



ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

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Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee

8 March 2022

DRAFT NOTES OF MEETING

Present:

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

Chair
Vice-Chair

Abingdon Carbon Cutters (co-opted)

In attendance:

Cllr Margaret Crick
Tim Badcock
John Killick
Lucille Savin
Nigel Warner
James Wigmore

Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager

Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Abibike

SECTION I - Open to the public and media

EA54. **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

EA55. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

EA56. **Minutes**

Minute EA42 – Forward Plan, Green Projects. The reference to “Ann de Souza from Cycling UK” should read “Anne Cossutta from the Climate Emergency Centre.”

Subject to the above amendment the notes of the meeting of the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee of [11 January 2022](#) were agreed.

EA57. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising additional to those already on the agenda.

Cllr Margaret Crick entered the meeting at this point, it being 7.04pm.

EA58. **Statements and Questions from the Public**

There were none at this point.

With the consent of the meeting John Killick participated in the item relating to the Biodiversity Plan (minute EA61).

EA59. **Actions Register and Forward Plan**

Actions Register

The Actions Register was noted. Further to the Register the following items were discussed.

Minute GR13 – 13 July 2021 – Food Policy. The Chair Cllr Gabby Barody reported that this would be brought back to the meeting of 8 June 2022. She would be working on this matter with Cllr Eric de la Harpe. Proposals would be brought forward regarding the scope of the policy. Cllr Jim Halliday stated that he had an example of a policy adopted by another organisation which he would share with Cllrs Barody and de la Harpe. Also note item in relation to Forward Plan – Plastic-free town initiatives – where it was suggested that this policy be considered alongside the Policy in relation to that matter.

Minute A43 – 26 November 2019 – Tree Survey. It was noted that 43% of the work had been done by the contractors but that we did not have a completion date for all the works; it was agreed that the Cemetery and Outdoor Services Manager (COSM) would contact the contractors so a date would be available for the next meeting. The COSM stated that all tree surgeons have been very busy but he would encourage them to expedite the works. A Member queried whether any delays would impact on the Council’s insurance. The Town Clerk (TC) considered that the Council would have shown due diligence by

having survey undertaken but that if an incident causing loss, injury or damage took place then the insurer would judge matters on the merits of case at the time, having due regard to the survey. The COSM stated that all urgent items in the survey have been addressed and that we were on top of this; this had been evidenced by the fact that only two major tree works had been necessary following the recent storms, relating to a tree in Boxhill Woods and a tree on an allotment site. This illustrated the value of surveys and of the Council's careful stewardship of its tree stock. DEFER NEXT SURVEY; KICK SURGEONS

EA47 – 11 January 2022 – reporting sunken boat to the Environment Agency (EA). It was stated that the action was complete in so far as the Town Council was concerned, i.e. the reporting of the incident. However the officers had posed the question as to whether members wished the item to remain on the Actions Register in an amended form until the EA had actioned the request and the boat in question had been removed. Officers reported that the EA had known about this matter for at least 12 months and Members felt that the Council should press them further on what the EA are they doing about it. The abandoned boat was a pollutant and could cause a hazard, especially as the river will become busier over coming months. The TC suggested that the Council write again to the EA and cc the local Member of Parliament. The COSM mentioned that there are more and more boats being left in the waters and this was an increasing problem. It was proposed by Cllr Jim Halliday, seconded by Cllr Charlie Birks and **recommended to the Town Council that a further letter be sent to the Environment Agency regarding the problem of abandoned boats on the Thames in Abingdon, to be cc'd to the local MP.**

The Town Clerk stated that there was duplication and overlap between the Actions Register and Forward Plan. This had been discussed with the Chair and the Vice-Chair and he would seek to rationalize the documents in time for the next Committee meeting. The Chair Cllr Gabby Barody acknowledged the pressure on the staff with vacancies in the administration but hoped that this could be achieved.

Forward Plan

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan as detailed below.

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	Budget now needs to be agreed.
Update: February 2022	Landowner approached by council's agent; awaiting further advice
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
February 2022 update	Play area working group established – Doodle poll for meeting to be arranged for late March 2022. IMPRVTS AT BOXHILL DONE AND CHILTON CLOSE. FIVE-YEAR PLAN. EXERCISE EQUIPT FOR CALDECOTT REC – TB TO CONSULT WITH RAWDA
3. Tree Survey (TB)	
Apr to Jun 2022	Commission tree report
Apr to Jun 2024	Commission tree report
February 2022 – contractors and staff continue to address the works identified. Contractors are behind schedule with 43% of work, by value, done.	
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.

February 2022 update	Feasibility study scoped and contract awarded. Work on feasibility study taking place in April 2022 – see update on agenda for meeting of 8 March 2022
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. March 2022 update – please see report at item 10. - 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. met with all establishments Anne to update – theme of green forum
Oct 2021 onwards	<p>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 form 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.</p> <p>Update March 2022: Plans being made for next competition, involving the schools. In addition Abingdon Learning Trust are planning an exhibition in the Guildhall (Roissey Room) in June 2022 to show what three of the schools have already done. Arrangements are to be confirmed. In response to a query regarding using the Museum basement area licenced to the Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre the Chair, Cllr Gabby Barody, stated that this would not be suitable as there was not</p>

	<p>enough space. She also mentioned that a young people's clothes exchange was due in the Roysse Room on 26 March.</p> <p>It was recommended to the Town Council that the Council pay for the above room hire for the June 2022 exhibition at an approximate cost of £150 from the appropriate budget.</p>
Apr to Jun 2022	<p>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.</p> <p>Update March 2022: being considered and taken forward by the Green Forum</p>
October 2021 update	<p>Cllr Cheryl Briggs to take over from Cllr Coveney (see Oct to Dec 2020 note) and work with Anne Smart in relation to work with “takeaway” establishments. Date of project to be put back to 2022.</p>
March 2022 update and at meeting	<p>Anne Smart to update meeting on the survey which she undertook with Cllr Cheryl Briggs re survey on takeaway establishments (see next item).</p>
2. Plastic-free town initiative	
Jan to Mar 2021	<p>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</p>
Apr to Jun 2021	<p>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</p>
June 2021 review	<p>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</p>
October 2021 update	<p>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.</p> <p>Report to a future meeting to consider the position regarding plastic-free initiatives beyond the Market Place</p>
Update at the meeting	<p>Use of plastic by food establishments</p> <p>Anne Smart reported that with Cllr Cheryl Briggs she had visited a total of 21 restaurants and takeaways to engage in dialogue</p>

regarding their use of plastics; there were other they had not had a chance to visit. Most (but not all) had welcomed the visit. 8 said they would consider bulk buying of more environmentally friendly packing, the main impediments at present being storage and cost. 12 said they were willing for customers bring their own container although they had hygiene concerns. It was reported that paper bags often proved too weak and there were reports of cardboard containers leaking through. It was noted that Polystyrene was due to be [banned](#) in these setting, by law, in April 2023.

Hugo Mango use laminated paper for packaging – this was much lighter and considered less damaging than plastic. They “doubled up” on paper bags where necessary.

Practice at most takeaways was disappointing though Willows was good.

With regard to Eat-in restaurants – ASK were especially good.
ONE CAFÉ AND ONE TAKEAWAY

Anne Smart asked for direction from the committee on further work.

The Chair Cllr Gabby Barody thanked Cllr Briggs and Anne Smart for their work. There was lots of good will from the businesses.

Members considered that this was primarily a matter for businesses and it was **recommended to the Town Council**

- (i) to facilitate a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and local food businesses to consider how businesses might act as a collective to reduce use of one-use plastics.**
- (ii) To ask the Chair, Cllr Gabby Barody and Cllr Eric de la Harpe to work on how the Town Council could advance this work in relation to Town Council areas.**

NW to sort

Awards scheme for food establishments

The COSM suggested potential for a scheme similar to the “Scores on the Doors” to recognise food businesses cutting down on use of non-recyclable plastics. The TC suggested a scheme similar to the Access Awards organised by the Vale Access Forum some years ago. This assessed compliance against specific criteria. Organisations either received recognition or not. This mean that the award was not over-complicated. He also suggested that criteria would need to change over a 5-year period as we move forward on plastic-free initiatives. **The Chair agreed to work on this alongside the food policy for the next meeting and with Anne Smart and the COSM. FOR NEXT SUMMER NOW – ASK ANNE**

	<p>WHICH COULD 2 PILOT ESTABLISHMENTS, ONE TAKEAWAY AND ONE CAFE Members agreed that this should be taken forward and it was suggested this could be considered as a “Green Badge” award. The Committee considered that any criteria would need to be very carefully worded.</p> <p>Anne Smart considered that the Jubilee was an ideal opportunity to promote this initiative. People could be encouraged to bring their own cups to the events and the Council could consider providing/ selling recyclable cups. Anne Smart stated that she would be willing to organise a rota for people to circulate and encourage everyone to use the bins, and to help empty them to avoid overflowing. It was agreed that Anne Smart would work with the Chair to come forward with a proposal to officers/ the Platinum Jubilee Working Group, to take this forward.</p>
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.
March 2022 meeting	See separate item minute EA61 (below).
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. 	

Financial matters

Arising from the above it was proposed by Cllr Gabby Barody, seconded by Cllr Lorraine Oates and **recommended to the Town Council:**

- 1. That any unspent sums from the current year budgets in relation to play areas improvements, tree works and cemetery improvements be carried forward to the earmarked reserves;**
- 2. That the Committee be advised of the amounts carried forward at its next meeting.**

EA60. Green Forum

The Committee received and considered the notes of the Green Forum of [6 January 2022](#), [20 January 2022](#), [3 February 2022](#) and [24 February 2022](#).

The Chair Cllr Gabby Barody stated that the Council had initiated the Forum as a way to work effectively and in partnership and thanked those involved with the Forum as it was making excellent progress. The Forum included members of Abingdon Carbon Cutters, the Abingdon Climate Change Centre and Abingdon Liveable Streets.

Report from Anne Smart, Chair of the Forum: Anne Smart updated the Committee and referred to the [website page](#) which related to their work.

Anne Smart stated that a number of groups were working together at the Forum and looking to attain achievable goals. They had produced a new map of cycle and pedestrian routes. **Financial request:** The Forum had organised a competition for schools to design a “high viz” covers for backpacks and waistcoats. The cost of producing these amounted to £605; a grant of £450 had been received from the Low Carbon Hub and so an amount of £155 was needed to complete the project. **The Committee recommended that the Council pay £155 from the appropriate budget to meet these costs (proposed by Cllr Gabby Barody and seconded by Cllr Lorraine Oates).**

For the Green Forum market stall on 29 January 2022, Carbon Cutters paid £15 for a gazebo; they asked whether the Council would consider reimbursing this amount please? **The Committee recommended to the Council reimbursing the £15 cost for the stall operated by the Green Forum at the market on 29 January 2022.**

Future meetings: the next meeting was on 10 March 2022, and then there would be a market stall on 26 March 2022. The Forum market stall will include information on car-sharing and car hubs and will also be seeking comments from residents on bus routes, green delivery slots and “bike-ability.” This will mark the end of the first quarter's Forum.

The Second Quarter's Forum, from April through to June, is themed in relation to Biodiversity; this will be co-ordinated by and chaired by Lucille Savin.

Cllr Charlie Birks reported that he had requested action from the County Council to clear the cycle route from Daisy Bank to the Fishponds on a number of occasions; this had

now been cleared by the community and it showed the power of such groups. The COSM commented that this matter had been reported at least 10 years ago and commended the actions taken.

The Chair, Cllr Gabby Barody, thanked Anne Smart for her report.

Policy

EA61. Biodiversity plan

At the meeting of 11 January 2022 the Committee received and considered the draft Biodiversity Plan which had been prepared by Cllr Gabby Barody, Chair of the Committee.

Members had been asked to pass any comments on the proposed plan to the Chair. [A copy of the plan is attached](#). Members were requested to consider the plan further so that any comments could be incorporated.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Committee received an update from John Killick. Mr Killick stated that producing a Plan was a major task. Abingdon Naturalists Society had met on 9 February and had formed a sub-committee to work on this. They were promoting the RSPB Birdwatch programme. They had also organised biodiversity walks but had some concerns regarding insurance which they asked for assistance on; Cllr Gabby Barody hoped that the Town Council may be able to assist.

John Killick reported that the Abingdon Naturalists were engaging positively with the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and had suggested some amendments in relation to their latest consultation .

John Killick reported that Abingdon Carbon Cutters had recently planted 420 trees and this was a very positive development together with the Town Council's planned Community Woodland.

Cllr Jim Halliday thanked Mr Killick for his report. In relation to section 3.3 of the report he asked the Town Clerk whether it may be possible to add a biodiversity layer to the Council's GPS system; the Town Clerk responded that to his knowledge this should be possible. He stated that with reference to paragraph 3.9, there was a budget to resource assistance for the project.

The Chair Cllr Gabby Barody invited John Killick to be involved in the judging of the schools' competition and he was pleased to accept.

The Chair stated and the Committee concurred that the policy, together with any amendments, should be considered further at the next meeting.

EA62. Allotments

The [Report](#) of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda, was received and considered.

The Chair, Cllr Gabby Barody, introduced this item and stated that the town has three allotment sites. They are all fully utilised and have waiting lists. Demand for allotments was likely to increase with the new growth of the town. Consequently we were looking at how we might meet this need and this could be part of the work in relation to a new cemetery and the community woodland.

Cllr Helen Pighills stated that the District Council were promoting the benefits of gardening for mental and physical wellbeing. They were also undertaking a strategic property review and hoped to identify small areas in the town which might be suitable for growing. They would likely not be large enough to term "allotments" but would, as shared areas, would give more people the opportunity to be active. They may be able to work with the Town Council and Abingdon Carbon Cutters on this as the project develops. Cllr Pighills also suggested that there were possibilities for residents without gardens to help out those with gardens but unable to cultivate them; this was to the mutual benefit of both parties.

In response to a question from Cllr Charlie Birks the Chair stated that the lease to the Council of the Wildmoor allotment site was due to end in December 2025 and as yet there was no indication as to whether it would be renewed. Cllr Birks also noted that the Wyck Hall site north-east of Abingdon was being sold and was now under "offer." He suggested that along with this site the Council also consider sites which are being considered for cemetery use, noting it may be that there was a site which might be unsuitable for a cemetery but which was suitable for allotments.

It was proposed by Cllr Jim Halliday, seconded by Cllr Charlie Birks and recommended:

- 1. To approve the report.**
- 2. To request officers to undertake further work to establish the demand for additional allotments and to outline the broad options for provision of any additional allotments. TIED UP WITH CEMETERY & INVESTIGATING SITES**

DEEP CLEAN – CHECK WHAT THEY WILL CLEAN – NINA UPDATE

Operational

EA63. Report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager

The committee received and considered [report](#) a report from the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager (COSM).

The COSM stated that the team had been busy during the winter months. During the recent storms there had been relatively little damage to the trees but more problems with fences being blow down. He was pleased to report that the team had been planting

hedges and trees. The amount of plant cover had been increased and a number of hedgerows had been linked, using native species. The team had enjoyed this work as it made a very positive difference to the town. The grass-cutting season had now commenced and this was keeping the team busy.

Cllr Jim Halliday raised two points:

1. Cllr Pat Lonergan had reported to him that one of the new plastic bollards at Chilton Close had been snapped off. The COSM reported that he was aware and that this would be repaired.
2. Cllr Halliday had recently walked through the town with Layla Moran MP and they had both noted the excellent floral displays. He asked that their thanks be conveyed to Chris Ford Nurseries and to the Outdoor Team.

Cllr Charlie Birks noted in paragraph 6.11 of the report that the COSM was investigating the potential to use battery-powered hand tools. The COSM reported that previously battery-powered tools did not have the amount of usage time required before it was necessary for them to be re-charged. However the market was changing and so there is now a more realistic prospect that such tools may be sourced. If it were possible to procure battery-powered hand tools then this would have a significant impact on our carbon footprint as we would be able to reduce our reliance on fossil-fuels. In response to a question, the COSM stated that he was looking at the requirement for and implications of a charging bay and that it was likely that tools would have a number of batteries so they could be swapped over when recharging was required.

The Chair, Cllr Gabby Barody, thanked the COSM for his report and for the excellent work which he and his team undertake for the town and asked that this be passed on to the team.

The report was noted.

EA64. New cemetery working party

The Chair of the New Cemetery Working Party, Cllr Jim Halliday, reported as follows:

“After the New Cemetery Working Party's report to the January meeting of this committee had been accepted, the Town Clerk worked with the Chair of the Working Party to draw up a detailed specification of what the Council wanted CDS to do. Given the current pressures on council staff, it was concluded it would make sense to set CDS a broad specification and in effect get them to write the bulk of the report that the Council will need before making an informed decision. The specification was also informed by reading other reports that CDS had prepared for other councils. In summary, the specification covered the following items:

1. Give details of the different projects which you have undertaken for other burial authorities (to establish the competence of CDS).

2. An assessment of the current capacity remaining in the Spring Road (new) cemetery for new burials and ashes interments - including consideration of expected population growth, a possible shift away from cremation, and the potential for an aquamation facility in Abingdon, plus any other factors they considered important.
3. An options appraisal for future cemetery provision, indicating the risk assessment of the following strategies : a) Do nothing; b) Review present cemetery space allocations (in both cemeteries) to see if there is additional space which could be found; c) Look for a new cemetery site; d) Work with a business partner to deliver cemetery services
4. Clarification of the powers and responsibilities of the district and town councils in relation to cemetery provision.
5. Carry out and report on a high-level review of possible sites in Abingdon. Seven possible sites were listed, as were a list of possible screening criteria. (We also listed Abingdon-specific criteria for a new cemetery, the potential for dual use of a site until it was needed, and possible ancillary uses e.g. another lodge, another works depot etc etc)
6. Description of the stages through which the town council will need to go if it develops a new cemetery, including a draft timetable and cost estimates. (we requested that the report should include firm data so that it can be used to support a business-case for a new cemetery.)

“CDS supplied a very detailed response, and confirmed that : a) CDS could undertake the study we have specified; b) Their current workload means that they could not start the study until early April; and c) the fee would be £9,650 +VAT.

“The Working Party members (Cllrs Halliday, Clifton and de la Harpe) and the Chair of the Environment and Amenities Committee, Cllr Barody, reviewed the reply from CDS and asked the Town Clerk to seek references from other councils about CDS, and then, subject to satisfactory references, to place a contract on CDS. This contract has now been placed by the Town Clerk under delegated powers.”

In response to a question from Cllr Charlie Birks regarding timescales, the Town Clerk reported that a meeting was being arranged on 1 April with CDS and they had indicated that they would start work in early April. It was anticipated that the work would take approximately 7 weeks. CDS were both experienced and well-resourced so this was a realistic timetable. A further report will come forward for the June meeting.

The report was noted.

EA65. **Publicity**

The Committee requested that publicity be given to:

1. The installation of new play equipment.
2. The Council’s plans for increasing biodiversity noting that this would lead not only to increased biodiversity but also to Abingdon being a better, nicer and healthier place to live.

John Killick reported that the Abingdon Carbon Cutters were working to increase their coverage in the press and this week there was a column in the Abingdon Herald written by their Chair, Caroline Townsend.

EA66. Dates of next meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Environment and Amenities Advisory Committee was noted as 14 June 2022.

EA67. 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.

The two members of the public left the meeting at this point.

SECTION II – Confidential

EA68. Confidential Actions Register

The confidential actions register was noted.

Cllrs Charlie Birks and Lorraine Oates highlighted some potential areas for consideration as sites for a new cemetery. Cllr Jim Halliday reported that these areas had already been scoped in and could also be considered for allotment use, if the land was unsuitable for a cemetery or as a temporary use. The Town Clerk drew the Committee's attention to the potential overlap between work on cemeteries and allotments.

Cllr Jim Halliday noted the work which had been undertaken in relation to the Council's landholdings. This was running alongside the Strategic Property Review which had commenced at the District Council and would mean that the Town Council was well-placed when negotiations on possible land transfers take place with the District Council. However he was concerned that not all Members were aware of the work that had taken place and its importance. The Committee agreed that a note should be appended to the notes of this meeting and that the matter should be separately highlighted to Members.

The meeting closed at 2040hrs.

Note in relation to landholdings

This matter was also reported as per the note below (with slight amendments), to the Town Infrastructure Committee on 17 March 2022.

Responsibilities for land span over three committees:

- Environment and Amenities: to oversee all arrangements in the town relating to recreation areas and open spaces, including the responsibilities of the various local authorities and arrangements in place for the management and maintenance of open spaces;
- Finance, Governance and Asset Management: the disposal, acquisition or renewal of any property interests;
- Town Infrastructure: the neighbourhood plan and making representations to the planning authority; to consider all matters in relation to highways, footpaths and bridleways; to consider all other consultations as may relate to services operated in the town including leisure and recreation.

Town Council land:

The Town Council has always been clear on what land it maintains but there are legacy issues in relation to ownership of some communal areas. The work to clarify land holdings, undertaken by Land and Property Registration, is almost complete and land holdings mapped in the Council's GIS system (Pear).

Lists of parcels of land which were maintained but not owned by the council will be brought forward to future meetings of the relevant committee with officer recommendations for action, for consideration. These recommendations will depend on a number of factors including the maintenance issues in relation to the land, the community benefit of the land, environmental and financial implications.

Having a clear understanding of ownership and a comprehensive and easily accessible GIS will prove very valuable when we speak in earnest with the District Council regarding property in Abingdon.

Vale of White Horse District Council land:

Based on our conversations with Vale officers early in 2021 we understood that the Vale Strategic Property Review (SPR) would report by the end of 2021. However it is currently in its early stages. I understood there is a quarterly meeting of the SPR, which has had its first meeting towards the end of 2021. They were looking at the various land owned by the Vale and the process was for the SPR group then to consult with local members regarding these various areas, with the consultation responses then being considered by the next quarterly meeting. I understood that it is then that parishes would be approached regarding any proposed transfers.

I have been told there was no timetable but that the process would be ongoing for the next 12 months. On being pressed it was not clear how quickly this would move from discussions to actions but I understood that as a result of the Town Council's desire to engage in constructive discussions the Abingdon part of the review is in the first tranche.

I will report further with any updates.

Nigel Warner, Town Clerk