
Climate Change and Leisure Committee MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Wednesday, 14 January 2026 from 7.30 pm - 8.54 pm.**

Present: Councillors

Chris Lloyd (Co-Chair in the Chair), Jon Tankard (Co-Chair), Raj Khiroya, Abbas Merali, Reena Ranger, Mike Sims, Tom Smith and Chris Mitchell (In place of Cheryl Stungo)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Cheryl Stungo
Councillor Narinder Sian

Officers in Attendance:

Sally Riley, Finance Business Partner
Francesca Cohen, Natural Infrastructure Projects Officer
Charlotte Gomes, Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure
Joanna Hewitson, Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy Officer
Jess Hodges, Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager
Emma Sheridan, Associate Director for Environment
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joan King and Cheryl Stungo. Councillor Chris Mitchell substituted for Councillor Cheryl Stungo.

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the Climate Change & Leisure Committee held on 15 October 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the meeting.

27 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair announced that he was taking item 6. P6 Budget Management Report of the agenda first.

29 CROXLEY HALL WOODS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure introduced the report.

Members highlighted the low response rate of 13 people in the consultation, and emphasised the importance of improving public involvement through proactive outreach, including direct contact with local groups and parish councils. Members commented on what they considered a low response to the consultation, when compared with other consultations such as parking schemes, and subsequently praised the Sustainable Transport Officer for his work in engaging with the public on the parking schemes consultation.

In response to questions on baseline ecological surveys, officers explained that they are costly and complex, and stressed that minimal intervention in woodland management is more beneficial to allow natural regeneration.

Concerns around grounds maintenance, specifically litter and bin emptying, were addressed, with a call for more empathetic communication to the public. The conversation also touched on the ecological balance of tree planting and natural light management, with a consensus on using appropriate, site-specific interventions.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation as set out in the report, seconded by Councillor Jon Tankard.

On being put to the Committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:

- i. Adopt the new 5-year Management Plan for Croxley Hall Woods
- ii. Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans.

30 P6 BUDGET MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Finance Business Partner introduced the report.

Members emphasised the need to allocate funds for upcoming works at Croxley Green, suggesting inclusion in the next financial year's budget. Members questioned the accuracy of and sufficiency of the Aquadrome's whole life costing budget, particularly, regarding footpath repairs, highlighting public concern and the apparent discrepancy between forecasted and actual costs. Officers clarified that the budget was set by Council in February and that additional funding for the Aquadrome, including a multi-million-pound lottery-supported project, exists beyond the Council's capital allocation. The discussion also addressed the usage and status of grants such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Open Spaces Funding, with the officer explaining that only confirmed grants appear in budget reports. In response to a question regarding details of the UKSPF capital allocation, the Associate Director for Environment offered to provide a written response to members of the committee. Officers encouraged Members to proactively share information about external funding sources.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation as set out in the report, seconded by Councillor Tom Smith. The Committee noted and commented on the contents of the report.

RESOLVED:

That Members note & comment on the contents of the report.

31 ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM REFRESH

The Chair announced that he was taking item 7. Environmental Forum Refresh of the agenda next.

The Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy Officer introduced the report.

Key points include the desire to re-establish the network with a hybrid meeting format to increase accessibility and engagement, recognising the importance of sharing information and educating the public about local environmental assets such as Croxley Wood and the Withey Beds. Challenges highlighted include declining attendance, the need for clearer definitions of membership, and difficulty securing regular participation from key stakeholders like water companies and environmental agencies due to their limited capacity. The conversation also touched on aligning the Three Rivers Environmental Network (TREN) agenda with broader environmental and climate issues, suggesting focused meetings on specific topics such as water management, climate change, and transport to ensure relevance and encourage active participation. There was support for sharing minutes and updates from related organisations like ColneCan to keep Members informed.

The Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure to check with ColneCan whether their minutes can be shared with Members.

Councillor Jon Tankard moved the recommendation as set out in the report, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd.

On being put to the Committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- i. Approves the new name Three Rivers Environmental Network (TREN).
- ii. Approves the revised Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).

32 MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE GREEN & STONES ORCHARD

The Natural Infrastructure Projects Officer introduced the report.

Key topics include the incorporation of local nature recovery strategies, management of pond wetlands, grassland and hedgerows, and addressing concerns about vehicles parking on The Green. Members debated the ongoing challenges with preventing unwanted vehicle access and the viability of implementing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), which was deemed unfeasible due to lack of evidence and resource constraints.

The Croxley Green Residents Association's involvement and consultation process were clarified, with some dissatisfaction about the number of meetings held, rather than the consultation itself. Additional questions addressed include ecological management of ragwort, identification of fruit tree species, climate change impacts on tree resilience, and the role of public participation in managing invasive species.

The Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure to request a written response from the Principal Trees and Woodlands Officer on climate change and its impact on tree resilience.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation as set out in the report, seconded by Councillor Raj Khirya.

On being put to the Committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Climate Change & Leisure Committee:

- i. Adopt the new five-year Management Plan for The Green & Stones Orchard.
- ii. Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding for actions relating to The Green & Stones Orchard Management Plan.
- iii. That public access to the report be immediate.

33 SERVICE PLANS 2026-2029

The Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure introduced the report.

Service Plan – Climate Change and Sustainability

There were no questions or comments on this service plan.

Service Plan – Leisure and Natural Infrastructure

Key topics include tree planting targets, distinguishing between standard trees and whips, and the challenges of funding and resource allocation. Members and officers discussed the importance of balancing tree planting with preserving diverse habitats such as grasslands and wetlands. The conversation also touched on leisure facilities maintenance, the need for innovation in leisure activities, and monitoring community needs. The Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure confirmed this is all within the work that the service deliver and will make this clearer within the introduction to the service plan.

In response to questions Members raised on the tennis court refurbishment, officers corrected the project end date to March 2027, and advised that this year's focus is on converting a tennis court at Eastbury playing fields to pickleball courts.

Concerns were raised about government proposals to remove Sport England as a planning consultee. Additionally, the discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration with local organisations, parish councils, and monitoring biodiversity net gain to ensure sustainable environmental development. Members also highlighted the importance of counting trees planted by the Council and through planning applications, to track progress.

Councillor Jon Tankard offered to forward the information on the total number of trees planted to Councillor Reena Ranger.

Service Plan – Communication, Customer and Culture

Key points include monitoring and improving call wait times, with notable success in reducing average wait times and positive resident feedback. Members offered their congratulations to the Head of Communications, Customer & Culture and his team for the successful reduction in average call wait times.

Members pointed out a reduction of first point resolution targets within the service plan despite high past performance. Officers responded that this will be fed back to the relevant head of service and a written answer provided. Suggestions were made to enhance local business engagement through partnerships with venues like Watersmeet Theatre to support economic prosperity. The introduction of a podcast platform was discussed as a new engagement tool, particularly to reach younger audiences. The Associate Director for Environment confirmed the podcast platform is being funded from the existing budget, as set out in the service plan.

The conversation also touched on the importance of using existing budgets for new initiatives and monitoring and adapting communication methods to increase resident engagement.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

On being put to the Committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That: the Climate Change & Leisure Committee provide any comments or suggested amends to the 2026–2029 service plans. Final service plans will be approved by Council in conjunction with the budget.

34 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed the work programme and agreed to add 'Parking on the Green'. The Associate Director for Environment emphasised that a report cannot be written on this item until the parish council decides on the desired actions. Members proposed aiming for the Committee's meeting on 11 March 2026. Members raised concerns about the absence of the project on Withey Beds on the work programme, noting the need for designs and planning applications before funding can be sought. The officer clarified that these projects will be included in the work programme when resources and capacity are available, highlighting a five-year management timeline. The discussion concluded with an acknowledgment of current limitations in funding and resources.

The Committee received its work programme.

RESOLVED:

To receive the Committee's work programme.

35 OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE

None

CHAIR