

Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 1st July, 2024 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Parks & Recreation Committee - D Newcombe, R Crouch, J Aitman, S Simpson, J Treloar, T Ashby, O Collins and R Smith (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk in advance.

Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings, please let the Deputy Town Clerk or Committee Clerk know before the start of the meeting.

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk **prior** to the meeting, stating the reason for absence.

Standing Order 30(d)(v) permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. Minutes (Pages 3 - 7)

a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 13 May 2024;

b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress on any item).

4. Participation of the Public

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of five minutes each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda. 5

5. **Residents Satisfaction Survey Results** (Pages 8 - 10)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the 2024 annual residents' satisfaction survey for this Committee.

6. **Witney Swifts Cricket Club - Security of Tenure at West Witney Sports Ground** (Pages 11 - 15)

To receive a verbal update from the Chair and Leader on the site meeting held with the Club and Oxfordshire Cricket Board on 20th June 2024; and reconsider issuing a licence agreement for a minimum of 5 years setting out responsibilities, terms & conditions of the Club and the Council in occupying and maintaining facilities at West Witney Sports Ground.

7. **Projects Update** (Pages 16 - 20)

To receive and consider the report of the Projects Officer concerning ongoing projects under the remit of this Committee.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 13 May 2024

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	T Ashby	R Smith
	O Collins	S Simpson
	R Crouch	J Treloar
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	Two members of the public.	

PR241 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Aitman

PR242 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

PR243 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Crouch and seconded by Councillor Collins that Councillor R Smith be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Ruth Smith be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

PR244 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 were received.

P121 – The Leys Parking Restrictions – The Head of Estate & Operations provided an update to say that the Project Officer continues to work with OCC Legal advisors towards a resolution. An Update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR245 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from a member of Witney parkrun who gave an update on their activity at West Witney Sports Ground which had been affected greatly by the poor weather over the winter season. They offered their appreciation for the support received from the Council's Works Team in supporting them to improve the troublesome areas of the course.

He expressed the importance of ensuring that the course remains in good condition as many of the 200+ runners did not participate in other parkruns if the Witney event was cancelled; for some of individuals who don't travel it was an important element of their wellbeing.

The Committee reconvened.

PR246 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

Members were pleased to receive this positive set of figures, however noted that these may be subject to further adjustment for year-end accruals and prepayments.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

PR247 **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO along with a verbal update concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

A Member thanked Officers for their continued hard work pressing West Oxfordshire District Council to take over projects in order for them to achieve delivery.

The Head of Estates & Operations provided additional information in relation to the Town Council taking on the management of the project to improve the facilities in the Raleigh Crescent area. He advised that a public consultation would take place to establish the needs of residents and users to ensure there was inclusivity. He was positive that the Town Council would deliver an improved environment.

Members were pleased to hear these views and were confident that Officers would build on the success of the recent Skatepark consultation and implementation.

Resolved:

That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted.

PR248 **SPORTS PITCHES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager regarding the use of the Council's sports pitches at West Witney Sports Ground for Cricket by Witney Swifts.

The Head of Estates & Operations gave a verbal summary to Members confirming that the Works Team had achieved the necessary standard of grounds preparation required by the league in which Witney Swifts played.

A request had been made by Witney Swifts for the purchase of a lawnmower, Members heard that the Works Team mower could cut to a level of 1mm, the mower requested by the club would cut to 4-5mm. It was therefore agreed that the preparation by the Works Team would be sufficient, and the expense of a mower was not necessary.

A Member reminded the Committee that with the improvements to be made in late 2024 to the WWSCC building, all the sports clubs would soon be experiencing a much-improved facility which, it was hoped, would show the clubs in a good light to visiting teams.

The Town Clerk explained that historically, when the Council's contractors undertook the wicket maintenance, Witney Swifts would do any last-minute maintenance on match day – on occasions this did have some issues – hence why clarification on any arrangement via an agreement was recommended. Members agreed that Officers would draw up a user agreement with Witney Swifts for the avoidance of doubt as to what preparations would be carried out by the Council and which would be the responsibility of the Cricket Club at West Witney Sports Ground. The Chair & Vice Chair would also meet with the club to verbally discuss the Council's reasons for the decisions being made.

Regarding the cost of booked sessions, Members asked for a breakdown to be supplied at a future meeting for them to better understand what value the cricket users receive. All Members agreed that charges remain unchanged.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee meet with Witney Swifts and,
3. That, booking charges remain unchanged and,
4. That, the request from Witney Swifts for a green's mower be refused.

(Cllr Treloar left the meeting at 6:40pm)

PR249 **MAJOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer regarding the major projects within the Town along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations (HE&O)

Leys Skatepark

Members were pleased to hear that the £57,975 grant provided by the FCC Communities Foundation was due to be received imminently following the key achievements being met and evidenced. Members reflected on what a great reception the park has had from users.

West Witney Sports Social Club

Members heard that Officers continued to progress grant funding opportunities and were now at the stage of drawing up the final specification and design. Members welcomed the advances on the project and were pleased to hear that renewable energy sources, including a ground source heat pump and photovoltaic panels were being explored. The HE&O advised that they hoped to meet the next grant funding window which was due to be open for June/July.

Also, during the public participation item earlier in the meeting the representative from Witney parkrun had asked to be included at an early stage in the Work Depot development so that they may be aware of the proposed layout and if this would impact on the parkrun course, particularly the proximity of the entrance to the Depot. The Head of Estates & Operations offered his contact details so that an onsite meeting could be arranged to discuss this further.

The representative also raised an issue with a bollard that protects the sports field and asked that this be fixed to prevent unauthorised access of vehicles to the field.

Witney parkrun were also pleased to see via a members social media feed that £30,000 had been budgeted for improvements to the section of their course which ran adjacent to Deer Park Road. It was, however, understood this would not be sufficient to complete the whole project and Officers would discuss this further when they meet with the representatives in order to identify specific needs and assist with potential further funding/grant resources.

Courtside Hub/Leys Redevelopment

The HE&O explained the issues regarding drainage and the works on the building foundations being experienced by Courtside which had delayed the delivery of the project. It was expected that completion would now be in the late summer. Members were disappointed to hear this however, they were pleased to hear officers were in regular contact to provide support in order that residents were kept up to date.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, an onsite meeting be arranged with representatives of Witney parkrun to discuss the plan for the new depot at West Witney as well as the possibility of improvement to the Deer Park Road path and,
3. That, the broken bollard at West Witney Sports Ground be repaired.

PR250 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.

(Members of the public left the meeting at 7:04pm)

PR251 **FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO provided on future ownership and management of sports pitch provisions in the town.

Members were pleased to receive a comprehensive summary of the progress of discussions between the Town Clerk and West Oxfordshire District Council. Each of the individual proposals and recommendations in the report were discussed and Members were unanimous in agreement of the recommendations below.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, WTC take on the grassed area of Deer Park Road Training Pitch on a freehold basis and,
3. That, WTC take on the grassed area including the MUGA/MUSA at Raleigh Crescent Training Pitch on a freehold basis. The grassed area from Spring 2025 and the MUGA/MUSA project when completed and,
4. That, ownership and maintenance of trees and hedges at both Deer Park Road and Raleigh Crescent remain with WODC and,
5. That, WODC be requested to re-establish the perimeter ditches at both Deer Park Road and Raleigh Crescent to stop illegal encampments and,
6. That, in respect of the Windrush Place Pavilion, Pitches and Play Zone/MUGA, WTC runs the site in line with its other sports pitches/pavilion/changing rooms dealing with allocation of the pitches and,
7. That, WTC confirm no changes are required to the internal layout of the Windrush Place Pavilion and,
8. That, should the 3G Pitch be situated at West Witney Sports Ground that the ownership will be transferred to WTC, and the Council establish a sinking fund in order to budget for the ongoing financial & maintenance commitments and,
9. That, WTC will establish demand for municipal pitches at Madley Park and,
10. That, subject to sufficient demand WTC offer to take on the freehold of the Madley Park Playing Fields and maintain from 2029 when the dual use agreement ends providing the pitches are brought back to specification and,
11. That, the Town Clerk reviews the administrative and maintenance resources required as a result of taking on these additional facilities, including a new bookings system.

The meeting closed at: 7.35 pm

Chair

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 1 July 2024

Title: Resident’s Satisfaction Survey Results

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with details of residents’ satisfaction on services provided under the remit of this Committee from an annual survey conducted during February-May.

The survey was sent to every household in the post and was promoted online via social media and in the local secondary schools; 443 responses were received in total.

While the number of responses is a very small percentage of the population, the results are still an important resource in advising the Council in which areas projects, communications, and future spending should be considered.

Current Situation

The following table shows how the services scored overall in the survey (with percentages rounded).

As a comparison, the figures/percentages from the previous two years surveys are included as is the ‘town council services overall’. It should be noted that in 2022 there was no n/a option available which is why the figures are vastly different from the last two years.

Service	Year	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	% comb	Poor	n/a	Resp
Recreation Grounds/Play Areas/ Open Spaces	2024	7.5% (33)	48% (207)	19% (82)	74.5%	10.5% (45)	15% (65)	432
	2023	12.5% (27)	40% (86)	24% (52)	76.5%	7.5% (16)	16% (34)	215
	2022	17.5% (51)	51.5% (151)	23.5% (69)	92.5%	7.5% (22)	n/a	293
The Leys Splash & Adventure Parks	2024	11% (48)	27% (117)	20% (87)	58.0%	11.0% (48)	31% (134)	434
	2023	11% (23)	31% (66)	11% (24)	53.0%	7.0% (15)	40% (86)	214
	2022	21.5% (60)	46% (129)	25% (70)	92.5%	7.5% (19)	n/a	278
Town Council Services Overall	2024	4.5% (2)	44% (19)	35% (15)	83.5%	14.0% (6)	2.5% (1)	43
	2023	10% (13)	42% (56)	34% (45)	86.0%	10.0% (13)	4% (6)	133
	2022	9.5% (27)	50% (140)	30% (84)	89.5%	10.5% (29)	n/a	280

In addition to the results above, the survey also welcomes specific comments, all of which relating to this Committee can be seen below:

Parks & Recreation

- The open spaces seem reasonably well maintained and cared for.
- Bring back goals in deer park.
- As a mum of a small child, the rec. areas are of importance - all good but often need repair.
- Play areas need to be checked by ROSPA.
- Splash park needs regular maintenance.
- The Leys splash park + adventure play is dirty + unsafe - the splash park last year my daughter slipped over from the algae.

- You need better parks and more activities instead of coffee shops.
- I like the new skate park but there needs to be warning signs for parents taking in toddlers that this is really dangerous for young kids getting in the path of fast skaters. Seen a lot of near misses.
- The Leys adventure play/splash park gets very muddy at times so maybe a better surface should be considered especially at the entrance.
- We could use an outside gym in quarry road.
- At the leys they have taken out a swing and not replaced it.
- I really like the way they have done the park it's so much more fun I do wish the public bathrooms were a bit more clean.
- There are not enough baby/toddler swings available. All except one have been removed from the leys and not replaced. The baby/toddler accessible equipment is either always damaged, non-existent or just not engaging enough for them. Considering its mainly parents with young children that use the park, it's really lacking in that area and the amount of people using it has significantly decrease since the baby/toddler swings have been removed. Also, in the summer months the slides are unusable because they're so hot. I've seen other play areas in other counties that have small shades over their slides so that they're accessible year-round.
- Cleanliness of the park is always great though. Really can't fault the staff that maintain and check the leys play area. They're very thorough!
- Significant drainage investment is required at West Witney for the ground to be usable for all recreational activities for as much of the year as possible.
- Although services like the leys, cycle paths and footpaths are quite good the maintenance of them is not great. This means often things are broken or not working which is such a shame.
- New skatepark looks excellent, well done all.
- More football pitches and sports facilities required throughout the Town.
- The Leys play park is terrible. Looks run down and uncared for. The see saw has been missing for over a year. Cogges Park also needs some tlc.
- Need more activities and play area for children. Indoor soft play.
- You waste too much money for ... things like skate parks and extreme sports. Where is the community centres for ALL ages
- Play parks do not facilitate for wheelchair users.
- One of my children is a full-time wheelchair user. There is one piece of equipment that I know of in Witney that he can use. He is a little boy who wants to play like his siblings and he can't.
- The west Witney sports ground car park is currently partial blocked by works which are not in connection with sports/recreation as per the covenant. This is a misuse of the land and should be moved.
- On the whole the parks offer a wide range of activities however some could do with updating/refreshing. Very pleased that the wheeled park is in progress however more opportunities for bikers specifically would be good on softer ground (grass/dirt).
- Please lead the way. Can you equip just one park- just one, preferably one that has parking with only wheelchair accessible equipment throughout. It would make such a difference not to have just one accessible swing but a whole play area dedicated to those who cannot use all that other tantalising play equipment. One item is so disappointing faced with what their able-bodied siblings and friends have. Please be a leader for inclusion. Just please.
- Just sort the west Witney sports club building. It's an embarrassment.
- Think it's a bit silly when they stop the kids playing football on the leys and Burwell when the pitches are playable. It's letting the kids down.
- Splash park needs updating and needs to be more available during summer months.

- Dog mess seems to be an increasingly common issue. I often take my boys to the field for football, cricket, picnic and always have to dodge poo on the ground. I also run a football team and use both these locations. On one occasion I had to pick up 4 separate lots of dog poo from a small area. Not sure what the answer is. Maybe more signs, patrolling and fines, more bins, bags available by the entrance or ban dog walkers on children's play areas. It's disgusting and dangerous.
- I have to note my 4-year-old completed this jointly with me (she did a paper version) wanted to make it very clear more tunnel slides are needed but was very grateful the zip line is now repaired at Burwell.
- The green gazebo's across on deer park green are always infested with teenagers who smoke...
- And more things for young people like a trampoline park, kfc etc... Also open the Astro for kids to use any time.

Members are asked to consider whether any of these items should be included in the Council's emerging Strategic Plan, and therefore whether budgets need to be incorporated in the short, medium, or long-term. They can then be costed and incorporated into future work programmes and budget-setting.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

There is a reputational risk if the Council does not address comments received in its satisfaction survey.

The Council's committees will have competing demands on the overall Council budget so other projects may take priority over these.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

If addressed, the comments may increase the general overall contentment of residents, particularly those which relate to the young and vulnerable.

Financial implications

- There are no new implications from the contents of this report at this point. But the Committee may like to consider increasing or creating budgets for any item.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- Whether any action is required from the results of the survey under this Committee.

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Document is Restricted

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 1 July 2024

Title: Major Projects

Contact Officer: Project Officer

Background

As you are aware, Witney Town Council's Open Spaces Strategy cited five themes to deliver improvements for our community: Parks, Sport, Leisure, Infrastructure & Effectiveness.

This report aims to provide you with an update on the major projects linked to Parks and Recreation, which are: 'Wheeled Sports Park', 'West Witney Sports & Social Club', 'Courtside Master Plan', 'Raleigh Crescent Sports & Social Area', 'Splashpad' and 'Parking Restrictions on the Leys'.

The Leys - Wheeled Sports Park



The park was opened at the end of March 2024 and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The project is almost complete, except for the following tasks, which are included in the report for update purposes:

- **Litter:** Due to increased footfall, litter at the park has significantly increased. WTC operational teams continue to clean daily, but to help reduce litter officers have sourced a new, large high-durability bin from Bendcrete, instead of coaching sessions as they were too complicated to set up (please see event enquiries below). It is the same style of bin used around Witney and will be installed week commencing 24/6/2024.
- **Anti-Social behaviour:** Officers are pleased to report no incidents of Anti-Social behaviour have been reported to the police since May 2024.
- **Event enquiries:** The popularity of the skatepark has prompted organisations to contact WTC asking for permission to exclusively use the skatepark. After reviewing

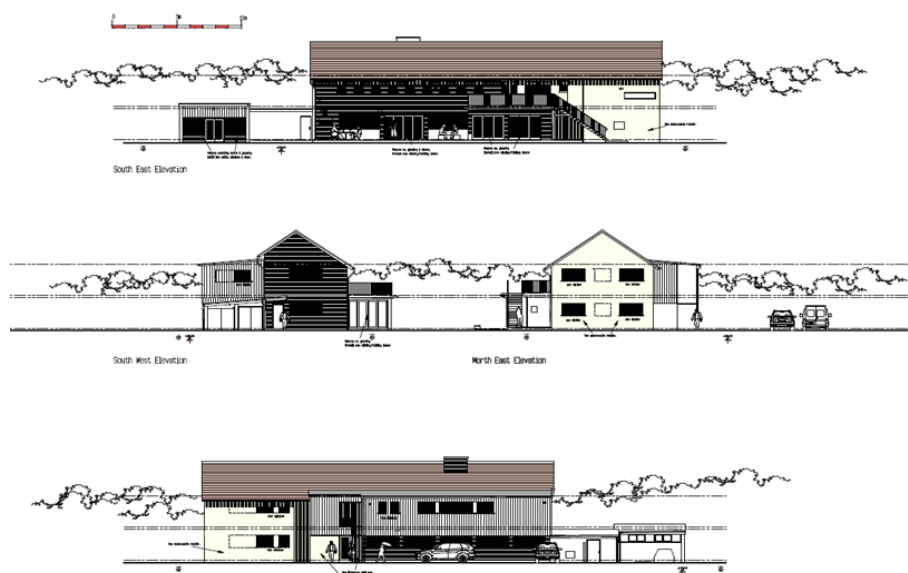
requirements, there are several liability/insurance/complaint risks, which prevent WTC giving formal permission. However, if a group/organisation wanted to use the park there was nothing stopping them, provided they obeyed the rules displayed on the signage and did not stop other people using the park.

- **Graffiti:** Officers are currently assessing the feasibility of running a competition to invite local graffiti artists to design and create some artwork in accordance with our brief which will focus on “youth”, “colour”, “inclusivity” & “Witney”. Officers hope this artwork will make the park more vibrant, welcoming and deter further vandalism. (This is also covered in “Stronger Communities” committee meetings).

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

West Witney Sports & Social Club (WWSSC)



Current Situation

- Planning Permission was approved in December 2023 with a requirement to demonstrate adequate drainage provision.
- WTC are currently exploring funding options and applying for grants to support this project. Please note the “Community Ownership Fund” closed due to Pre-Election rules, therefore “Sports England” and “National Lottery” are our main targeted funders.
- At the design and specification stage to prepare to procure and tender.
- Anticipated construction start date is late 2024, subject to the co-ordination with the new depot build project and requirements from any successful funding applications.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

The Leys - Courtside Hub



Current Situation

- Due to building footprint being moved to safeguard a drainage chamber – the District Council need to reassess the planning submission. WTC have been given reassurance from Courtside that this poses zero risk to their project, but it has impacted construction timescales. As a result, the opening date has been pushed back to late 2024.
- Courtside have issued community comms through their channels and WTC have supported with messages through social media/online to mitigate risks of complaints and reputational damage (through association, as not WTC Project).
- Work is due to recommence shortly.
- A planning application is being produced for a new WTC depot to be built at the West Witney recreation ground

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

Raleigh Crescent – New Sports and Social Area



Current Situation

- WTC and WODC have reached an agreement on the field, which enables WTC to lead with construction of Sports and Social Area, utilising S106 monies.
- Due to playpark at the other end of field, the concept is to build a Multi-Use-Game-Area (MUGA) and a Multi-Use-Social-Area (MUSA). The MUGA is an enclosed area for football/basketball/netball etc. The MUSA is an inclusive outdoors exercise area, normally with calisthenics equipment, such as pull up bars and aerobic areas combined with seating areas.
- Consultation has already started with four contractors expressing interest and submitting ideas.
- Officers are collating ideas and concepts from contractors to present to community at a couple of consultation events (Witney Carnival and local community centre). From these officers will be able to collect community opinions and requirements to create councillor recommendations and procurement tender.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

The Leys Splashpad – reactivation and refurbishment



Current Situation

- The Splashpad has been reactivated for the summer period. Work has been carried out to repair several components, such as pumps, electronics and drainage

pipework, which means the community can now enjoy this popular park during Summer.

- Started work on exploring refurbishment of Splashpad for 2025 to improve appearance, reliability, energy efficiency and water usage.
- Community consultation planned over summer period starting at the Witney Carnival.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

The Leys Parking Restrictions



Current Situation

- Officers have researched and clarified the intricate process to implement a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).
- Courtside have offered to assist with any associated costs.
- Officers are currently assessing the appropriate level of parking restrictions to impose on the parking bays.
- Disabled bays are 'out of scope' for the TRO
- Planning to make councillor recommendations and apply for the TRO in July – the process will take approx. 4 months but need to allow extra time for election period because the TRO requires approval from Secretary of State.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.