

Droitwich Spa Town Council

Report of the Chairman of Community & Amenities Committee 2021

The Communities and Amenities Committee is responsible for the following:

- Copcut Park
- Spring Meadow Open Space
- 4 allotment sites at Vines Lane, Chawson Lane, Westwood Lodge and Copcut Park
- Bus shelters, public benches and Town notice boards within the Town centre
- Summer and Winter planting
- The Community Hall in Heritage Way
- Heritage Tourist Information Centre and Salt Museum at St Richards House.
- Summer Band Concerts in the Lido Park
- Logistical support for local Town Centre events including equipment to loan to other users.
- Grants Appraisal Panel for Grant Funding and Sponsorship.
- Christmas Illuminations and the Annual Switch On event

Copcut Park / Spring Meadow Open Space

The last professional arboreal survey was completed in autumn 2018 maintaining the usual 4 year interval cycle. This derived a programme of essential works covering all of Copcut Park and elements of Spring Meadow. The acceleration of Ash Dieback disease is prominent and has increased the workload required to remove those trees afflicted.

At Spring Meadow we have been able to plant a number of new trees thanks to County Council Divisional Funding from Councillor GR Brookes. This is part of a national tree planting scheme linked to The Countryfile and Woodland Trust. These were supplied and Sourced from the Town Council's municipal planting contractors, Acorn Environmental Care Ltd.

Provision for the remaining perimeter line section adjacent the rear of the Tesco Express shopping precinct has been made within the next Municipal Year budget. These measures maintain the investment and improvements to the area of public open space which is a widely used public amenity for the local community.

Thanks are expressed to Mr Rob Harrison for the tree work and Mr Dan Lovett and his team from Top Cut for their diligent standards towards the regular grounds maintenance covering both areas of public open space.

Allotments

Currently all four sites are almost fully tenanted with measures in hand for any remaining plots from the waiting list. This coincides with the annual renewal invoicing currently taking place.

Investment to maintain the sites to a suitable standard within a limited budget has continued during the year. Tree maintenance has been carried out at Copcut Park and Chawson Lane allotments. The outbreak of Japanese Knotweed at Westwood Lodge site from the previous year continues to be treated and is currently under control. Thanks are expressed to the Droitwich Spa Allotments Association and particularly Mrs Hilary Byrne & Mr Paul Clancy for their close support on all connected matters during the past year.

The Town Council recently reviewed tenancy charges and resolved to maintain the current tariff without amendments. With due consideration for maintenance overheads made, the current charges tariff has only been amended 3 times over the past 12 years. This approach maintains consistency, represents value for money and is a very competitive tariff when compared to neighbouring authorities' community allotment schemes.

Summer and Winter Planting

As reported last year, Acorn Environmental Care are now maintaining the municipal planting maintenance for the Town centre hanging baskets and displays at St Richard's House and the War Memorial in Victoria Square. Summer planting in 2020 we had fantastic displays of flowers and colours with numerous comments from Droitwich Spa residents in person and on Social media saying how they were the best displays we had had in many years! The winter planting followed with ornamental plants at St Richard's House and spring bulbs planted which are now starting to bloom to add some beautiful colour. Thanks are expressed for the whole team at Acorn for their hard work and dedication.

Charter Market and Monthly Farmers' Market

As previously reported through the year, the weekly Charter market ceased operation with effect from January 2018. This was due to the retirement of the operator following a term of approximately three years running the market on behalf of the Town Council. Regrettably, it has not been possible to find an alternative operator or any other viable and economic means of maintaining the weekly market. Endeavours continue looking at all options.

I am very pleased to report that the monthly Farmers Market was re-established from March 2019 and continues to thrive. The collaborative approach working with the Group has succeeded in preserving this valuable amenity and has been well received by the community.

The Community Hall

The Community Hall has unfortunately not been in use for a large percentage of the year due to the Covid-19 regulations covering indoor spaces. Many hirer's have continued to use the halls when the regulations eased and it is hoped that going forwards into spring, with the vaccine programme in progress, we shall be able to open the doors again to welcome back our regular and new hirer's.

During the periods of closure the Hall has been used a few times for NHS blood donor sessions with strict Covid-19 safe procedures in place.

The lighting in the John Corbett Room has been updated to brighter LED lighting thanks to County divisional fund donation from Councillor GR Brookes. A review of the charges tariff has once again been completed in December 2020. There are no changes and the 20% charity status discount is retained.

St. Richard's House, the Heritage Centre (Museum and Tourist Information Centre)

The Heritage Centre, ran by the Two Heritage Managers, Sarah Davies and Catherine Finn and their team of volunteers, has also been closed for a large part of the year due to the Covid-19 restrictions that have been in place. During the first shut down which commenced in March 2020 the Heritage centre received funding from Worcester County Council through Councillor GR Brookes to ensure that the Museum and Tourist Information Centre were safe to re-open when it was permissible in a Covid secure way. This involved Perspex screens, one way systems, appropriate signage and hand sanitising stations.

The Heritage Managers have this year applied for a Community Legacy Grant from Wychavon District Council for a Heritage Trail App which can be used by residents and visitors to the Town to explore the history and rich culture of Droitwich Spa.

The Heritage Centre benefits from a very dedicated and knowledgeable team of regular volunteers. I express my sincere appreciation to the Heritage Managers and all volunteers. Efficient forward planning manages the daily operations and includes regular themed exhibitions and activities. School and educational group visits are encouraged and catered for at all times of the year. A lot of work continues to be carried out relating to the documentation, maintenance and preservation of the archival collections, both in storage and on display, to ensure we meet the standards required as an Accredited Museum.

The Tourism website www.visitdroitwichspa.com has continued to flourish during the year. This has necessitated a bespoke webpage to be developed exclusively to showcase the Heritage Centre and Museum. The new page, www.droitwichheritagecentre.org.uk provides a quick link profiling the TIC prominently over and above the many features on the main tourism web page. This is especially useful for school and national curriculum coverage from the rich local history.

Summer Band Concerts in Lido Park

The Band Concert programme which usually operates every Sunday in Lido Park from May-September was unfortunately cancelled for the summer of 2020. It was sadly missed but necessary to comply with all the regulations in place and we hope to see it resurrected as we hopefully ease out of lockdown into summer 2021.

Local Town Centre Events

It was with deep regret that many annual events in Droitwich Spa had to be cancelled this year due to the global pandemic of Covid-19. The Town Council and associate organisers felt this necessary to ensure all restrictions were adhered too and to help keep our residents safe. Events such as St Richard's Festival, The Food Festival, Saltfest and the Christmas lights switch-on day were amongst those that were sadly missed and it is hoped that as we cautiously move out of restrictions these will be resurrected.

A Remembrance Service was filmed in a Covid Secure way in association with Cllr A Humphries and the Royal British Legion branch at St Andrew's Church. This was broadcast through YouTube for public viewing. Special poppy motif lights were arranged for the frontage of St Richard's House during Remembrance fortnight. This aspect was partly in place of the usual Remembrance arrangements which could not take place due to Covid-19. The Mayor and Lady Hughes from the County Lieutenancy Office, accompanied by the Town Clerk, presented wreaths at the war memorial on the 11th November.

Grants Appraisal Panel Awards

Throughout the year, the Grants Appraisal Panel would usually meet on 3 occasions to assess the grant applications received and meet with the applications. As the face to face meetings were unable to be held this year, any applications received were assessed directly by the Grants parent Committee, Community and Amenities Committee. The 4 grant applications successfully awarded total £5252. Similar applications can be considered for 2021/2022 with effect from 1 April through enquiries registered with the Town Clerk's Office. Please note that the first Appraisal Panel Meeting will be on the 7 June 2021. The Panel continues to be very impressed by the amount of voluntary work and charity support given by many people to improve the lives of their fellow residents showing true community spirit.

Throughout the year I have had the full support of my Vice-Chairman Councillor Richard Morris and members of the Community and Amenities Committee. Finally on a personal note I would like to thank the Town Clerk - Mark Keld and the Assistant Town Clerk, Community and Amenities - Sharon Abbott for their unwavering support to me during the year. I must also pay tribute to Jane Greenfield, Assistant Town Clerk – Civic, Admin and Finance, together with all other members of staff and the army of volunteers who enable the work of the Town Council to be

undertaken so efficiently. We all hope that 2021/22 will be an easier time as we emerge from the Covid restrictions.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bowden
Chairman of Community & Amenities Committee