

# **Report on the work of the Environment and Leisure Committee for the year 2023/24**

Chair: Councillor Stephen Chowns

Deputy Chair: Councillor Tony Bradford

The committee's responsibilities include the care of the Recreation Ground, the Cemetery and the Dog Hill Wood area. Two working parties also operate under its remit: the Climate Change Working Party and the Events Working Party. The town's Christmas Lighting scheme also comes within the committee's terms of reference.

Two issues in particular have been in the public's eye this year.

The future of the Town Cemetery is under review since it is clear that there is a limit to the number of interments that can be accommodated in the present site. While it is true that there is a national trend towards cremation rather than burial, it is also true that a substantial number of long-term residents of the Ledbury wish to be buried in the cemetery when their lives end. The timescale and costs of cemetery extension are difficult to assess, and the committee has set in motion a thorough study of possible options, hoping to report to the Full Council, and hence the community, in the next Council year.

The Christmas Lighting scheme over the last three seasons has been much appreciated, though it is relatively expensive compared with similar towns in the county. The cost has, in recent, years fallen entirely on the Town Council's budget. So the committee has been set the task of finding a much less costly alternative, or perhaps seeking other sources of financial support.

The Climate Change Working Party has the objective of raising public awareness of the impact of climate change, seeking ways to make our town more sustainable by reducing waste and saving energy, and creating links to organisations with expertise in this field.

The Events Working Party has a growing 'menu' of community activities, and it endeavours to co-ordinate the events arranged by a wide variety of voluntary groups in the town. Particular highlights this year have been Heritage Open Days, held in September and which was attended by a record number of people. Many were particularly interested in the Ledbury Copy of the Domesday book that we had on display for this event. 2023/24 saw the 3rd Ledbury World Book Day event in March. There was a variety of free workshops available to children of all ages including a visit from the Author of Interview with a Panda, Andy Seed, who brought with him a sarcophagus that he had made in lockdown to compliment his book "The Curse of the Tomb Robbers". Again, this event saw a record number of attendees.

Much of the equipment in our Recreation Ground has been renewed or refurbished in the last twelve months, and efforts have been made to repair seating and signage in Dog Hill Wood so as to improve access and safety. We are making efforts to increase CCTV coverage in the town centre and recreational areas, within our limited financial resources.

I should like to pay tribute to the work of Council staff, who have day to day responsibility for the care, maintenance and development of our town's facilities.

April 2024