

## Report from the E&A Committee 2021/22 for the annual Parish Meeting

The new committee was formed last year and became an amalgamation of the original Amenities and the Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committees, following recommendations from a structural review.

### Committee Purpose:

Strategic: to define and oversee projects, programmes and services which address the Council's objective "Respond effectively and Speedily to the Climate Emergency", as agreed at Council on 20th March 2019.

Operational: to agree performance standards for identified functions and periodically review process efficiency and operational performance against those standards. Oversee all Amenities and Recreation matters falling within the purview of Abingdon-On-Thames Town Council;

This remit focuses on:

a. Adverse weather arrangements;

**b. Allotments;**

c. Abingdon in Bloom;

**d. Cemeteries - burials and maintenance;**

e. Closed Churchyards;

f. Fisheries;

**g. Maintenance of trees on Town Council land and working towards increasing tree cover;**

**h. Recreation areas, play areas, the town's open spaces, amenity land and sports pitches;**

i. Roysse Court garden;

j. War memorial;

k. Keeping the town tidy through grounds maintenance, litter picking and general management on areas which are the responsibility of the Town Council and where there is an agency agreement with another authority to provide such services;

**l. The Council's Works Depot, transport, plant and equipment; m. Development and delivery of a biodiversity strategy; n. working with other landowners and organisations to achieve the Town Council's strategic objectives.**

We have focused on the highlighted areas above, and the review below reflects and illustrates what has been achieved thus far.

## **Report Summary**

### **New Cemetery Project (lead by Cllr Jim Halliday Chair of the Cemetery Working Group)**

The cemetery working group have now commissioned a study from CDS (April start date), to survey potential sites for a new cemetery for Abingdon, in addition to assessing the capacity remaining at the current site in Spring Road. This study will give us the information we need to plan ahead in terms of purchasing an appropriate plot of land if necessary, reflecting the future needs of our community, and the necessary stages required to make the land fit for purpose. This will also focus on the predicted costs initially and ongoing.

Rewilding projects continue to occur with the Outdoor Services Team (OFT). Rewilding is ongoing and will expand in relation to the community woodland project, small plots of shared spaces and other plots of land in Abingdon that are currently being assessed. Abingdon Carbon Cutters (ACC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), have recently been successfully tree planting, which will continue as part of the Jubilee celebrations, local school initiatives and the community woodland project.

### **Playground areas**

The OST are in the process of upgrading our play areas in Abingdon. They are working through a priority list at present. There have been recent equipment additions to Boxhill park and Chilton Close. The final safety sign is shortly to be completed, resulting in the two areas being fully open to the public. We would like to thank Tim Babcock and his team for their ongoing commitment to improving our play areas.

### **Allotments**

We have a report outlining the allotment provision within three areas of Abingdon. The report was requested to provide some analysis of the provision thus far and the ongoing support from the TC. This report has prompted a discussion on whether any existing or new land could be acquired to support further allotments provision for Abingdon, given there has been an increase in demand from various community groups. The new provision would benefit the health of our current and new residents (from the new housing sites), and also help in promoting the general mental and physical health of our community.

## Climate Emergency

**The CEE Bill was officially adopted by the TC in line with other Town and Parish Councils, and in support of our local MP.**

A Key objective of the town is to respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency. Whilst delayed with the ongoing pandemic, momentum is now building for environmentally friendly events which have been greatly enhanced by the formation of the Green Forum.

### **Working towards Plastic Free Town Initiative (now part of the Communities Services Committee).**

Single use plastic Policy in place

Tote Bags (designed by the TC) and reusable cups given out at two promotional events in 2021, to promote sustainability, less plastic and reduce waste in line with our vision for a **Green Abingdon**

Many thanks to Anne Smarty (ACC) for initiating the first them and for agreeing to be co-opted onto to the A&E Committee with the intention of promoting awareness, seeking support and providing regular updates.

The **Green Forum** was set up to promote and initiate changes which will help towards carbon neutrality within the town, reduce waste, promote the general well-being of our residents, and improve its biodiversity.

The Forum Steering Group is a collaboration of local voluntary groups which are active in trying to improve the town's environment.

The Steering Group includes representatives from One Planet Abingdon/ Climate Emergency Centre, Carbon Cutters, Abingdon Liveable Streets, and others.

Many thanks to Michelle Charlesworth, for establishing the CEC (One Planet Abingdon) and again becoming a conduit to the E&A Committee and TC.

Four themes have been agreed and declared for this year:

- Active Travel and Sustainable Transport including Bikeability provision
- Biodiversity: trees, plants, and wildlife
- Reducing Consumption including single use plastic; clothes; holidays
- Reducing Carbon in homes/ buildings; a sustainable and healthy diet

The *active travel* event and *youth clothes exchange event* occurred on the 26<sup>th</sup> March and both were very successful. The plan is to have them as regular events

## **Biodiversity**

There is a draft proposal in circulation outlining a vision statement and the necessary steps required for a formal policy to be agreed and adopted.

The policy will be completed and adopted at the June committee meeting once input has been received from all relevant parties including individuals, community groups and councillors. This policy once agreed will complement and align with the Local and Neighbourhood Plans

The biodiversity competition winners (2021) have been notified with certificates and will be awarded cash prizes at the Mayor Making Event in May.

A schools' biodiversity competition will be launched next month alongside the work already achieved by Abingdon Learning Trust, with three of the local schools

## **Community Woodland Project**

The working group for this project has been established to work on developing the land off the Marcham road, and turning it into a fully functioning community woodland. This will showcase a wild meadow, tree and hedge planting, a shared vegetable growing patch, and a pond. This will encourage biodiversity and facilitate a safe and inclusive sanctuary for residents in Abingdon to participate actively, or to simply relax, unwind and enjoy. We envisage that the schools will use the space on a regular basis and form part of their curriculum.

Many thanks in particular to John Killick and Lucille Savin from The Naturalists Society, for their input into the original design of the woodland and its progression over the next five years

### **Overall (Net) budget and predicted expenditure for this year: £227,679**

Community Woodland	£13,500
Biodiversity	£8,000
Green Forum Events	£3,000(Est. on an ad hoc by event basis)
Additional Play area equipment	£60,000 (to be funded from CIL money, specific grant funding or drawn from reserves) (making a total of £96,000)

We acknowledge the committed work that our members, communities, charities and council staff, have contributed so far to this newly formed committee.

Cllr Gabby Barody