

Abingdon Town Council Community Committee Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 2024

Introduction

Our work this year started with the celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles III, including a very popular Bun Throwing.

Alongside those, we held the successful Clubs and Societies Day, Fun in the Park, Music in the Park and the committee has supported a wide range of local groups and projects through grant funding, managed the Michaelmas Fair, continued to host numerous markets and has ensured that the Abingdon Museum continues to provide and excellent service to the town.

Coronation of King Charles III

The Town Council organised several events for the Coronation weekend as well as supporting those run by other groups.

Councillors attended the church service held in St. Helen's Church to mark the coronation of King Charles III on the evening of 5th May.

The Coronation Fun in the Park event in Abbey Grounds on the afternoon of Sunday 7th May, followed by the very popular Bun Throwing event which attracted a record crowd.

Supporting community groups

The Town Council once made major grants to support the work of several important local groups. These include The Abingdon Carousel Family Centre (as lead funder), Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice, The Abingdon Bridge and Be Free Young Carers. In some cases, we decided to increase the level of grant to reflect substantial increases in costs affecting the organisations or because of increased demand due to the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

We also fund the **Abingdon Integrated Youth Support Project** which is a joint scheme between the Town Council, The Abingdon Bridge and the DAMASCUS Youth Project which aims to significantly increase support for young people in the town.

During the year we also decided to make an ongoing major grant to One Planet Abingdon – Climate Emergency Centre. The Town Council had already decided to allow the group to use the County Hall basement as a base and will now fund the core activities of the group going forwards too.

Community Grants

As well as the major grants, we have given a number of smaller grants to local organisations to fund a wide range of events, activities and projects.

This includes grants to: Abingdon Music Centre Trust; Home Start Southern

Oxfordshire; Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue; Clean Slate; Thomas Reade Primary School Association; Royal Voluntary Service Darby and Joan Club; International Tree Foundation; Abingdon Church Twinning Committee; Healthy Abingdon; Abingdon Street Pastors; Abingdon Joint Schools Carnegie Trust; Abingdon Lawn tennis Club, ATOM Festival; North East Abingdon Community Association; One Eighty, and: Oxfordshire Play Association.

Museum

The Abingdon Museum has continued to promote a wide range of events and themed exhibitions. Visitor numbers have continued to increase during the year and the team have been particularly successful at building the museum's digital reach.

Major exhibitions included: 70 – the 2nd Elizabethan Era; Celebrating Abingdon Women in the arts & sciences; Comic recollections from the pen of Geoff Dunbar, and MG 100 – evolution of an icon.

These ran alongside a wide range of events and activities including many aimed at children.

Our thanks to the magnificent museum team who provide such a brilliant service to the town.

Town Crier

We have continued to publish the Town Crier magazine on a (roughly) quarterly basis which is delivered via Royal Mail. We get very positive feedback from residents who tell us that they are pleased we keep them informed.

PCSOs

The Town Council continues to provide support for additional PCSO coverage for the town and receives feedback about the work of our PCSOs regularly.

Christmas Lights

Following very positive feedback about the new style lights we used for Christmas 2022 we used the same contractor for 2023.

Unfortunately, one of the contractors was involved in an accident the night before the Abingdon lights switch on, but our staff went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that lights were ready to be switched on. Thanks to them and best wishes to the contractor. There were also some maintenance issues exacerbated by the very windy weather.

Bandstand

The Bandstand Working Group was reinstated following the elections and is continuing to work on plans and costings for a Town Bandstand.

Guildhall

The historic rooms in the Guildhall complex are now being run directly by the Town Council. Several groups continue to make regular use of the building.

Platinum Jubilee Review

Our interim Town Clerk, Ron Spurs, conducted a review of the Platinum Jubilee events. Ron was not involved with the events concerned but does have experience of running large Town Council events and the governance of Town Council. His report has been published on the website and the Town Council accepted his recommendations.

Conclusion

It has been another busy year, both due to royal events, the election of new and keen town councillors and an upswing in activity by several of our partner organisations. Thank you to everyone that has worked so hard to support our community.

Councillor Neil Fawcett

Chair of Community Committee