

Environment Sub Committee Annual Report 2020/21

I am delighted to be delivering the first report from the Environment Sub Committee to an Annual Town Meeting as its first elected Chair.

The work of Huntingdon Town Council in recognising the enormous challenges we face as a community is something that I am immensely proud of.

Firstly, I must thank Town Council Officer Hayley Burns for her phenomenal support since the formation of the Sub Committee, her hard work and dedication to the improvement of this Council's environmental impact has been incredible – and the internal audit carried out on the Council's own internal practices has ensured that every viable opportunity for Huntingdon Town Council to improve and reduce its carbon aims, objectives and commitments has been taken, in line with the comprehensive Environment Policy and draft Climate Action Plan – which was unanimously agreed by this Council. Tackling the climate emergency requires leadership and I am proud that Huntingdon Town Council is showing this quality in the district by participating in the early access testing Parish Council Eco Audit Tool.

Huntingdon Town Council is also now in the process of sourcing quotes for a full and comprehensive professional eco audit as we continue to take the necessary steps to reduce our carbon footprint.

Next I must pay tribute to Peter Haynes, our Head Groundsman, and the whole Estates Services team who have, day in day out, through the elements, continued their hard work in making our town look amazing – from the Summer into Winter, through the Covid-19 pandemic and, hopefully, into more normal times in the future, adapting their practices and minimising waste.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have had to postpone our plans for the first Huntingdon Eco Fair. However, I am pleased that we are still hoping this event can go ahead in the not too distant future, with stallholders still being looked at and these plans still very much part of Huntingdon Town Council's programme of events when we return to something closer resembling normality.

The year ahead will be another full of challenges, but I have confidence that we will continue going from strength to strength and continue taking positive steps in the years to come. I am pleased also to report on the excellent progress as we approach the completion of the new state of the art crematorium to the north of our town, which is perhaps the biggest and most ambitious project undertaken by Huntingdon Town Council in modern times.

National Geographic reports that 78% of people opt for cremation when they pass away in the UK. The new crematorium will ensure sustainability and dignity for people of all faiths and families across Huntingdonshire, whilst embracing innovation and new technologies in the form of the first all-electric carbon neutral cremator in the country, recycling of recovered heat, rainwater harvesting, solar panels and the composting of plant materials. As well as this, the site will serve as a depot and plant nursery for the Estates Services team, with electric car charging ports for Council vehicles. The new crematorium will also offer natural burials and will play a key role in ensuring friends and families can pay their respects to their loved ones locally, removing the need to generate excess carbon emissions from cars travelling into Cambridge or Bedford.

Finally, I must say that it has been an honour to sit as the first chair of the Environment Sub Committee. I would like to thank my Vice Chair, Cllr Juliet Cole, and the Town Clerk, Philip Peacock, for their fantastic support and work behind the scenes since the Sub Committee's

formation. As well as this, I would like to thank all members of the Environment Sub Committee for the important role they have played in shaping Huntingdon's environmental policies, and I look forward to continuing our work together over the next year.