

Full Council Meeting – 30 March 2021

Report of Councillor Richard Lees – Sports, Parks and Leisure

After a very difficult and unusual year I am happy to report the following service updates and improvements relating to 2020/21. I would like to thank the hard work of both the Council staff and those of our partners which have delivered these under very difficult circumstances.

Leisure (Everyone Active)

This year has seen the Council's leisure partner forced to close all centres and furlough the majority of staff due to lockdown three times in line with Government guidelines. Each closure and reopening has required different ways of operating and large communications plans to keep customers informed. All closures and changes have impacted the income available to sustain buildings and support staff during a difficult year. We were successful in obtaining a Grant through the National Leisure Recovery Fund via Sport England. SWT with EA submitted its application to receive funding to support our leisure centres, in respect to our health and fitness suites, studios, swimming pools and sports halls. The funding covers the period December 2020 to the end of March 2021.

When the facilities were open, Blackbrook, Wellington and Wellsprings offered the use of its gyms and classes, whilst the pools offered lane swimming and lessons; all proved extremely popular as did the golf course.

Parks and Open Spaces

The in-house team have been working hard to assist the Council with Covid-19 projects while still delivering the essential services and making the Parks and Open Spaces great places to visit. This was essential during the past year and these have seen increased usage during lockdowns.

Green Flag Awards

We had tremendous success getting numerous Green Flags again in the last year.

- Taunton's Vivary, Victoria and French Weir Parks have retained their Green Flags along with Swains Lane Nature Reserve in Wellington, which is managed by the Swains Lane Community Group. Wellington Park has retained a Green Flag Heritage Award (one of only two in the West Country). Comeytrove Park managed by the Friends of Comeytrove Park also retained a Community Green Flag Award.
- Minehead's Blenheim Garden has also received a Green Flag. This is the first Green Flag Award in West Somerset.

Events

Somerset West and Taunton had a vibrant event listing for 2020. Sadly due to Coronavirus (COVID-19), all events were cancelled except a few.

Play Areas

Work continued on the maintenance and replacement of play equipment stock. Whenever possible the team worked to ensure that equipment is not out of service for longer than necessary.

The following play equipment upgrades have been installed:

Vivary Park: slide and play panel

Wiveliscombe: Double spring play panel and play talk tube.

Taunton Green: slide and spring rocker

The following projects have been completed with use of Section 106 funding:

- Beach Volleyball court at Victoria Park
- West Monkton Cricket Club project
- Under 8s play equipment at Wilton Lands
- Corfe PC Football goal purchase and installation
- Corfe PC artificial turf purchase and installation
- Wellington Tennis club new courts project
- Carhampton Parish Council-additional play equipment

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