



Saffron Walden Annual Town Meeting 14th March 2023

Assets & Services Committee

Chair's Report from Cllr Dave McLellan

The purpose of the Assets & Services committee is to work with and support the officers in looking after the assets of the town council and providing services to the town's residents and visitors

Assets

The assets of the town council include playing fields at Herberts farm, Crabtrees and Anglo-American, playgrounds on the Common, Anglo American, Golden Acre and Little Walden. In addition, we have Bridge End Gardens, The Common, the Cemetery, the Battle ditches and some of the towns allotments. And of course, the Town Hall itself. Key achievements this year include:

- The purchase of the former NatWest bank building next to the Town Hall at a very good price. This will allow us to create new purpose built offices for the town council staff and bring a landmark building back to life. Using the ground floor for retail /commercial will provide annual income negating the need to be sole reliance on the precept.
- Work has begun on the refurbishment of the play area at Anglo American with a view to providing equipment for use across all ages, the refurbishment should be completed by mid-April.
- It's been great to see the new football pitches at Lime Avenue coming into use along with the associated changing facilities. We have worked in partnership with Matt Clare at Saffron Walden Community Football Club and a thanks to their support and maintenance of the site.
- Bridge End Gardens looks better every year and many of the trees and hedges we planted around the town over the last few years have really started to mature. Bridge End has hosted a couple of prestigious gardening and hedge cutting courses this year bringing in people from all over the country.
- The Common played a key role in last summer's events, including the Jubilee, the Carnival and Community Day. The beach proved very popular with families.
- The Council won Essex awards for playing fields, Golden Acre and the Common (Gold) and Crabtrees, and Tudor Park (Silver).
- Terry Frostick was awarded Market Manager of the year by the Local Markets association. A well-deserved reward for Terry and his team.

Services

As well as maintaining the Council's assets, (mowing, watering, planting, pruning, mending, painting, sweeping and cleaning) the Council put on several events for the public. Colette, our new Events and Activities Officer has been fantastic at coming up with and organising events and importantly getting sponsorship for them, enabling us to make them free and accessible for all residents. During times of economic hardship with household budgets stretched, SWTC has recognised the importance of providing affordable and free events to our community.

SWTC key events this year include:

- The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June was a brilliant free weekend of events on the Common enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The Community day gave many local clubs and organisations and opportunity to meet residents and we had great feedback
- Queen Elizabeth's passing and the subsequent period of mourning was managed smoothly and respectfully by staff. The proclamation of King Charles III was well organised and appreciated by all generations of residents.
- The Christmas lights switch-on and lantern parade was as enjoyable and well attended as usual.
- Over the summer holidays, weekly activities took place in the Market Square, many put on by third parties and provided free to participants.
- Free cinema screenings were put on in the town hall with something for all ages.
- Following Covid we were able to fully open Golden Acre for booking again and return to having weddings and other events in the Town Hall – both generating a total income of £81,670 so far this financial year.
- In partnership with the Churches Together the Council has established a free warm hub providing somewhere for residents to come for company, warmth and hot drinks and soup through the winter.
- Other events included a Ukrainian day to welcome and introduce Ukrainian families being looked after in the town and Well-being over 40's day.
- Preparations are already underway for the Coronation later this year.
- The council is working with UDC to bring the Garden Rooms back into community use this year, as well as hosting summer events in the bandstand.
- Further health and well-being events are already being planned for the forthcoming year

It's when chairing the Assets and Services Committee that you realise the real asset of the Town Council are the officers and staff without whom none of the events above would have happened. Many of the events are at weekends or evenings and the staff are always happy to help in whatever way they can. Even now, many of the operations staff are working in the NatWest building, helping to bring it back into use.

We really are very lucky to have such a committed and skilful team.