

Earley Town Council
Amenities and Leisure Committee
Electors' Report 2020/21

Introduction

This year has been a difficult year for Earley Town Council (ETC), as it has for all areas of community life. Due to the ongoing Pandemic, there have been restrictions on what we have been able to achieve. Committee meetings have been held virtually, once this was permissible by law. Much of the work of the Council this year has focused around the impact of Covid 19, but there have also been some opportunities as well.

Highlights of activities that have been carried out during the last year are:

Community Centres

- Deep cleaning and decorating of all four Community Centres whilst they were closed during full lockdowns.
- A significant amount of maintenance, including a programme of upgrading of the Fire alarm systems in all Community Centres and the Council offices.
- Hall lettings have taken place where this has been permitted, with appropriate risk assessments in place and adhering to the government guidelines on types of lettings allowed, hygiene and social distancing.
- Pre-schools have continued to operate throughout the pandemic within Government restrictions.
- Radstock Social Club has sadly closed, and a Council working party was set up to discuss the future use of this space. Various ideas have been discussed and the club spaces have been cleared and are in the process of being cleaned and decorated. It is hoped that further progress will be made on this, as Pandemic restrictions start to ease.

Sol Joel Park

- Although the cricket clubs were unable to play in 2020/21, football clubs have continued to meet where Government restrictions allowed.
- The Pavilion has been decorated.
- A significant grounds' maintenance project was carried out in preparation for the 2021/22 sports season.

Town Council Offices and Help Shop

- The Town Council Offices have remained open throughout the pandemic. Officers have adhered to social distancing and strict hygiene measures were put in place to maintain staff safety.
- The Help Shop and Council chamber have been decorated.
- The Help Shop was re-opened on 27th July to visitors in person, once restrictions allowed, and was very popular in supplying items such as blue rubbish bags, dog waste bags, food waste caddy bags, garden waste bags etc. This was especially useful as most other sites that would normally supply these remained closed.

- When the Help Shop has been open it has become a drop off point for “Ali’s Recycling” (see ETC website for details of what recycling is collected).
- Unfortunately, the Help Shop had to close to the public again in December in line with Government restrictions. It reopened again on 29th March 2021 and is again providing a useful service to residents.
- At all times during the pandemic, Help Shop staff have remained available to assist residents and answer queries either by telephone or email. Our officers have dealt with approximately 6,500 queries over the past year, despite the significant impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on the operating of the Help Shop service..

Maiden Erleigh Lake and Nature Reserve

- ETC has provided a response to DEFRA’s reservoir emergency onsite flood plan consultation and an emergency plan is in place.
- The Wednesday Volunteers Group have been busy, when restrictions have allowed, in assisting the Park Rangers with a number of projects.
- The Park Rangers have carried out a very significant amount of maintenance work over the last year.
- Fishing at Maiden Erleigh Lake has continued for permit holders and this has been a popular activity. The Water Bailiffs have continued their duties to monitor fishing.

Local Walks Project

Earley Town Councillors and Officers have been actively involved with the Loddon Local Ramblers group to produce 12 local walks of varying lengths. The Town Council has publicised details of these walks on posters around the town and the Town Council’s website, where they can also be downloaded.

Youth Work

The Youth sub-committee has been developing a Youth Outreach project which has included paid Youth workers and volunteers. The aim of this work is to support young people who might not otherwise engage with Youth Groups. Progress has been made with Youth workers chatting to and getting to know young people in local parks, but the work has unfortunately been hampered by Pandemic restrictions. ETC are seeking to recruit a Senior Youth Worker with a view to expand its youth work in Earley.

Despite the Pandemic it has been a busy year! I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Earley Town Council Officers. They have often gone above and beyond to keep things running and as Chair of the Amenities and Leisure Committee, and on behalf of all the Committee, I would like to give our sincere thanks for all their hard work during what has been a particularly challenging time for all.

Councillor Alison Newton
Chair of Amenities and Leisure Committee