

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Environment & Amenities Committee
Meeting date	17 September 2024
Report author	Nicky Cayley
Agenda item	13

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK ON AUSTIN PLACE

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To consider a request by residents to create a community garden at Austin Place.

2. **Summary**

- 2.1 A request has been received by a resident representing a group who would like to create a community garden on an area of land to the front of the former Dunmore pre-school. This request was first considered by town council on 20 February 2024 (minute E91/23). The town council has received e-mails both supporting and objecting to the project (Appendix B).
- 2.2 At the meeting of 20 February 2024, officers were asked to look into all possible options for the land. This is detailed below.

3. **Action required**

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the request by the resident.
- 3.2 Members are asked to consider the officer's recommendation to allow the garden to go ahead, subject to review after the period of one year and subject to no financial investment by the town council.
- 3.2 will require a proposer, seconder and vote.

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives.**

- 4.1 The proposal would meet all four of the town council's key objectives.

5. **Key Information and Options**

5.1 The town council land at Austin Place is open space with little amenity value. It is used for exercising dogs and the occasional group of children congregate there. There is a footpath across the centre of the land which once served the now closed pre-school. Access is via footpath only, either directly from Austin Place or the short alleyway from Farm Road. Some residents have expressed concern about anti-social behaviour in the area but it is hard to see how a tended area (possibly with residents working there in the lighter evenings) would attract this more than the land does in its current state.

5.2 Options for the land

Officers have investigated options for the land as requested previously. The access to the land is extremely narrow and would not permit construction on the area. There is a play area owned by the town council a short walk away so investing in play equipment is not required.

A community orchard would not be possible due to the proximity of houses and the likelihood of tree roots causing subsidence in future years.

The remaining options are therefore to leave the land as it is or to allow the community to use the area for a garden, as described in appendix A.

5.3 Recommendations

I would recommend that the group is given permission to go ahead with the proposal for the period of one year, at which point the arrangement will be reviewed and may be terminated at the town council's discretion. It should also be stated that the town council will not support the garden in terms of financial assistance or officer/staff time.

6. **Climate change/green implications**

6.1 The proposal would benefit biodiversity, particularly with the guidance of Abingdon Carbon Cutters.

7. **Financial/budget implications**

7.1 If permission were to be given for the garden, it should be on the condition that the town council will not support the project financially or by way of staff time.

8. **HR implications**

8.1 None.

9. **Consultation implications**

I consider that there are no matters within the report on which we should consult.

10. **Supporting papers and appendices**

APPENDIX A (i) and (ii) - request for community garden, photograph and plan
APPENDIX B - e-mails from local residents in opposition to the project
APPENDIX C - e-mails from local residents in support of the project

Nicky Cayley
Deputy Town Clerk
19 August 2024