

**ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020**

**Agenda item 8: Report of Matters Raised at the Annual Town (Parish) Meeting**

Matters raised at meeting under agenda item 6

This is a brief note of the matters raised at the Annual Town (Parish) Meeting at agenda item 6, Town/Parish affairs and an update on the report issued to the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 which was cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**1. *Can you tell me when the lift in the cinema will be repaired?***

Town Clerk stated the hydraulic lift to Abbey Hall had been regularly serviced and maintained but was old and unreliable. The Abbey Cinema did not wish to use it due to its unreliability and so the only option would be new lift , a significant financial cost to the council. It was also in the wrong place, at the back of the building and accessed by a lane shared with vehicles. Short term the council are looking to install a platform lift from the foyer up to the cinema, as previously in place. Longer term solution would be to the council are looking at having a lift at the front of the building with the aim of improving access across the whole of the guildhall building. We hope to make progress on the platform lift in the coming months.

*Update: the installation of the platform lift has been delayed by the Covid 19 pandemic. As reported at the Guildhall Committee of 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 this work is now recommencing.*

**2. *Has previously attended a meeting in 2015 and raised a concern about the state of the grass verges in Northcourt Road Abingdon and the destruction caused from vehicles being parked here. Please can you provide an update on this situation.***

Town Clerk confirmed that the particular grass verges in question fall outside the authority of Abingdon Town Council and as a result there are limits on what we can do. Matter had been raised formally and this was a problem in other areas too. We will raise this again with the relevant authorities to investigate.

*Update: Matter was raised on agenda of Traffic Advisory Committee for its meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This meeting was cancelled due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The next meeting of this committee is now scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020. County officers are aware of these issues.*

*Members are aware that the condition of grass verges and their use by vehicles is a problem across the town. They will consider a policy to address this problem, alongside the need for improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. It is acknowledged that many of the verges are not owned by the town council and that the highway authority is Oxfordshire County Council. The town council will seek to lobby other authorities and to work constructively with them (as applicable) to find a solution. Note also that this is a matter which can be looked at as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process.*

Resident thanked the Mayor for hosting the annual Christmas Party for the over 70's at Christmas.

**3. Resident seconded the concerns raised regarding the grass verges and the state of the ground as a result of parking here. Felt this issue should be resolved prior to work being carried out on a neighbourhood plan.**

**4. Can Abingdon Town Council do anything regarding the upcoming housing development north of the town and the diamond interchange, to ensure diamond interchange is built before any housing?**

Town Clerk confirmed that Abingdon Town Council shared these concerns and Council objected to planning application because the diamond interchange would not be built before the houses. Matter for County Council but Town Council would continue to make representations. A member stated that the interchange would be built but not before housing started to be occupied.

**5. Can you tell us what plans there are for trees on Boxhill?**

Cllr. Jim Halliday replied that the Abingdon Carbon Cutters had requested that trees be planted on areas of the Boxhill recreation ground however this would cause the council some concern as the area use to be a land infill site for household waste which would cause problems if disturbed and that the area was also leased to a football club. He informed the meeting that the Council's Tree Survey had reported the trees on the northern edge of the recreation ground were not in good health and would be felled in the next few months and replaced in the autumn with semi mature trees and it may be possible to increase the number of trees that were originally there.

*We could also add that the town council is very proactive in looking at where additional planting can take place in accordance with its climate change/ environmental policy.*

**6. What is being done about the Upper Reaches as this is a major Eye sore in the town?**

Town Clerk understood that this building is on a long lease from District Council to private company and that we are not aware of their plans. We have previously expressed our concerns to The Vale and will continue to do so, but as we do not own the building, we have no authority regarding its future.

*Update: have requested district council to outline latest position.*

**7. Can you tell us what is being done about Old Abbey House?**

Town Clerk confirmed that this building is owned by the Vale of White Horse District council and that we are not aware of their plans. We have previously expressed our concerns to the vale and will continue to do so, but as we do not own the building, we have no authority regarding its future.

*Update: have requested district council to outline latest position.*

**8. Does Abingdon Town Council have any plans to improve the Information Centre facilities and the signage in the town?**

Town Clerk explained that the Information centre is currently located in what will be the reading room once the archives are returned to the council. As a result, a permanent home for the information centre was being discussed, a potential permanent home had been identified and the council hoped to be able to provide future updates in due course. Regarding the signage for the information centre, this is a movable structure and was taken down due to recent weather issues but would be back up when weather conditions permitted it.

Regarding the signage on a wider level –fingerposts originally installed by the Joint Environmental trust and did not pass on to either town or district council after Trust was wound up.

- *Committee could seek permission to access say £3k of JET funds to update/refurbish the finger posts - would I be right in thinking that this would then allow us to a) reclaim any costs ATC spend and b) if appropriate pay a third party to do some refurb work ?*

*Update: with regard to the proposed new location of the Information Centre the Town Council had spoken with the district council when the Covid 19 restrictions were introduced and pre-planning application advice to be sought. Unfortunately this advice is delayed due to the restrictions in place, which would require an accompanied site visit. However enquiries now been made to ascertain whether the pre-planning advice can now be obtained.*

**8. Is the name of the town ‘Abingdon’ or ‘Abingdon-on-Thames’? Royal Mail have refused to accept the change. She had heard that this was because road/ street signs said Abingdon and not Abingdon-on-Thames.**

Town Clerk confirmed that as per a motion passed in 2011 the name of the town was ‘Abingdon-on-Thames’. We wrote to the Vale of White Horse District council at the time who endorsed this and would then have informed other relevant authorities including Royal Mail.

The town entry signs installed reflected the new names but it would not be a cost-effective project to remove perfectly good signs simply to replace them with the new name.

We did not have any information regarding Royal Mail’s position.

He considered the two names were interchangeable as in Henley/ Henley-on-Thames.

*Update: the motion in November 2011 was as follows: this Council resolves that it should take all necessary steps to change the name of the town to Abingdon-on-Thames, and authorises the Town Clerk to make the necessary application to the Vale of White Horse District Council to do this.”*

*As stated at the meeting the two names are interchangeable, with Abingdon and not Abingdon-on-Thames being the name of the town in the charter of 1556. No further action proposed.*

There was also a questionnaire to accompany the exhibition boards showing the Council’s work, and the following answers were given:

**What do you think Abingdon Town Council do well?**

- Answer emails
- Playgrounds and woods, wildlife
- Lovely schools’ and lots of things to do with kids
- The Children’s Playgrounds
- The Schools are good
- Sport Facilities
- Festivals
- Cinema
- Historic building handling
- The welcome return of the Town crier magazine
- Events e.g. Fun in the park and Music in the park
- Floral displays
- The Market place is well used
- Events such as FITP

- Support for charities especially the work being carried out with carbon cutters
- Encouraging our many community groups
- Keeping a diverse population together with whole town events

### **What do you think Abingdon Town Council could do better?**

#### Cycling and traffic

- Cycling is currently too dangerous in Abingdon especially for kids. It's a nightmare to know where to cycle with the kids, should we be on the road? Off the road?
- Town Planning: nothing is adapted to cycling in this historical town
- Support Cycling more and reduce congestion (or lobby the correct authorities for it to happen)
- Cycle Routes need to be improved. – Less parking spaces on streets means Oxfordshire County Council can be lobbied for cycle lanes.
- Redistribute some of the road so there is less space for cars and more for cycling, I cycle my kids to Caldecott school and back and it's a headache every day. I was to encourage my children to cycle but I don't want them to die because of it.
- Repaint Cycle Paths, add more cycle racks and replace the damaged ones.
- Remove 6 parking spaces on East St Helen street and put in a bike rack to link up 2 parts of the NCR5.
- Cycle/walking bridge over A34 at Tesco's roundabout (there is a cycle path then to Marcham).
- Ban on cars driving along roads outside schools during pick up/drop off times.

#### Climate emergency and wildlife:

- We need to provide more provisions for Nature (Swift birds, bird boxes, bat boxes, wildflowers, trees, hedgehogs etc.)
- In general the climate emergency is not visible enough.
- Plant more trees. Establish tiny forests (see BBC news Witney today 10/03/2020)
- Protect our damaged grass verges. Plant wildflowers.

#### General:

- Tourism – we under sell ourselves enormously.
- Supporting local businesses better especially shops
- Larger Town Crier
- Get the Notice boards back up
- Several central locations need urgent use – Upper Reaches, Old Abbey House
- Work with schools to inform the public about the climate emergency and what they should be doing.

- How can a neighborhood plan become viable when we have huge blocks within the town that are not the responsibility of the town council? (Upper Reaches, precinct, multistory etc.)
- Magazine you circulate is excellent but its infrequency discourages contributors.
- Caldecott neighborhood is dirty and must be cleaned more often
- Tourist information office needs improving.

*Update: a major theme running through the questions and the comments relates to the environment and facilities for cycling and pedestrians. This is an area which relates to the council's key strategic objectives 1 and:*

1. To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency;
2. To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.

*The Council also has adopted a motion to work with other authorities to introduce a 20mph zone in Abingdon.*

*To progress this work the Council will wish to consider how to embed this work and resource it with regard to committee responsibilities/ focus and staff resources.*

### **Recommendations:**

The Committee is requested to consider this report and any further actions to address the matters raised at the Annual Town (Parish) meeting.

This report has been posted on the website in the Annual Parish Meeting section. The Committee may wish to consider how best to communicate further in relation to the matters raised at the meeting and our response. This could include further updates on the website and in the Town Crier as these matters are addressed and consideration of how we might specifically engage with younger people.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020.

**ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020**

**REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK**

Agenda item 11 – Democratic matters: Draft calendar of meetings for 2020/2021, Annual Meeting 2020/21 and Committee terms of reference and scheme of delegation

Draft calendar of meetings for 2020/2021

The Leader and the Town Clerk have drafted the attached for consultation with Members (Appendix A).

In drafting this we have:

- Increased the cycles from four to six per year. More frequent committee meetings will allow business to be expedited more quickly, with no long wait between meetings.
- The Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committee met most months during 2019/20 and previously the Committee has agreed its own schedule of meetings. The calendar assumes one meeting per cycle but the Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committee may wish to take a view on its meetings schedule. Last year the meetings generally took place on a Tuesday and the Green Committee may also wish to take a view on this as this evening is not convenient for a member of staff who attends.
- Should a particular committee find that a meeting during a cycle is not required then the Town Clerk may consult with the Chair of the Committee to cancel that meeting for lack of business.
- Retained meetings for each committee on the same evenings as the current year.
- Avoided meetings during the school holidays, with the necessary exception of Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee.
- Avoided clashes with District Council meetings where possible.
- Drafted the first cycle of 2021/22, which members, public and staff find helpful.

Members are also encouraged to carefully consider the proposed dates so that any which are, for whatever reason, inconvenient, can be changed if necessary at this stage. Please consult with your diaries and let us know if any dates are inconvenient or if we have scheduled a meeting which clashes with other known commitments. This will avoid, as far as possible, having to change dates during the course of the year, although it has to be accepted that this may still be necessary on occasion if circumstances so dictate.

Note that during the year the council may wish to review the committee structure.

We are not in a position at this stage to determine whether meetings will be virtual or a hybrid of virtual/ in person. The law provides for virtual meetings until May 2021 and with the requirements for social distancing and shielding of medically vulnerable persons the option to retain virtual meetings during this period should be retained.

The Committee is requested to consider and recommend the Town Council to approve the calendar of meetings.

#### Annual meeting of the Council/ Mayor Making

The date suggested for the Annual Meeting/ Mayor Making is Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May, avoiding the District Council which is the previous Wednesday.

The Committee is requested to make a recommendation to the Town Council in relation to the date of the Annual Meeting.

#### Council and Committee terms of reference and scheme of delegation

The Council should review this document regularly and with the commencement of the new Council year it is timely to do this now. I am currently reviewing and will circulate this separately.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020.

**ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**  
**26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020**  
**REPORT OF TOWN CLERK**

**Agenda item 12: Report of the Town Clerk – Police Community Support Officer**

At the meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020 it was **resolved** “that the role of PCSOs / establishing closer links be an agenda item for the next meeting of all committees, with a report back to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.” With the cancellation of the March meeting, this matter is now brought forward to the Committee.

The following comments were made by the other council committees:

Amenities and Recreation Committee:

The Committee considered the current involvement of the PCSOs and made the following recommendations and observations for the Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider:

- The working relationship with the PCSOs was good and they were always there for staff and officers when problems arose.
- Consider action in relation to flyposting.
- To consider action in relation to vehicles with engines running whilst in queues.
- To consider the problems caused by parking on pavements in the town. Particular concern was expressed in relation to Sellwood Road and St John’s Road but this was an issue in other areas too.

County Hall Museum Management Committee:

Cllr Samantha Bowring noted that the museum’s relationship with the PCSOs should be a mutual one and that the museum should consider offering the PCSOs something in return for their support.

The Operations Officer noted that the museum’s relationship with the PCSOs is very positive, and that PCSO Ali Blood attended the recent staff training session to give instruction on the use of personal alarms.

Guildhall Committee

The Committee noted that the PCSOs had frequent contact with staff in the Abbey Cinema and the Guildhall. They had been of considerable assistance when there had been occasional problems.

The matter is now brought back for further consideration by the Committee.

Members may also wish to note that during the Covid-19 pandemic the Abingdon Police Neighbourhood Team, including our council part-funded PCSO Ali Blood have been working normally within the constraints of social distancing.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

**ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020**

**REPORT OF TOWN CLERK**

**Agenda item 13: Update on Neighbourhood Development Plan**

Following a competitive process Feria Urbanism were appointed by the Working Group to work with the Council in relation to the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and specifically the “Scoping Stage.” They were appointed in accordance with the brief to consultants which is being circulated with this report (Appendix B).

Feria Urbanism have successfully worked with a number of councils, including Lewes Town Council. Last year the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan won a commendation from judges in the Royal Town Planning Institute South East planning awards, having been nominated in the category for Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment.

Feria Urbanism’s website address is:

<http://www.feria-urbanism.eu/>

Feria Urbanism made a presentation to the Annual Town (Parish) Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Unfortunately the Covid-19 restrictions (lockdown) came in to place shortly afterwards. Given the restrictions on travel and social gatherings as a result of the Covid-19 public health crisis, the preferred methodology for this project has needed to be changed. The Working Group had a virtual meeting with Feria Urbanism. Whilst there was the option of delaying matters until the current restrictions are eased and accepting that there would be compromises with an alternative strategy, it was decided not to delay with the work. An alternative strategy has been agreed and instead of face-to-face meetings and “real world” design workshops, Feria Urbanism has prepared an alternative strategy, now based on website materials and a series of phone or video interviews.

A package of online materials has been prepared by the Feria Urbanism team. These are on the town council website <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>. These include the following:

1. A slideshow, to explain what a neighbourhood plan is and how the process works. This is available as a PDF download and as a narrated video.
2. A number of PDF downloads about “PLACE” – Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture and Engineering. These invite people to take a walk around Abingdon and annotate a map in response to specific questions. This will help inform the baseline audit of the town.
3. A “skills audit” the aim of which is to help establish the steering group membership. It allows people to focus on what they can bring to the planning process, define how much time they would like to commit and consider what they will enjoy and value most about the process. The purpose of this skills audit to get people to think about what they would like to contribute.
4. Finally, a “cereal box challenge” for young designers. It aims to get children thinking about the place where they live, how towns are designed and how to look at and think about architecture. Getting them to design their own buildings might help them think about design in their local area.

Emails have now been sent to all those who expressed an interest at the annual town meeting in becoming steering group members (17 names in total) alerting them to this website content.

Following the receipt of responses from those contacted, the Feria Urbanism team will lead either a video conference or an in-person meeting – depending on social distancing rules, most likely a video conference. The team will listen to what people have learned while running the PLACE audit and will start to establish roles within the steering group, based on the skills audit results. The date and format of this session is to be confirmed.

#### Initial stakeholder interviews by phone or video

- Jennie and Richard from Feria Urbanism have also sent initial contact requests to a representative list of local organisations, as advised by the town council. This includes: Civic Society; Carbon Cutters; Chamber of Commerce; Fairtrade Group, Museum; Abibike – cycle campaign group; ATOM Science Society; Abingdon Bridge; Abingdon Carousel. Members are requested to consider if there are any other organisations to target at this stage. Note that it is open to

anyone or any organisation to become involved and as the consultation develops more groups will be engaged.

- The purpose of these phone or video interviews is to map the various activities and concerns around Abingdon, be that specific and local or linked to broader networks and ideas. These results of these conversations will help to inform the baseline inputs to the plan. It is expected that the names and organisations that get mentioned in this first round of interviews will help inform a second and third round of interviews shortly afterwards.
- Conversations have already happened with Carbon Cutters and the Civic Society with dates/times for others being agreed daily.

Following conversation with Feria Urbanism I will update Members at the meeting regarding the timescale on this stage of the process.

Members are requested to consider this report and comment as necessary.

Nigel Warner

Town Clerk

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020.