

RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

RECREATION, LEISURE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

It is only when one sits down and reflects on the last year that you realize how much work has been done by Councillors and staff in both maintaining and improving recreational facilities in the town. It is on that note that I would like to express my very great thanks to my fellow Councillors and also to all of the staff who have worked so hard to keep your recreation, leisure and open spaces in such good condition.

They have done so much that I can only draw out a few of the most notable ones to mention this evening.

ALLOTMENTS AND CEMETERIES

Work is progressing with the design for the roadway into the cemetery extension. There has been a little delay. This is largely due to some new environmental protection legislation that requires us to have certain short surveys carried out before the site can be used as a cemetery. Hopefully, we will get the green light on the site and we can commence the work in the not too distant future.

We have a high demand for allotments. Unfortunately, the price of land is such that we just cannot afford to buy more land to meet that demand. We have, therefore, completely reviewed our Allotment Waiting List and this has resulted in twenty people being taken off that list simply because they no longer needed an allotment or failed to reply from three letters from us. Our allotments are very large by modern standards. Many working people find it difficult to properly maintain a large allotment to the standard they would hope to achieve. In some cases, that has led to the Council terminating the tenancy. In order to overcome this problem, and also to help us reduce the size of the waiting list and accommodate more applicants, we have decided to halve the size of all allotments. They are still large and are big enough to provide ample produce for a family's own use. When one of the large allotments becomes vacant, it is automatically reduced in size to allow us to take two people off the waiting list.

LONG LANE

The provision of the sports pitches on the ten acre field have been an outstanding success. We are still trying to buy additional land in that area so that we can provide new bowls facilities, perhaps an all-weather area and tennis courts and netball facilities and also an outdoor exercise trail. These are commonly known as 'outside gyms.'

CARVER'S RECREATION CENTRE

This continues to be one of the two main green areas in or near the town centre. The transfer of the football pitches to Long Lane has enabled us to improve the outfield of the cricket square and, indeed, provide a few extra wickets within the main square. During this year, the refurbishment of the Pavilion will be complete.

The Drop In Centre, established only last year, also continues to be exceedingly successful. I am grateful to the County Councillor Nigel Clarke and to District Councillors Jeremy Heron and Steve Rippon-Swaine for allocating monies towards the further improvement of this facility. I know that the youth workers who run the Drop In on a voluntarily basis, and the young people who attend, are really grateful for the support the Town Council and the Councillors are providing for them on this very informal facility.

THE BICKERLEY

We continue to quietly improve this area. Firstly, I would like to express my thanks to District Councillor Christine Ford, who has allocated her personal allowance for facilities for the provision of the new seat along the footpath of the Bickerley. I know that the seat and the footpath are very well used and my guess is that this seat is the first of more than one. All the way along the Bickerley you will see improvements from those of five or six years ago. We are trying to maintain the grass just that little bit better and also are trying to restore the embankments up to the old railway line to the condition they were in when the railway ran through the town. Some of the old self set saplings and the wild undergrowth are being removed. At the same time, areas of natural habitat, of birds and insects, are being preserved. At the western end of the Bickerley and including Pocket Park, some further enhancement works have been carried out and we hope to implement a major scheme to give better footpath access adjoining the Millstream and views over the meadows to the south of the Bickerley. For the first time, disabled people will be able to get close to the Millstream in their wheelchairs. As an extension to the Bickerley, we were hoping to provide a footpath alongside the Millstream through to West Street. We have agreed terms with the Scouts, who own the first piece of land affected, but have been unable to agree terms with the Social Club who own the next piece. We are continuing to try to negotiate with the Social Club and hope that it will not be necessary to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order in order to achieve a long lasting and beneficial facility for the people of the town, which is currently being blocked by a pretty small number of people. It is hoped, however, that it will be possible to resolve this issue and next year report good progress on the provision of this footpath.

CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

We tried, with not a little trepidation, introducing a Summer holiday play scheme at Carvers last year. I am pleased to say that it was an outstanding success and we will be providing similar entertainment in this year's school Summer holidays. This year we hope that we will also be able to arrange to have an ice-cream van on the site to provide refreshments to the young children during the course of their activities on Carvers.

Finally, can I reiterate my thanks to my fellow Councillors, the Town Clerk and the staff for their wonderful support throughout my term of office and for the hard work they have all put in to deliver recreational facilities for the people of Ringwood.

Cllr Neville Chard
Chairman