

Council Meeting - 20 March 2019

Report of Councillor Mrs Vivienne Stock-Williams - Sports, Parks and Leisure

Good sports, parks and leisure facilities improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.

1. Community Leisure

Play and Recreation

1.1 **The following works have been advanced**, since the last report, using either the Taunton Deane replacement play equipment budget and/or Section 106 Agreement funding:-

- Showell Park Kindergarten, Taunton - two new Spring Rockers are currently being installed;
- Victoria Park, Taunton - the 7.5 m tower slide has been manufactured and installation works are underway. The Baseball pitch is currently under construction, as is the Beach Volleyball court; and
- Walkers Gate, Wellington – replacement play equipment is being ordered for this small play area using Section 106 Agreement funding.

Play Equipment Repairs

1.2 Work continues from within the Open Spaces Team on the maintenance of our play equipment stock. All known repairs to our play equipment are currently up-to-date or have the replacement parts on order. As far as is reasonably practical, works are being carried out (spares permitting) to ensure equipment is not out-of-service for longer than is necessary.

Section 106 Agreement Funding for Play, Sport, Allotments and Community Halls

1.3 Stoke Road Allotments continue to complete their improvement projects and are drawing down Section 106 funding.

1.4 West Monkton Village Hall are continuing on their agreed improvement works to the hall.

Capital grant scheme for Voluntary Village Halls, Sports Clubs and Allotments and the Parish Play Area Grant Scheme

1.5 The awards made to halls, sports clubs and parish play areas in 2018 have been drawn down as projects complete.

2. GLL (Taunton Deane)

Community Sport and Health

Work Experience

- 2.1 Five students from Bishop Fox's School visited during the Christmas holidays to find out more about working in a leisure centre. All have now been offered work experience placements during the summer.
- 2.2 The Taunton Partnership has now received over 30 applications for work experience opportunities for the 2018/2019 school year.

Health and Wellbeing

- 2.3 GLL staff attended the Beacon Centre Health and Wellbeing event in January 2019. The event was well attended by patients from Musgrove Park Hospital, who were keen to find out more about the opportunities available to them at their local Better Leisure Centres and many of the community activities which GLL run.

GLL National Awards

- 2.4 A number of staff attended the GLL National Awards Ceremony in London on 7 February 2019:-
 - Debby Brown - Healthwise Co-ordinator, Wellsprings Leisure Centre
 - Ben Wilkinson and team, Blackbrook Leisure Centre and Spa
 - Natalie Ackland, Taunton Tennis Centre
 - Sue Gibbs - Coach and Holiday Activity Lead, Wellsprings Leisure Centre.

3. Leisure Procurement Project

- 3.1 Three bidders were retained following the Detailed Solutions stage and invited to dialogue meetings to clarify outstanding matters prior to final submissions. The dialogue meetings were supplemented by legal conference calls to address specific legal matters that remained "live".
- 3.2 The three bidders submitted final tenders by the December 2018 deadline and these were checked for compliance before being evaluated by officers and Councillors in the days leading up to Christmas. To ensure consistency, the same team evaluated the bids, after which moderation sessions were held to 'challenge' the outcome and ensure the process was as robust as possible.
- 3.3 Following evaluation and moderation, the team was able to identify submissions that met the Authority's requirements. They next identified a preferred bidder for each Lot – ie the bidder which offered "the most economically advantageous tender for the Authority".

- 3.4 The following Operator was selected as preferred bidder for both Lots: Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) (trading as 'Everyone Active').
- 3.5 The recommendation was presented to Shadow Scrutiny in January 2019 and subsequently to Shadow Executive before being approved at a special meeting of Taunton Deane's Full Council.
- 3.6 Now that the statutory 'standstill' period has ended, we can progress with 'fine tuning' any last items and agree any remaining minor contractual issues. SLM are beginning mobilisation ready to start on 1 August 2019.
- 3.7 The position reached enables the Authority to meet its primary aim of protecting valued services whilst at the same time doing so effectively and efficiently.
- 3.8 In the last full year of operation, the Authority paid GLL £261,000 to operate the services. The new contract will deliver a total saving of £6,937,310 (including a maintenance saving) over the eight months and 10 years term (assuming the final GLL payment had remained constant).
- 3.9 The outcome is hugely positive for the Authority. We will be working with both SLM and GLL over the next six months to ensure a smooth transition.
- 3.10 My thanks to Steve Hughes, Project Manager – Leisure Procurement, and Chris Hall, Project Sponsor, for their focused commitment to achieving this superb outcome for the Authority.

4. Parks and Open Spaces

Arboriculture

- 4.1 ArboTrack Limited have been appointed to examine 7,000 of our trees to ensure they are safe. This work will be completed by the end of the year.

Comeytrove Park

- 4.2 In order to fund the Friends of Comeytrove Park's public liability insurance, a member has made and put up 10 nesting boxes, which have been sponsored by various individuals and companies.



Green Flags

- 4.3 All entries for this year's Green Flag competition have now been entered. We know how much green spaces matter to our residents and visitors in Taunton Deane, so are absolutely delighted to receive these Awards. They are testament to the dedication of our staff and the wonderful volunteers who put so much effort into maintaining our parks and open spaces to such a high standard. It really is an achievement to retain them year on year. They should feel very proud

Frieze Hill Community Orchard

- 4.4 The Friends of Frieze Hill Community Orchard organised another very successful Wassail in January. Entertainment was provided by the Taunton Thespian Mummers, who performed "St George and the Dragon" to the delight of all the children present and their families, followed by the Big Noise Street Band. Entry was free and everyone was encouraged to wear wellies, bring a torch together with bells, whistles, horns and drums to wake up the apple trees.
- 4.5 It was a pleasure to see the newly formed Friends of Netherclay helping out with this happy event.

Somerset Memorial Wood

- 4.6 Councillor Norman Cavill and his hard working team of volunteers spent a week recently digging up, transporting and re-planting 200 12-year old trees from the Ruishton Park and Ride area in order to make way for the Junction 25 Redevelopment Scheme. These will add to the diversity of the expanding woodland.
- 4.7 Wellington Town Council was proud to donate three young Wellingtonias to the scheme, which will slowly grow into notable tall specimen trees to be admired for generations.



Staffing

- 4.7 Richard Brown's effective secondment as part-time Project Manager has now come to an end and he has returned to his base in The Deane House.
- 4.8 Darren Hill and Roy Porter, in addition to their business-as-usual activities, are immersed in the recruitment process for the transformed Localities Champions Workforce (LCW). All current employees who are taking up new roles will be in post on 1 April 2019.
- 4.9 Darren and Roy are keen to roll out refresher and training workshops and courses to all staff as soon as practicable, so that the new ways of working become quickly embedded.
- 4.10 They will also then begin an external recruitment process to ensure that all posts are suitably filled and the LCW is at full strength.

Transition Town Wellington

- 4.11 Rebecca Pow MP has nominated Transition Town Wellington (TTW) for a Green Heart Hero Award, under the category of “Inspirational Community Project”. She was particularly impressed with the foraging map the group had produced. Two members were hoping to attend the ceremony on 13 March 2019 in Westminster Palace.
- 4.12 TTW’s Food Group, in partnership with the DLO’s Open Spaces Team, Somerset Rural Youth Project outreach workers and members of the local community are starting work on the one acre Dobree Park Community Garden Project. They began by surveying the site and levels using laser guided surveying equipment to gain accurate measurements and, with the aid of an accurate scale map, make a detailed plan. It is an interesting area as the field was remodelled into two distinct levels when the housing estate was built, incorporating a sustainable drainage system.
- 4.13 Work has begun on clearing the well-established brambles and accumulated rubbish. It has been agreed that dense piles of brush-wood lying here may be hiding hibernating hedgehogs, and so they will be left undisturbed until the weather warms and the animals wake up! The town’s Tree Warden has estimated 50 trees could eventually be planted in this newly acquired community garden, the main focus being on fruit and nuts.

Vivary Park

- 4.14 The postponed project to desilt the Lake in Vivary Park is now scheduled to start on 1 April 2019 and will result in a much improved watercourse for wildlife and the public’s enjoyment. Any subsequent reinstatement works needed will be undertaken shortly thereafter.
- 4.15 For safety reasons, the bridge at Wilton Lands has been taken out of action. A temporary bridge has been installed until the Vivary Stream de-silting work is completed. A permanent new flat bridge will then be installed, so that it is not damaged by rising waters.
- 4.16 New segregated litterbins, made from recycled plastic, are to be installed in the area of the park near the children’s playground and café. These are harder wearing than the traditional bins, easier to clean and extremely difficult to set fire to – a cigarette stub would simply cause insignificant melting which would be unnoticeable. They are also cheaper than the large Big Ben bins. There will be a programme to roll these out across the district as litter bins need replacing.
- 4.17 Vivary Park will also benefit this summer from the installation of new, recycled plastic benches, which are dark brown in colour and have wheelchair access.
- 4.18 A battery powered maintenance vehicle for Vivary Park is replacing the current petrol vehicle this year and a replacement schedule is being programmed for the district’s parks.

- 4.19 Battery powered blowers, strimmers and hedge cutting tools are being trialled in the Park this year, thus actively reducing the workforce risk of hand-held vibration issues.
- 4.20 Looking forward, it is proposed to schedule a gradual replacement of the current style of dog bins with front, not top, lids to ease the removal of full and heavy internal plastic bags.
- 4.21 It is proposed to purchase mini-shredders for the shrub bed gangs, so that compost can be made from the cuttings in the DLO Nursery rather than paying for its disposal. This compost will be available for local groups to use.

Unauthorised Encampment Action

- 4.22 The Council is taking action to deter unauthorised encampments on open space land. The priority area is in Wellsprings, Taunton, which has seen five illegal encampments in the last two years.
- 4.23 It has devised a landscaping scheme to stop vehicles gaining access to two stretches of open space near the Kingston Stream. The measures follow calls for help from the local community which submitted a petition to the Council asking for something to be done to stop future incursions.
- 4.24 Work will include the creation of several landscaped bunds (2ft high banks of land) around the perimeter of open access areas in Enmore Road and Wellsprings Road.
- 4.25 There will also be strategically placed bollards which can be dropped down to allow access for maintenance vehicles. Bollards may also be placed at Hope Corner Lane as a further preventative measure.
- 4.26 The scheme, along with other minor preventative work on key sites, will cost in the region of £15,000 and should be completed by Easter.

Wellington Flower Tower

- 4.27 Wellington's impressive Flower Tower (forged by Darren Hill's grandfather) is to be repaired and will again take pride of place in the town this summer, bedecked with colourful flowers from the DLO Nursery. The flower tower represents Wellington's unique Monument and the National Trust is delighted that there will be visual support from the town and Borough for their Restoration Appeal (which is now their third most important priority nationally).

Wellington Park

- 4.28 Work has now been completed on clearing out the rubbish and tidying the pond in Wellington Park. A child's pushchair and shopping trolley were amongst the items retrieved from the muddy bottom.
- 4.29 The Friends of Wellington Parks and Parks Team are busy making preparation for this year's Spring Fayre, which will be held on Sunday, 5 May,

starting at the earlier time of 12.30 p.m. This is a very popular annual event for local families and will include exciting new entertainment.

5. Property

Station Road Swimming Pool

- 5.1 External redecoration of the whole building is now complete and its refreshed appearance has been well received.
- 5.2 Following an external survey of all the leisure sites, remedial electrical works will be carried out shortly at this site and at Blackbrook Pavilion.

Vivary Park Golf Course

- 5.3 Essential tree surgery work is being carried out on the golf course.
- 5.4 An Energy Performance Certificate survey of the Green Keeper's Workshop revealed that the lighting needed upgrading, which is scheduled to take place imminently.

Wellington Sports Centre

- 5.5 Tarmac repairs have been carried out to improve the safety in this popular car park.
- 5.6 Extensive work has also been carried out to improve the exterior of Wellington Sports Centre. Panels were re-rendered, brickwork repairs and pointing carried out and the whole outside of the building was then repainted and refreshed.
- 5.7 Remedial electrical works are also scheduled to be carried out at this site and at Wellsprings.
- 5.8 The Procurement Team are continuing their preparatory work for the replacement of the centre's air handling unit.

Valete Taunton Deane Borough Council!!!

Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams