations or reports emerging from a meeting of the Committee to be submitted for consideration by the City Council at the earliest opportunity.

BUDGET AND FUNDING

The cost incurred in servicing this Committee will be met by general council funding, but there is no further specific budget allocated at this time. The Committee may however make a request to Council for a funding allocation for a particular project via resolution.

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Committee may appoint task and finish groups consisting of Councillor(s) and/or community members. Each task and finish group to be Chaired by a member of the Committee who is also a City Councillor, and all decisions subject to confirmation by the Committee and subsequent council resolution.

CONDUCT

All members of the Committee or any task and finish group associated with it are required to abide by the principles and practice of the City Council's code of conduct.

CHANGES TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

Recommendations for changes to these terms of reference can be made by the Committee by resolution. The recommendations will be subject to confirmation by resolution at a meeting of the City Council.

DISSOLUTION

Recommendation for the dissolution of the Committee can be made by resolution of the Committee and is subject to confirmation by resolution of the City Council. The Committee can be dissolved by resolution of the City Council without prior recommendation for such action by the Committee.

Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee

27 September 2023: APPENDIX 2

Activity Undertaken to Date

The climate change and biodiversity agenda is extremely broad, encompassing everything from individual to societal behaviours, green spaces, buildings, renovation, heat, light, travel, community activity and much more besides. Many day to day or project specific activities carried out by the council therefore impact upon this broad agenda, either directly or indirectly.

LCC Buildings

Over the past eight years or so, the Council has carried out the most ambitious repairs and renewals programme since its foundation in 1980. A good deal of this work has included improvements to thermal efficiency and/or improvements to building elements such as lighting. Examples include:

- New exterior doors and surrounding panels at Curborough Community Centre and Boley Park Community Hall, the replacement fixtures boasting significantly improved thermal efficiency than their predecessors.
- Replacement of SOX/SON bulbs in approximately 150 LCC owned pathway lights with LED alternatives (completed in 2019).
- Rebuild of Cruck House annexe significantly improved the thermal values of the building against its 1960's predecessor, in addition to improved design, accessibility etc. (completed 2021)
- Replacement LED lighting in the Guildhall ground floor corridor, Guild Room, main hall and both kitchens. The Moulton Room is the only room in the building where the lighting has not been upgraded.
- Replacement LED lighting at Boley Park Community Hall (the Hall being run by LCC officers since the resignation of the previous management committee in 2016).
- Upgraded lighting to the council offices at Donegal House.
- Replacement display and room lighting at the Birthplace Museum
- Ongoing work at Darwin Hall includes addition of extra roof insulation to further improve the u-value of the building.
- Installation of solar panels at Darwin Hall (progressed by Darwin Hall Community Association).
- Ongoing installation of solar panels at Curborough Community Centre (progressed by Curborough Community Association, approved by Council July 2023)
- General and significant repairs and maintenance work to windows, roofs and other building fabric that is aged, deteriorated or was in general poor repair across the LCC portfolio.

In terms of further improvements, there are several limitations to the council's property portfolio. Several of the buildings are listed (Johnson Birthplace, Donegal House, Guildhall, Cruck House) and the nature of their structure makes them less thermally efficient than more modern buildings. Former Town Clerk Peter Young sought advice on the possibility of the installation of a Ground Source Heat Pump at the Guildhall when the previous boilers had reached the end of their service lives. Expert advice was that such an installation would not be practical. Other than Darwin Hall, all LCC owned buildings are heated by gas.

The design and construction of Darwin Hall focused heavily on environmental considerations, with a Ground Source Heat Pump and an 'intelligent' building design to regulate temperature and provide good thermal efficiency. Unfortunately, many elements of the building were experimental, and the 'intelligence' of the building is not as anticipated. While the majority of issues at the hall are not directly related to energy efficiency measures,

Darwin Hall does serve as a lesson to all that new technologies may promise much and deliver little; it can be unwise to push headlong into a project with uncertain or unproven outcomes, especially when it is public money at stake both for the project itself and any subsequent improvements that may be required.

Community centres and offices rely to an extent on the users; lights can be left on, heating controls tampered with, for example. This has been mitigated to some degree at Boley Park CC with the installation of a hive system that can be controlled remotely, also allowing heating to be powered down when the hall is not in use for a lengthy period. Measures such as these and the addition of further motion activated lights, extractor fans etc could be investigated across LCC owned property.

A further consideration is the environmental appropriateness of any upgrade; is it less environmentally friendly to replace an ageing but serviceable element with a new, more efficient alternative when that new equipment carries an inherent environmental impact? This may depend in part upon whether the element being replaced can be recycled, and the environmental impact of the recycling process.

LCC Open Space

The Council owns approximately 65 acres of open space, and over the past few years various areas have been given over to projects to support biodiversity, such as the bund at Nether Stowe, installed during the summer of 2020 following the incursion by Travellers onto open space 10.

The bund's primary purpose was to guard against a recurrence and utilise some of the soil that Lichfield and Heatherton Canals Restoration Trust were looking to dispose of following their excavations along Tamworth Road. The bund was originally planted with flowers and shrubs, but many of these were taken by persons unknown within a couple of weeks or so following planting. The sowing of wildflower seeds was seen as a positive alternative, and many positive comments were received.

Festival Gardens has been a centrepiece for this work for some time, beginning with 'no mow' areas in 2017 and being improved following reintroduction in 2023. The wildflower borders were introduced in 2022 and enhanced for 2023 – planted partly to 'hide' the bollards installed early in 2023 to deter unauthorised vehicular access. 'Three Tree Triangle' on the edge of the site is managed by local group Transition Lichfield.

The City Council played an active role in Lichfield District Council's 'Mowing Panel', with the Town Clerk and Open Spaces Officer attending those meetings. The City Council put forward pilot areas and designs for no-mow (Festival Gardens and Open Space 10 at Nether Stowe) for 2023. Also agreed via the Mowing Panel was the decision to not routinely cut grass around the base of trees, and reduced verge cutting in certain areas where the land is owned by SCC but is managed by LDC Operational Services through an agreement between LCC and SCC.

Perhaps the greatest success in terms of public response has been the small wildflower area opposite St Chad's Church. This small triangle of land was becoming ever more unsightly as it was used as an overflow parking area, with resulting damage to the grass, churned mud etc. Installing bollards to prevent parking necessarily created an awkward area to be mown, but the planting of wildflowers both removed the need for regular mowing and turned a previously unsightly area into a summer spectacle that was greatly appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

There is the potential for additional wildflower and 'no mow' areas across LCC's open spaces, though if sites were to be selected it is recommended that ward members be

consulted prior to any formal decision being made. Members should also be aware that wild flowers perform very poorly when under the canopy of trees or are otherwise in shade; the cost of the wildflower seeds is significant, and careful consideration should be taken when deciding where they should be planted.

LCC Operations

At a more basic operational level, the City Council remains somewhat behind the times in terms of the oft-vaunted 'paperless office', but progress is being made to streamline systems that both reduce paper use and improve efficiency. Significant progress has been made, but this work began from a relatively low base. Invoices and other general correspondence are now emailed rather than posted, resulting in an approximate 50% reduction in postage during the past five years or so and the corresponding reduction in printing, envelope usage etc.

Routine home working during normal 'office' hours is relatively rare for LCC staff, unlike some other bodies where the majority can seemingly be found to be working from home on any given day, with the resulting reduction of transport emissions, office space demand etc.

All of the above has been necessarily inward looking, focusing on what the Council can do with its own buildings, resources and procedures. This Committee will wish to look both inward and outward, perhaps with a focus on education, partnership working or other avenues to spread its message and impacts across the city. Such ideas may well form part of the discussion later in this agenda.

Though the Committee should be aspirational it must also be realistic, appreciating the limitations both in terms of reach and funding that are available to a parish council.

The Committee may also wish to give early thought to an acknowledgement that the City Council is not perfect; accusations of hypocrisy serve to undermine both the messenger and the message, with such hypocrisy evident in some elements of the wider climate discussion. An acknowledgement that this is a journey for the council as well as the residents and businesses of the city may go some way towards addressing such criticism.