

Report of the meeting of the Environment Committee  
held on 1 September 2020 at 8.00pm via video conference

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Present: Cllr Matt Stringer (Chairman)  
Cllr Chris Davies  
Cllr Benj Emmerson  
Cllr Jayne Stansfield (joined late)  
Cllr Martin Trueman

Jerry Dicker (Filnore Woods)  
Judith Hurford (Tree Warden)  
Cilla Farquhar (Filnore Allotments)

Wendy Sydenham (Deputy Clerk)

(Cllr Eva Fielding – absent)  
(Cllr Pam Shipp – absent)

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***A minute's silence was held in memory of Councillor and Committee member, Clare Fardell.***

**1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Guy Rawlinson – out of Thornbury  
Cllr Angela Symonds – another commitment

Brett Harrison (Community Composting Site)  
Felicity Harrison (Sustainable Thornbury)

**2. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public present.

**3. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no members declaration of interest.

**4. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

It was noted that this was the first opportunity to elect a Vice Chair of the Committee due to cancellation of meetings due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Chair confirmed that he had spoken to Cllr Guy Rawlinson before the meeting and confirmed that he was very happy to continue as Vice Chair. The Chair asked for any other nominations for Vice Chair. There were no other nominations received, and therefore Cllr Martin Trueman seconded the proposal for Cllr Guy Rawlinson to continue as Vice Chair. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

**5. TO DISCUSS MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2020 NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

*(Cllr Jayne Stansfield joined the meeting.)*

The report was noted. The Deputy Clerk highlighted an issue that had arisen regarding the Poulterbrook Environmental Area. The picnic table had been purchased but before it had been installed a toxic plant (Hemlock Water Dropwort) had been identified growing near the

stream between Poulterbrook and the main playing fields area. Advice had been sought from Council's health and safety advisers who felt that the planned picnic area was a reasonably safe distance away from the stream but advised that we seek an expert opinion. A weed control company had attended the site and confirmed that the plant was not present at the time of the inspection. Jerry Dicker presented to the Committee on the nature of this plant and the risks involved, and confirmed that by the time of the inspection by the weed control company, the plant would have died down for the year. Jerry's advice was to leave the plant alone as interfering with it would also present risk and the plant had most likely be growing in that area for years. It was noted that the plant was growing on the main playing fields side of the stream, rather than the Poulterbrook side. The Committee discussed the issue and it was agreed that, in light of the information and advice received, we should proceed with installing the picnic area in the Poulterbrook Environmental Area.

## **6. TO CONSIDER NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

### **(a) To receive an update on South Gloucestershire Council charges for grass cutting and bin emptying**

The Deputy Clerk reported that she had contacted South Gloucestershire Council to confirm whether we would receive a reduction in charges due to the reduced grass cutting and bin emptying during the COVID-19 restrictions. South Gloucestershire Council had confirmed that it would be carrying out the required number of grass cuttings in line with our agreement with them, but had not yet confirmed the situation regarding a reduction in bin emptying. She would continue to chase this and report back to the Committee.

### **(b) To consider a request for a dog waste bin in Milbury Heath**

An email had been circulated with a request from a resident of Milbury Heath for a dog waste bin to be installed. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that area concerned was within the boundary for Thornbury Town Council. Details of the cost of a bin and an emptying service from South Gloucestershire Council had been obtained. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should check the emptying costs with South Gloucestershire Council and report back to the Committee.

### **(c) To consider the effects of the COVID-19 situation on the Committee's budget**

The Deputy Clerk reported that it had been proposed that this became a standing item on Committee agendas. The COVID-19 situation had meant that some budgeted projects had not been progressed but also that some areas would be significantly overspent e.g. cleaning materials and PPE. The Finance and Policy Committee would take the lead on pulling together these issues but individual Committees may need to consider items related to their budget in due course.

## **7. TO CONSIDER MATTERS IN PROGRESS AND RECEIVE UPDATES WHERE APPROPRIATE**

### **(a) Perennial planting in Pullins Green raised beds**

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that South Gloucestershire Council had informed us that due to staffing issues, they were unable to look at this until later in the year. The Deputy Clerk will chase this up in due course and report back to the Committee. She confirmed that at present South Gloucestershire Council did not have responsibility for this area.

### **(b) Installation of drinking water fountain in the Mundy Playing Fields**

The Deputy Clerk reported that no progress had been made with this due to the COVID-19 restrictions, but that this would be progressed as soon as possible.

(c) Update on seating in the town – moving of a seat at junction of Oakleaze and Gillingstool

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the seat had been moved in the Spring, just before lockdown.

(d) Schedule of Tree Works

The schedule of tree works had been circulated and was noted. The Deputy Clerk reported that progress on works had halted during the COVID-19 restrictions, but the tree surgeon was now back at work and Council outdoor staffing levels were now back to normal, and therefore works could continue. The works to be completed by the tree surgeon were now mainly bracing works and arranging a picus tomograph. The Deputy Clerk will contact the tree surgeon to obtain an update on these works and speak to the outdoor staff regarding outstanding actions for them. She also confirmed that not all of the works had been completed in priority order because the tree surgeon had wanted to complete similar works together e.g. all bracing had been left towards the end, however none of the outstanding works with a higher priority were of concern.

(e) South Gloucestershire Council's tree planting project

Emails relating to complaints about South Gloucestershire Council's recent tree planting project had been circulated. It was noted that the Committee had already contacted them to pass on similar complaints.

(f) Schedule of Minor Matters

The schedule of minor matters had been circulated and was noted. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she had been unable to obtain an update yet from South Gloucestershire Council on issues that had been reported to them, because of the large number of issues. The Committee asked for the updates to be circulated to them as soon as they were received.

(g) Fairtrade

There was nothing to report.

**8. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS AND REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY GROUP REPRESENTATIVES**

(a) Operational Matters – Volunteer Evening/Hanging Basket Scheme

The Chair confirmed that it would not be possible to hold the Volunteer Evening for 2020 but that it was hoped that this would go ahead in 2021. The Deputy Clerk reported that the scaled down hanging basket scheme had been successful and all 170 hanging baskets had been sold at cost price thereby avoiding significant loss.

(b) Consideration of any issues raised at Councillor Surgeries

It was noted that Councillor Surgeries were not currently taking place due to COVID-19 restrictions.

(c) Community Composting Site

Brett Harrison had sent an update which had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was noted. The update was as follows – “The group have extended the opening hours of the site. They now run from Monday to Saturday from 9am to 3pm. This requires the members to open and lock the fencing to the site at these times. At first we found that users were happy to contribute donations but there seems to have been a falling away recently. Large quantities are also beginning to arrive. The volunteers remain upbeat. Dry logs are now available from

the container next to the compost when volunteers are on site on their usual Wednesday afternoons 1-3pm and Saturday mornings 9-11am.”

(d) Filnore Allotments Report

Cilla Farquhar reported a very successful period for the allotments. The number of plots had been increased to 31. Volunteers on furlough had been helping with plots usually looked after by people who were shielding or self-isolating.

(e) Filnore Woods Report

Jerry Dicker reported that it had not been possible to organise many work mornings due to people self-isolating, although three had been organised recently involving 4-5 people to ensure compliance with COVID-19 guidance. These groups had cleared flower areas, ragwort and hedges. They are currently awaiting the cutting machine and all volunteers were welcome to help with grass raking once this was completed.

(f) Tree Warden’s Report

Judith Hurford reported that over 30 trees were planted last season (in addition to 14 planted for the Committee). Four Limes that were vandalised had been dug up and planted in Judith’s garden in the hope that they will be able to be planted around Thornbury in the future. Working with CATS, 200 whips had been planted, with 100 whips left to replace any that do not survive. A talk had been given to CATS about the Tree Strategy Group and the tree database had been demonstrated to them. A tree survey will be undertaken in the near future with the main aim to replace dead or dying trees. The replacement tree at the Grovesend roundabout had not come into leaf and so will need to be replaced. Judith proposed that a tree be planted in memory of Cllr Clare Fardell. This idea was supported by the Committee. Judith asked for clarification regarding funding from the Committee for more trees. The Chair confirmed that there was £1056 in the budget for trees and that Judith should liaise with the Deputy Clerk as and when funds were needed.

(g) Sustainable Thornbury Report

In Felicity Harrison’s absence, there was no report. It was noted however that Sustainable Thornbury would have a stall at the upcoming Fun Day on the High Street.

(h) Footpath Warden’s Report

Cllr Guy Rawlinson had provided an update in advance of the meeting. The update was as follows – “Nothing significant to report. Tree down along the stream near Coppins Well. There will be a separate section on the new Town Council website for the Footpath Warden. This will include a few words about the role and how the public can report footpath problems”.

(i) Thornbury Ramblers Report/Walks Booklet

In Jeff Paed’s absence, there was no report.

(j) Thornbury Litter Busters

In Jeff Paed’s absence, there was no report.

**9. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business.