

Annual Report 2019/20

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

1: Grass Cutting:

On taking this portfolio on, my first task was to look at why the grass cutting was such an issue, and to ensure that as soon as possible we were on track – more staff were taken on and very quickly the grass cutting was improved dramatically. The team at the DLO really pulled the stops out to achieve this.

2: Taunton Flower Show:

As in our manifesto, we expressed a wish to encourage activities for families within the new Council – therefore this very important event in Taunton had to be looked into as there was a poor relationship between the Flower Show organisers and the previous Council. Various meetings with the Flower Show representatives and myself, with officers, soon rectified this and we had a very successful event last August. I am sure this coming August we will see the same again. The Flower Show brings in a great deal of people to Taunton, not only sees them enjoying a great event, but also improved the foot-fall and people enjoying the Town itself.

3: Leisure:

The management of our leisure facilities by GLL came to an end and new contract was awarded to Everyone Active, which commenced on 1 August 2019. During the initial period there was huge investment in refurbishing all of the sites and installing new equipment throughout. Everything went smoothly with regard to this. It is a 10 year contract and I am sure, with my officers, we will ensure this continues to work well as we have started with a good relationship. Everyone Active have put a great deal of money into improving the leisure centres at Blackbrook, Wellsprings and Wellington.

The High Ropes in Vivary park issue of who owns them has now been resolved. Our officers met with GLL in London and came to a decision whereby we paid them a sum to resolve this issue and now the High Ropes are legally the possession of Somerset West and Taunton Council. This has been a long and drawn out procedure, but at long last and nearly twelve months of negotiations, a good result has been achieved. I will be looking into the possibility of a swimming pool being provided in the Minehead area, as it was included as a manifesto consideration, so this will be something to investigate for this coming year.

4: Bridges:

We have this last year seen the bridge at Wilton Lands next to Vivary Park repaired, as well as the one at Goodlands Gardens. Alongside these bridges, damage was done to Vivary Park main gates (almost certainly caused by the weather and not vandalism), which was repaired very quickly and generously by Montaz Engineering..

5: Green Flags:

We had tremendous success getting numerous Green Flags again in the last year. Next year we will be including Blenheim Gardens in Minehead for a Green Flag. I am sure our staff will work hard to ensure this is successful, along with the rest of the areas for which we apply for Green Flags. I must, here, thank all the volunteers involved in supporting our staff to gain these very prestigious Green Flag awards.

6: Vivary Park Concert:

Again, our manifesto indicated we wanted to see activities for families in our parks - Last summer we saw a very well attended and successful set of concerts over a weekend in the Park. The concerts were headed up by Tom Jones. This is such a well-liked, well attended weekend, that we will be having this event again this coming summer. Do look out for the event being advertised in due course.

7: Wellington Park:

Throughout last summer, events were organised by the Friends of the Park, and they are to do similar events this coming summer. I have very kindly been invited to open their Spring Fair on the 3rd May.

Finally, I would like to say "Thank you" to the staff who have supported me throughout this year; but not only them, the other members of the Executive that assisted me and supported me when I was off for a period of time due to a medical condition. "Thank you" all of you.

Cllr. Dr. Richard Lees,
Portfolio Holder for Sports, Parks and Leisure,
Somerset West and Taunton Council.