

Droitwich Spa Town Council

Report of the Chairman of the Community & Amenities Committee 2022

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 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. The next survey is commissioned around June 2022.

At Spring Meadow we have been able to plant a number of new trees thanks to County Council Divisional Funding from Councillor GR Brookes. Previously this has been part of a national tree planting scheme linked to BBC Countryfile and the Woodland Trust. In addition, a new ornamental planting raised flower bed and trees is being prepared ready for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June. This latest addition will support the Queen's Green Canopy initiative. With this regard the Town Council are grateful to County Councillor Tony Miller for the allocation of a Holm Oak Tree sapling which will be planted at Copcut Park. Acorn Environmental Care Ltd. continue to provide excellent service and standards throughout the year for the Municipal Planting. For 2022 arrangements are in place for red, white and blue floral displays throughout, as well as some additional planting for the High Street area. Wychavon District Council have collaborated for the additional Jubilee planting with some funding provided through the "Welcome Back Funding" stream.

New perimeter line fencing adjacent the rear of the Tesco Express shopping precinct has been provided for within the new 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 & mowing covering both areas of public open space.

Allotments

Currently all four sites are fully tenanted with measures to let any vacant plots from the waiting list. This coincides with the annual renewal invoicing currently taking place through April and May.

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 2019 continues to be treated under the ten year plan and is currently under control. New site gates have been purchased and installed at Vines Lane and Westwood Lodge. 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 slightly increase the current tariff in line with market conditions. With due consideration for maintenance overheads made, the current charges tariff has only been amended 4 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 from 2019, 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. For summer planting in 2021 we had fantastic displays of flowers and colours with numerous positive comments received from Droitwich Spa residents & Visitors, in person and on Social media - saying "how impressive the displays were looking"! The winter planting followed with ornamental plants at St Richard's House & Victoria Square and spring bulbs were planted, which have now added some new 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 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. Sadly 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. In addition, there have been different approaches received to consider deliverable options for an antiques market /fayre in the Town. Tentative

arrangements are being taken forward with the interested parties, including collaboration with Wychavon District Council.

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 endured further disruption through 2021 caused by the pandemic restrictions. Thankfully this was not to the same extent as the problems in 2020 at the start of the pandemic. Reservations and interest have resurrected well and are approaching levels maintained prior to the restrictions in March 2020.

A review of the charges tariff has once again been completed at Year end budget setting. A small increase to the charges structure has been resolved in order to keep in line with market conditions. The 20% charity status discount is retained.

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

The Heritage Centre, operated by the Two Heritage Managers and their volunteer team, has maintained operations throughout 2021 despite the pandemic. A degree of temporary disruption persists with reduced Friday and Saturday opening hours. This is a short term measure attributed to the recruitment of our new Heritage Manager who is set to be in role during May. The staffing compliment should then be set for stability and normal opening hours.

The Heritage App Project launched in August 2021 is currently subject to further enhancements and a full relaunch is anticipated in the Autumn.

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 maintain 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 will operate every Sunday in Lido Park from May-September in 2022. Details have already been publicised. For 2021, a shortened programme was possible during September and this was well received following the pandemic restrictions.

Local Town Centre Events

Many events were still restricted for the reason of the pandemic during 2021. The Town Council were pleased to proceed with the Remembrance Service and the Christmas light's switch on during November, for the reason that both had not been able to take place the previous year. A full programme of Town events is anticipated for 2022 with added excitement due to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June.

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. The allocated fund of £5000 was expended to support various groups and organisations during the year. A similar fund value is allocated for the period 2022/23 and the next appraisal panel meeting takes place on 6th June 2022 to consider any applications received. 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 2022/23 will be an easier time as we full emerge from the pandemic.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bowden
Chairman of Community & Amenities Committee