

Albert Park – Review of Expenditure

Albert Park is a Grade II listed Victorian Park situated near the centre of Abingdon on Thames. It is a private park, for public use, which is owned and maintained by Christ's Hospital of Abingdon, as are the immediate surrounding roads, pavements, and verges (Park Road and Park Crescent). It contains a workstation where the Park-Keeper is based and garages containing machinery and equipment for maintenance use. The Abingdon Bowling Club is situated within the Park and is fully responsible for the costs relating to the building leased from Christ's Hospital and the maintenance of the bowling green.

During the accounting year 1st January to 31st December 2021 the sum of £98,135 was spent on costs relating to Albert Park and the surrounding roads. Donations towards expenses received for 2021 total £4,100, being from Abingdon Town Council for which the Charity is extremely grateful.

Expenditure during the year consisted of a proportion of the salary paid to the Park-Keeper.

A Duty of Care survey was which completed in November 2020 for Albert Park and the surrounding roads. Works relating to this, which appear in the 2021 accounts amounted to £34,212. These involved the removal of dead trees, crown lifting and general safety measures to ensure the welfare of the trees and the users of the Park and areas around.

Again this year, there have been several instances of vandalism in Albert Park, in particular a memorial bench was again uprooted and the decision was taken to remove it to the safety of the workstation for the Summer months. This was organised by the Park Keeper with assistance from the regular maintenance contractor. The Park Keeper performs in-house repairs to damaged railings, fencing, benches and bins as often as he is able. Each year there are complaints about excess litter and dog fouling. However, we feel that with the park-keeper visiting each weekday and signs already in place regarding both of these things, there is little more to be done. As the charity's main responsibility is for the provision of almshouses and grants for those in need, every pound spent on Albert Park must be very carefully justified. We are of the opinion that more guidance or prohibitive signs would not make a difference to those who are already disregarding responsible behaviour.

We are awaiting quotes on repairs to the Conduit House, the historic listed structure on the eastern border, and these will then be put forward to the Conservation Trust for review and possible funding, however if this is not successful the Charity will bear the burden of costs, likely to be in the region of £30,000.

Despite its problems, we do feel that the Park is a very much loved and used by the townsfolk of Abingdon and it is a wonderful resource for public well-being. We will continue to maintain it to the best of our ability. However, we would still be willing to discuss Abingdon Town Council taking over control of Albert Park and the surrounding roads, pavements, and verges, if they wished to do so.

Gillian Kent
Clerk to the Governors