

## **SURBITON NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021**

### **Introduction**

This report and the work we have done in this municipal year is being presented in the context and backdrop of an unprecedented Covid19 pandemic.

Since March 2020 and after our appointments as Co-Chairs in July 2020, there have also sadly been a number of deaths from Covid19 in our neighbourhood, and our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who have passed away. This has been both unsettling, and in some cases, life changing for a lot of people - the psychological and physical impacts of which are still being felt.

We acknowledge that residents have faced numerous challenges over the lockdown period, including accessing the right help and support when needed, avoiding social contact with other non-household members, reducing transmission by adhering to the 'hands, face, space' public health messages and dealing with myriad of information relating to track and trace, and dealing with Covid19 symptoms and the aftermath of hospital treatment.

The Kingston Stronger Together Hub has helped and supported residents who needed advice and reassurance during the pandemic. In the early phase, councillors across the neighbourhood joined the effort to call round the more vulnerable residents ensuring they were able to access the right services and available support networks. This work has been repeated throughout the pandemic. Together with residents, neighbourhood managers and our voluntary sector partners, deliveries for medications and food have been well organised and we would like to take the opportunity of thanking everyone who helped in this mammoth effort. Please visit [Kingston Stronger Together and FAQs – www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk) for further details.

The effects of the pandemic are still emerging. As Co-chairs we will be looking at how to help and support residents in the medium to long-term, particularly focusing on post-Covid recovering services. We will do this in partnership with "Friends of" groups, resident associations, charities and other local organisations, including any data we are able to gather from our health partners, including Public Health and SWL Clinical Commissioning Group. This will help inform our understanding of what is happening in our communities, what the level of need is, how we build on our strategy and objectives and shape what actions are required moving forward.

We are delighted to highlight in this annual report specific actions and key deliverables we have achieved in the 2020/21 municipal year. They are as follows:

### **Surbiton Neighbourhood Community Plan**

Our Surbiton Community Plan was approved at committee on 23rd February 2021. It clearly sets out our vision, strategy and objectives for the next municipal year 2021/22 (starting June 2021) and draws on the success (retrospectively) of the work we have already done as Co-Chairs in 2020/21.

Despite Covid restrictions, we have facilitated the implementation of many projects and initiatives across the neighbourhood, and we are immensely grateful to officers, residents and local councillors, and other voluntary sector organisations and local charities who have stepped in to help and support residents and get these projects off the ground.

## **Community Grants Programme (CGP)**

We are also delighted to have awarded a total of £23,615 to various projects as part of the Community Grants Programme, including Councillor Ward Funding for:

- Surbiton Farmers Market (£2,356)
- Surbiton Festive Decorations (£12,523)
- Hanging Baskets (£8,736)

We also awarded a total of £14,296 as part of the Neighbourhood Community Grants to:

- Christians Against Poverty (CAP) (£2,500) - providing free debt help and advice.
- Friends of Victoria Recreation Ground (£1,896) - park improvements including a new pathway.
- Save the World Club (£3,000) - food programme to help and support residents in the community during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown.
- Hollyfield School (£900) - book reading scheme.
- Zoological Society of London (£3,000) - hedgehog monitoring programme.
- The Community Brain (£3,000) - artwork for the next phase of the walking trail from Tolworth to Berrylands.

## **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding**

CIL money totalling £13,500 was also agreed at February's neighbourhood meeting for the Six Acre Meadow site (as part of the Elmbridge Nature Reserve). Straddling the wards of Berrylands and Alexandra and bordering onto New Malden, this project will encourage and enhance more biodiversity and wildlife in these areas of natural beauty. We have worked with parks officers and our biodiversity officer to facilitate this much needed funding to install a new boardwalk through the meadow. Residents and visitors of all ages will be able to enjoy this setting for years to come.

We are also pleased to say that the construction of the new boardwalk started in May and was completed in June. The new recycled plastic boardwalk has reused 54,123 plastic bottles, thus also helping in a small way to reduce wider pollution from plastics.

## **Local Implementation Plans (LIP) Funding**

Transport for London (TFL) gave funding for the next financial year and was approved at Surbiton Neighbourhood Committee on 11th March. Due to the pandemic the funding available has been uncertain.

The main project is the continuation of the Go-Cycle programme. Phase 3 works started in March near the Tolworth Broadway end of Ewell Road, anticipated to reach the junction of Ditton Road by the end of Summer 2021. This will complete phase 3 of the scheme, linking up South of the Borough with Surbiton and Kingston.

There are various other schemes in the pipeline across the neighbourhood which will be brought to committee for consultation.

## **Surbiton Farmers' Market**

Much work behind the scenes took place in the Summer and Autumn of 2020 to get the farmers market up and running again. Thanks go to the organisers of the market, local ward councillors and the senior leadership team at the council who worked extremely hard over many weeks to secure funding and deal with various highways issues including signage and road closure permits. Closing off Maple Road has enabled the stalls to be positioned on the road rather than on the pavement and doing this has helped maintain social distancing. As we emerge from the lockdown, we will continue to work with the market organisers, residents and officers to establish the best way forward.

Local businesses and restaurants are also keen for us to explore the option of extending Maple Road's functionality to enable evening dining and our aim is to realise what the ambition is of our local community, liaise with officers on this feedback and explore what would work safely post lockdown.

## **Friends of Fishponds Park**

Action days have now restarted from 10th April. There are plenty of jobs to do around the park and we understand members are keen to continue work on the orchard and removal of bramble and other weeds. There is also an allotment project underway, with help from a local charity. There are also on-going discussions with Thames Water about the draining system. Please visit [Fishponds Park, Surbiton - Home | Facebook](#) to find out more about the volunteering work being done and up and coming events.

## **Friends of Victoria Recreation Park**

Friends of Victoria Rec was formed in 2020 initially out of opposition to a planning application for a large incongruous telephone mast, but is now busy with improvements to the park. It is working with RBK, our contractors and local councillors on improvements such as weed clearing along the rail embankment, new planting at the Victoria Avenue entrance (using a Surbiton Neighbourhood grant of £2,000) and rubbish clearance. They have run 2 volunteer days, and will organise more as lockdown restrictions ease. Any residents wanting to join the group should email [fovr-surbiton@hotmail.com](mailto:fovr-surbiton@hotmail.com).

## **High Street Fund**

The Mural Art Trail (CiC) and Surbiton Food Festival (organised by The Community Brain) have now been endorsed, with £24,000 and £11,760 High Street grant funding awarded respectively for both projects. Meetings are continuing between our Neighbourhood Manager James Geach and Stephen Young from The Mural Art Trail CIC on the Boots passageway project and we are delighted with the progress made so far. This will improve the linkage from St Philips car park to the high street.

Our aim is still to set up a "Friends" of Surbiton High Street, bringing together all stakeholders to consider how to improve the high street, but it has been difficult due to the Covid pandemic. With further easing of the restrictions we hope to move forward with this plan.

## **Friends of Surbiton Station**

We're delighted with the response to the RBK portal in the establishment of a Friends of Surbiton Station group. The portal closed on 1st April 2021. We received over 80 responses of which the majority are from residents which is a fantastic result.

The first Friends of meeting took place on 20th May 2021 involving a virtual presentation on SWR's adoption programme. Roughly 20% of residents have expressed an interest in a leading role (Chair, Treasurer, etc).

## **Community Parks Programme**

In line with our vision and strategy and working with the Borough's Green Spaces Strategy (2015 - 2021), we sought to identify the existing Community Parks Programme and Capital Bids 2020/21 and 2023/24 allocation, and setting priority areas across the neighbourhood for further investment.

Claremont Gardens is included in the plan already for work on the drainage and we have extended it to explore in consultation with residents what they would like to improve the park and then take forward as a project for CIL funding. Other areas identified for potential improvements are to the basketball courts in Alexandra Recreation Ground and further improvements to the play park and pathways in Victoria Recreation Ground to allow better access to all park users.

## **Wildways Project**

We have been working with officers to look at the 'Wildways' project, which is seeking to encourage native wildflower species to establish on grass verges. Loss of biodiversity has a severe impact on our local ecosystem and its ability to function. The proposal has been researched and led by our Biodiversity officer Elliot Newton.

One main location has now been agreed as part of phase 1 works (grass verges in and around Langley Avenue in Surbiton Hill ward). After liaising with our neighbourhood colleagues, a further site has also been agreed for phase 2 main works located at Elmbridge Road roundabout in Berrylands Ward. Several other smaller sites have been put forward for future consideration and these will contain specifically recommended planting for 'Biobeds'. This would align with the wildways ethos by starting to incorporate sustainable pollinator plants into any new planting schemes. These could potentially include work with the existing planting at the beds at Chiltern Drive mini roundabout and The Crescent in St. Marks' ward.

Residents have told us that they want sustainable and biodiverse outdoor spaces to enjoy, with plenty of wildlife and areas of natural beauty contained within them. We are delighted that we are able to move forward with phase one of the project planned for this Summer.

## **Fly Tipping and Waste Management**

Looking at behaviour trends, we have seen an increase in fly tipping across the neighbourhood and in poor waste management (overflowing bins/wrong bins put out) compared to the previous year. The issues with poor waste management are due, in part, to increases in recyclables and in food waste as more residents are at, or working from, home. Cllr. John Sweeney and Cllr. Liz Green are both heading up a task force to tackle this issue and we are exploring various enforcement options in the weeks ahead.

We have also been working with officers, ward councillors and local residents living above flats to find resolution to bin and waste issues in Brighton Road. A new roadside bin scheme is being trialed and if successful rolled out in other locations.

## **Summary**

As we reflect on the past year (with all its challenges), we reflect with positivity on the various community activities we have undertaken despite the covid pandemic. We look forward to the next municipal year 2021/22 and potential projects with enthusiasm, commitment and optimism.

We are exploring potential LIP and CIL funding opportunities within our parks and open spaces, as well as other projects such as the High Street Fund and where the need arises, facilitating the establishment of further Friends of groups across the neighbourhood.

During the next municipal year the council will be consulting on our Local Plan as mentioned by our Neighbourhood manager James Geach at our last meeting. Please follow the link to [Local Plan – www.kingston.gov.uk - Kingston Council](http://www.kingston.gov.uk) for further details.

During this time, local councillors from across the neighbourhood will be asking residents for their thoughts and ideas on how they think Kingston and Surbiton neighbourhood should look in 20 years.

Within our neighbourhood, and as we shape Kingston together, we look forward to receiving residents' feedback and engaging with them on a range of topics including where our homes, schools, parks should be, plus the adopted London Plan and issues such as challenging housing targets and a declared climate emergency.

We would like to take the opportunity of thanking all our stakeholders, officers and key partners within the council and across Surbiton neighbourhood for their on-going support and commitment. Thanks also to our Surbiton neighbourhood councillor colleagues from across all parties for their continued diligence and oversight in the work we do, for which we are very grateful. We look forward to working with them in the year ahead.