

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

Held on Monday, 15 January 2024

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

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman T Ashby O Collins R Crouch	D Edwards-Hughes R Smith S Simpson
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Derek Mackenzie Mark Lewis	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	No members of the public. Councillor Geoff Doughty Councillor Jane Doughty Councillor Duncan Enright	

PR14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

PR15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

PR16 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 October 2023 were received.

PR574 – Following a request from a Member it was confirmed that the £40,000 figure requested in the 2024/25 budget related to replacement play area equipment.

PR575 – The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that communications had been delayed on the STRI pitch report however these would be delivered when appropriate.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 October 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR17 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

There was no public participation.

PR18 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

The Leader thanked the RFO and expressed her thanks for the delivery of a prudent and healthy summary.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

Councillor D Enright joined the meeting at 6:14pm during Agenda Item 6 – Leys Parking Restrictions.

PR19 **LEYS PARKING RESTRICTIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Estates & Operations regarding the proposal to introduce limits to the period of parking on The Leys. He summarized the issues being faced and the implications of any proposed changes to users of the recreation ground.

Members were aware that it spaces were used by students who attended Henry Box School as well as other individuals who found it as convenient parking before walking into town. This impacted the availability for users of the recreation ground who would naturally expect to be able to park there and make use of the facilities at all times.

It was acknowledged that the problem of parking at The Leys was historical, also that Witney was fortunate in the amount of free parking, which was available, including the proposal by West Oxfordshire District Council to make additional long-term parking in Zone G of the Woolgate Car park a permanent arrangement which would predominantly benefit those that work in the town

The HE&O outlined the proposals from WODC or OCC to set up and support the enforcement of the change, OCC's (option A) verbal quote was agreed subject to official confirmation..

Members discussed the terms of the restrictions. As issues were experienced mostly during weekdays with little impact at weekends it was proposed that the restrictions be considered to run Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm with a parking limit of 3 hours with no return, there would be no restrictions at weekends..

A vote was taken, Members were unanimously in favour of the proposal, however it was agreed that if the OCC verbal quote to establish and operate the scheme varied significantly when confirmed in writing, that the decision should return to the committee for further consideration.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, a scheme be proposed to run Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm with no restrictions at weekends a limit of 3 hours and with Oxfordshire Country Council as the provider and,
3. That, should the costs significantly exceed the quote of £3,740 then the committee consider the proposal again before proceeding.

PR20 LEYS INTERIM TRADING REQUEST - COFFEE SHED

The Committee received correspondence in the form of a request from Courtside Hubs CIC to allow them to trade from a temporary unit whilst the development took place to improve The Coffee Shed building and Leys area.

Members were unanimous in agreement to allow.

Recommended:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the Council confirm to Courtside Hubs CIC their agreement.

PR21 SPLASH PAD RENOVATION WORKS

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations regarding repairs required to the splashpad.

Members discussed the various options presented to them and were initially very reluctant to close the splashpad for the 2024 season knowing the disappointment that this would be to residents. However, members agreed that it would not make financial sense to enact a costly repair when the splashpad was reaching the end of its expected lifespan of ten years.

Members were unanimous in agreement of Option 4 to cap all splash pad inlets and remove the 10,000-litre tank from the Depot to allow the redevelopment of the Leys Masterplan area to commence.

Members went on to discuss the Communication of the closure in order to ease concerns of users and explain how the changes will fit in around the overall transformation of The Leys. Members, having seen the benefits of engagement around the redevelopment of the Skate Park asked that Officers adopt the same approach during the design stage to engage with the community and children who will use the new splashpad.

A Member asked that Officers investigate alternative play activities such as a large sandpit to replace the splashpad whilst work is completed. Members also asked that Officers prepare a draft plan and timeline for the splashpad replacement, to include details of how access will be restricted to the main play facilities; this to be presented at the next meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers proceed with Option 4 to cap all splash pad inlets and remove the 10,000 litre tank and,
3. That, the splashpad be closed for the 2024 season and,
4. That, Officers investigate alternatives to play while the splashpad is closed and,

5. That, Officers prepare a timeline for the splashpad replacement along with a draft project design for the meeting on 4 March 2024.

PR22 RECREATION AREA SIGNAGE

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager regarding the erection of signage on the Council's recreation grounds.

As previously discussed, when Members originally reviewed the signage, the signs should be informative and the list of activities that were not allowed be kept to a minimum. Perhaps with the use of smaller icons with the use of "tick" or a "cross" to encourage compliance. Also, a bullet pointed list that fulfilled the legal requirements along with wording such as "please enjoy this space" could be considered.

To assist the public, Members asked that consideration be given to the use of a QR code to link directly to additional information about the recreation ground, such as how sports pitches can be booked.

It was advised by a Member that West Oxfordshire District Council had undertaken a review of signage in the town and therefore Officers should consult with them to check any new signage is compatible with this larger project.

It was proposed by Cllr T Ashby and seconded by Cllr O Collins that a final decision is delegated to Cllrs Ashby, Crouch, Aitman along with the Chair and Mayor. All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, final approval of the signs be delegated to Cllrs Ashby, Crouch, Aitman, Newcombe and Collins and,
3. That, Officers liaise with WODC to ensure that the new signage is suitable and,
4. That, Officers review and update the online information for each recreation ground.

PR23 MAJOR & STRATEGIC PROJECTS

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations.

Members were pleased to hear that the work to redevelop the Wheeled Sports park was due to commence and hopefully complete by March 2024, providing the weather allowed.

Members also heard that it would be necessary to relocate the Works Depot once the redevelopment of the Courtside Café and Leys Masterplan commenced, this would then allow time to complete the build of the new Depot.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal update be noted.

PR24 **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.

Cllr R Crouch left the meeting during the Agenda Item 12 - Major Projects – at 7:30pm

PR25 **MAJOR PROJECTS**

The Committee received a confidential update from the Town Clerk/CEO relating to the provision of sports facilities in the town.

Members received correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and asked members for comments to feedback to WODC on the assessment they had carried out on the West Witney, Madley Park, Burwell and Woodgreen School sports areas.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the comments provide by members be forwarded by the Town Clerk/CEO to WODC.

The meeting closed at: 7.42 pm

Chair