

Meeting	Parks & Open Spaces Committee
Date	6th October 2026
Report Title	Future Planning for Heatwaves, Drought Conditions and Climate Resilience
Agenda Reference	17
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Recommendations:

1. To note the report taken to F&P Committee in September and consider POS Committee next steps.

Purpose of Report

To consider the impacts of prolonged periods of extreme heat and drought on Parish Council assets, public spaces, and community safety, and to explore measures that may improve resilience through future planning, emergency preparedness, and budget considerations. This report follows observations made after recent periods of prolonged hot and dry weather, which have highlighted several potential risks affecting public spaces, infrastructure, and Council-maintained assets across the Parish. These concerns build upon matters regarding future planning for heatwaves and climate resilience.

Background

The Council rightly considers flooding and severe rainfall events as part of its planning and emergency preparedness arrangements. However, this year has demonstrated that prolonged periods of extreme heat, drought and associated fire risks may present equally significant challenges.

Extended dry weather can affect not only the appearance and condition of parks and open spaces but also public safety, infrastructure, maintenance costs, and the long-term sustainability of Parish assets.

Whilst many residents have enjoyed the warmer weather, the environmental impacts witnessed this year suggest that it may be prudent for the Council to begin considering how such conditions could affect future service delivery and budget planning.

Observed and Potential Impacts

Public Safety

Recent dry conditions have the potential to create a few health and safety concerns, including:

- Ground shrinkage and cracking within parks and open spaces creating trip hazards.
- Uneven or damaged surfaces affecting recreational and play areas.
- Cracking of grassed areas used by residents, children, and dog walkers.
- Ground movement around fixed infrastructure.
- Exposure of concrete foundations around lamp columns and similar assets.
- Leaning or weakened fencing and barriers where ground conditions have altered.
- Instability of benches, signs, and other street furniture.
- Deterioration of pathways and access routes.

These issues may present risks to residents, visitors, children using Council facilities and those exercising pets in Council-managed areas.



Impact on Parish Assets

Prolonged heat and drought may also lead to:

- Damage to grassed areas requiring restoration.
- Stress, decline or loss of younger trees and planting.
- Increased maintenance requirements.
- Deterioration of flower beds and shrub planting.
- Reduced biodiversity and habitat quality.
- Increased wear on outdoor facilities and infrastructure.
- Potential subsidence-related impacts affecting Council assets.
- Higher future repair and replacement costs.

Early identification of such issues may help avoid more significant expenditure in the future.

Financial and Reputational Considerations

Haydon Wick Parish Council has built a strong reputation for maintaining its parks, open spaces and community assets to a high standard. Failure to anticipate the impacts of prolonged dry weather could result in:

- Increased reactive maintenance costs.
- Greater pressure on existing budgets.
- Higher repair and replacement expenditure.
- Potential insurance claims arising from damaged assets or safety incidents.
- Possible increases in insurance premiums.
- Deterioration in the appearance and quality of public spaces valued by residents.

Taking a proactive approach may therefore represent prudent financial management whilst helping to protect the Council's reputation and community assets.

Fire Risk and Emergency Planning

The recent combination of prolonged dry weather, reduced rainfall and high temperatures has also increased concerns around:

- Grass fires.
- Hedge and shrub fires.
- Damage to open spaces and wildlife habitats.
- Risks to neighbouring properties.
- Disruption to Council operations and maintenance programmes.

Whilst current emergency planning arrangements appropriately consider flooding and severe weather events, consideration could be given to incorporating:

- Heatwaves.
- Extended drought periods.
- Wildfire and grass fire risks.
- Water shortages and prolonged dry conditions.

into future reviews of the Council's Emergency Plan to ensure these risks are appropriately recognised and managed.

Future Budget Considerations

At this stage, the purpose of this report is not to recommend immediate expenditure. Instead, it is proposed that we investigate potential future costs and provide options for consideration during future budget setting discussions.

Areas that may warrant further assessment include:

- Repairs resulting from drought-related damage.
- Restoration of damaged playing fields and grassed areas.
- Tree replacement programmes.
- Watering provision for young trees and planting.
- Drought-resistant planting schemes.
- Additional tree planting and shade creation.
- Fire prevention measures.



- Water storage and conservation initiatives.
- Infrastructure repairs arising from ground movement.
- Emergency response preparedness.

The Council may also wish to consider, following further investigation and cost analysis:

- Climate Resilience Reserve
- A modest reserve fund designed to address unforeseen weather-related damage and emergency requirements.
- Annual Preventative Budget Provision
- A modest annual budget allocation supporting preventative measures aimed at reducing future maintenance costs and improving resilience across Parish assets.

Parish-Wide Condition Survey

To support future decision-making, it is recommended that a formal Parish-wide condition survey be undertaken following prolonged dry weather conditions.

The survey could include:

- Parks and open spaces.
- Play areas.
- Footpaths and surfaced areas.
- Lamp columns and associated foundations.
- Fencing and barriers.
- Benches and street furniture.
- Trees and planting schemes.
- Other Council-owned infrastructure and assets.

The findings would provide an evidence-based assessment of any emerging issues, future liabilities and maintenance requirements, enabling informed budget planning and prioritisation.

Conclusion

Recent weather conditions have highlighted that extreme heat and prolonged drought may present risks to public safety, Council assets, open spaces and future budgets.

A measured and proportionate approach focused on identifying risks, assessing impacts and exploring future resilience measures would help ensure that the Council remains prepared for a broader range of environmental challenges whilst continuing to protect community assets and maintain high standards for residents.

Future Resolutions for the Working Party to Consider

1. Haydon Wick Parish Council acknowledges the potential risks associated with prolonged heatwaves, drought conditions and increased fire hazards.
2. A Parish-wide condition survey of Council-managed assets and infrastructure to identify any impacts associated with recent dry weather conditions.
3. Review the Council's Emergency Plan and consider the inclusion of heatwaves, drought conditions and wildfire risks within future revisions.
4. Investigate and report back on potential future budget requirements relating to climate resilience, asset protection, and emergency preparedness.
5. Consideration be given during future budget discussions to:
 - the establishment of a modest Climate Resilience Reserve; and
 - a modest annual budget provision for preventative resilience measures.