

Grand Pavilion Opening

6 May 2024

Bank Holiday Monday saw the opening of the Pavilion extension at Arborfield Park, on Swallowfield Road, which is owned and managed by Arborfield & Newland Parish Council for the local community. Despite the rain, many residents turned out to celebrate the opening of the enlarged building which provides the Parish Council with a Parish Office plus changing rooms, shower facilities and storage for the football teams that use the outstanding football pitch adjacent to the building.

Councillor Jim Murphy, who managed the project with the support of the Responsible Finance Officer, Colin Watts, spoke about the Pavilion build which has been in the pipeline for many years. By saving funds year on year for over 20 years, the Parish Council have been able to foot the £240,000 build costs to create the building that had been envisaged for so long. All visitors were very impressed with the work that had been done and the facilities now available.

However, the celebration was not solely about a building project – it was also about celebrating Gary Cowan who has been the Borough Councillor for Arborfield and Newland Parish for 27 years until his retirement on 2 May 2024. Councillor Andrew Clint, the Chair of the Parish Council, reflected on Gary's tireless support for the Arborfield community and the Parish Council as well as his determination to advocate for the Parish Council and residents at Borough level. To commemorate Gary's dedicated public service, Councillor Paul Stevens unveiled a spectacular sculpture of a human-sized cat (his own handiwork, carved from one of Arborfield Park's memorial trees felled due to disease) which will be placed in a key position for all to enjoy. The significance of the carved creature is that Gary's beloved wife, Katie, who died two years ago, was a lover of cats. Katie also served her community on the Parish Council for several years.

Gary was extremely moved by the sculpture and the recognition that he received from all present. Even more so when Paul presented him with a smaller version of the cat to take home.

Gary cut the red ribbon to officially open the Pavilion and everyone crowded inside and under the gazebo, sheltering from the rain, to enjoy tea, cake and a good natter in true Arborfield spirit.

