**Environment Committee**

**2 November 2021**

**6.30pm - 8.00pm**

**Minutes**

**Attendees: Cllrs J Simister, C Elsmore, M Cox, S Cox & Getgood**

**Ms F Herniman, Ms D Sturgess and Ms S Cheese**

**Public: Di Standing and Ann Oakes**

1. Apologies were noted from Mr W Williams

**Note: Dr. Paul Rutter sent his apologies, and has committed to attendance at the next Committee meeting.**

**2.** There were no declarations of interest

1. There were no dispensation requests
2. The minutes of 5 October 2021 were unanimously agreed, and **Cllr. Simister signed a copy of the minutes as a true record**

1. **Matters arising from the minutes of 5 October 2021**

Newsletter was discussed, and to be drafted for December 21, ready for website going live

The Town Clerk confirmed that Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (Gareth Parry) had been invited to provide a quotation for the Environmental Audit

Cllr. M Cox summarised, explain that forestry owned trees are not straight forward re: TPOs, and for Planning Committee to take forward **Cllrs. M Cox, and Getgood, and Sarah Cheese to take forward**

1. **Public Forum**

**Di Standing spoke, and summarised as follows:**

* Dean Meadows interested in what we’re doing. Meadows Day (on Angus B Rec), and would like to hold a walk around Coleford’s green sites, starting at Natural Burial Ground. June/July TBC and, although Di is also a Walk Leader, for Walkers are Welcome, probably won’t tie in with Walking Festival
* SDC green grass outside council offices/new development, is thought to be too bland, and Di asked whether this is an area where wild flowers could be planted?

**Ann Oakes spoke, and summarised as follows:**

* Interested in Maintenance Contracts, and raised concerns that mess is left behind (on pavement and road)
* Moved here in March, and sought clarity re: who manages and maintains which bits of Angel Vale, as confused by who is responsible for what
* Concerns raised re: Ash trees, and Ash Die-back
* Interested in volunteer maintenance of Lawdley Road, and people are happy to help
* Two Rivers have issues with maintaining, as bins are left on lawns because they don’t have access to rear gardens. Private houses have the same issues. Anna asked whether this could be considered further through Planning committee, also in Tenancy Agreements, which should be reviewed

Cllr. Simister explained that this Committee were on a fact finding mission to find out who owns what, and would report back

* Facebook Groups were discussed, in respect of contact with communities, and a meeting with Angel Vale residents was identified as a starting point, which Ann Oakes was keen to be involved with, and **for Cllr. Simister to pursue**

1. **To receive an update, discuss, and consider, FoDDC Climate Emergency Strategy / Action Plan 2022-25, re: alignment with CTC Environment Action Plan, following their inaugural Steering Group meeting**

**Cllr. Simister summarised, and responded to questions, as follows:**

* Does anything map this out to keep in touch with aspirations?
* Meets on 3rd Tuesday, monthly
* They know where we already are in terms of carbon neutrality
* Do they know what they realistically need to do to achieve it? No, but they do know the first steps. Currently focussed on council properties. Needs to go district wide. Domestic dwellings are the key, and problematic in getting the messages across, and turned into actions
* Council do not have jurisdiction over domestic dwellings. What is the plan? Are there incentives? Council want to act as a hub e.g. source grants and to make the information public
* Was there reference to Aurora? No, but it was mentioned within the meeting
* We have access to audits and associated files
* We will hold FoDDC to account in normal circumstances. Is our relationship more parallel? Cllr. Simister stated that he saw this occurring, as leading FoDDC by holding them to account
* Climate Action Group might…or should….take primacy
* Cllr. M Cox very concerned re: Aurora’s absence of reference, and is a project £500,00. FoDDC are the mechanism to make Aurora happen, and FoDDC trying to build from the ground up, but they are not used to that way of working. Cllr. Simister emphasised that this Town Council need to make sure the essence of the Aurora bid is managed in an effective and timely manner, and the Town Council also needs to see genuine actions from the ground up.
* Cllr. Simister referred to the Gloucestershire Fire Service CRMP, and the need to consider the Town Councils role within this, and to be taken to Highways & Public Safety Committee
* Chris McFarling was confirmed as the lead FoDDC Member, overseeing this Plan.

**It was noted that Cllr. Simister was attending these Forums, but for others to attend also, and to also cultivate / strengthen links with other Forest of Dean Groups e.g. West Dean Parish Council Group (Jackie Dale)**

**It was also noted that the Action Plan, and Audit would be key documents to ‘track’ this Groups activities**

1. **To receive comment, and professional advice from Paul Rutter**

Item deferred to next Committee meeting

1. **To discuss, and consider, Ash Dieback across the Parish, and tree work generally; to make recommendations, as necessary**

Cllr. M Cox summarised, and the follow points were noted:

* Stuart Paine and Gareth parry, Glos. Wildlife Trust, provided useful information at the last committee meeting
* Clarity was sought re: GCC / FoDDC Ash dieback Scheme, and to establish whether it existed, and what it covered.
* What’s the recovery actions from whatever actions are taken?
* Sarah Chees, and Cllr. M Cox met with TrunkArb, to identify specific trees that need to be dealt, and to identify replacements. e.g. Angel Vale, with costs to be agreed at Finance & Asset Management Committee, as two trees still need to be felled at Angel Vale
* Natural Burial Ground e.g. hawthorn, is being addressed
* Cllr. M Cox reported on other areas that is Town Council owned, that still needs to be visited and decided upon
* Cllr. M Cox raised the issue of what native species do we stop looking at, and what non-native do we focus on? Also needing to look at the landscape to stay the same? Or do we keep with the same species. Hornbeam is a classic to take place of an oak
* It was suggested that a Working Group is established, with input from other specialists e.g. Paul Rutter, to take forward within the Action Plan
* To look at RTPI, and Forestry lists also

**Actions: For Committee Members to look at the Ash Die back Toolkit, to further familiarise, and for Cllr. Simister to upload (to Dropbox) the ‘Toolkit’.**

**For this Committee to work closely with Finance & Asset Management Committee re: costs, and implications.**

**Cllr. Simister to look further re: Grants in respect of Communities vs. Climate Change**

**Overall Conclusion to prioritise, in line with recommendations, which have been agreed by Full Council**

1. **To receive updates, discuss, and make recommendations re: the updated Environmental Action Plan**

Cllr John Simister presented the updated action plan and led discussions accordingly, highlighting to members the key changes and additional tabs for tracking activities undertaken.

After a full discussion, and Cllr. Simister taking note, to update the action plan, it was unanimously agreed that:

* Clerk to bring paper and ink usage for the last year to next meeting
* Clerk to chase GCC Highways re: gateways actions, as a matter of urgency
* NDP will be reviewed fairly soon to make a decision before hand over in 2023
* Youth Association, and using green spaces, and Cllr. M Cox is working with Forest Youth Association, as well as UWE students, who will also be doing consultations with young groups with a look to how we can use spaces and places to provide more facilities
* Re: taking forward Action Plan tasks, Cllr. Simister asked whether this Committee wanted, needed, to focus on fewer, more specific points, otherwise it could become ‘overwhelming’, and overall needed to narrow down its priorities, and top also develop volunteer groups, to take forward some key, and identified, community-based actions, and tasks.
* Re: Volunteers to look at one volunteer group, and to establish, work with, that group to be set to work e.g. Angel Vale, as the residents were keen to be mobilised, and for other areas to have some someone to represent each area.
* Good work being developed with Alex Digby (FVAF Youth Association Officer re: Bells, and for Cllr. Simister to develop the litter picking aspects, and to note the Co-op are also mobilising the community with this.
* Re: Cemetery to perhaps also involve ex.Cllr. Heather Lusty to be involved with Sarah, and Cllr. M Cox, as she has had much time in the cemetery, and is keen to see its environmental improvements.
* Aurora was also emphasised as a key aspect of this Committee’s activities

1. **To receive an update from the Working Group looking at Environment actions, and implications, re: maintenance contracts, ready for Spring 2022**
2. Paper is important to detail and pin down tasks
3. Finance and Asset are responsible for contracts

Cllr, M Cox summarised further the Environment Committee paper re: contracts, and it was recognised that this paper is key, to inform contract discussions, managed by Finance & Asset Management Committee, and the importance for environment tasks to be clearly identified. **Cllrs. M Cox, Sarah Cheese, Fliss,Herniman, and Chris Haine to coordinate**

1. **To consider GCC Waste Local for Gloucestershire: Duty to Co-operate Scoping Paper: Consultation 2021**

Cllr. Simister summarised that GCC want to manage recycling and waste better, and a response to this Consultation needed to be fully considered. Cllr. Simister agreed, with others to consider, and prepare a draft report/letter by next committee meeting

1. **To receive updates re: wider FoD Environment meetings, forums, Member’s activities, and to take forward actions into Plan, making recommendations, as necessary.**

Cllr. S Cox updated re: wider Forest of Dean group activity, and Debbie Sturgess raised matters re: cyclists in the forest, and referred to correspondence she had had with Kevin Stannard, Forestry England, re: Mountain Biking and Biodiversity Crisis, which was noted and was logged within the Action Plan. Debbie Sturgess also raised reference to Town Council warden role, and whether this was something for the Town Council to note and, there was some discussion in the context of Walkers are Welcome, with participants perhaps undertaking an observational, environmental role. It was however, recognised that this was something more appropriately incorporated into the mobilising of volunteer groups role.

**Meeting ended: 8.20pm**