

Report of the meeting of the Environment Committee
held on 19 January 2021 at 8.00pm via video conference

Present: Cllr Matt Stringer (Chair)
Cllr Guy Rawlinson (Vice Chair)
Cllr Chris Davies
Cllr Benj Emmerson
Cllr Pam Shipp
Cllr Jayne Stansfield
Cllr Angela Symonds
Cllr Martin Trueman

Cilla Farquhar (Filnore Allotments)
Judith Hurford (Tree Warden)
Jeff Pead (Thornbury Ramblers/Walks Booklet/Litter Busters)

Wendy Sydenham (Deputy Clerk)

(Cllr Eva Fielding – absent)

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jerry Dicker (Filnore Woods)
Joy Farrimond (Community Composting Site)

2. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chair welcomed Sara May to the meeting as a representative of Sustainable Thornbury. Sara introduced herself to the Committee and it was agreed that Sustainable Thornbury would become a standing item on the agenda.

4. TO DISCUSS MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2020 NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The report was noted. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

5. TO CONSIDER NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS

(a) To note the costs of the 2021/2022 Agreement for the Provision of Services with South Gloucestershire Council

A letter from South Gloucestershire Council had been circulated and was noted. This letter set out the costs for the provision of services for 2021/2022 and highlighted that they would be reviewing their charges for services during 2021. The Committee noted that Council may need to factor in an increase in these costs for the 2022/2023 budget.

6. TO CONSIDER MATTERS IN PROGRESS AND RECEIVE UPDATES WHERE APPROPRIATE

(a) Poulterbrook environmental area

The Deputy Clerk reported that the picnic benches and recycling bin should be installed in the next couple of weeks. The sowing of the wildflower seed would take place in the Spring.

(b) Request for a dog waste bin in Milbury Heath

The Deputy Clerk reported that she had been informed that the installation of the combined litter and dog waste bin in Milbury Heath by South Gloucestershire Council was in a backlog of works due to COVID.

(c) Perennial planting in Pullins Green raised beds

The Deputy Clerk reminded the Committee that South Gloucestershire Council had been asked to provide plans and costs for planting up and maintaining some of the beds in Pullins Green. Nothing had been received from them yet and it was noted that there had been other communications from them confirming that they were experiencing a backlog of work and would need to review additional commitments. It was agreed that we would wait to hear from them and in the meantime, we would inform Thornbury In Bloom that the plan for these beds is delayed.

(d) Butterfly Area

An exchange of emails between the Deputy Clerk and South Gloucestershire Council had been circulated. This clarified that they did have a copy of the requested mowing regime and were committed to managing this area as per the regime from now on. It also confirmed that they were not able to agree to extending the area that they would maintain in this way at the current time. It was agreed that we would keep this issue under review. Cllr Chris Davies reported on "verge strategy meetings" that were taking place at South Gloucestershire Council which may help to manage this area more successfully and potentially to extend it in due course.

(e) Installation of a drinking water fountain in the Mundy Playing Fields

The Deputy Clerk reported on progress that had been made. She had obtained written confirmation from South Gloucestershire Council that this would come under permitted development and therefore planning permission was not required. A quote had been obtained from an approved plumber. Further plumbing quotes would be sought along with prices and options for the fountain. It was noted that the costs of this project would be covered by the green projects budget in 2021/2022.

(f) Medieval Fishponds

The Thornbury Medieval Fishponds Management Plan produced by Cotswold Archaeology had been circulated, along with emails relating to an invitation to Council to be involved in a Community Interest Company (CIC) which would manage the Park Farm development. It was noted that more details of the nature of this involvement would need to be clarified, but in theory, Cllr Guy Rawlinson and Cllr Martin Trueman could represent Council on this CIC. It was also noted that their involvement should only be in relation to the Medieval Fishponds.

(g) Schedule of Tree Works

The schedule of tree works had been circulated and was noted. The queries regarding bracing works have now been resolved and should be carried out shortly. It was noted that the next tree survey would be arranged in the near future.

(h) Schedule of Minor Matters

The schedule of minor matters had been circulated and was noted. A number of concerns regarding reduced emptying of dog bins and litter bins by South Gloucestershire Council were noted. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should log these concerns and also obtain a quote for increased bin emptying. Concerns were also noted regarding bins not being emptied frequently enough on new estates. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should contact the relevant management companies to register these concerns. A broken signpost along streamside walk had also been logged with South Gloucestershire Council.

(i) Effects of COVID-19 on the Committee's budget

There were no issues raised under this standing item.

(i) Fairtrade

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the Fairtrade leaflet had last been updated in Winter 2019/2020 and therefore was due to be updated. This was not possible however, with current COVID restrictions, and therefore it would be updated as soon as restrictions allowed.

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

(a) Operational Matters – Hanging Basket Scheme

It was agreed that at this stage we were not able to confirm what kind of hanging basket scheme would be possible this year, due to COVID restrictions, but the usual number of baskets would be ordered.

(b) Consideration of any issues raised at Councillor Surgeries

As Councillor Surgeries are not currently taking place due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were no issues to consider under this standing item.

(c) Community Composting Site

The following report from Joy Farrimond had been circulated and was noted.

“The Thornbury Community Composting site got the go ahead from South Gloucestershire Council to remain open during the current lockdown. Social distancing measures continue as they have throughout the pandemic. There are no working parties taking place - individual volunteers are managing the opening and closing of the fencing as per winter opening hours. The depositing of green waste has been minimal. Residents are taking moderate amounts of compost. The committee is reviewing the situation regularly and if any problems occur, the site will be closed.”

(d) Filnore Allotments Report

Cilla Farquhar reported that things were going well at the allotments. Due to a high turnover of allotment holders, smaller plots were being provided which should be more manageable. Lots of maintenance and clearing of brambles was taking place. The free trees that had been obtained from the Woodland Trust were growing well.

(e) Filnore Woods Report

The following report had been provided by Jerry Dicker.

“There is not much to report about Filnore Woods. The paths are wide and muddy and we keep refilling the leaflet holder so it is in use by large numbers of people. Thornbury Farm Wood (formerly Vilner Lane Wood) is to have its trees surveyed and then thinned and made safe by a South Gloucestershire Council contractor before the end of February, the start of the nesting season. The made-up ground by Allan Burberry’s seat is a bit of a quagmire but grass is beginning to germinate.”

(f) Tree Warden’s Report

Judith Hurford had provided a written report prior to the meeting which had been circulated and was noted. This included news of the upcoming planting of Judith’s 200th tree!

Details had also been circulated of the Woodland Trust Free Trees for Schools and Communities Scheme. Judith confirmed that she had approached Thornbury In Bloom to see if they would be interested in working with her to plant some of these trees on a site in Thornbury. Potential sites were discussed and it was noted that although the Committee supported participation in this scheme in theory, care would be need to be taken to avoid the kind of problems encountered with the recent South Gloucestershire Council tree planting scheme. A potential site in Streamleaze was discussed and it was agreed that this would be explored further. As this site is on South Gloucestershire Council land, Cllr Jayne Stansfield confirmed that she would approach the relevant department to try to progress this and would report back at the next meeting. It was also agreed that the Deputy Clerk should put the issue of potential sites for tree planting under this scheme on the agenda for the next Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee meeting.

(g) Footpath Warden’s Report

Cllr Guy Rawlinson reported on problems that had arisen with a number of footpaths around the country during COVID restrictions due to wet weather, increased usage and people not sticking to the designated path, as well as problems with livestock, etc. This issue was discussed and it was agreed to add some guidance and information on the problem on to Council’s website and Facebook page. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that we are currently experiencing staff shortages which affected Council’s ability to address some of the issues with footpaths on our land. It was agreed that volunteers from the Committee may be able to do something to help repair problem areas.

(i) Thornbury Ramblers Report/Walks Booklet

Jeff Pead reported that due to COVID-19 restrictions there was very little activity with the Thornbury Ramblers.

(j) Thornbury Litter Busters

Jeff Pead reported that again due to COVID-19 restrictions, there was little activity with the Thornbury Litter Busters, just some individuals working where possible.

8. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business raised.