

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber,
1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ on Wednesday 14 June 2023
at 7.30pm**

Present

Councillors: C C Pond (in the Chair)
C P Pond K Valentine
G Wiskin D Wixley (as substitute for B Cohen)

Officers: Mark Squire (Town Clerk)
Paul Hoy (Services Manager)

EH197 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Beales and Cohen. The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Cohen for this meeting.

EH198 Declarations of Interest

Cllr C C Pond declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda items relating to the work of Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) and Essex County Council (ECC) as a member of these authorities. Cllr Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9.2, as the resident who made the request is known to him.

EH199 Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EH200 Public Representations

None were received.

EH201 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that at the Planning & Licensing (P&L) Committee meeting on 12 June 2023, the protection of Loughton's conservation areas was discussed. It was brought to the attention of the P & L Committee that seemingly small changes were being made within the Conservation Areas of Loughton, namely Baldwins Hill, Staples Road and York Hill, from unauthorised changes made by householders and/or lack of enforcement, which when taken together had had an incremental deleterious change in the Conservation Areas.

The P & L Committee had invited EFDC's Conservation Officers and Enforcement Team to be vigilant against these sorts of minor changes.

EH202 Heritage Plaques – Min EH185

The Clerk reported that a suitable location for the plaque for Charles Frederick Clark (1876 – 1945), Industrialist and Philanthropist, had been agreed with the homeowner at 8 Connaught Avenue. A contractor would be employed to erect the plaque at the owners preferred location at a cost of £60.00.

The Committee NOTED the request by the homeowner of 62 The Uplands for the placement of three plaques at the property. The three suggestions were considered, but it was AGREED that only the plaque for Percy Thompson (major historian of Loughton) met the criteria. This plaque would therefore be added to the Committee's list.

The Committee NOTED the guided tour and narrative on 27 May 2023, led by Cllr CC Pond, for a number of heritage blue plaques in the vicinity of Loughton Library, as requested by the Loughton Library Team. The event was considered a great success by all those in attendance, and requests have been received for the event to be repeated.

EH203 Allotments

203.1 Willingale Road Allotment Site

203.1 Status Report

The Committee NOTED the report. It was AGREED that important notices would display a variety of different languages, to reflect the diversity of the plot holders, as was recommended in the report. The Allotment Officer will ascertain the particular language(s) where there is a need for clearer communication and action accordingly.

The Committee also AGREED to sell the rotovator, as it is deemed too large and powerful for non-professional use. The proceeds of the sale will go towards the cost of providing a strimmer, for communal use.

203.2 Annual Rent Review

The Committee NOTED the report and AGREED that the rent increase for the period 1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024 should be set at 10%.

203.3 Grow Community Garden (Grow) - Hillyfields

The Committee NOTED the report of a number of recent break-ins with regret. The Town Clerk reported that Grow had requested that the Town Council ask EFDC for more robust fencing at the most vulnerable part of the perimeter at this site when the adjacent site is re-developed for housing. The Committee AGREED to this request and it was also AGREED that a request would be made to EFDC for the free provision of water supply to the site and the addition of CCTV at any development of the nearby garage block.

EH204 Signage

204.1 Signage to the Forest from Loughton Station / Town Centre – Min no EH187.1

The Committee NOTED that all formalities have been completed by the Epping Forest Heritage Trust, and delivery and installation of the signage is expected soon.

204.2 Broadway Noticeboard – Min no EH187.2

The Service Manager reported that the purchase order for a new wall-mounted notice board was placed with the suppliers on 17 April 2023, as was anticipated to be delivered before the end of June. Installation will take place shortly after the notice board is received.

204.3 Oakwood Hill Noticeboard – Min no EH187.3

As with the Broadway Notice board (above), the purchase order for a new post-mounted notice board was also placed with the suppliers on 17 April 2023. Installation will also take place shortly after the item is delivered.

204.4 Alleyway Project – Min no EH187.4

The Services Manager reported that he was due to visit all sites with the installation contractor on Thursday 15 June 2023. Installations are due to commence immediately thereafter, and it is hoped that they will be completed on that day or soon after.

EH205 Correspondence with Essex County Council

205.1 Salt Bin provision – Min no EH188

The Town Clerk reported that all three potential sites for additional grit bins, and a request for the provision of additional salt bags, were with Essex County Councillor Vance and a further response are awaited.

205.2 Bus shelter – Min no EH196

The Committee NOTED the report. It was AGREED that a decision on this request would be deferred until after the commissioning of ECC's bus shelter replacement programme and further AGREED that the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman should write to County Councillor Lee Scott to ascertain a time frame for the programme. It was AGREED that should this project go-ahead, it might be considered as a suitable project for the Essex County Councillor's 'Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South' Locality Fund. All the land round the northbound Greenstead Road bus stop was Highway, thus ECC would have strict rules (relating to size, specification, utilities etc as to what could or could not be placed on it.

EH206 Events

206.1 Loughton Day – Min no EH189

The Town Clerk Reported that organisation of the event is progressing well and would be stepped up following the Jessel Green Family Fun Day on 25 June 2023. A variety of potential sponsors will be approached by the Community Manager and Town Clerk.

206.2 Christmas Window Competition

The Committee AGREED to continue with the competition in its present format.

206.3 Loughton Wombles

The Town Clerk reported that the Loughton Wombles carried out another successful group litter pick on Saturday 27 May 2023, with 11 wombles out, in two teams, covering the length of Rectory Lane and Hillyfields Green. The next group meeting will be on Sunday 25 June 2023 for Jessel Green Fun Day, between 12 noon to 4pm, meeting point – the Loughton Town Council gazebo.

EH207 Chigwell Lane Bench – Min no EH190

The Services Manager reported that results from several utilities companies had been received and there was evidence of live electric cables in the vicinity. It was AGREED that further investigations should be carried out, to ascertain whether the implementation of the bench was still viable. The Committee NOTED that a charge of c£60.00 was necessary to ascertain site information from Thames Water. A report would be made at the next sitting of the Committee.

EH208 Financial savings – Min no EH194

The Town Clerk reported on a productive a meeting that he and the Services Manager had attended with the Managing Director ,Qualis, Property Solutions and Qualis, Head of Operations (Planned and Business Development) earlier in the day. All aspects of the contract formerly held with EFDC had been discussed, and new procedures around more regular and timely invoicing and accountability were agreed in principle. A report from Qualis Management in this regard would shortly be provided, and the Committee AGREED to consider any options for financial savings, specifically around re-wilding opportunities, on receipt and digestion of the report.

EH209 Closed Churchyard

The Town Clerk reported on the meeting that he, the Services Manager and Burial Clerk had attended with the Church Warden of St John the Baptist Church on 30 May 2023. A further tour of the site was also undertaken, and officers were informed that extensive works to make safe many of the memorials, following a detailed independent inspection, had recently been completed. It was AGREED by all parties at the meeting that a clear and comprehensive process would have to be followed, and the next stage would be for the Town Council to submit a list of questions asking for details on all aspects of the running of the churchyard. Answers to the questions would then be put to this Committee, for its consideration, at a subsequent meeting. The Committee AGREED to this plan of action.

EH210 Weekly Markets

The Committee NOTED the report and it was AGREED that the Chairman and Town Clerk would re-visit the Loughton Town Council (LTC) Market Policy and produce an updated version for members to consider at the next sitting of the Committee.

The Committee AGREED for officers to progress with an advertisement seeking a suitable Market Operator and AGREED that officers should investigate an appropriate fee that would need to be charged for a licence payable to LTC.

EH211 Financial Position

Current Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the current financial position as of 30 April 2023. The Town Clerk also reported that he along with the Deputy Town Clerk, Community Manager and Services Manager, would be meeting after every two months to discuss the current financial position, in order to identify any potential budget concerns at an early stage.

EH212 Financial Savings

None were identified.

EH213 Environmental Issues

No issues were raised.

EH214 Future Work of the Committee

No further items were raised.

EH215 Exclusion of the press and public

The Committee RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the following item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as it contains confidential information relating to contractual matters.

EH216 Allotment Dispute

The Committee NOTED the report and considered the detailed correspondence between the two parties involved in this dispute. The Committee AGREED that the Roding Road Allotment and Leisure Gardens Association (RRALGA) had followed due process throughout, and that LTC should support RRALGA in its decision.

It was also AGREED that LTC/ RRALGA agreements would be updated and formalised in the coming weeks.

Signed:

Date: 2 October 2023