Minutes of the Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 30 June 2026

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chair); Councillor Alan Williamson (Vice-Chair); Councillors Arthur Abdulin, Steve Bridger, Rob Geleit, Steven McCormick, Julie Morris (Items 1 to 7) and Rachel King (as nominated substitute for Councillor Christine Cleveland)

Absent: Councillor Christine Cleveland

Officers present: Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer), Angela Guest (Democratic Services Officer), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager), Stewart Cocker (Countryside Manager), Vanessa Newton (Senior Accountant), Victoria Potts (Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration), Mark Rachwal (Environment and Sustainability Officer) and Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager)Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer), Angela Guest (Democratic Services Officer), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager), Stewart Cocker (Countryside Manager), Vanessa Newton (Senior Accountant), Victoria Potts (Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration), Mark Rachwal (Environment and Sustainability Officer) and Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare Manager)

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1 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was one statement from a member of the public in relation to agenda item 6 on the agenda, Library of Things at Bourne Hall. This was read out at the start of that item.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Julie Morris declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Free Summer Tennis – and would leave the room for that item.

Councillor Steven McCormick declared that he had been copied into several emails regarding agenda item 6 – Library of Things at Bourne Hall – but that he came with an open mind. The Chair stated that several other Members had also been copied into the emails.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Committee held on 4 March 2026 and the Chair signed them.

4 ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP

The Committee received a report that recommended the continuation of a Councillor Working Group for 2026/27 to oversee the implementation of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. It also proposed terms of reference for the group to be approved.

The following matters were considered:

b) **Substitutes:** A Member raised an issue regarding not allowing substitutes on the working group, especially as most of the meetings would be held during working hours and proposed they be allowed. Another Member agreed with this and stated it was also an issue for the Car Parking Working Group which was the next item on the agenda. The Vice Chair explained that he would be looking to hold the Environment Working Group meetings early evening and online.

c) **Legal representation:** A Member asked why there was no legal representative at committee to which the Deputy Chief Executive explained that legal did not attend committees as a standard and there was no foreseen reason for legal to be in attendance for this meeting. The Member stated he would take this issue up with the Monitoring Officer following the meeting.

Following Consideration, it was resolved to:

(1) Agree the continuation of the Environment and Sustainability Working Group (ESWG). (unanimous)

(2) Approve the terms of reference for the Working Group as set out in Appendix 1. (4 for and 3 against)

(3) Agree to appoint the following Members to the Working Group as set out below: (unanimous)

- The Vice-Chair of the Environment Committee (to preside as Chair of the working group) – Councillor Alan Williamson
- 2 Residents' Association Group members of the Environment Committee – Councillor Arthur Abdulin and Councillor Steve Bridger
- 1 Labour Group member of the Environment Committee – Councillor Rob Geleit
- 1 Independents Group member of the Environment Committee – Councillor Julie Morris

(4) To authorise the Vice Chair of the Environment Committee (Chair of ESWG) and in their absence the Chair of the Environment Committee to

invite councillors, stakeholders and officers to the Environment and Sustainability Working Group as required. (5 for and 2 against)

5 CAR PARK WORKING GROUP

The Committee received a report that sought agreement on the continuation of the car park working group for 2026/27 and to agree the membership and terms of reference for the group.

The following matters were considered:

a) **Substitutes:** The matters concerning not being allowed substitutes as raised under the previous item of Environment & Sustainability Working Group also applied to this working group.

b) **Nominations:** Councillor Rob Geleit withdrew his nomination so there was no need for a vote.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

(1) Agree to the continuation of a Car Parking Working Group (CPWG). (Unanimous)

(2) Approve the Terms of Reference for the Car Park Working Group as set out in Appendix 1 to the report. (4 for and 3 against)

(3) Agree to appoint members to the working group as set out below. (Unanimous)

- The Chair of the Environment Committee (to preside as Chair of the working group) – Councillor Liz Frost
- The Vice-Chair of the Environment Committee – Councillor Alan Williamson
- 2 Residents' Association Group members of the Environment Committee – Councillor Arthur Abdulin and Councillor Christine Cleveland,
- 2 Minority Group Members of the Environment Committee – Councillor Steven McCormick and Councillor Julie Morris.

(4) To authorise the Chair of the Environment Committee (Chair of CPWG) and in their absence the Vice Chair of the Environment Committee to invite councillors, stakeholders and officers to the car park working group as required. (5 for and 2 against)

6 LIBRARY OF THINGS AT BOURNE HALL

A member of the public provided a verbal statement to this item.

The Committee considered a report that presented the proposed plan by a third party, Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network (EECAN), to set up an external store within Bourne Hall grounds as part of the operation of a Library of Things (LoT) at Ewell library, located in Bourne Hall.

The following matters were considered:

a) **Materials for the structure:** It was noted that there was some concern about the use of wood, rather than metal, for building the structure. The Chair stated that a wooden structure was given planning permission, but it was felt that this would not be appropriate in the location as there had been a history of break-ins, vandalism and arson. Therefore, the lease would state that the structure had to be approved by the police.

b) **Length of term of agreement:** A Member queried why the lease was not for five years rather than two as recommended and asked for this to be changed. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that legal had requested a two-year agreement due to it being a new group and that it could have an extension written in but that would need to be agreed by legal. Members discussed how extending the legal agreement would assist with taking on volunteers and show commitment from the Council. Cllr McCormick proposed an amendment to recommendation one in that the legal agreement be for five years with a two-year break clause. This was seconded by Cllr Geleit. Six Members voted for this amendment, so the amended recommendation was adopted.

c) **Best Value:** A Member stated that paragraphs 3.3 and 9.2 seemed to conflict in relation to best value and sought clarification. The Deputy Chief Executive stated she would get legal advice after the meeting.

Following consideration it was unanimously resolved to:

(1) Agree to enter into a legal agreement at nil rent for 5 years with a 2 year break clause (terminable if the Library of Things (LoT) ceased to operate from Bourne Hall) direct with Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network (EECAN) for a police approved outdoor store for the LoT, dependant on planning permission being obtained, noting the health and safety risks and legal issues highlighted in this report and agreeing the mitigation measures form part of the legal agreement.

(2) Delegate authority to the Head of Property and Regeneration, Interim Assistant Head of Service for Venues and Community Commercial Services and Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer to agree the final legal arrangements.

Cllr Steven McCormick declared that he had been copied into several emails regarding the Library of Things at Bourne Hall, but that he came with an open mind. The Chair stated that several other Members had also been copied into the emails.

7 HOGSMILL RIVER STEPPING STONES

The Committee considered a report that explained how the Environment Agency (EA) has advised that, for safety reasons, it wished to remove the stepping stones from the Hogsmill River unless another organisation agrees to assume responsibility for their ongoing safety and maintenance. The Committee were also told of a CIL bid that had been submitted for funding for a bridge across the river near to the stepping stones. The report asked that the Committee consider various options for protecting the stepping stones from removal whilst providing a safe crossing point.

The following matters were considered:

a) Costs and budget (for repairs and liability): A member sought clarity about who would pay for what and where the money would come from if the committee were to choose option 2 which included keeping the stones and having a new bridge. The Countryside Manager explained that there were two aspects to this. The cost of repair to the stones was estimated be less than £1K which could include a handrail and non-slip surface and could be accommodated from existing budgets. If the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bid was successful this would pay the capital costs of building a bridge, but funding would still need to be found for design and planning. Some of this maybe found from partnerships. The insurers had been contacted about potential increased costs, and it was their view that if measures such as an inspection regime, handrail, anti-slip surface, repairing the steps down to the stepping stones, lowering the depth of the water at that point and a safety sign, that they would not see an issue and there was no mention of increased insurance costs.

b) A Member stated that they did not believe the council should be taking on liability, especially at this stage when the EA believed that even with remedial actions suggested, the stones were still unsafe. They also felt that for the council to let people do things that were known to be unsafe was irresponsible.

c) Hogsmill Management Plan: A Member asked what actions the council had taken in the last nine years to encourage the EA to carry out their responsibilities. The Countryside Manager highlighted the good work of the EA and partnership working with them and stated that the work of the EA had been done in line with the management plan. The management plan was there to guide, assist and provide a context for all the works done.

d) Options: The Committee discussed the various options and which they preferred and were reminded that the EA would not take responsibility or any liability for the stones, even if repaired, as they wanted them removed. If the Council took on liability there would need to be legal agreements in place as the riverbed and banks were still owned, and the responsibility of, the EA. The cost of the bridge was an issue and would need to be approved by Strategy & Resources Committee. It was also confirmed that the EA also intended to remove the steps leading to the stones.

Following consideration the Committee resolved to:

(1) Agree to Option 3: Do not agree to take on the liability for the steps and stepping stones and acknowledge the EA will remove them and agree to deliver a new footbridge as an alternative safer fully accessible crossing point subject to being granted CIL funding and securing additional funding for the design and planning of a footbridge. (received 5 votes for)

(2) Note the submission of the CIL application for funding the construction of a new pedestrian footbridge.

Councillor Julie Morris left the meeting at 8.45pm

8 FREE SUMMER TENNIS

The Committee received a report that reviewed the continued success of the Pay-to-Play Tennis Scheme, including participation levels, income generation and investment in court maintenance, and sought approval for the continuation of free morning tennis sessions during 2026 school summer holidays.

The following matters were considered:

a) An amended recommendation The Chair proposed and amendment to the recommendation, seconded by the Vice Chair, which was tabled. It read: To approve the proposal to offer free morning tennis sessions on all Epsom and Ewell Borough Council owned and managed tennis courts in the borough from 22 July 2026 to 31 August 2026. This received a majority vote, so the recommendation as amended was adopted. (6 votes for and 1 abstention)

b) Process for residents: Following a Member question it was confirmed that residents wanting to access the free sessions would need to register but there would be no charge. They may receive some marketing once registered.

c) Cost to Council: Following a Member question the Interim Assistant Head of Service & Streetcare would provide details of the cost to the Council and how that was paid following the meeting.

d) Extension of times free tennis is available: Committee discussed a Member proposal to extend the time limit to say 8am to 3pm or 4pm as the free sessions had been so popular. It was thought by some that this would be unfair to paid members who would not be able to get access and may feel aggrieved. Councillor McCormick proposed a change to the recommendation to state that free sessions would be available from 8am to 2pm. This was seconded by Councillor Geleit. The vote gave 2 for, 3 against and 1 abstention. Therefore, the motion was lost.

Following consideration the Committee resolved to (5 for and 1 against):

(1) Note the progress of the Pay to Play Tennis Scheme.

(2) Approve the proposal to offer free morning tennis sessions on all Epsom and Ewell Borough Council owned and managed tennis courts in the borough from 22 July 2026 to 31 August 2026.

Cllr Julie Morris declared a personal interest in relation to this item and left the meeting at 8.45pm.

9 FOOD HYGIENE SERVICE PLANS

The Committee considered a report that in compliance with national monitoring arrangements, set out how the Council intended to discharge its statutory responsibilities in respect of food hygiene in the year 2026-2027 and reported on activities in the previous year.

The following matters were considered:

a) Overdue Inspections: A Member asked why there were 74 overdue inspections in the current year and why the statutory service was not able to meet demand. The Public Protection Manager explained that this was not an unusual situation for a local authority. In this case the overdue were mainly for category E premises (ex: sweet shops, domestic home caterers) which have been deprioritised in favour of higher risk food outlets. In the service area of environmental health, as in other authorities, there was a tug of war between various statutory requirements and therefore priority is given to higher risk areas as written in the policy.

b) Audit and Action Plan: A Member asked when the service was last audited and asked where to find the Food Standards Agency Action Plan and what interventions did it contain. The Public Protection Manager stated that the service was audited in the last four years but would give exact date after the meeting. He also stated that the intervention plan was freely available and again would send this to Committee Members following the meeting.

Following Consideration the Committee resolved to (5 for and 1 against):

(1) Adopt the service plan for food hygiene.

Councillor Julie Morris did not return to the meeting for this item.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.06 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIR)