



ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

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Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee 11 January 2022 DRAFT NOTES OF MEETING

Present:

Cllr Gabby Barody
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Charlie Birks
Cllr Rawda Jehanli
Cllr Lorraine Oates
Cllr Helen Pighills
Cllr Samantha Bowring
Anne Smart

Chair
Vice-Chair

(*ex-officio*, Chair FGAM Committee, Leader)
Abingdon Carbon Cutters (co-opted)

In attendance:

Tim Badcock
Andy Crick
Sam Fox
Nigel Warner
James Wigmore

Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager
Committee Clerk (clerk to the meeting)
Resident
Town Clerk
Abibike

SECTION I - Open to the public and media

EA37. **Apologies**

There were none.

The Council approved the co-option of Anne Smart from Abingdon Carbon Cutters to the Advisory Committee (approved at Council meeting 1 December 2022) and she agreed to join. Her co-option was proposed by Cllr Briggs, seconded by Cllr Halliday and agreed.

EA38. **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

EA39. **Minutes**

The draft notes of the meeting of the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee of 16 November 2021 were agreed.

EA40. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising not on the agenda already.

EA41. **Statements and Questions from the Public**

There were none.

EA42. **Forward Plan and Actions Register**

The Forward Plan was noted.

Actions Register

The Actions Register was noted.

Forward Plan

1. Community Woodland (TB/NW)	
Jan to Mar 2021	Plan for community woodland
Jun 2021 review	Community Wood Project - report to Amenities 9.6.21. Carbon Cutters undertaking a site survey June 2021
July to Sep 2021	Consideration of business plan
Oct to Dec 2021	Site and draft plan agreed by committee November 2021
January 2022 update	Budget now needs to be agreed. If agreed then there will be an approach to landowner and negotiation February 2022.
Apr to Jun 2022	Commence work
Oct to Dec 2022	Planting

2. Review of play areas (TB)	
Jan to Mar 2021	Review of play areas
Jun 2021 review	Review took place June 2021
Oct 2021 update	Quotes for play equipment received. Procurement should be completed in 2021 – report to committee 16 November 2021
Nov 2021 update	Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager updated meeting on quotes received. Work to proceed under delegation to officers.
January 2022 update	See action plan update
3. Tree Survey (TB)	
Apr to Jun 2022	Commission tree report
Apr to Jun 2024	Commission tree report
October 2021 update	n/a
4. New Cemetery (NW>VM)	
Apr to Jun 2021	Land offer from VOWH - Key decision on proceeding
Jun 2021 review	Masefield Crescent site part of Vale Strategic Property review See Amenities Committee - 9.6.21 Recommended: 1) New Cemetery Working Group reappointed; 2) Sum of £20,000 released from the earmarked reserves towards work on the business case 3) Other potential sites in the town be explored cemetery infrastructure is already in place); 4) Confirmation on suitability of Masefield Crescent site undertaking a desk top exercise; 5) Valuation of the Masefield Crescent site; 6) A business proposal be developed, as far as we are able, ahead of further information from DC; 7) Dialogue with the District Council continue during this period so that proposals can be informed. Further meeting due with VWHDC June 21
Dec 2021-Jan 2022	Town Clerk to prepare report. Meeting to be called once the report is prepared.
January 2022 update	See report to meeting of EA Committee
Oct to Dec 2023	Commence building work TBC
Jan to Mar 2025	Open new cemetery TBC

5. Infant Burial Area (TB)	
January 2022	This project is ahead of schedule. The area has been planned by the Outdoor Services Manager and a quote has been obtained for the work
Apr to Jun 2022	Plan infant burial area
July to Sep 2022	Implement infant burial area
Potential projects for prioritisation and timetabling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rewilding and tree planting programme. January 2022 update: have identified sites for 30 replacement and additional trees. Identified 150 metres of council boundaries suitable for hedge planting. Town Council is not responsible for grass verges on the highway. - Annual programmes for: cemetery improvements, major arboricultural works (inc. date of next major survey), vehicles/equipment replacement dates, street furniture. 	

1. Green Projects	
Oct to Dec 2020	Cllr Andrew Coveney & Anne Smart to liaise with takeaway establishments regarding climate emergency. Invite experts to discuss.
Oct to Dec 2021	Promote small financial awards programme for environmental initiatives especially in relation to schools, to include biodiversity initiatives (inc. competition) Biodiversity competition was launched over the summer, showcasing biodiversity in action from residents and organisations sharing gardens, shared spaces from residents. Judging to commence shortly, with the announcement of the winners and prize giving ceremony to be hosted by the Mayor in December at the County Hall Museum.
Apr to Jun 2022	Environmental Awareness Day – requires proposal for November 2021 meeting to include format, date, budget etc - To be included as a theme within the Green Forum. - Suggested date, to be confirmed: 23 April or 30 April 2022.
October 2021 update	Cllr Cheryl Briggs to take over from Cllr Coveney (see Oct to Dec 2020 note). Date of project to be put back to 2022. Update at January 2022 meeting.
<p><u>Green Forum</u></p> <p>The Chair, Cllr Barody, provided an update on the Green Forum. The Green Forum was established to link in organisations in Abingdon including Abingdon Carbon Cutters, the Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre and the Naturalists Society to discuss themes such as biodiversity and active travel. The forum will meet quarterly, with two meetings and two events. The aim will be to use the three months leading up to each meeting or event to share information about the themes and to seek the views of the public.</p>	

12 people met on 6 January 2022 and the forum intends to meet again on 20 January 2022. The first meeting will discuss active travel and sustainable travel. It is hoped that an event can be organised for the end of March 2022.

Ann de Souza from Cycling UK has agreed to set up a web page with Sustrans and is inviting comments on the site.

The forum is keen to work alongside the neighbourhood plan and to take account of the Oxfordshire County Council Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

The forum will need to decide what is realistic to work on over the three months leading up to each meeting or event. A traffic light system has been suggested as follows: red - interesting items but outside the scope of the forum; amber items - which might not be completed; green - items to complete.

It is intended to have standing item for future agendas of the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee with Green Forum activity. Anne Smart will be asked to provide a brief report.

Takeaways

Anne Smart and Cheryl Briggs visited six takeaways before Christmas with a questionnaire. They hope to visit more and asked the meeting if the exercise was considered worthwhile. The committee expressed its support for the exercise.

2. Plastic-free town initiative

Jan to Mar 2021	Work with ACC regarding the plastic free town initiative with the objective that shop and market retailers use no plastic or polystyrene. Commence this work with an audit of retailers
Apr to Jun 2021	Agree and implement measures and incentives to achieve the objective that shop and market retailers use no plastic or polystyrene. Pop-up to promote reusable cups took place 29 May 21
June 2021 review	Cafes audited. Most retailers do not now use polystyrene. Work delayed due to Covid but next steps and proposal to be considered at July mtg
October 2021 update	Use of single use plastic in relation to activity on the Market considered by Community Committee (as service ctte), at its September 2021 meeting – The report of the Community Services and Events Officer on the single use plastics policy on the Market Place was noted. The Community Services and Events Officer noted the delay in rolling out the new policy due to the pandemic and health and safety concerns over reusing items. The policy was now being introduced in consultation with market traders. Report to a future meeting to consider the position regarding plastic-free initiatives beyond the Market Place

3. Biodiversity plan	
Apr to Jun 2021	Commence work on a biodiversity plan for the town council.
June 2021 review	Plan discussed ctte April 2021 and rescheduled adoption. Link to the Green Spaces Plan (Neighbourhood Plan). Approach a volunteer to assist in this area
Jan to Mar 2022	Adoption of biodiversity plan
Oct 2021 update	Work has commenced and we should be able to keep to the timetable for a biodiversity plan to be adopted in March 2022. Report due to committee in November 2021.
January 2022 update	See report to meeting of EA Committee together with budget proposal.
Potential projects for prioritisation and timetabling	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure actions and decisions are in line with and partner the Neighbourhood Plan and relevant Local Plan work. - Be ready to be a pilot town for innovative green schemes which may emerge, noting that this will require flexibility in relation to this section of the Forward Plan. - Council to allocate responsibility re speed awareness and pushing forward on the 20 mph speed zone policy - latter now with OCC. 8.11.21: update provided to Traffic Advisory Committee. To remove from Forward Plan for this committee and add to Town Infrastructure Committee for updates from TAC 	

Policy

EA43. Draft 2022-23 budget

The committee received and considered a report from the Deputy Town Clerk / RFO on the draft budget for 2022-23.

Biodiversity

Has a figure of £2,000. The Chair, Cllr Barody commented that the budget may be insufficient and suggested this be increased to £8,000. The committee agreed.

Play areas

The report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager under item EA46 outlines a five year plan for play area improvements. The sum quoted in the report is slightly different: the budget report quotes a figure of £36,000, which includes £6,000 for routine maintenance.

Cllr Samantha Bowring joined the meeting at 7.18pm

The Outdoor Services Team were complimented on their work on play areas. A reasonable budget is needed to ensure that the play areas are maintained to a good standard.

As well as considering the maintenance and upgrading of existing play areas, the committee considered potential areas of spend. A basketball court has been suggested by DAMASCUS and the Youth Forum and it may be possible to obtain specific funding for such a project. Abingdon Eagles Basketball Team could be approached to help with this.

Another option suggested was for a 'trim trail' outdoor exercise trail and an outdoor gym. Funding for such projects could be provided from general reserves or from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money but the committee recommended a figure of £60,000 in addition to that included in the budget report.

The committee was advised that the budget is initially set annually in January to tie in with the setting of the council precept. The budget requirement is reviewed during the year and additional funding can be sought from the reserves if required / appropriate to do so.

It was proposed by Cllr Barody, seconded by Cllr Pighills and recommended to the Town Council that the budget for play areas be increased to £90,000 with £60,000 to be funded from CIL money, specific grants, or reserves if needed.

It was proposed by Cllr Bowring, seconded by Cllr Jehanli and recommended to the Town Council that a small task-based working group be set up to work on play area improvements with the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager, the membership to be agreed by the Town Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Barody, seconded by Cllr Oates and recommended to the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Advisory Committee that a budget of £227,679 be agreed for the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee, this figure to include an additional £60,000 for play equipment to be funded by CIL money or specific grant funding or to be drawn from general reserves if required.

EA44. Biodiversity plan

The committee received and considered a proposal for the development of a biodiversity plan for Abingdon which was prepared by the Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr Barody, seconded by Cllr Oates and recommended to the Town Council that the report and recommendations therein be agreed.

Members were asked to pass any comments on the proposed plan to the Chair and that any proposed changes or refinements be considered at the next meeting of the advisory committee.

Operational

EA45. Report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager

The committee received and considered a report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager. The Town Clerk noted a compliment which had been received from a resident over the floral displays in the previous year. The Town Clerk was asked to contact anybody providing such positive comments to see if their comments could be shared on the website and social media.

The Outdoor Services Team have cut back the hedges on Boxhill Road adjoining Boxhill Park and the Committee Clerk was asked to request that the debris on the path be cleared.

The report was noted.

EA46. Play equipment

The committee received and considered a report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager on the future procurement of play equipment to inform future budget provision.

Cllr Bowring asked if all the requests for improvements from Councillors had been included in the report as some seemed to be missing. The Town Clerk confirmed that all requests had been taken into account following the initial request sent out in March 2021 but invited Councillors to contact the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager if there were any omissions.

The report was noted.

EA47. New cemetery working party

The committee received and considered an update from the New Cemetery Working Party, as requested at the meeting of the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee on 19 October 2021 (EA13).

The working party is working with a consultancy and hopes to report back to the next meeting with a more detailed proposal based on the work of the consultancy. Different services were considered, such as an on-site crematorium or alternative, environmentally-friendly forms of dealing with the deceased.

The working party was asked to prepare a needs analysis to develop a business case for the Town Council to make a decision.

The Town Clerk advised the committee that the District Council has discretionary power for burials and that default responsibility for dealing with the deceased falls to the District Council under its public health duties. Such a need is extremely rare as there is always capacity to deal with such needs within the existing system. Cemeteries need to provide space to inter ashes.

The report was noted.

EA48. **Fisheries report**

The committee received and considered a report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager on the updated arrangements for managing fisheries in Abingdon.

The Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager was asked about the path next to the Thames heading towards Oxford being in disrepair and the fact that there are two boats sunk in the middle of the river. **The Town Clerk would look into this and contact the Environment Agency as the riparian owner.** [A riparian landowner is the owner of land that is next to a watercourse or has a watercourse running through or beneath it.]

The committee thanked the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager for his work negotiating the agreement with the boat hire establishment. The report was noted.

EA49. **HM Land Registry - Local Council First Registration Pilot Project**

The committee noted a message received from HM Land Registry as detailed in the agenda.

EA50. **Publicity**

Items suggested for publicity:

- Play equipment at Boxhill and Chilton Close when it is installed
- Fishing permits - new system
- New Green Forum – to go into the next Town Crier

EA51. **Dates of future meetings**

The dates for future meetings of the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee and items to be considered were noted:

- 8 March 2022
 - Update on biodiversity from John Killick – publish information with this set of notes on the website.

- Biodiversity plan – comments and suggestions on the proposed plan discussed under item EA44 above.
- 14 June 2022

EA52. Exclusion of the public, including the press

The Chair moved that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

SECTION II – Confidential

EA53. Confidential Actions Register

The confidential actions register was noted.

The meeting closed at 8.34pm