

## Grounds Update

The Grounds team have continued to operate with 3 team members successfully although now in the height of the season the need for additional hours as agreed by Council is essential to implement. The team is complimented with our part time caretaker who works 20 hours a week.

During the heat and sunshine the team have continued to prioritise daily walkarounds, inspections (particularly play areas) and litter picking (Monday to Friday) in order to ensure our play areas and Recreation Grounds are safe and litter free. These jobs are carried out as the first task of the day. We now have a 7 day a week operation in as much as the weekend 'caretaker' role implemented 10 months ago again has this as the key priority (Saturday & Sunday). During the summer months the grounds team starts at 6.30am to carry out these tasks. At the weekend, our caretaker starts around 7am and prioritises both Recreation Grounds, Iver first, to ensure it is in good order for any Saturday / Sunday use by Delaford Colts.

In the extreme heat week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> July, temperatures and sun levels were monitored in conjunction with the team and working hours modified in order to carry out the Council's duty of care to its employees. We strictly enforced our usual process of knowing where team members were and that we knew when they moved and where they were going. The team were provided with some general information from HSE concerning sun protection, heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stress. I'm proud of the mature approach they continue to take when dealing with hot and extreme weather. Whilst they are very regularly briefed and updated, they respond positively and fully appreciate my role in ensuring their health and wellbeing as my priority. The use of the 'Grounds' WhatsApp group is a valuable tool for constant communication, especially reminders about the heat.

We continually review the schedule of tasks and prioritise as necessary. The team continue to base their prioritisation on safety of users and themselves first followed by identifying where potential for complaints and issues may be identified by users that need resolving. I am very pleased to say the level of issues / complaints on things under our control is minimal and where they occur, we react as soon as possible. As pleasing is the number of compliments we receive either verbally or via the office or via the 'pay a compliment' form on our website. Whilst I'm out on our sites I too receive compliments on the work being carried out. One such example is the collaboration with residents of Universal House Swan Meadow) where there is extensive growth of weeds etc beside it and we agree with the residents when it needs a major strim and this is prioritised. This year we received several compliments that it was actioned so quickly. Inevitably the team get to know regular users of our open spaces and they continue to act as good ambassadors for the Parish Council.

With the new opportunity for increased seasonal hours we have identified a number of priorities for the next three months. These include preparation of the pitches for the football season, an 'aggressive' effort at the Churchyard where growth occurs quickly with the changing weather patterns and a programme to prepare less well used or 'popular' areas where we still have responsibility for like St Leonard's, Cottage in the Woods path and Mud Wharf for the rest of Summer and the autumn months.

The team continue to prioritise the use of appropriate PPE and have recently received new uniform supplies including footwear. The team worked with the Deputy Clerk to select the variety of options available as uniform. Uniform is branded and therefore the public can identify our team when they are working. For the Summer, appropriate quality shorts have been provided with agreed guidelines on when shorts are appropriate to be worn for tasks and where full leg protection is required. Again, the team discussed the possibility of shorts as part of the uniform offering with the Officers in a proactive way and understood our requirement for safety and wellbeing. We continually review PPE requirements and supplies and as a result of the recent hot weather the next step is to look at suitable hats / head coverings as currently the team tend to provide their own hats. Branded hats will be a good addition. The team are proud of their new uniform and know that uniform and particularly PPE is essential for safe operations and that regular replacement is essential to keep them safe and fresh.

The team collaborate well with the officers in order to obtain the necessary supplies they need for the day-to-day operation and we have developed simple processes for procurement this year. This includes items such a strimmer line, lubricants, and line marking paint

Alongside the routine essential tasks, the team relish the opportunity to do ad-hoc jobs and tasks that crop up. This uses their skills and often their DIY skills. In a lot of cases doing a task 'internally' means it can be done quickly and without the need to call in tradesmen and incur charges. Our Caretaker has extensive experience of minor repairs and the whole team work well sharing knowledge and experience. With his role including 1 day in the week, the whole team work well together and provide support for each other. They are good at dealing with changing priorities.

In this year there has only been 2 incidents that have required an entry in the accident book. These were both minor, require minor first aid and where needed appropriate action was taken to reduce any future risk. All members of the Grounds Team are qualified first aiders and the training will be updated in November 2022.

There continues to be minimal sickness absence from within the team and the team are reminded and appreciate the need to take Annual Leave regularly and leave is in order for them to be rested. They accept the need for the Council to demonstrate their duty of care. They also recognise the level of man management they receive and the engagement and close working now between the officers and the team.

As the winter months approach we are again jointly developing a maintenance schedule for equipment and a training plan. The team meet regularly with the Deputy Clerk at meetings and ad-hoc when out and about. Again they see this as a positive. This is demonstrated by the recent formal consultation process.

The team remain engaged and committed and continue to work for the good of our residents and users of our open spaces.

**Jeremy Day**  
**Deputy Clerk**  
July 2022