

**Report of the meeting of the Environment Committee
held on 6 April 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)
Joy Farrimond (Community Composting Site)
Judith Hurford (Tree Warden)
Sara May (Sustainable Thornbury)

Wendy Sydenham (Deputy Clerk)

(Cllr Eva Fielding – absent)

The Chair began the meeting by informing those present that a new Committee structure had been agreed by Council and was due to start in May. This would therefore be the last meeting of the Environment Committee. Some of the issues dealt with by the Committee would be picked up a new Outdoor Spaces Committee. The details regarding other issues covered by the Environment Committee, including representation from outside environmental organisations, were currently being finalised. Details would be sent to those organisations as soon as possible.

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

The new Chair of Thornbury In Bloom was in attendance and was welcomed to the meeting.

Although Council's hanging basket scheme was on the agenda under item 6 (a), the Deputy Clerk provided an update at this point in the meeting. She had been unable to find a contractor who could provide a watering service and therefore it had been agreed outside of the meeting, with the Chair of the Committee, to proceed with offering a supply and delivery only service. This would involve offering baskets first to customers who has bought baskets in previous years under the usual scheme. Any remaining baskets would then be offered to all Thornbury residents.

4. TO APPROVE THE REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2021 AND TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ANY OPERATIONAL ISSUES OR MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

Cllr Guy Rawlinson proposed that the report be approved. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Benj Emmerson and unanimously agreed.

5. 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 had been installed and the wildflower seed would be sown later in the month.

(b) Perennial planting in Pullins Green raised beds

Cllr Guy Rawlinson confirmed that he had met recently with representatives from SGC to discuss the recent excessive cutting back of many areas in Thornbury, including the Pullins Green beds and the Grovesend roundabout. SGC had committed to improving the planting on the roundabout at their cost. It was noted that the licence for residents to look after some of the beds on Pullins Green was between Thornbury In Bloom and SGC, not between Thornbury Town Council and SGC. Therefore any agreement for SGC to plant and/or maintain any of the beds previously looked after by residents should be dealt with by Thornbury In Bloom. If this was not possible, then the licence should be revoked and control given back to SGC. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should forward details of who currently looks after which bed to the Chair of Thornbury In Bloom, along with a copy of the existing licence.

(c) Butterfly Area

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that Matthew Lipton from SGC would be attending the next meeting of the Committee in May (although this would now be the Outdoor Spaces Committee).

(d) Medieval Fishponds

Cllr Guy Rawlinson confirmed that he had heard from the legal representative for the CIC for Park Farm regarding Council's representation on it. Their response had been disappointing as Council's representation was not guaranteed. Cllr Rawlinson had registered his dissatisfaction with the situation and was awaiting a reply.

(e) Schedule of Tree Works

The schedule of tree works had been circulated and was noted. No further works had been carried out. Quotes would be sought shortly for a new tree survey.

(f) Schedule of Minor Matters

The schedule of minor matters had been circulated and was noted. The most recent responses from SGC were noted which mainly asked for older issues to be relogged. It was noted, however, that some of these issues had actually been resolved, so there must be some errors in the administration system at SGC. It was agreed that the resolved matters could be removed from the schedule, and that the remaining issues should be relogged.

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

There were no issues raised under this standing item.

(h) Fairtrade

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she had received no response to her request for a Fairtrade representative.

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

(a) Operational Matters

(i) *Hanging Basket Scheme*

The Deputy Clerk had provided an update on the hanging basket scheme under item 3 of the agenda. The only remaining issue to discuss was what Council would charge for a basket this year. The baskets cost £28 each and it was proposed by Cllr Benj Emmerson that we charge £30 per basket to allow us to recoup some of the other staff costs incurred by the scheme. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Matt Stringer and unanimously agreed.

(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

Joy Farrimond reported that the site remained open and would be increasing its opening times soon. Lots of composting had been sold recently.

(d) Sustainable Thornbury

Sara May reported that the group had a very interesting meeting recently and had an article in a recent edition of Thornbury Magazine. She asked the Committee what the Council's policy was on glyphosates and pesticides generally. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she would find out more about this and let Sara know. The Thornbury In Bloom representative also agreed to find out more about this.

(e) Filnore Allotments Report

Cilla Farquhar reported there were no 35 plots, which included some sub-divided plots. Generally things were going well. Wildflowers were proving popular at the allotments.

(f) Filnore Woods Report

Jerry Dicker reported that 20 new trees had been planted recently and working groups were being organised to repair some of the signs of wear from lots of people walking in the woods. Jerry also reported that he is liaising with SGC regarding the removal of trees in connection with Ash dieback. There was concern that too many trees were being removed by SGC and that actually only trees which showed signs of Ash dieback should be removed.

Information regarding the More Than Weeds campaign had been circulated. Jerry outlined the campaign and asked for the Committee's thoughts about him trialling this in an area of Chapel Street and doing some publicity on it. The Committee confirmed their support of his intended trial.

(g) Tree Warden's Report

Judith Hurford reported on some vandalism to some trees in Poulterbrook. She also confirmed that the last tree of this planting season had been planted in memory of ex-Councillor and Chair of Council, Val Gregory. Judith also reported that she had attended the Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee meeting to ask for suggestions for areas to plant free trees from the Woodland Trust Free Trees for Schools and Communities Scheme. That Committee had agreed to look into setting up a working group to explore this and would also consider the idea of planting trees on some open green spaces as an alternative to installing bollards.

(h) Footpath Warden's Report

Cllr Guy Rawlinson reported that the change in weather meant that the footpaths were drying out. He highlighted the good work that a group called Thornbury Walker was doing, giving details of walks and videos of the walks online. He highlighted that footpath resources at SGC remained very limited, but that it was important to keep reporting issues, such as broken or fallen signs, to ensure that SGC were aware of them.

(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 the updated plan for the installation of a drinking water fountain. She had also previously circulated details of a suitable fountain as well as a guide to installation which she hoped would provide useful information on the various regulations that covered this process. She had obtained quotes for two suitable fountains from approved suppliers but had since been made aware of new "touch free" fountains which may be worth investigating further in light of COVID and potentially similar issues in the future. The Committee agreed that she should investigate this type of fountain further.