



Chairman's Report December 2020

I am writing this overdue report in the lead up to what will be a rather quiet Christmas for many of us. The year has been difficult with the restrictions necessary to control the spread of COVID 19 and our weather has been eventful. Hopefully, 2021 will be a better year and we will be able to meet at an AGM.

Finance

I attach the accounts for the year 2019-20. You will note that we continue to run a small deficit and therefore there continues to be a need to increase the maintenance charge by an additional £10. This will help to build up a reserve to fund more tree work (there is ash dieback in the gardens affecting many of our 40+ ash trees) and path maintenance. Most of our expenditure goes on keeping the gardens safe by carrying out tree work recommended by our tree specialist Martin Langton. It is a condition of our public liability insurance that the work is carried out. We have currently £28,669 in the DCGA bank account.

Tree Work

During 2019-20 there were 9 elm trees felled due to Dutch Elm disease and 10 others due to disease or for safety reasons; a particularly bad year. I am pleased to say that the work required this year is much reduced involving the felling of 2 trees and crown reducing or lifting in 3 other trees. This work will be carried out in January. The beech hedge was cut back in 2019 and given a trim this year. The decision to fell trees is never something that is taken lightly and is always done with the consent of the City Council. It does however give the opportunity to plant replacement trees and we have planted several hornbeam (which is resistant to honey fungus), Norway maple, small leaf lime, oak, hazel and more recently a red maple by the middle lawn and a red oak. The introduction of crab apples has been successful and the blossom and fruit this year was outstanding.

Garden Maintenance & improvements

The garden paths have always been difficult to maintain due to access issues for putting down gravel but we have made improvements to the paths/steps leading from one level to another with repairing edges and laying down new gravel. My

thanks go to Gordon Plews who has done a good job. Ian has continued to plant spring bulbs, mainly daffodils and a new blue, white and silver border has been created this year despite the Covid restrictions which meant that many of the perennials were bought online as plug plants and they have been very successful.

Social Events

Due to Covid restrictions it was not possible to hold our usual Easter, Summer and Hallowe'en parties. However, during lockdown in the spring and early summer many residents took full use of the gardens, many for the first time. An hour was also set aside for the exclusive use of our older residents.

Pavement

Although not strictly a gardens concern, I have been approached several times by residents in the Crescent concerning the dangerous surface of the new York stone pavement when wet. The surface is very smooth and seems to encourage algae growth. It is my view that the specification for the paving was wrong and that it should have had a ridged or roughened surface to ensure there was no slippage in wet weather. We have had more than our fair share of that in recent weeks and to date there have been 8 bad falls over the past year with 5 residents breaking bones. This has been reported to the City Council but little has been done so far. Both myself and Andy Ellis have emailed our city centre councillors on the matter and suggested a method of roughening the surface. It is interesting to note that the City Council's specification for York stone for George Street is for a ridged surface. I attach the emails from Andy and myself to our Councillors. Please make sure you report all slips and falls to the City Councillors and to me. We will need to keep the pressure on the Council to make sure they do something. A few claims for compensation from those injured would help.