

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 3 July 2023

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	D Edwards-Hughes
	T Ashby	R Smith
	O Collins	S Simpson
	R Crouch	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager
Others:	2 members of the public.	

PR359 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

PR360 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

PR361 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 22 May 2023 were received.

P255 – A Member provided an update in respect of a hogging path at West Witney which could be used by Parkrun and that there may be an opportunity in Autumn 2023 to access grant funding. An update would follow at a future meeting.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 22 May 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR362 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from two members of Spartan Rangers Football Club concerning Agenda Item 7. Questions followed from members.

The Committee reconvened.

PR363 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer.

No questions arose from Members.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

PR364 LEYS TRAFFIC CALMING

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the final design plans received from Oxfordshire County Council for traffic calming on The Leys service road.

All members were in agreement with the implementation of the final updated plan.

Recommended:

1. That, the report is noted and,
2. That, confirmation is sent to OCC that the town council approves the plans with a contribution being made of £5,000 to the implementation of the scheme.

PR365 PRE-SEASON FOOTBALL PITCH UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager in respect of the council's football pitch provision.

The Operations Manager gave a verbal update explaining the history of the football pitches under the Town Council's control as well as talking through the options outlined in the report.

Members were concerned about the potential removal of the Cricket Square at The Leys which had been presented an option to increase the number of available adult football pitches. Even though the square had not been in use for over four years, if it was removed it would be difficult to return it in the future should the need for cricket to be played there occur.

In addition, the re-establishment of a football pitch on the current event field at The Leys would mean that there would be significant impact for one year on events being held whilst the work was carried out. Members were again concerned that although football was in great demand, there was a large portion of the community which did not participate and would be affected by the reduction or relocation of annual events if they were unable to take place on The Leys, which is after all was a central location.

Members agreed that the Town Council should contact local cricket clubs and former users of the Leys Cricket Square to establish their future requirements and needs and to make Contact with the landowners of the "Henry Box Sport fields" to investigate the options that may exist for events or sporting activities to be held there.

With regard to additional football pitches, Members noted that new facilities at Windrush Place should be playable for the forthcoming season. Discussions were ongoing at District Council level with developers regarding these pitches, including their playability, availability and potential use but being aware of the expected needs, it was agreed the town council should correspond with the District Council to express the urgency for them to be utilised from September.

The Operations Manager emphasised that although additional pitches and resources may become available in the longer term, the council needed to make a decision regarding what facilities it had under its ownership now.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update is noted and,
2. That, officers speak with cricket clubs and former users of The Leys Cricket Square to establish demand and,
3. That, Officers contact the landowner of Henry Box School playing field to ascertain if it could be used for sporting activities and events and,
4. That, the Town Council writes to West Oxfordshire District Council to request that a playability report on the pitches is undertaken as soon as possible, and if suitable, that a temporary access is constructed to ensure the pitches can be used for the forthcoming season.

PR366 WEST WITNEY CRICKET RENTAL AGREEMENT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager regarding a request for a rental agreement at West Witney Sports Ground from Witney Swifts Cricket Club.

As discussed earlier in the meeting there was a potential for the cricket square at The Leys may be removed and therefore Members discussed that the council, if they agreed to an exclusive rental agreement, would be left without a cricket square that would be available to any other team that wishes to play in the town.

Officers confirmed the Council had already had two cricket teams use the facility at West Witney for occasional games this year.

Regarding the request from Witney Swifts for them to take on the ground's maintenance, the Operations Manager gave members a summary of the work the Council carries out in preparation for matches which was necessary to meet the league playing standard, and he highlighted the potential for loss to the council if incorrect methods lead to damage of the pitch.

It was agreed that Officers should contact Witney Swifts and enquire what improvements could be made to ground maintenance to improve the playing experience within the league and therefore help resolve their issues without the Council passing responsibility and running of the facility to a third party.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, a decision is deferred to allow Officers to further explore options of improving the facility and,

3. That, Officers speak with Witney Swifts to ascertain if any improvements they desire can be made to the ground.

PR367 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

Resolved:

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

PR368 PROPERTY, LEGAL & PROJECT MATTERS

The Deputy Town Clerk and Head of Estates provided a confidential verbal update in respect of additional tennis court colour-coating at West Witney Sports Ground.

It was reported the council had been successful in recouping the costs associated with the additional slip test report and Members agreed half of this amount should be provided to Witney Lawn Tennis Club.

Recommended:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, half of the recouped costs provided to the Town Council be paid to Witney Lawn Tennis Club.

The meeting closed at: 7.22 pm

Chair