

MINUTES OF Environment Committee Meeting

15 April 2026, 7:30pm

The Guildhall

Cllr C Martin	Present	Cllr Rowlands	Substitute
Cllr Coniam	Apology	Cllr Saunders	Present
Cllr Cook	Absent		
Cllr Gibson	Apology	Martin Collins	Present
Cllr Golding	Apology	Matthew Hatchwell	Apology
Cllr Perkin	Present		

In attendance:

Louise Bareham (Town Clerk)

Stacey Woolf (Facilities Manager)

242 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Coniam, Cllr Gibson and Cllr Golding. An apology for absence was also received from Matthew Hatchwell.

243 Declarations of Interest

None.

244 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

It was proposed by Cllr C Martin, seconded by Cllr Rowlands, and on being put to the meeting it was **RESOLVED to accept the Minutes of the Environment Committee meeting dated 11th March 2026.**

A discussion ensued regarding the fish in Stonefish Ponds. Concerns were raised about the ecological balance due to the increasing number of carp, which were affecting the pond's greenery and overall health. Councillor Perkin highlighted the need to address the issue of too many carp in the pond, which was disrupting the ecosystem.

245 Facility Manager's Update

The Facilities Manager delivered his report – see Appendix One.

It was proposed by Cllr Perkin, seconded by Cllr C Martin, and on being put to the meeting it was **RESOLVED to consult with Lesley Seager and to write to local residents, QE Grammar School, and St Mary's School to consult them prior to Siltex treatment at Cooksditch Stream.**

246 Environment Events

- **Sunflower Competition**
The 2026 Sunflower Competition had been launched at the Spring Fair on 28th March.
- **Bat Training and Walks**
The volunteers who signed up (including Cllr Coniam, and Cllr Gibson) had undertaken a training session with Liz Vinson from Kent Bat Group and would be going on a mock bat walk shortly.
- **Hedgehogs**
A social media campaign would be undertaken during Hedgehog Awareness Week in May.
- **Bees**
A talk by Kent's Plan Bee Officer, Simon Springate, had been organised at the Assembly Rooms. This was being advertised and would take place on 20th May. During Bees' Needs Week an exhibition was being arranged. Rob Gibbs was working with Simon Springate on this.
- **Climate Action Weekend**
The Town Clerk encouraged attendance by Councillors to the Talk on 24th April, and the Climate Fresk, on 25th April.
- **People's Emergency Briefing at the Hot Tin**
Cllr Rowlands advised he was attending this event on 22nd April and asked if this could be shared within the Town Council to encourage attendance.

247 Oare Gunpowder Works

The committee received an update on the Oare Gunpowder Works project. The feasibility study and heritage statement had been completed, and the committee opted for the low impact option for the café placement. The next stage involved confirming costs and seeking additional funding from SBC. The architects would engage with heritage authorities due to the site's ancient monument status. The employment status of a seasonal worker was discussed, and it was agreed the Solicitors would need clarify contract details.

248 Matters for Report

- Cllr Rowlands raised potential environmental impact work around Cooksditch Stream.
- Eco Fair 7th June – The Town Clerk advised she would contact Sam Brookfield (SBC) for an update.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

APPENDIX ONE – FACILITIES MANAGER'S REPORT

FTC FACILITIES REPORT.

ALLOTMENT.

Stonebridge.

Provide an update regarding recent activity at Stonebridge Allotment.

The allotment team has been doing excellent work clearing around the waterways, with strong attendance at recent work parties. However, some concerns have been raised about bonfires on site.

I have spoken with the Chair of Stonebridge to clarify the rules. Bonfires are only permitted from 2 pm onwards and are not allowed between June and October. The site typically holds just one large bonfire per year, and they have generally been adhering to these guidelines.

During my visit, BNM Weston was observed having a fire started mid-morning. A plot holder also mentioned that this was the second consecutive day a fire had taken place. Additionally, there is some evidence that Stonebridge Lodge may also have had bonfires, based on clearings in their garden and a large pile of foliage to burn.

I have spoken with Mrs Joyce to address these concerns and reassured her that this appears to be a one-off situation and that the allotment community is committed to following the agreed rules. We also agreed that, should a larger bonfire be necessary, it would be limited to once per week and would use only dead foliage.

Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused.

What's *not* law (but often confused)

These are **common guidelines, not legal rules**:

- “Only burn after 2 pm”
- “No fires in summer months”
- “Only once per week”

These are usually:

- Council recommendations
- Allotment site rules (which *can* be enforced locally)

Stonebridge has a waiting list of 62 people.

Millfield.

All is working well on site.

Millfield has a waiting list of 35 people.

St Nicholas.

Spoken to the chair of St Nic recently, no major issue, they would like more of the plot holders to collect rainwater for their plots and make the numbers on the plots more visible.

Would like an up-to-date tenancy list, as more plots have been taken on. Joseph is to contact the secretary

St Nic's has a waiting list of 2 People.

Perry Court.

All is well on site,

An email has been sent out to all plot holders about forming a committee at Perry Court.

I have had a lot of interest in this and will be setting a meeting for all the plot holders to attend and discuss the outcome.

Mowing has started on the site, doing the sides of the pathways and walkways, leaving the middle bits to be natural and wildflowers.

The Facilities Team have been filling the potholes along the track to the Allotment.

Perry Court has 0 on the waiting list.

North Preston.

All is well

A few plot holders have had emails to get them up on their plot as the growing season has started. Will be checking again in a couple of weeks to see some progress.

The padlock on the main gate has been serviced, as some keys were having trouble opening it.

There is one vacant plot on the site.

North Preston has a waiting list of 4 people.

Faversham in bloom.

Still trying to get meetings started, waiting on dates to be agreed.

Town Planters.

The station planter is next to be planted up due to vandalism.

The War Garden Memorial.

Joseph has been shadowing Becky Poole, who has been looking after the garden, and will be doing this until the end of March

We will be planning a work schedule for the Garden.

A big thank you to Becky for all her hard work.

Other.

We are planning on helping the West Brook stream. They would like to plant a tree in the Stonebridge pond feeding area, waiting on a bit from them.

Cooksditch stream: at the last meeting, I gave a price for the application of the chalk calcium carbonate. The quote provided (£1050) is for delivering and applying half a tonne of Calcium Carbonate.

For best results, I advise carrying out this half-a-tonne application annually for the next 2-3 years.

Drew - British AquaCare

A report from Anna Stoner on Stonebridge Pond.

Hello all

The siltex application went smoothly today.

I wanted to update you all on a few things:

Fish in the pond

- Drew from British Aquacare (who applied the siltex) said the number of carp, in particular common/mirror carp in the pond has increased substantially since the last application of siltex in November. He estimated at least 40-50 carp, some of which are 20+lbs. Once he'd pointed them out to me, it was obvious to see. They are huge!
- Info from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust sets out that: Carp can grow up to 40lbs, and live up to 30 years. As well as directly feeding on invertebrates, they stir the water making it too muddy for aquatic plants to grow and thus remove food/cover/egg-laying opportunities for other species. Drew also said that as well as being invasive they are also adding to the silt problem through their own waste. On top of this they can breed very effectively too - so numbers are only going to go up.

- As well as the biodiversity impacts, the carp are also very likely attracting the night fishing which we are trying to stop.
- One (maybe crazy) theory is that they have been introduced to the pond to increase the attractiveness for anglers.
- As such we talked about the possibility of removing the carp from Stonebridge to a nearby fishing lake. This would help the pond and hopefully also stop the illegal fishing. This is done by electro-fishing - which stuns the fish, they float to the top and can be netted and removed (I understand?)
- The cost for a day's work by British Aquacare is £750 - Drew suggested it could be done in a day - but that's a very rough estimate.

Further siltex applications

- Now that the second application of siltex has taken place we will begin to monitor its effectiveness, and assuming that it's positive we'll aim for another treatment in the autumn.
- I understand from Drew that Stacey is speaking to him about application at Cooksditch.
- The siltex at Stonebridge was applied to the main pond area - from British Aquacare's boat. 2.5 tonnes were used up, so there was none left for the leats (sorry Bob) and the channel along Flood Lane - application is trickier there and will need to be applied by hand from the bank.
- If we want to apply siltex to the leats/Flood Lane, we'll need to order extra for the next application - or potentially add to Stacey's order for the Cooksditch - if that's possible? Stacey - is that application confirmed? However, we need to bear in mind that if extra siltex is ordered and not applied immediately, it needs to be kept dry, ideally inside. We could ask British Aquacare to do the application, but I think it might be difficult in the allotments as they may need access via people's allotments, which needs to be sensitively done. I think the Friends of the Westbrook could probably manage application along Flood Lane.

As such, I'd like your thoughts, if you have them on:

- All - removing the common carp from the pond.

- Stacey - could you let me know what's happening at Cooksditch and whether there is an opportunity to order some extra siltex for the Stonebridge leats and Flood Lane.
- Bob - if you'd like some extra ordered for the leats, and if you have somewhere to store in at the allotments, and if the allotment society would be happy apply it themselves from the bank?

I hope that makes sense. Very many thanks

Anna

Weekly Outdoor Tasks Overview

Throughout the week, the Facilities team follows a structured schedule to maintain community spaces, ensure safety, and uphold environmental standards.

Mondays focus on team review and planning, alongside cleaning the community bus and carrying out planter checks and weed control across paths, flowerbeds, and green spaces.

Tuesday activities include bench inspections, creek and jetty reporting, replenishing dog bag stations, and litter picking in areas closed to the public.

On Wednesdays, work is concentrated on the recreational ground, including litter collection, planter maintenance, the flood lane area, and the war memorial.

Thursday tasks cover a wider range of locations, including Perry Court, various allotment sites, and Stonebridge Pond, as well as authorised graffiti removal and cleaning.

The week concludes on Friday with community-facing activities, including public space tidy-ups and litter picking, planter maintenance, cleaning street name signs, and upkeep of the war memorial.

This structured approach ensures consistent maintenance, supports community engagement, and helps keep all public areas clean, safe, and well-presented.

WEEKLY TASKS (Outdoors)								
Day.	Tasks.				Notes.			
Monday.	Team review & planning.				Evaluate the week's work			
	Clean Community Bus							
	Planter Checks & weed control.				Paths, Flowerbeds & Green space.			

Tuesday.	Bench Checks.							
	Creek & Jetty Report.							
	Replenish Dog Bag Stations							
	Litter Picking (Closed To Public)							
Wednesday.	Rec.					Recreation areas, litter picks		
	Planters.							
	Flood lane Area.							
	War memorial.							
Thursday.	Perry Court.							
	Allotment checks.					Various Allotment areas.		
	Stonebridge pond.							
	Graffiti Check/Cleaning					Only in areas where we are allowed		
Friday.	Community Space Tidy - up / Litter pick (Open To Public)							
	planters.							
	Wash Street Names And Signs							
	War memorial.							

Stacey Woolf

Facilities Manager

March 2026