

**RESIDENTS' QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ASKED AT ANNULA TOWN MEETING IN MARCH 2020
UPDATE FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 10 MARCH 2021**

Question / Issue	Response at Meeting	Latest Position
<p><i>Q1. Can you tell me when the lift in the cinema will be repaired?</i></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>A Platform Lift has been installed during the third lockdown period (January 2021) and is ready for the re-opening of the cinema which may be as early as 17 May 2021 under the Government's Covid-19 Response Spring 2021.</p> <p>Further improvement works will take place dependent on arrangements for the future use of the building.</p>
<p><i>Q2. 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.</i></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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 most of the verges are not owned by the town council. They are the</p>

		<p>responsibility of Oxfordshire CC and the Vale of White Horse DC and brought to their attention at the Traffic Advisory Committee meetings.</p> <p>The matter was discussed at the Finance and General Purposes Committee in November 2020 which was attended by PCSO Ali Blood, see attached report.</p> <p>Note also that this is a matter which can be looked at as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process.</p>
<p>Q3. 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.</p>	As above	Ditto
<p>Q4. 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?</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The position remains unchanged. The Council has repeated its objections to housing ahead of infrastructure. There is a virtual exhibition organised by Oxfordshire County</p>

		Council taking place from 8 March 2021
Q5. Can you tell us what plans there are for trees on Boxhill?	<p>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.</p>	<p>The outside team worked with Carbon Cutters to create a community orchard at Boxhill Recreation Ground in November 2020</p> <p>In relation to trees more generally the Council following a comprehensive survey of the Council's trees carried out by an external tree specialist – works totalling £89k were recommended – since then some of the work (approx. £30k worth) has been carried out the Council's Works Team and a contract awarded to professional tree surgeons to carry out the remainder of the work. See report of Chair of Amenities and Recreation Committee to this meeting.</p>
Q6. What is being done about the Upper Reaches as this is a major Eye sore in the town?	<p>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.</p>	<p>There has been regular contact with the District Council regarding this matter. The latest update is that the Vale are continuing to work closely with the tenant of the Upper Reaches to encourage them to bring forward plans for the site. We are also ensuring that the tenant undertakes essential</p>

		<p>maintenance as required under the terms of their lease.</p>
<p>Q7. Can you tell us what is being done about Old Abbey House?</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>In February 2021 the property was sold by the District Council to Ede Builders for conversion to a hotel. Ede estimates that the hotel could bring in around £430,000 a year of spend around the town in retail, food, drink and local attractions. It will also provide career opportunities in the hospitality sector, as well as secure wider employment opportunity in the area. Ede hopes to begin the refurbishment of Old Abbey House in the next few weeks. Scaffolding will be put up once Ede begins its work as the roof on the original part to the building needs urgent attention. Ede will work closely with the council to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum.</p>
<p>Q8. Does Abingdon Town Council have any plans to improve the Information Centre facilities and the signage in the town?</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Work on the location of the Information Centre is progressing. At present the services delivered by the Information Centre are provided remotely but it is anticipated that the Information Centre will fully re-open to the public as part of</p>

	<p>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.</p>	<p>the easing of the lockdown, potentially with the potential for some controlled face to face service available at Stage 3 (not before 17 May 2021) and full re-opening at Stage 4 (not before 21 June 2021).</p>
<p><i>Q9. 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.</i></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>We did not have any information regarding Royal Mail’s position.</p> <p>He considered the two names were interchangeable as in Henley/ Henley-on-Thames.</p>	<p>Town Clerk - No further action taken or proposed by me unless the Town Council wishes to review this matter.</p> <p>The name of the borough from 1556 through to its abolition in 1974 was Abingdon and it is believed that the suffix “on-Thames” was added as a tourist matter in the nineteenth century hence its use on some old Borough road signs and since then the names have been interchangeable.</p> <p>The wording of road signs does not affect the name of the town.</p>