

**Report of the meeting of the Environment Committee
held on 2 March 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

Jerry Dicker (Filnore Woods)
Cilla Farquhar (Filnore Allotments)
Judith Hurford (Tree Warden)
Sara May (Sustainable Thornbury)

Wendy Sydenham (Deputy Clerk)

(Cllr Eva Fielding – absent)

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Joy Farrimond (Community Composting Site)
Jeff Paed (Thornbury Ramblers/Walks Booklet/Litter Busters)

2. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

4. TO APPROVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2021 AND TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ANY OPERATIONAL ISSUES OR MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The report was approved by the Committee. The Deputy Clerk provided an update on item 6(h) of the report relating to concerns about the emptying of dog waste and litter bins around Thornbury. She had contacted South Gloucestershire Council to report these concerns and to request a quote for increasing the frequency of emptying. SGC had confirmed that they were not able to provide a quote at this time because they couldn't guarantee having staff available to carry out the work. They would, however, aim to increase the frequency of emptying of specific problem bins, if these were highlighted to them. The Deputy Clerk also confirmed that she had contacted the Thornbury Fields and Park Farm estates to highlight concerns regarding bins on those estates not being emptied frequently enough.

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

(a) Poulterbrook environmental area

The Deputy Clerk reported that the bad state of the ground had prevented the picnic benches and recycling bin being installed, but this should be completed in the next couple of weeks. The sowing of the wildflower seed would take place in the Spring. Publicising of the area and/or signage was

discussed. It was agreed that Facebook would be a good place to start publicity once the area was finished.

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

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that SGC had installed this combined litter and dog waste bin.

(c) Perennial planting in Pullins Green raised beds

The Deputy Clerk reported that she had not as yet received any plans/quotes from SGC for the planting and maintenance of some of these beds. She also reported that there had been concerns raised by residents about the severe cutting back of some of the planting in the beds. Although this had been raised with SGC, and assurances received that this would not recur, there were concerns about similar treatment of other areas around the town. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should arrange an on-site meeting between SGC and Cllr Guy Rawlinson to talk through how SGC were maintaining these areas. It was also agreed that the Deputy Clerk would respond to members of the public who were keen to plant trees on Morton Way to replace those that had been cut down by SGC, to inform them of the meeting that was being arranged.

(d) Butterfly Area

Cllr Chris Davies updated the Committee on a recent communication with SGC regarding options for extending the butterfly area. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should contact Matthew Lipton from SGC to explore available resources for improving this area. It was also agreed that the Deputy Clerk should confirm the situation regarding CIL funds that had been allocated to Green Projects in the past, but not spent.

(e) Medieval Fishponds

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she had registered Council's wish to be a non-voting member of the Community Interest Company which would manage the Park Farm development, but only in relation to the Medieval Fishponds. Cllr Guy Rawlinson provided an update on the area, including that the fencing remained intact.

(f) Schedule of Tree Works

The schedule of tree works had been circulated and was noted. Only bracing works now remained, which should be carried out in the near future. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the process for repeating the tree survey would begin at some point soon.

(g) Schedule of Minor Matters

The schedule of minor matters had been circulated and was noted. The Deputy Clerk reported that the re-posted sign along Streamside Walk had been relogged with SGC as it was believed that this had not been concreted-in and was potentially dangerous.

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

There were no issues raised under this standing item.

(i) Fairtrade

It was noted that Council currently did not have a Fairtrade representative and it was agreed that the Deputy Clerk would email Councillors again to ask for volunteers for this role.

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

(a) Operational Matters

(i) Hanging Basket Scheme

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the usual number of baskets had been ordered (170) but that the Committee would need to decide on the nature of the scheme that it would run this year. She outlined concerns regarding social distancing if the usual scheme was run, particularly in relation to the provision of the watering service which involved two members of staff using one vehicle for long periods of time. This was currently not considered safe under the existing risk assessments which were produced in line with Government guidance.

It was agreed that Council would most likely run the same scheme as in 2020 which was a “supply only” scheme, not including a watering service, but with baskets offered first to customers who participated in the normal scheme. It was, however, further agreed that the Deputy Clerk should explore the option of buying in a watering service from an outside contractor. She should liaise with the Chair of the Committee following this to make a final decision on whether the “supply only” scheme would be run or whether a watering service could be provided via an external contractor.

It was also agreed that she should keep Thornbury In Bloom informed of the situation regarding hanging baskets. There was some discussion about a recent communication from Luke Hall MP regarding Thornbury In Bloom and it was agreed that the new Chair of Thornbury In Bloom should be invited to a future Environment Committee meeting.

(Jerry Dicker left the meeting at this point.)

(ii) Accommodation Guide

It was agreed that due to the COVID situation, the Accommodation Guide produced in 2020 would be carried over into 2021 and those who had paid for inclusion in 2020 would effectively get a free entry in the 2021 Guide. It was also agreed that the provision of a Guide would be reviewed for 2022 as interest in it had declined over recent years.

(b) Consideration of any issues raised at Councillor Surgeries

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

(c) Community Composting Site

The following report had been provided by Joy Farrimond and was noted - “The Thornbury Community Composting site has remained open during this lockdown and everything is running smoothly at the moment.”

(d) Sustainable Thornbury

Sara May reported that there was a lot of interest being shown in “grow your own food” and there had recently been an encouraging meeting regarding wind turbines.

(e) Filnore Allotments Report

Cilla Farquhar reported that there was lots of activity at the allotments, a good amount of rain water had been collected recently and the WhatsApp group was flourishing.

(f) Filnore Woods Report

Jerry Dicker had unfortunately had to leave the meeting due to other commitments before his slot in the agenda. The Committee looked forward to his report at the next meeting.

(g) Tree Warden's Report

Judith Hurford had provided a written report prior to the meeting which had been circulated and was noted. This confirmed that Judith's 200th tree had been planted and that there were plans for a memorial tree for Val Gregory.

The Woodland Trust Free Trees for Schools and Communities Scheme was discussed. Cllr Jayne Stansfield confirmed that she would be raising a potential planting site in Streamleaze at a SGC meeting on 11 March 2021 and would report back at the next Committee meeting. Judith also requested the Committee's permission to approach the Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee at their next meeting to ask them for ideas for areas for planting on other Council-owned sites around Thornbury. The Committee agreed that the Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee should be asked to put this issue on their next agenda and Judith would attend that meeting to outline the scheme to them.

(h) Footpath Warden's Report

Cllr Guy Rawlinson reported that after the persistent inclement weather and the resulting damage to footpaths, these were now beginning to recover. He reported that the department at SGC dealing with footpath issues continued to appear to be under-resourced which made it difficult to address these issues adequately.

(i) Thornbury Ramblers Report/Walks Booklet

Jeff Pead was not able to attend the meeting and therefore there was no report.

(j) Thornbury Litter Busters

Jeff Pead was not able to attend the meeting and therefore there was no report.

7. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business raised.

8. TO RESOLVE UNDER THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 THAT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS AS PUBLICITY WOULD BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST BECAUSE OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED.

Resolved.

9. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Deputy Clerk had circulated a plan for the installation of a drinking water fountain. The Committee agreed that the best location for the fountain would be fixed to an external wall at the Pavilion and also agreed that it should consider water bottle filler only fountains, and not those with water spouts or dog bowls. The options of purchasing or renting a water fountain were also discussed and it was agreed that renting would reduce the risk to Council. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should circulate details of examples of water fountains that met the recommended standards so that the Committee could be better informed when considering quotes at its next meeting.