

Annual Town (Parish) Meeting – Wednesday 10th March 2021

Report from the Chair of Amenities and Recreation Committee

The Amenities and Recreation Committee is responsible for many different functions and activities : The Abingdon Common, Adverse weather arrangements, the Allotments, Abingdon in Bloom, Cemeteries (burials, maintenance of the two cemeteries and the lodges and Chapels), Christmas Lights, the Closed Churchyards (adjacent to St Helens and St Nicolas churches), Fairs, Fisheries, Recreation areas (the Town Council's play areas, open spaces, amenity land and sports pitches), Roysse Court Gardens, Street Furniture (bus shelters, public seats, town entry signs, notice boards), War memorial, Weed control (and litter picking and removal of fly posting but only on Town Council owned land), and the Works Depot (and plant & equipment).

This year (2020/21) the Committee has been responsible for expenditure expected to total £431k (compared to £503k last year), income of £82k (Cemetery fees, rent, sale of fishing permits) (£110k last year), resulting in a net expenditure of £349k (last year £392k). All the changes were the direct result of Covid-19.

Whilst I could report item by item, I thought it would be more interesting to highlight a few areas:

Bus Shelters : A replacement bus shelter has been installed at the south-bound stop at the Boundary House, and a new shelter installed in the Vineyard (by the Londis shop). The noticeboards at the Stratton Way bus shelters have been refurbished and brought back into service.



Cemeteries : The Cemeteries continue to receive compliments from residents and are a credit to the Town. It is estimated that during the Christmas period over 2,500 people visited the Cemeteries. Since last year sheep and bees have been sited in the Spring Road Cemetery - this has not only reduced maintenance costs but also aided the local environment. The Cemetery fees were adjusted to allow former residents who had been resident in an Oxfordshire care home in recent years to be interred at the residential rate. Work to identify possible sites, determine costs, draw up a business plan and a project timeline for a new cemetery has unfortunately been delayed by the Pandemic.

Christmas Lights : Once again the Christmas Lights attracted many favourable comments from both residents and visitors. This year the Council sourced the Christmas Tree and purchased large baubles for it which were widely appreciated. Unfortunately, the Pandemic meant that the annual Christmas tree recycling scheme usually provided by the Council was unable to take place.

Cycle Racks : new cycle racks have been sited outside the Guildhall.



Fairs: Sadly, it was necessary (upon the advice of the County Council and District Council Officers and with the agreement of the Fair Organisers) to cancel the Michaelmas and Run-Away Fairs in 2020.

Floral Displays : New planters have been installed to replace worn-out ones in the town centre – some of the old ones have been moved to the Reynolds Way shopping area and others are being offered to the allotment associations and local schools.



Noticeboards : New Noticeboards have been installed at Roysse Court and Bath Street and quotes obtained for a circular post-your-own-notice roundel.



Partnership Working : The Committee welcomed suggestions about tree-planting from the “Carbon Cutters” and was pleased to facilitate a joint tree-planting session with them at the Boxhill Walk recreation ground.

Play Equipment : The play equipment, which is regularly inspected, sited at the Town Council-run play areas has continued to be well used - appropriate Covid notices have been installed at each play area.

Roundabouts : Whilst the Town Council is not responsible for the roundabouts on several of the key entry points to the town it is aware that the several local businesses are keen to sponsor suitable floral displays. It has therefore continued to press the County and District Councils to find a quick, efficient, and practical means to facilitate this.

Seats : The “happy-to-chat” benches in the Market Place and on St. Helens Wharf have continued to be used in a Covid-appropriate manner. Worn-out benches on St. Helens Wharf have been replaced by matching recycled plastic benches.

Trees : In 2019 a comprehensive survey of the Council’s trees was carried out by an external tree specialist – works totalling £89k were recommended – since then some of the work (approx. £30k worth) has been carried out by the Council’s Works Team and a contract awarded to professional tree surgeons to carry out the remainder of the work.

The Committee was indebted to the Outdoor Services Manager and Works Team for carrying out the practical work to implement its ideas, and to Mr. Steve Rich, the Council’s former Head of Service who retired during the year - having given the Committee invaluable expert advice and guidance for many years.

CLlr Dr Jim Halliday
Chair of the Recreation and Amenities Committee 2020-2021