

Crewkerne Town Council

NEWSLETTER

Summer – Issue 64



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A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



The last few months have been very strange indeed. We have seen shops and businesses closed by the Government, we have been told to stay at home and not go out unless it is essential and then to stay 2 meters apart from another human. The most vulnerable among us have been told to shield themselves from everybody and families have been split during lockdown. We have been paid to stay at home and suddenly become teachers to our children.

As this is being written, non-essential shops are open, pubs and restaurants are being allowed

to open with strict measures in place and I think the whole of Crewkerne will be pleased to see hairdressers and dentists back to work.

This has not been an easy time for anybody, Crewkerne, and I would like to say THANK YOU to you, Crewkerne, for abiding by the rules laid upon us and keeping the town safe.

Special thanks must go to Crewkerne Community Church who mobilised so quickly after lockdown to ensure that vulnerable residents could still receive their prescriptions and shopping. They delivered hot meals to those that needed them and offered a telephone support service to anyone that needed regular contact with another human.

Thanks must also go to businesses like Barrett Bros. Butchers and James Hardware for organising delivery services to Crewkerne and the surrounding villages. These businesses went beyond the call of duty to keep us all fed and functioning.

As we ease out of lockdown, please remember all the community groups, shops and their workers that worked so hard to keep us all going. Crewkerne has proved itself to be an amazing town to live in. Let us continue to support local businesses, they will need our support more than ever now.

It is also important to remember that the virus is still out there, so continue to wash your hands regularly and stay safe.

Coronavirus and the Town Council

LOCKDOWN IMPACT

Like everyone else in Crewkerne, the Town Council has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Since lockdown was imposed in March, the Council has closed the Town Hall office, Local Information Centre and the Victoria Hall to the public.

But the work of the Council goes on and office staff have been working from home and have been manning the office phones. Council grounds staff also continue with their job of managing the town's recreation grounds and open spaces. Council meetings have recommenced remotely using zoom and are working quite effectively, but we recognise that they are a poor substitute for face-to-face meetings, and we look forward to the time when we are given the go-ahead to re-commence meetings at the Town Hall.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Council elections are normally held in May, when the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Committee Chairmen are elected. But because of the pandemic, the Government has allowed councils to postpone their elections until next year. The Town Council have taken advantage of this option.

Cllr. Kathy Head said "with so much upheaval caused by the coronavirus, the Council felt that it was important to maintain continuity. So all Council positions, from Mayor to Committee Chairmen, have been retained until May 2021".

OPENING UP

The Council have now opened all of its playgrounds and the Falkland Square public toilets. Please pay attention to the covid safety notices displayed at these amenities – they are there for your safety!

Work is also ongoing to make the Town Hall "covid secure", and we anticipate that both the Local Information Centre and the Council office will soon be open to the public.

George Reynolds Centre Update



Since opening in November 2012, the George Reynolds Centre (GRC) has been managed by the not-for-profit charitable company known as Crewkerne Sports & Youth Activities Ltd (CSYAL). Unfortunately, due to continuing financial difficulties, CSYAL has been forced to close the charity. The Council would like to express their thanks to the CSYAL Directors – who were all unpaid - for their hard work in trying to make a success of the centre.

With the closure of CSYAL, responsibility for the management of the GRC has now reverted back to the Town Council. The first priority for the Council has been to undertake a number of outstanding building maintenance tasks. In addition the Council is planning to improve the interior environment of the GRC main hall and bar areas through the installation of air conditioning. Another improvement being investigated by the Council is the installation of solar panels on the roof of the building, both to reduce the building's electricity costs and as part of the Council's commitment to the environment.

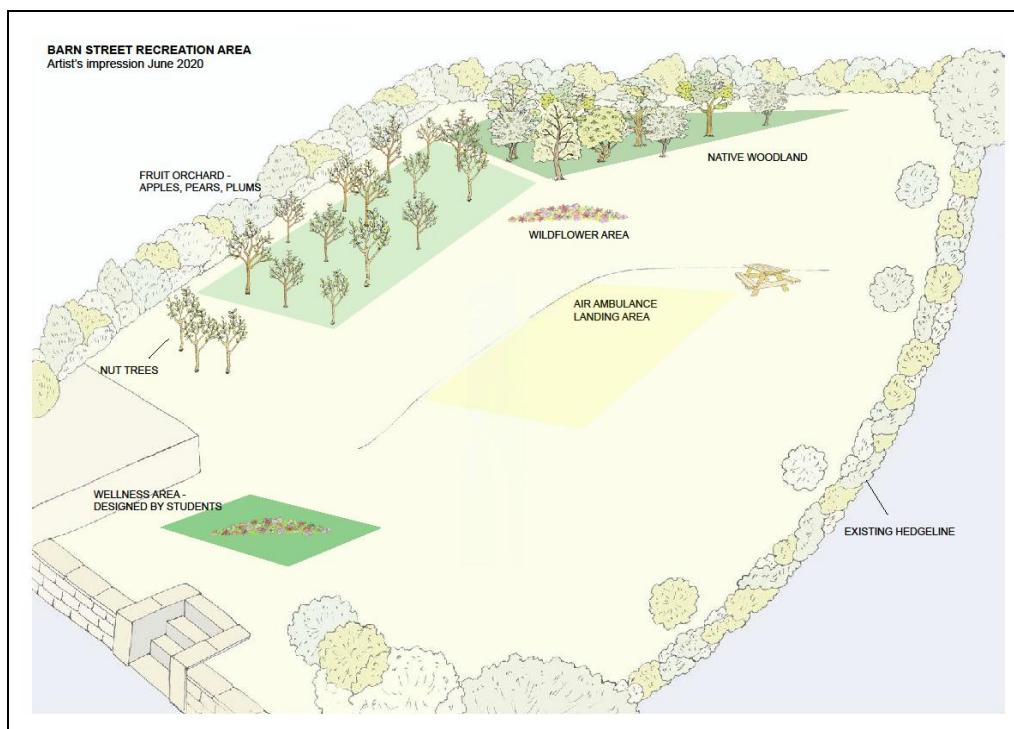
If you want to use the GRC, then the message from the Council is simple: please be patient! We are working hard to sort out the outstanding maintenance jobs on the building and to put in improvements, and we plan to re-open the GRC in September.

COUNCIL EVENTS UPDATE

In order to comply with Government guidelines on social distancing, the Council has regrettably taken the decision to cancel this year's Henhayes Summer Fete and Cemetery Open Day events.

Looking further ahead, the Council and Christmas Committee are considering options for Christmas events for the town which respect the need for social distancing. More details to follow in the next issue of the newsletter. But what is clear already is that the Christmas Committee will need more volunteers to help make any Christmas events happen in the town. If you would like to lend your support, please contact Laura Gowers at the Town Council.

BARN STREET RECREATION GROUND PROJECTS



The Council have two projects in development for the Barn Street recreation ground. The first project involves the planting of a number of trees kindly donated by a local resident. Cllr. Hartshorn commented "the tree planting scheme will create three distinct areas: native woodland trees, a community orchard and small wildflower areas. These areas will add interest to the recreation ground and support the environmental aims of the Council, whilst still retaining the majority of the recreation ground as an open grassed area. The need for the air ambulance to land here has also been taken into account in the plan".

The second project is the brainchild of a group of students at the Maiden Beech Academy, who want

to create a wellbeing garden area. Cllr. Kathy Head, the Mayor, said "the Maiden Beech students have shown real initiative in coming forward with a proposal for a wellbeing garden area. With the stresses imposed on us all by the coronavirus pandemic, the idea of a wellbeing garden area is so very relevant. The Council is keen to support this initiative and to help the students get their project off the ground".

The Council are very keen to hear the views of residents on both of these proposed projects. Please let us know what you think! The Council will be looking to finalise the details of these projects in the autumn, so if you want to give us your comments, please do so by the end of August.

FUTURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN CREWKERNE

The Town Council was extremely disappointed to learn that the planning inspector has granted the appeal made by the developer of the Kithill housing development outline planning application (application 18/01737/OUT).

The Town Council had recommended refusal of this application and South Somerset District Council (SSDC) had turned down the application both at their Area West Committee and at their Regulation Committee. It was therefore a blow to the residents of Crewkerne, the Town Council and to SSDC to learn that the inspector had approved the application.

The planning inspector's decision can only be challenged in the High Court, a time-consuming and potentially hugely costly process. Nevertheless, the Town Council is seeking expert legal advice to understand whether there could be grounds to challenge the inspector's decision.

The long-awaited Taylor Wimpey housing development known as CLR continues to inch closer to reality. The next key step will be for Taylor Wimpey to submit their reserved matters planning application for the southern section of the site.

Financial Summary for the Year Ending 31 March 2020

With the end of the Financial Year behind us, the Council's end-of-year accounts have been prepared and have now been audited by an independent internal auditor, prior to submission to the external auditor for their review. The majority of the Council's income comes from the precept, which was £409,391 last year.

How does the Council spend this money? Here is a summarised breakdown of the Council's net expenditure last year:

Category	Net Expenditure	Comments
Staff Salaries	£199,981	The Council employs 5 part-time office staff and 4 full-time staff in support of grounds and amenities maintenance.
Grounds Maintenance and Open Spaces	£49,254	Grounds staff workshop rental costs, running costs of grounds equipment, treeworks etc, partly offset by Henhayes car park income.
Town Hall Project	£48,783	The final phase of the major programme of work to the exterior of the Town Hall building.
Administration	£43,911	Insurance, computing, audit, newsletter printing and distribution etc.
George Reynolds Centre	£23,219	Maintenance/repair costs (drainage issue plus provision of separate water supply) together with purchase of assets from CSYAL.
Youth Service	£20,064	Provision of a youth service from Active Learning & Skills (ALS).
Town Hall & Victoria Hall	£18,882	Rates, utilities, maintenance costs etc, partly offset by rental income from Victoria Hall.
Public Toilets	£16,051	Cleaning and maintenance of the Falkland Square public toilets.
Events	£14,129	Christmas lights purchase and installation plus summer food festival.
Grants	£12,108	Grant funding to local community groups plus grant funding support to facilitate closure of CSYAL.
Cemetery	£11,193	Cemetery maintenance costs partly offset by income from sale of plots etc.
Aqua Centre	£3,913	Loan repayment partly offset by rental income.
Projects	£124	
War Memorial Grounds	-£705	Expenditure on maintenance of the war memorial grounds was more than offset by investment income.

For those wanting more detail, the full accounts can be found on the "Finance" page of the Council's website.

If you have any comments or concerns about issues which affect Crewkerne, please contact:

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