

## ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Environment & Amenities Advisory Committee
Meeting date	11 January 2022
Report author	Cllr Gabby Barody
Agenda item	8

### PROPOSAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DRAFT BIODIVERSITY POLICY

1. **Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To consider a proposal for a biodiversity policy for Abingdon.

2. **Summary**

2.1 The proposed biodiversity policy is as follows:

**Biodiversity Mission Statement: “Give control back to nature”:**

To promote natural biodiversity as a key concept within Abingdon requiring appropriate timetabling and planning focusing on diverse habitats, regeneration and protection of the natural environment, ensuring food and species protection (bees, insects, birds etc), promoting open green spaces as mini nature reserves, as well as places for people to enjoy and enhance their mental health and well being

2.2 Overall Aims (general and specific)

- Help with the national and international plans to minimise the incidence of drought, flooding and diseases
- Towards carbon absorption (30,000 units per 10 hectares is the national target)
- Towards overall carbon neutrality
- Protecting the environment, enhancing the wild/ natural local ecosystem (including a tree planting policy), allowing this to thrive, including the right trees and plants in the right place. (Community woodland and jubilee tree planting as starting points).
- Promoting outdoor activities, walking, cycling, natural bathing and green spaces for stress reduction, enhanced and restorative well-being and social prescribing
- Encourage a collaborative town approach to owning biodiversity, including all residents, schools, businesses and charities

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3. **Action required**

- 3.1 Produce and publish a Biodiversity Action Plan by 31 April 2022, including actions both short- term and long-term, to improve our biodiversity within a 5 year period
- 3.2 Set up an audit with the support of the outdoor team and the naturalists society to establish the biodiversity we already have on town council land, including the green spaces that we own and the distribution of trees and examine what do we do well and what needs to change
- 3.3 Produce a map as a resource to include meadows, woodlands (established or planned), hedges, ponds, rivers and other key natural areas.
- 3.4 Utilise and or adopt a templates already in existence (Bradford Upon Avon, Leicestershire and OCC Guide),to help develop our own plan as an example of good practice
- 3.5 Form close alliances with interested parties, such as carbon cutters, the Climate Emergency Centre (one planet Abingdon), and the naturalists' society and the Green Forum
- 3.6 Consult and Liaise with the Neighbourhood Planning Group to ensure alignment and adoption of agreed actions
- 3.7 Promote local initiatives such as Biodiversity walks and rewilding projects
- 3.8 Involvement from the local schools forming part of their green curriculum
- 3.9 To delegate to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the committee to Consult and procure expert advice and guidance during this process within a budget of £8000

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives**

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.
3. To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.

5. **Background**

- 5.1 The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 1992 (United Nations) was established and a treaty agreed on the conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Its overall objective is to encourage actions which will lead to a sustainable future.
- 5.2 In 2010, Parties to the CBD adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, a ten-year framework for action by all countries and stakeholders to safeguard biodiversity and the benefits it provides to people.

**Nationally and Locally**

- 5.3 The average proportion of land which is covered by plant growth globally is 70%. The UK falls short of that at 53%. The well-established climate emergency has been the catalyst in setting the target for carbon neutrality by 2050 nationally and by 2045

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locally in line with the Vale`s overall plan. The Environment Agency (2021) has also publicised repeated warnings of a looming climate catastrophe, if immediate action is not taken, locally, nationally and internationally. Many towns and districts have already adopted a biodiversity or green plan. Abingdon Town Council therefore has a duty of care to establish its own biodiversity plan.

**What we have done towards biodiversity so far Abingdon**

- 5.4 We have publicised to the town including residents, businesses and interested groups the intention of the Town Council to develop a policy on Biodiversity
- 5.5 A community woodland has been agreed with funding for a 5 year plan, incorporating diverse planting, hedging, a wild meadow, pond and a community shared plot.
- 5.6 We have a naturalist society involved with the neighbourhood plan advising on green spaces and inputting into the community woodland project.
- 5.7 Sheep grazing has been established within the meadow area of Spring Road Cemetery. Bee hives permits were also created with more bee hives being set up by Abingdon residents.
- 5.8 There are many shared spaces where biodiversity has been embraced. Some of these were entered into our recent competition, showcasing biodiversity in Abingdon. Examples include Stonehill Community Garden, Bothy Vineyard and St Ethelwold`s House The winners will be announced in January with prize giving to be hosted by the Mayor as soon as indoor events are deemed safe.
- 5.9 Hedging and rewilding by the Cemetery and Outdoor Services team in Abingdon, with plans to expand over the next year.
- 5.10 A Schools biodiversity competition will be launched in early spring 2022. The winners and prize giving to coincide with the jubilee celebrations and tree planting event.

**6. Key information and options**

Included above.

**7. Financial/budget implications**

- 7.1 Request for a sum of £8,000 to be included in budget for 2022/23.

**8. HR implications**

- 8.1 There are no HR implications which would require additional staffing, work would be accommodated by councillors and staff as appropriate.

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9. **Supporting papers and appendices**

Templates and papers that will help to guide and inform the policy

- 9.1 A [town council paper](#) to support a motion regarding biodiversity.
- 9.2 An Oxfordshire County Council [guide regarding biodiversity](#).
- 9.3 Leicestershire County Council [document](#) detailing what town and parish councils can do for biodiversity – includes a section on biodiversity plans.

Cllr Gabby Barody  
Chair, Environment and Amenities Committee  
7 January 2022