

Swanley Town Council

Civic Centre, St Marys Road, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7BU

Tel: 01322 665855

www.swanleytowncouncil.gov.uk

ESTATES AND FACILITIES

Date 14th January 2021

Dear Member

A meeting of the above committee will be held via Zoom on **Wednesday 20th January 2021 at 7:30pm** or at the conclusion of the public participation session.



Mr R Hayman
CEO & Town Clerk

Committee Members: (Chair) Cllr S Andrews, (Deputy Chair) Cllr L Ball,
Cllr C Barnes, Cllr J Domigan, Cllr M Foster, Cllr J Griffiths,
Cllr T Searles, Cllr J Tuckfield.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

If required, the meeting will be preceded by a public participation period of up to 15 minutes in total at 7:30pm. Members of the public are also entitled to speak, during the meeting, on agenda items only and with express permission from the Chairman / Mayor. Those wishing to speak on an Agenda item must indicate this during Public Participation.

THIS WILL BE A VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

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RECORDING (AUDIO AND / OR VIDEO OF COUNCIL MEETINGS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

During this meeting the public are allowed to record the Committee and Officers from the front of the public seating area only, providing it does not disrupt the meeting. Any items in the exempt Part of an agenda cannot be recorded and no recording device is to be left behind. If another member of the public objects to being recorded, the person(s) recording must stop doing so until that member of the public has finished speaking. The use of social media is permitted, but all members of the public are requested to switch their mobile phone devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

MOBILE PHONES

Member of the public are reminded that the use of mobile phones (other than on silent) is prohibited at Town Council and Committee meetings.

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as correct the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 21st October 2020.

4. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES MANAGER REPORT

To comment on the report and ask questions of the Manager.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 21st April 2021

If you would like further information on any of the agenda items, please contact Mr Ryan Hayman, on 01322 665855 or rhayman@swanleytowncouncil.gov.uk

To: Estates & Facilities Committee

From: George Brooker - Park & Open Spaces Manager

Bethany Willson – Office & Soft Play Manager

Date: 20th January 2021

Subject: Estates & Facilities Update

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To inform the committee of any new projects, bookings, or changes to operations.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To accept the update report and note any new bookings/changes to operations.

3. Background and information

Swanley Park and Open Spaces

3.1 Park Performance

Since the end of October the parks activities have been closed and packed away for the season. This is always a bad time of the year as the income the park generates drops drastically.

From May 2020 we changed the way the parks car parks operate. Changing from an attendant on the gate to ANPR cameras with mobile payment. We have encountered some teething problems with the system which we are in the process of rectifying, such as; a non-user friendly payment application. Staff have had numerous conversations with the systems Operating Manager. We are pleased with the progress made since these discussions, which helped secure the installation of a solar panelled pay meter within the park. This will improve the customer experience.

The ANPR cameras are operational all year round. This has led to this income stream being extended from April-September to October-March. Over the last 3 months we have received:

- October £2,613.60
- November £2,452.80
- December £1,184.80

These figures will have a final fee of £0.25 to subtract before invoicing

December's income was affected by Kent Drive in Cinema, as our New Barn Road Car Park was closed to host this event. This event raised an additional £2,054.

3.2 Planned Developments

The winter period has been a very busy time for developments and refurbishments.

The Soft Play facility is the main focus for developments with significant progress already being made. New windows and doors have been fitted as well as shutters. In addition new electrics and fire alarm have been installed, with the aircon/heating and security alarm being first fixed. The roof and walls have been insulated & boarded. The concrete which has created the entrance and new bike track has been laid. The project is still scheduled to be finished by Mid-February.

A logo has also been designed and finalised by the marketing department at Swanley Town Council.

At the end of last season we relocated the Hand Boat Pool to inside the Splash Pool area. This area will now house the Hand Boat Pool, Tree Trek and the Waterslide. The final stage of this project is to install an astro-turf surface. This area will be complete and ready for the new season.

Having previously renovated 2 out of the 5 rooms in the toilet block, at the beginning of the year, the remaining 3 rooms are now being refurbished. The male, ladies and old disabled toilet will be revamped to the same standard as the first 2. Essential plumbing works will also be carried out to reduce the risk of legionella. We are looking to renovate and increase capacity as the park grows and welcomes many more visitors. The disabled toilet will become a family changing room which can be used by visitors and pool users, with the old toilets having a complete refurbishment. A changing bed for disabled users is being looked into by the Town Clerk.



Before works started:



Works to date 04/01/2021:





3.3 Appointments

Parks & Open Spaces Manager and Office & Soft Play Manager.

Mid-December saw the promotion of the then Parks Manager to the Parks & Open Spaces Manager, George Brooker. George has worked in the park for more than a decade.

At the beginning of January a new position at the Park was filled by Bethany Willson, who was previously employed as a Park Ranger for more than 2 years. Bethany is now contracted as the Office & Soft Play Manager.

3.4 Maintenance

Maintenance jobs across the board have been kept manageable, with all departments keeping open communications. Jobs with a health & safety issue are as always a priority and are completed promptly.

During December, the Maintenance & Housing Officer resigned from his duties. This has had an effect on the amount of maintenance tasks carried out. Now, after some restructuring, the maintenance for the Estates & Facilities will be managed by the Parks & Open Spaces Manager, The Estates Supervisor and the team. The jobs have now been ranked by priority and will then be completed according to the ranking.

We will be advertising for a new Estates Technician, this will enhance the team to 5 full time members, which allows for the restructuring not to affect their general duties.

Before his promotion to Town Clerk, Ryan Hayman organised the "Kickstarter scheme" this allows us to staff a new position. The government will pay 25 hours of their weekly wage for 6 months, or even potentially longer. The position we have in mind will see a Parks Supervisor, this member of the team will be predominately based in Swanley Park and will assist the estates team in their duties within the park.

With these new members of the team we will be able to keep on top of all Estates & facilities jobs that are presented to us, keeping a lot of jobs in-house instead of hiring external contractors.

3.5 Park Events

This year has been very difficult to arrange and host events, with our annual 1812 event being cancelled for the first time since commencing. We have been lucky enough to be able to host our annual Halloween event. Which included a themed hunt and best dressed event. This seasonal event was a huge success and we hope to be able to introduce more seasonal events.

Despite the pandemic there was a new event introduced at the Park, being provided by Kent Drive in Cinema who attended twice this year, once in July and again just a week before Christmas. This has proven a huge success and offered some normality back to its guest. Unfortunately, during the booking, it was announced that London and the South East would be going into tier 4. The organiser made the executive decision to cancel any screenings from the 22nd of December.

We are now in the midst of planning our comeback events for this season, whilst also looking at additional events we can potentially host for the residents and visitors of Swanley.



3.6 Park Winter Closing

This year we had plans to trial extending our season by keeping some of our activities open. Working closely with the café we wanted to offer a winter deal. Offers included a hot drink and Pedalo combination deal, it was hoped this would help to bring income over an additional month.

Currently, the Great Outdoors is the only other pay to play attraction that operates during the winter months. The Great Outdoors has now been leased back to the founder who will be running it on a rolling contract basis. We will receive £100 per week.

We are looking to complete the Soft Play facility in February, with hopes that we will be able to open late winter/ early spring 2021. Once open this will generate a new stream of income for the park all year round.

3.7 Awards

2020 has been a very successful year for Swanley's parks and open spaces, we are proud to have achieved 8 Awards for our open spaces and parks. These awards include both Green Flag Awards and south & South East in Bloom awards.

We are also looking at a new award to enter into, with the refurbishment of the toilets planned to be finished by April, we are planning on entering the "Loo of the year award" to promote the cleanliness of our new toilets.

3.7.1 Covid-19

We obtained the COVID-19 "we're good to go" award. Being one of the first sites in the UK to achieve this status has increased confidence in the public and visitors and enticed them back to the park. We are still keeping up with the ever changing government guidelines and restrictions, making sure the workplace is COVID-19 compliant where possible.



3.7.2 Green Flag

This year, we are looking to apply for the Green Flag Award for all 3 sites as well as a new site Archer Way. We are hoping to attain the award for this site as a peaceful and tranquil open space for local residents.

All 4 applications have been started and we are in the final stages before submitting the final documents.

2 flowerbeds have been installed within Swanley Park to celebrate this achievement. With future plans to add additional beds and potentially a community garden.



3.7.3 South & South East in Bloom

The South & South East in Bloom applications and accompanying reports have been started. The newly appointed Office & Soft Play Manager and the Assistant Town Clerk have been jointly working on the awards.



3.8 Swanley Park Opening

We had previously planned for a partial opening at the beginning of the February half term. Unfortunately, because of the new national lockdown measures this is looking unlikely. The Park will still aim to be set up for the half term and will await until such a time when it can reopen.

3.9 Swanley New Barn Railway (SNBR)

Again like many of the events the park offers, Swanley New Barn Railways annual "Charity Day" was not allowed to proceed with the current Covid restrictions. The railway still did their best and donations were still welcomed via a just giving page on social media. Over £120 was raised for a very worthy cause "Alzheimer's Society".

“Since closing at the end of season, we had some time before lockdown to complete some of our winter activity.

The on-going refresh of the coach bodies continues, with 4 new coach bodies well underway, and once lockdown ends these will be completed.

Meanwhile in the workshop, the mechanical work of finishing the overhaul of one of the society steam engines nears completion, with attention turning now to the painting of the engine. We remain hopeful this locomotive will be completed for the 2021 season.

With the lockdown, we have had to postpone our AGM, all members supported the decision to hold the AGM in 2021 when we can meet up face to face, rather than through electronic means.

Depending when lockdown ends, we expect to get some winter track replacement completed, but after the sterling work of the last few years, we are ahead of our normal maintenance programme. Vandalism permitting, the mainline is up to standard, but we hope to do some work in the yard over the winter.”

Peter Jackson

Swanley New Barn Railway

3.10 Café

Swanley Park's Café has been open almost every day these past months. With takeaway services are available they have been allowed to serve. This has proved a big success with the users of Swanley Park and has allowed the users that meet up for; exercise, dog walking or support bubbles to be able to grab some sort of refreshment on their visits.

The Café operators have been praised by members of public for providing a sense of normality and a central hub for people to meet safely.

We plan on helping the Café to open all year round, post Covid, by adding a serving hatch in the Soft Play Barn, this will allow them to operate with a steady income over the quieter months.

3.11 Friends of Swanley Park

A new organisation is being setup to help fundraise improvements and projects at Swanley Park. The members come from all aspects relating to the park, such as; Swanley Town Council, Swanley New Barn Railway & Swan Group to name a few. It is thought that this will allow us to apply for grants that can then be collectively agreed upon for future project and/or improvements to the Park.

3.12 Dog Training

Unfortunately Michael will be leaving the park at the end of January after an unsuccessful trial.

4 Conclusions

4.1 As highlighted in this report, we continue to aim to maximise the use of our facilities, whilst also generating additional income for the Council.

George Brooker
Parks & Open Spaces Manager

Bethany Willson
Office & Soft Play Manager