

Salisbury City Council

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SALISBURY
CITY COUNCIL



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Minutes

Meeting of : The Environment Committee
Date : Monday 28 September 2026
Meeting held in : The Guildhall, Salisbury
Commencing at : 1830 hours

Present:

Chair: Cllr J Bolwell

Vice Chair: Cllr A Riddle

Cllrs: V Charleston, S Foster, R Johnson, V Milos, S Rideout, A Suddards, and C Taylor

Officers: Andrew Hunt, Clare Dickinson and Jay Gawthorpe

Others present: Cllrs C Corbin, S Hocking

There was 2 members of the public and press present.

1. Apologies:

Cllr J Nettle was substituted by Cllr A Suddards and Cllr P Sample was substituted by Cllr V Charleston.

2. Public Questions/Statement Time:

Two statements were submitted by members of the public. The first concerns the environmental management of Harnham Slope, submitted by James Winch. The second was an update statement regarding the application for Bathing Water Status at Lower Bemerton, submitted by Margaret Willmot. Both statements are available in full at the end of the minutes.

3. Councillor Questions/Statement Time:

There were no questions or statements submitted by councillors.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on 8 June 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of interest were received.

6. Dispensations:

No dispensations were requested or granted.

7. Chair's Announcements:

The Chair made no announcements.

8. Budget Monitoring Report Month 4:

Jay Gawthorpe, Head of Environment, presented the Budget Monitoring report to end of Month 4 (July 2026), providing explanation of specific budget variations for car parking and parks and open spaces.

A vote was taken, and it was:

Resolved to:

8.1 Note the Budget Monitoring Report for Month 4.

9. Environment Team Update

Jay Gawthorpe, Head of Environment, presented progress updates on projects being carried out by the Environment teams, including the Poultry Cross, Wyndham Wall's revised plans and the Depot De-Watering Bay.

A vote was taken, and it was:

Resolved to:

9.1 Note the presentation and updates.

10. Tree Policy Review

Jay Gawthorpe, Head of Environment, presented updates to the Tree Management Policy review and set out the principal changes between the existing policy and the current draft.

A vote was taken, and it was:

Resolved to:

10.1 Note the update on the Tree Management Policy review, including the comparison between the existing Tree Policy and the current Version 7 draft set out in section 4, and notes that the draft remains under refinement before any later formal approval process.

11. Cool Spaces:

Jay Gawthorpe, Head of Environment, gave a verbal update regarding potential urban Cool Spaces opportunities that officers have identified within the Salisbury City Council boundaries, including additional water re-fill stations, shaded seating options around existing trees and hard standing shaded areas.

A vote was taken, and it was:

Resolved to:

13.1 Note the update.

12. Urgent Matters (if any) which by reason of special circumstances the Chair, decides should be considered as a matter of urgency:

Cllr C Corbin raised concerns regarding the maintenance schedule of gulley clearance from Wiltshire Council, under Section 41 of the duty to maintain highways, specifically regarding the clearing of gulleys and drains and the resulting flooding that is created. It was requested that all Councillors on the committee to report resident concerns about this topic.

The meeting closed at 1938 hours.

Please note: These are unsigned Minutes. Signed copies can be requested for viewing by emailing corporate@salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk.

Full Statement from Member of the Public - James Winch

Dear Councillors,

I am writing to challenge the Council's superficial and politically driven management of Harnham Slope. The devastating loss of over 30 mature trees and 100+ saplings in March 2025 was the direct result of a total failure to understand a basic biological truth: a woodland is exactly like a human body. It is a single, living organism. You cannot neglect or amputate its vital organs and expect the rest of the body to survive.

The Council and its contractors treat the wood like a scenic billboard—focusing only on the trees because they are large and visible to the public. But a forest's "vital organs" are in its floor and its hidden biodiversity. By allowing a suffocating carpet of unchecked ivy to completely overrun the ground medium, you have cut off the woodland's circulation.

When the ground flora is choked out, the complex underground network collapses. Where are the political votes in Scarlet Elfcup? Where are the votes in *Drosophila* fruit flies? The public might not like flies, and they might not notice a rare fungus, but without these "invisible bits," the entire body dies. Fungi cycle the nutrients; insects feed the birds and decompose the waste; the ground flora stabilizes the soil. Every single piece of vegetable and insect life is linked.

By ignoring the forest floor, you have weakened the entire ecosystem. This is why the Slope collapsed under the 2025 gales while the adjacent, actively managed side of the hill—where the strangling ivy was proactively severed—survived with minimal damage.

Planting a few token saplings at public expense while the ground medium beneath them is choked and dying is like putting a plaster on a body suffering from internal organ failure. It is a cynical, box-ticking exercise designed for public relations rather than actual ecology.

I urge this committee to stop managing our public lands based on what looks good in a council brochure. We demand that Bawden Tree Care be instructed to carry out active, total habitat management—starting with rescuing the woodland floor, severing the canopy ivy, and protecting the unglamorous, insect-and-fungal life that actually keeps Harnham Slope alive.

Kind regards, James H Winch

Full Statement from Member of the Public – Margaret Willmot

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this meeting.

My name is Margaret Willmot, I am a Trustee of Bemerton Community Ltd, and at your last meeting on June 8th I spoke in support of the application for Bathing Water Status at Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground which was an item on the agenda. Bemerton Community are proposing to submit this application in October and I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update.

The application requires surveys of bathers and a widely publicised consultation to ascertain the views of the public and other stakeholders. Since June 8th the following progress has been made:

- Surveys were undertaken on 2 days, in May and July, which showed that there were over 100 bathers on both days
- An online consultation was set up and has been publicised in Bemerton What's On for September, the Salisbury Journal, Salisbury & Avon Gazette and Wiltshire TV.
- The consultation closes on October 2nd and as of Sept 24th there have been 165 responses, all but one in favour of the application,
- 12 organisations have so far supported the application, including CPRE South Wiltshire, Salisbury & South Wilts Sports Club, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Broken Bridges Nature Reserve, Salisbury & District Angling Club and Salisbury Pride in Place Community Board.

It is worth noting that Salisbury Bemerton Pride in Place have extended their boundary so that it now includes Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground, recognising that this is an important recreational facility for residents of the Heath. Tom Belshaw, Chair of Pride in Place, has kindly emailed to indicate the support of the Community Board, and I know he has an interest in how 'Pride in Place' might be able to support this initiative going forward.

The process which the City Council have developed to support the successful application for bathing water designation at QE Gardens can hopefully be used as a guide for Lower Bemerton Rec. At the Environment Committee meeting in June there was a resolution to provide a formal letter of support as landowner and stakeholder to assist this application, and I trust it will be possible to provide this before the application deadline of October 15th.

Margaret Willmot
Bemerton Community Ltd