

MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENTAL PANEL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 JULY 2021
AT 6.00 PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BELLE VUE TERRACE

Present

Cllr Lou Lowton
Cllr Neville Mills
Cllr Neil Morton
Cllr Aidan Stitt
Cllr Sharon Taylor

Apologies

Cllr Julie Dallow
Cllr Jack Satterthwaite

In attendance

Charles Porter – Operations Manager
Louise Wall – Minute Clerk
Cllr Nick Houghton - Mayor

1. Election of Chairman

Cllr Neil Morton was elected Chairman of the Environmental Panel for 2021/22.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr Sharon Taylor was elected Vice Chairman of the Environmental Panel for 2021/22.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Cllr Julie Dallow and Cllr Jack Satterthwaite.

4. Declarations of interest

None.

5. Notes of previous meeting held on 13 May 2021

The notes of the previous meeting held on 13 May 2021 were accepted as a true and correct record.

6. Format and Terms of Reference of Environmental Panel

As the Environmental Panel was newly formed at the Annual Council meeting, terms of reference setting out its parameters are now required. A draft set of terms was provided to members at the meeting to use as a guide, and these were amended accordingly.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the terms of reference as attached at Appendix A be approved by Full Council.

7. Application to the Worcestershire Natural Networks Programme

Cllr Taylor explained that the Natural Networks Programme was a Worcestershire-wide scheme offering grants and advice to projects which aim to create or restore wildlife-rich habitats.

The Natural Networks programme is a partnership between Worcestershire County Council and the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

The Town Council would be eligible to apply for a grant for a specific project, such as a wetlands area at the land at Mill Lane.

The Chair requested that the link to the programme be provided to the panel so that members could familiarise themselves with all of the details, with a view to having a further discussion at a future meeting.

8. Recommendation to Full Council for a Green Audit

The Operations Manager explained that there were two types of audit:

1. Carbon Footprint Audit – an examination of the effects the Town Council has on the environment by establishing its current carbon footprint, calculated using historical data. This will set a baseline from which targets can then be set to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.
2. Environmental Audit – a measure of the Town Council's environmental performance tested against its environmental policies and objectives

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Malvern Town Council engages an organisation to undertake the establishment of its carbon footprint, subject to budget approvals.

9. Visit to MTC rewilding sites with panel members and Duncan Westbury, Principal Lecturer of Ecology and Environmental Management, University of Worcester

Cllr Taylor explained that she had been contacted by Duncan Westbury who was willing to look at Town Council sites with members of the Environmental Panel, with a view to making recommendations and suggestions for further wilding, or improvements to the current sites. This would be at no cost.

It was **AGREED** to invite Duncan Westbury to visit MTC rewilding sites with panel members.

10. Annual Planting Schemes

A discussion was held on the Town Council's annual planting schemes and the Operations Manager informed members that currently, approximately 15,000 plants are used in beds at Victoria Park, the cemetery, and Rosebank Gardens. These plants are changed twice a year. Approximately 80% of these plants are annuals.

Hanging baskets and troughs are emptied each year and therefore not suitable for perennial planting.

The Operations Manager explained that any change to perennials would fit within the current annual budget levels.

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Lowton would produce a draft press release to publicise the Town Council's decision to move to a higher percentage of perennial planting, to be brought to the next meeting of the Environmental Panel.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Malvern Town Council sets a target for the planting schemes of bedding from October 2022 of 80% perennials and 20% annuals.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Malvern Town Council sets a target of planting schemes for troughs, baskets and planters in spring 2022 to be 50% insect-friendly.

11. Joint working update (Cllr Taylor)

Cllr Taylor reported that there were currently two schemes of joint working in place:

Working with MHDC and other interested groups to turn the disused land by the old convent near to the retail park into a memorial garden for all those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This will be a place for reflection and be wildlife friendly. More details will follow.

Working with Platform Housing and other local groups to look after a piece of land off Beauchamp Road, with a view to making it a community space. Cllr Taylor and Cllr Stitt will meet with Chris Reed from Platform Housing on 5 August for further discussions. It was agreed however that the Town Council would not want to put any funds into this project as it was thought that eventually, planning permission would be given to Platform Housing to build on the land.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Cllr Taylor act as an intermediary link to the Environmental Panel regarding this project and report back accordingly.

12. Rewilding at Michaels Crescent

It was noted that the relevant ward Councillors and members of staff had received complaints from residents when the area of land at Michaels Crescent had become very overgrown since rewilding, as it had stopped them being able to use the area.

Some members of the panel had visited the area and felt that it needed some regeneration in terms of the play area and more suitable planting. It was noted that there were not any other green spaces in the immediate area available for residents and that this space was very important to them.

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Stitt would speak to residents in the area and gather their thoughts before reporting back to the Operations Manager.

It was **AGREED** to take Michaels Crescent off the list of areas to be rewilded.

13. Update on MTC rewilding (Operations Manager)

The Operations Manager explained the difference between true rewilding – leaving an area to revert to its natural state, and manufactured rewilding, where an area is cultivated and replanted with wild plants.

Both have their advantages and disadvantages, depending on the site in question.

The Operations Manager will look at options for the roundabout on Townsend Way which is currently very overgrown with weeds.

14. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Environmental Panel was agreed as Wednesday 8 September 2021 at 6.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

**MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENTAL PANEL - DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE
AS AMENDED FOLLOWING MEETING HELD ON 28 JULY 2021**

1. Advisory Powers

- 1.1. Acting within the powers and responsibilities of Malvern Town Council, consider and recommend achievable and sustainable targets, to achieve the objectives set out in the Council's Environmental Policy.
- 1.2. To actively measure achievements against the set targets.
- 1.3. To work in partnership with officers, representatives from local environmental groups, residents and businesses to agree and instigate actions leading to behavioural change.
- 1.4. To work up and activate a communication strategy to convey the severity of the climate change emergency to residents and businesses.
- 1.5. In accordance with the communication strategy, advise and enlighten the community on ways residents and businesses can take independent action to cut greenhouse gas emissions;
- 1.6. To provide a progress report to Full Council at least every six months.

2. Powers Delegated to the Town Clerk and Officers

- 2.1. To undertake any specific reviews in accordance with the above and seek specialist or professional advice when necessary;
- 2.2. The approval by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk/Operations Manager of expenditure of £2,500 or less relating to any matter as a result of the Environmental Panel's undertaking;
- 2.3. In the event that the budget outlined in 2.1 is likely to be exceeded, the matter must be returned to the Policy and Resources Committee.

3. Membership

- 3.1. Membership of the Environmental Panel shall be seven members as agreed annually at the Annual Council Meeting.
- 3.2. The Environmental Panel may co-opt non-voting members with relevant skills, experience and knowledge consistent with these Terms of Reference and point 1.3 in particular.

4. Quorum

- 4.1. The Environmental Panel shall be quorate when no fewer than four voting members are present.
- 4.2. If fewer than four voting members are present, the meeting shall stand adjourned.

5. Chairman

- 5.1. The Environmental Panel will elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from amongst their number in accordance with the procedure as specified in Council's Standing Orders.

- 5.2. If the Chairman is not present, the Vice Chairman will take the meeting. If neither is present, members will elect a Chairman for the meeting from amongst their number.

6. Frequency and Timing of Meetings

- 6.1. The purpose of working parties (panels, forums, groups) is that meetings may be called at relatively short notice at any reasonable time in order that urgent issues can be considered.
- 6.2. A meeting may be held on any day of the week and at any reasonable time of day or evening;
- 6.3. A meeting will be held as soon as a quorum is confirmed and cancelled or postponed if it is apparent in advance that the meeting will not be quorate.

7. Standing Orders

- 7.1. The Standing Orders of Malvern Town Council will apply.