

Community and Leisure Services Committee Report

May 2022

In the summer, we hosted weekly free children's events in the gardens – run by the Community Arts group, who showcased a variety of dancing, music and craft events, with the added bonus of free packed lunches for those children that would ordinarily be receiving free meals in school, and enhanced by a bouncy castle and an ice cream van. Sadly, the kiosk in the garden could not be operational at the time, but this has recently been removed and we hope to organise some kind of refreshment vendor at least for the summer months until a permanent replacement can be installed.

The entertainment is scheduled again for this year, to be rebranded as Earth Arts. We will also be hosting free adult yoga sessions. Speaking of the Memorial Garden, we have a brand new Jubilee flower bed which we hope will be nicely established by the time of the celebrations. In accordance with the council's environmental aspirations, we have added a bird feeding station (which is proving very popular as the birds are now lying in wait for Steve to arrive and refill it) and a bug hotel. Swift nesting boxes have been installed just in time for their nesting season as the council has adopted the swift as their species of the year.

A comprehensive reassessment of the small play area is underway to make it more inclusive. This had been expected to be a simple exercise to replace a swing seat and purchase a new roundabout but it has turned out to need a complete overhaul in order to get it right. We have been consulting with some parents of children with special needs for their input.

The wall-top fencing for security purposes has been agreed upon, and we are awaiting an installation date from the contractor.

The external shutters around the pavilion veranda were installed, and not only do they look attractive, but it is hoped this will prevent the anti-social behaviours that were taking place in the shelter there.

In the autumn, a huge bulb-planting mission was undertaken at various locations around the town, both with a mechanical planter and hand-planting – our town keeper drilled around 600 holes in various places, and 1,500 holes at Munchkins Green where local volunteers came along to do the planting, sustained by tea and biscuits. Further planting is programmed for next year.

We have implemented a litter-picking equipment loan scheme to help keep our town tidy.

The SLA with West Suffolk Council has been continued for maintenance around the town, and a new relationship forged between us for regular meetings and monitoring, which is promising.

We are also looking to continue to build a solid working relationship with Jockey Club Estates.

The tin shed at the cemetery is gone now, and the area is looking better. Reseeding of the grass area is due to take place soon to further enhance it. All the burial deeds have now been scanned and are held electronically, which makes retrieval simpler.

The lighting at the clocktower was upgraded, which was designed to give us control over the colour scheme so we could use it to promote various events or celebrations, though there have been some teething problems with the software.

We have committed to "going greener", and are in the process of replacing our diesel van with an electric one. We are on the waiting list as the supply is somewhat limited currently.

We have run many events, both large and small, already in this year, such as:

Soapbox Derby – attended by thousands of people from Newmarket and beyond, and raised some funds for local charities

Remembrance Day Event – War Memorial ceremony, High Street parade and service at Tattersalls

Christmas – Giant snow globe and Santa (very popular - long queues), free mince pies, DJ, choir, town band; plus supporting Discover Newmarket with their Wizard of Oz trail on the Yellow Brick Road; plus assisting in the High Street lights switch-on event by Newmarket BID

High Street Bombing Commemoration – on the windiest day of the year! New plaque commissioned and installed for ceremonial unveiling, presentation, historical items display, tea and cake

Imminent preparations are underway for:

Festival of Suffolk Jubilee Torch relay;

Twin town visitors from France;

Soapbox Derby 2022;

And the BIG ONE:

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebration weekend, with tea dance, beacon lighting, bagpiper, and official beacon tart on Thursday, big High Street parade and fun day on the Severals on Friday, and Sunday brings old-school sports day for children and afternoon tea at the museum on Palace Street, puppet theatre and children's entertainers at All Saints' Church. Red, white and blue bunting will criss-cross the High Street to add to the festival spirit.

The Human Resources committee has responsibility for staffing matters for Newmarket Town Council under the leadership of the Town Clerk.

Cathy Whitaker was appointed Town Clerk on 1st June 2021. She continues to hold the post of Responsible Finance Officer.

The Town Council now employs a small but stable, motivated and efficient team under the management of Cathy Whitaker.

Tracey Symonds was appointed as the Deputy Town Clerk on 1st September 2021.

Steve Mayes returned to the post of Town Keeper on 1st February 2022 and Jo Ferreira was appointed to the post of Administration Assistant on 7th March 2022.

The staff continue to attend in-service training courses, such as the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and those organised by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC).

Kevin Yarrow

HR Committee

The Newmarket Neighbourhood Plan continues to be a 'work in progress'.

A recent example is that of the bio-diversity working group being established and a species is to be adopted annually. The current species is the swift. This community action has resulted in nesting sites and nesting boxes being established to encourage breeding in the town.

Working groups comprising councillors and members of the public are currently addressing a range of issues:

- Climate change
- Public Rights of Way
- A Newmarket Community Town museum
- Health & Wellbeing:, guided by Chris Pyburn Manager Suffolk County Council. Opportunities for physical activity, volunteering & participation, means to reduce health inequalities, encouraging involvement and 'ownership' of the town (public realm), healthy lifestyles
- The market: The market charter. The location of the market is contentious and three locations are currently debated, the High Street, Palace Street and the Market Place.
- Affordable Housing supported by the Community Land Trust organisation.
- St Felix site: that the West Suffolk Council Local Plan be challenged for a change to the plan which currently provides for housing on the site, to no housing to allow for the provision of a community sports hub.
- The clearance of 'the Brook' with other agencies, contributing £2000 to West Suffolk District Council.
- The Public Realm initiatives: Bulb & tree planting, Yellow Brick Road

Kevin Yarrow

Neighbourhood Plan committee



Development and Planning Committee Report

May 2022

The Development and Planning Committee can comment on all planning and licencing applications in Newmarket. This year the committee has focused on a return to the Memorial Hall for meetings, first in the main hall for distancing considerations then finally back in the council chambers. Working from home had been quite effective, allowing councillors to access the West Suffolk Council planning portal on their own computers during the meeting, so we have brought that back with us and use the projector to display plans as much as possible.

The committee set up task and finish working groups to work through Public Rights of Way amongst other activities.

We continue to reference our Newmarket Neighbourhood Plan and have included an expanded guide to material planning considerations and parking requirements to our agenda packs, so all councillors can be informed when making objections to applications. As ever, we are only considered a neighbour response with West Suffolk Council and sought to engage with them to learn how we can be more effective moving forward.

Chris O'Neill

Cllr. Chris O'Neill,

Chair of NTC Development and Planning Committee



Finance & Policy Committee Report (2021-2022)

May 2022

It is the task of the Finance and Policy committee to scrutinise the financial position of the town council; to review the policy documents; to formulate medium- and long-term plans and to review grant funding applications received by the Council.

Through the hard work of our council officers, although we had a number of unexpected costs, income from the use of the Severals Pavilion and Memorial Hall was significantly above our budgeted income, and the council ended the year within budget. Due to the need for replenish our financial reserves and fund earmarked projects for 2022 to 2023 it was necessary to increase the precept by a small amount, although we were mindful of the cost of living increases that we are all facing this year.

During the year we looked at increasing the efficiency of the council. This was achieved through a review of the terms of reference for committees, improving reporting of information and adjusting how many committee meetings take place every month. This will free up council officers time to work on projects. It will also allow councillors and other interested parties to utilise working groups to look in detail at issues affecting the town, and produce detailed reports for the council and committees to consider. These changes will take place from next month.

We have also reviewed our financial regulations and other policy documents to ensure that the council is able to operate in an efficient manner.

Douglas Hall

Cllr. Douglas Hall,
Chair of NTC Finance & Policy Committee