

Council Meeting – 30 July 2019

Report of Councillor Dr. Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

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

Section 1 - Community Leisure

Play and Recreation

- 1.1 Responsibility for S106 administration has transferred to the Planning Department since Transformation. This is a new area for the staff within the Planning team and the creation of processes and procedures is currently underway.
- 1.2 Responsibility for monitoring housing developments for payment trigger points and assisting communities and organisations with their ongoing projects currently lies with Rebecca Staddon, Christine Gale and Gail Sloman.
- 1.3 Although we are now one Council the IT systems and S106 policies are still separate and will be for the foreseeable future. This creates some challenges for streamlining the administration of the Agreements across both areas.
- 1.4 There are many S106 Agreements in place where money has been collected from developers and is available for community groups and parish councils to apply for and use on projects taking place within our local communities.
- 1.5 The S106 Agreements for the old Taunton Deane area are very specifically worded to give clear guidance on how and where the money collected from each development can be spent. Likewise, the S106 Agreements for the old West Somerset area require the money collected from each development to be spent in the parish where the development takes place.
- 1.6 The following works have been completed in the old Taunton Deane area, since the last report, using either the Replacement Play Equipment Budget and/or Section 106 Agreement funding:-
 - West Bagborough play equipment.
 - Bishops Hull Playing Field pavilion.
 - North Curry pavilion.
 - West Monkton Village Hall.
 - Cotford St Luke MUGA.
 - Beach Volleyball court, 7.5 metre tower and slide and Baseball pitch at Victoria Park.
 - West Monkton Cricket Club project.
 - Hamilton Road Allotments project.
 - Under 8s play equipment at Wilton Lands.

1.7 The following projects are ongoing:

- Minehead Town Council - New sports& community hall, Minehead
- Watchet Bowling Club – Hall and community gym
- Bicknoller Village Hall and Community Shop redevelopment project – Hall
- To be extended, the kitchen updated and the community shop enlarged.
- Minehead Town Council – Signage and noticeboards for Minehead

1.8 Play Equipment Repairs

1.9 There is a capital fund bid for replacement play equipment made each year. These funds are vital to allow us to replace broken and worn out play equipment in the children’s play areas that Somerset West and Taunton Council are responsible for in the old Taunton Deane area.

1.10 Planning will liaise closely with Localities (Parks and Open Spaces) regarding the appropriate spending of these funds.

Planned Works for 2019/2020:

- Acacia Gardens – replacement climbing frame.
- Bacon Drive – replacement infant roundabout.
- Blenheim Road – replacement spring equipment.
- Cashford Gate – replacement spring equipment.
- Chestnut Close – replacement swings and climbing frame.
- Comeytrove Park – replacement climbing frames.
- Denning Close – replacement spring equipment.
- Priorswood Park – replacement spring equipment, infant slide, climbing equipment and roundabout.
- Wellington Recreation Ground – replacement roundabout and play table.

There are also two further capital fund bids made each year. Both these capital fund bids, one is for voluntary halls, sports clubs and allotments and the other is for parish council and playing field committees.

Application for these funds are accepted each year by 30 June and awards are made of up to 33% of the project cost for voluntary village halls / sports clubs and 50% of the project costs for parish play areas.

Section 2 - GLL (Taunton Deane)

Community Sport and Health

2.1 Flexercise

GLL are now running four Flexercise sessions at sheltered housing halls, which are proving very popular and reaching capacity. They are providing an opportunity not only for physical activity but social fun times. In addition GLL have also run two workshop leaders courses; one for staff working in local care and residential homes and a second one for members of staff from Way Ahead.

2.2 Taunton and Wellington Health Walks

GLL's Wellington Walk Leader, Jenny Dilley, was recently awarded the Taunton Deane Citizenship award for her outstanding contribution to health walks in Wellington. Jenny contributes so much to this programme and it was great to see this recognised locally.

The new 2019 summer programme has recently been launched and the walks continue to attract many new people, especially in the Wellington area which has seen a surge of people moving to the area.

Taunton Well Walk group recently held their summer outing to Portland. On a glorious sunny day the group left Taunton with a full coach. The visit included two walks approximately 4 miles each, with shorter options for those that were unable to walk that distance.

2.3 Come and Try It Sessions

In partnership with Somerset Skills and Learning, GLL have launched a FREE series of 'come and try it' sessions to promote health and wellbeing across the partnership in May, June and July.

Local residents have been invited to come along and try the following sessions:

- High Ropes
- Beginners Yoga followed by Spa session
- Beginners Pilates followed by Spa session
- Stroke Improvement - front crawl and breaststroke
- Face your Fear - High Ropes session

Numbers have been very good, with 56 people attending so far.

2.4 Football

In April Wellsprings Leisure Centre, held a charity football match with local team TNF, who stepped in at the last minute when staff at Taunton Academy were unable to raise a team. The final score was 7-6 to TNF. The aim was to

raise funds for Cancer Research and a grand total of £434.44 was raised with cash and on line donations.

2.5 Parkinson's Golf Session

Customers who regularly attend the Parkinson's circuit session at Wellsprings, were invited along to play golf. Eddie Cullen from Vivary Golf Club supported the session with lots of hints and tips.

The session was thoroughly enjoyed by the whole group and a further session is being booked for later in the summer.

2.6 Seated Pilates

In April Wellsprings Leisure Centre set up a new session for customers currently on the Healthwise programme. Up to 18 people now attend weekly sessions and it is proving to be a very popular class.

2.7 Easter Egg Collection for Hospice

Customers and staff from Wellsprings Leisure Centre made a significant contribution during the run up to Easter with their chocolate egg collection. Over 35 eggs were presented to St. Margaret's Hospice, Taunton to be distributed to patients and their families over the Easter weekend.

2.8 Work Experience

Students from Kingsmead School, Bishop Fox's School, Brymore School and Heathfield School have spent time at Better Leisure centres in Taunton during May and July. Students have been at the centres for five days shadowing staff, setting up equipment, trying out the High Ropes and attending classes. Students from Castle School also attended Wellsprings Leisure Centre as part of their work experience week, for a tour and to speak to staff about their job roles.

2.9 Vibe Youth Sessions

Vibe Youth Sessions, held on a Friday night at Wellsprings Leisure Centre, are currently free to any young person attending. A wide range of activities is on offer to participate in, including football, cricket, table tennis, badminton and parkour.

In partnership with the local Tesco Express and Fareshare, staff from Wellsprings collect food each week for distribution to those young people attending.

Section 3 - Leisure Procurement Project

- 3.1** Our communities can look forward to the change of contact delivering our leisure services. Sports and Leisure Management will be taking over 1st August and have planned investments of £1.3m in the first few months, starting with Wellsprings. Dilapidations are currently being addressed by GLL at all sites and all will transfer under TUPE at midnight on 1st August. Members who attended the briefing held on 3rd July were able to meet a representative of SLM and understand more of their approach to increasing participation, and looking at how they can go out into the wider community i.e. the old West Somerset area offering facilities other than just in Taunton.

Section 4 - Parks and Open Spaces

4.1 Grass Cutting

The first quarter of the financial year was challenging due to the requirement to recruit a high volume of staff and the hire of agency staff to meet this shortfall in the short term. The staff have worked extremely hard to bring all areas up to the required standard, which has brought about much favourable comment. There is now a schedule in place for grass cutting across the Authority's area.

I am thankful to the staff which we kept and their efforts to ensure a service was delivered.

4.2 Firepool

Open Spaces have been part of the huge team effort to develop the Firepool site, using its links with local contractors and its own staff to produce a green vibrant area, that links the station area to the Cricket Ground.

4.3 Vivary Park

With the onset of summer, Vivary Park has seen lots of families use this town centre park.

To ensure the safety of the public, we have taken out of use the dangerous small foot bridge which links Wilton Lands to the area by the care home. Whilst a new bridge is being constructed, a temporary scaffold bridge has been installed to allow use of this area; it is envisaged that the new bridge will be installed within a few months.

4.4 Wellington

To highlight the Wellington Monument, we have had the Wellington Monument planter repaired and installed it, in pride of place, in the churchyard, in the town centre. Open Spaces have planted it up to provide a focal point in this area.

4.5 Minehead

Open Spaces have continued to work with Minehead Town Council, to deliver an outstanding service to the community. Both MTC and SWT bedding have been planted, to improve areas. Additionally the watering has been shared to ensure that these areas are maintained to the highest standard.

Section 5 - Property

Work continues across all of our leisure sites to ensure all electrical aspects have been inspected and up to date.

5.1 Wellsprings

The curvature of glass that surrounds the two floors of gyms will be replaced with thermal property glass, which will improve both the energy efficiency of the building and the aesthetics externally.

5.2 Vivary Park Golf Course

Essential tree surgery work will commence in August to ensure that all trees are healthy and safe.

New lighting has been installed in the Green Keepers Workshop and we have now acquired an Energy Performance Certificate.

5.3 Wellington Sports Centre

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.

The Procurement Team are continuing their preparatory work for the replacement of the centre's air handling.

Section 6 - Music in the Park.

6.1 We have just had a three day music in the park event at Vivary Park. It has been a great success and I have received many comments on how good people from Taunton and wider felt about the event.

6.2 Wellington Park has a very good programme of events going on throughout the summer months and I would encourage anyone that wishes to know more of the programme to contact Wellington Town Council.

6.3 I know that in Blenheim Gardens too have events going on there, and would suggest that anyone wanting to know more should contact Minehead Town council.

6.4 We are waiting for the International Green Flag Award results. Whilst these are regarding the parks in Taunton that have been entered, I am wanting to

expand the applications for next year to right across Somerset West and Taunton Council.

Section 7 - Taunton Flower Show

- 7.1 A successful meeting was held between Council officers, members of the Taunton Flower Show Committee and myself to discuss how the Council could support and showcase this major annual event. The Flower Show Chairman provided some helpful suggestions of how the Council could improve communication with the park user groups and gave useful feedback on how the Council could improve delivery of our services that support events being held in our parks. This was a very amicable meeting and I am sure that we Council and Flower Show will work together to ensure this extremely valued event is continued.

Section 8 - Green Rewilding Schemes

- 8.1 We are exploring the potential for rewilding and rainwater gardens across the District. We are working closely with communities and Friends of Parks groups and Parish Councils to explore the potential for re-wilding and rainwater gardens across the District. These schemes will support the Councils 'Green' agenda and Garden Town status, encouraging community action and provide areas for the community to enjoy and experience.

Councillor Dr. Richard Lees