Droitwich Spa Town Council

**Report of the Chairman of the Community & Amenities Committee 2022/2023**

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

**Land Holdings**

The last professional arboreal survey was completed in June 2022 maintaining the 4 year cycle. From the report produced all category one works arising have been dealt with during July and August 2022. This category includes dead, diseased or dangerous tree defects that presented an immediate risk in the public realm. The remaining category 2 & 3 works will be taken forward as part of the general land maintenance responsibilities. The next full survey will be commissioned in Spring 2026.

For the planting, further new blossom trees have been added at Spring Meadow and Copcut Park as part of the Plant It Britain and the Queens Green Canopy Initiatives during 2022. A special Holm Oak Tree was kindly donated by County Councillor Tony Miller and planted in Copcut Park as part of the Late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in June 2022. Wychavon District Council collaborated for the additional Jubilee planting with some funding provided through the “Welcome Back Funding” stream. This has enabled new stone planters to be added at the entrance to the High Street and on Salt Barrow Market. These will be maintained as part of the Municipal Planting arrangements year on year. A new ornamental flower bed and accompanying signage was installed at Spring Meadow near Primsland Way to mark the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee in June.

At Spring Meadow new perimeter line fencing adjacent the rear of the Tesco Express shopping precinct is currently being taken forward. The pedestrian entrance way from Mulberry Tree Hill is shortly due to be improved by lessening the gradient, new surfacing and additional raised flowers beds. These measures maintain the investment and improvements to the areas of public open space owned & maintained by the Town Council and which are widely used public amenities 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 will coincide with the annual renewal invoicing which is due to take place in April.

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 in 2021/2022 and are due to be fitted at Chawson Lane this Spring. Thanks are expressed to the Droitwich Spa Allotments Association and particularly the Site Representatives at Copcut Park (Mr Terry Rivers) and Chawson Lane (Mr Oakley Petts) for their support on all connected matters during the past year.

Unfortunately trespass and vandalism incidents continue to be encountered especially at the more remote Chawson Lane site location, although close contact continues with the Local Policing Team to resolve these matters.

The Town Council reviewed tenancy charges again in January 2023 and resolved to maintain 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 2022 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 special theme for Summer 2022 was red , white and blue to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee 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. This spring the planters at the War Memorial have been temporarily removed to enable painting refurbishment & repairs. Simultaneously arrangements have been made with WCC Highways to improve the surfacing and attend to paving defects in that area of Victoria Square. All works are anticipated to be finished ready for Easter.

The Planting Contract was subject to the usual three year review, renewal options and the procurement process in autumn 2022. This has been renewed for a further three years commencing January 2023.

**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 very difficult to find an alternative operator or any other viable and economic means of maintaining the weekly market in the intervening period. Recent endeavours have been more successful and it is hoped to resurrect the Weekly Charter Market on Fridays at Victoria Square from April through the Company Bluebell Events. A press and media release will confirm the start date and arrangements in due course.

The monthly Farmers Market was re-established from March 2019 and continues to thrive. The collaborative approach working with the Worcestershire Farmers Market Group has succeeded in preserving this valuable amenity and has been well received by the Community. The Market takes place on the first Saturday morning of each month at Victoria Square

**The Community Hall**

The Community Hall has resurrected well following the Covid 19 Pandemic disruption since March 2020. Bookings and Regular hirers remain strong and the revenue derived is a valuable source of supplementary income within the Town Council finances.

A review of the charges tariff has once again been completed at Year end budget setting. The tariff and associated 20% charity status discount remains unchanged.

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

The Heritage Centre, operated by the Two Heritage Managers – Catherine & Becky and their volunteer team, has maintained operations throughout 2022/2023 and resumed full operations following the Pandemic. A recent Volunteer recruitment drive has successfully attracted 5 new people to the team. Work based experience continues for students with two currently on placements to support their course of studies for University and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The Heritage App Project developed through 2021 has been refined and fully launched in November 2022. The user interest is being monitored prior to consideration and shaping for additional & enhanced features this year.

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](http://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](http://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.

**Summer Band Concerts in Lido Park**

The Band Concert programme will operate every Sunday in Lido Park from May-September in 2023. The first performance takes place on the 7th May which is part of the special Bank Holiday weekend for the Coronation of King Charles III. Details have already been publicised. This schedule will operate for 20 weeks this season which is slightly longer than the 16 weekends for 2022. It is pleasing to hear that the concerts are enjoyed by residents and visitors through the year.

**Local Town Centre Events**

The Town Council organised many events and occasions during 2022. The year featured many themes and different emotions including,

-The Vigil for support for Ukraine at the Band Stand in April,

-For the Platinum Jubilee in June – the Pageantry of the National Beacon at St Augustine’s Church, The Community Celebration Town Centre Event and many local street parties.

- For the very sad passing of her Late Majesty the Queen in September – The London Bridge Protocol and Official Condolences followed by The Proclamation of King Charles III, both at St Richards House, and the National Moment of Reflection at the Bandstand.

- In November – the Armistice & Remembrance Sunday, followed later in the month by the Christmas Lights and Switch on Event.

It was encouraging to see St Richards Festival, The Food & Drink Festival and the Salt Fest all resume in 2022 after the Pandemic.

**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 2023/24 and the next appraisal panel meeting takes place in June 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 Deputy Town Clerk, Community and Amenities – Katy Prew for their unwavering support to me during the year. I must also pay tribute to Jane Greenfield, Deputy Town Clerk – Civic 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.

**Councillor Mrs Christine Bowden**

**Chairman of Community & Amenities Committee**