

Hawkwell Parish Council Annual Report for the Civic Year 2020/21

As the Civic Year draws to a close we reflect on the impact of Covid-19 on all our lives. The resulting unprecedented measures in place have affected the way we live and work and have changed almost everything that most of us take for granted.

In light of the pandemic, Council stands proud in having continued to fulfil all its statutory obligations within the Parish. While Parish Council meetings were suspended for a few months, Council business continued uninterrupted with staff adapting to different working practices, including working from home. Council is grateful to its hardworking staff, together with contractors, who continued to provide important services for residents, while adhering to ever-changing, strict Covid guidelines. Our parks and open spaces continue to be maintained to a highly commendable standard and these areas were especially important for residents during the year, enabling many to get fresh air and exercise during the lockdowns.

Regular visitors to Magnolia Park Nature Reserve may have noticed the pathway improvements near the pond which has made this area more accessible for all. Pond drainage works were also completed near the pond to improve the surface water run-off. The pond continues to receive periodic silt remediation treatments which help encourage a healthy pond environment and the water is now clearer than it has been in a long time.

The Magnolia Park Adult Gym had to be fenced off for long periods in accordance with Covid restrictions but it is now accessible again and Council hopes there will be no need to fence it off again. Playgrounds also had to close during the first lockdown and Council took the opportunity to repair the safety surfacing under the swings at the Magnolia Park playground during this time.

During Winter, the Parks Committee undertook a review of its parks equipment and some items that weren't being utilised or needed replacing were sold. New pieces of equipment were also purchased to enable certain works to be carried out more efficiently.

Residents may recall that Council initiated a phased project in 2018/19 to upgrade all 150 Parish owned street lights from old Sox lamps to LED lampheads. These lamps give out less CO2 emissions, reduce light pollution and cut the energy cost by around half. Council is pleased to report that the project was completed in September 2020, ahead of schedule.

Parish now also has two defibrillators for community use; one is situated at the Jet Garage along the Ashingdon Road and the other outside the Hawkwell Baptist Church on Rectory Road. Over the last few years Council has promoted and supported the Police Community Specials Project and it was hoped it would lead to volunteer police officers on dedicated patrols within Hawkwell, partly funded by the Parish Council.

Regrettably, no candidates have come forward to date but the project remains open. The Parish Council recently undertook a trial with a security company to carry out patrols around the Parish, including in its parks and open spaces, particularly to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within the area. The trial has now finished and Council will decide whether to continue with this initiative; Council would be pleased to hear residents' views.

Council's traditional annual Christmas Parcels project had to be streamlined this year due to the logistical problems caused by the pandemic. Members felt it important that elderly residents who live alone in Hawkwell didn't miss out and it was possible to deliver luxury boxes of biscuits to 217 residents. The biscuits were greatly appreciated by the recipients, many preferring the biscuits to the usual food parcel. Thanks to the Members and volunteers who assisted the staff in organising and delivering the biscuits; this was in itself a challenge due to the social distancing measures in place at the time. This year again saw great support from Waitrose who worked closely with Council in sourcing and delivering the biscuits to the Council offices.

Council recently launched a Community Engagement Facebook Page and encourage residents to follow it. Council maintains a website containing lots of interesting information which is now compliant with the Website Accessibility Regulations that came into force during the Civic Year.

The Parish Council continues to face ongoing challenges in the decline of its membership. It has had one Member step down during the year as an indirect result of the pandemic, so it continues, as always, to seek new Members to join. It goes without saying that the Parish Council is far stronger in supporting its community to grow and develop services for its residents if it is fully constituted in its membership. If you, or anyone you know, has a community spirit and a desire to make improvements in the local area then contact the Clerk and take a look at what becoming a Parish Councillor means and how to go about it.

Lastly, I hope that this new Civic Year will see a return to more normal life for everyone.

Cllr Roy Patient
Chairman

Summary of Income & Expenditure (2020/21 un-audited)

	2019/20	2020/21
Precept Income	£183,016	£188,995
Interest Received	£947	£418
Other Income	£100	£0
Total Income	£184,063	£189,413
Total Expenditure	£181,152	£157,631