

Report from the Environment & Amenities Committee 2023/24 for the annual Parish Meeting

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 (ATC);

I have focused on the highlighted areas below. The report below reflects and illustrates what has been achieved this past year and some of the plans going forward.

Report Summary

Update on acquiring land for a new cemetery.

Three sites are being environmentally assessed for their suitability in becoming the new cemetery for Abingdon. Issues relating to planning review, restrictive covenants, drainage, and other agricultural factors will be reviewed in relation to potential sites for cemetery development. Following completion of this work, and a proposed site is forthcoming (subject to approval and agreement from ATC, with all criteria met, including the cost), discussions will then take place on how such a site could be used as it transitions towards cemetery need, including allotment provision and a market garden initiative.

Spring Gardens Cemetery Update

Improvements to the Infant Burial area have progressed well, with new paving laid and a special post box (white) for letters to be posted to loved ones that have passed away, seating area, flower bed and shrub planting still to be completed. The project is scheduled for completion in June.



Open Spaces Update

The Council has many large mature trees growing on the land that it is responsible for, and every two years commissions a detailed tree survey and then ensures that all the recommended actions are carried out. Work continues following the completion of stage one. The bulk of the remaining work will be completed by April next year, when the next survey will be commissioned.

Abingdon Carbon Cutters (ACC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) have progressed with tree planting, bee bedding maintenance, and we hope to enhance this with the cultivation of the community woodland site and other local projects this year. There has also been significant interest in creating a community garden by some of our residents.

Playground areas

I would like to thank Tim Badcock and his outdoor services team for their ongoing commitment to improving our play areas and footpaths.

Outdoor play encourages interaction with the natural environment.

Equipment is sourced from environmentally responsible manufacturers and where possible made from sustainable materials.

ATC are responsible for maintaining the play areas below:

- Chaunterell Way
- Masefield Crescent
- River Close
- Caldecott Recreation Ground
- Boxhill Recreation Ground
- Chilton Close
- Elizabeth Avenue
- Hill View

Work completed this year.

Caldecott and Boxhill Recreational Grounds

A new pendulum swing has been installed in both Boxhill and Caldecott Recreation Grounds.



The MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) has been installed in Caldecott recreational ground. This will make a difference to residents (particularly young people) in this part of Abingdon.



Hillview Park

The path at Hillview in North Abingdon has been renewed for another 20 years.



The installation of self-closing gates

Self-closing gates have now been installed within all the playgrounds that ATC are responsible for, promoting and ensuring access and safety.

The plan for this year

To embark on the restoration of existing outdoor fitness equipment within Boxhill Recreation Ground.

To undertake work on exercise equipment and play equipment for young children at Chaunterell Way.

To install a net climbing frame and sheltered seating at Masefield Close; review the popularity of the new equipment to be installed at Masefield Close to enable further play equipment installation within the next year.

The proposed improvements would come from the 2023-24 revenue budget of £87,000.

Climate Emergency

Working with One Planet Abingdon/ Climate Emergency Centre

Abingdon Carbon Cutters is promoting the signing up by local establishments to a reduced use of plastic via a pledge supported by ATC.

ATC will follow this later in the year with a policy primarily linked to the Market Place and then to businesses within the wider community.

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.

Anne Smart from ACC and co-opted member of the E&A Committee, has presented reports to the committee on a quarterly basis, relating to community events and initiatives linked to the themes below:

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

Various events relating to the above were supported financially by ATC.

We hope to support more over the next year including a “grow your own” campaign, clothes exchanges, energy saving, sustainable and healthy foods initiatives and the impact of the ecological and climate emergency on our biodiversity, specifically our animals, bees, and insects.

Biodiversity Competition 2023/24 “Rewild and Grow”

A biodiversity competition was launched to encourage Schools, Colleges, and the general community to enter, showcasing a “rewild and grow” project/initiative. Applications will be shortlisted in the spring/summer months and onsite judging will commence in September. The winners will be announced, and monetary prizes awarded later in the year. Follow this [link](#).

Radley Parish Council have now introduced something similar, a “biodiversity garden”, competition after seeing the publication of the competition in the Town Crier.

Community Woodland Project

I am hopeful that work will start on our designated woodland area later this year. The committee members can then (with the help of our experts), go onto to showcase a new design for our woodland including, a wild meadow, tree and hedge planting, a shared vegetable growing patch, and a pond. This will also promote biodiversity (alongside our strategy) and create a safe and inclusive sanctuary for residents in Abingdon to participate actively, or to simply relax, unwind and enjoy. We also invite Abingdon schools and other educational establishments are also invited to contribute to the design and use the space on a regular basis, in accordance with their “green” curriculum.

Abingdon Active Travel Map

This map is now accessible primarily as a pdf via a tab on the ATC website. [Link](#)
There are sustainably printed copies available in the information centre and more will be distributed at various events. These will form part of our welcome packs to all the residents living in the new development sites across Abingdon. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has given approval for a £2.4m bid for new cycling routes in the centre of Abingdon. ATC looks forward to engaging and working with OCC in suggesting new routes and will be liaising with Abingdon Living Streets (ALS) to help with this process. Our map will be updated to reflect any changes resulting from this.

Youth Council/Forum

I am proud of our strong engagement with many organisations supporting the young people of Abingdon. I have encouraged young people (from schools and the community in general), to present issues relating to green and sustainability some of our committee meetings, and the committee has funded some associated events. I look forward to enhancing this connection and to give more of a regular voice to this group, which will form part of a new ATC four-year strategy, that will be forthcoming after Mayor making this year.

I acknowledge the committed work that our members, communities, charities, and council staff, have contributed this year to the objectives set out by the committee, representing the community. It has been a privilege to chair this committee for the past three years.

Cllr Gabby Barody

Chair of the E&A Committee