

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

Held on Monday, 10 March 2025

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

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith R Crouch J Aitman S Simpson	J Doughty (In place of T Ashby) G Meadows (In place of O Collins) G Doughty (In place of J Treloar)
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Mark Lewis	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	No members of the public.	

PR135 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Treloar, O Collins & T Ashby, Councillors G Doughty, G Meadows & J Doughty attended respectively as substitutes.

PR136 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

PR137 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 13 January 2025 were received.

P23 – Members heard that the Chair of the Traffic Advisory Committee, Cllr A Coles had made representations to Oxfordshire County Council with respect to the Traffic Regulation Order for The Leys. Officers would report back on progress.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 13 January 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR138 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

There was no public participation.

PR139 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.

A Member expressed their appreciation for the report and how they were pleased to see all finances on track.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Parks & Recreation Committee for the period up to 31 January 2025 be approved.

PR140 MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer providing an update on the Council's Major Projects. The Head of Estates & Operations (HE&O) also provided a verbal update and response to Members' questions.

The Leys Community Hub

The Committee were pleased to hear of the completion of ground works and that the structure build was under way. Members also welcomed the additional confidential progress report from Courtside which they found informative.

Although initially disappointed to hear of the complaints regarding the height of the main building from residents of Fernleigh, Members were reassured by the confidential update from Courtside that contact had been made, and further updates would be provided to all Fernleigh residents in the preceding months.

Raleigh Crescent – Sports & Social Park

The Committee heard that the Project Officer and HE&O were due to meet with West Oxfordshire District Council later that week and final agreement was to be reached, and the tender published.

In response to a question from a Member, the HE&O acknowledged that at the same meeting the lack of working play equipment in the playpark would also be discussed. The Park would also be included in the playpark review that was currently being carried out by Officers to assess if further work was required.

Splashpad

Members were very pleased to hear that the work to rejuvenate the splashpad would commence in the week commencing 17 March with an anticipated completion date at the end of May ahead of the summer season.

Portaloo's at West Witney Sports & Social Club (WWS&SC)

The Committee considered points raised in the report and agreed that both Portaloo should be locked and that Officers should continue to work with Park Run and WWS&SC to try and find a

resolution until the completion of the refurbishment of the Social Club and replacement facilities were completed.

Members heard that the new changing room and toilet facilities would be under the control of the Town Council and this would make it easier for access to be granted to users of the recreational area.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Portaloo's at West Witney remain locked and,
3. That, Officers continue to assist Park Run in finding a workable solution for toilet provision.

PR141 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND 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.

PR142 PROPERTY MATTERS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Estates & Operations regarding the progress of the lease arrangements for Witney Swifts Cricket Club.

Members heard that the Council and Witney Swifts had some differences regarding conditions to be included in the lease and that Officers were concerned about the impact on other sports user who utilised the West Witney Sports Ground.

The HE&O expressed his concerns that should the conditions within the lease not be followed it would create a risk to sports ground users both in respect of safety concerns and the protection of grounds maintenance. Members agreed that the Council needed to retain control of their facility and that the needs of Witney Swifts should not supersede those of other users.

Members considered the request from Witney Swifts to make use of the grounds for training at no cost, Members were aware of sessions which had taken place before; one of the purposes of any such fee being charged would be to compensate the Council for this additional impact. However, there would need to be a level of respect and honesty from all users, including football teams, for the additional use of the sports fields outside of booked arrangements for game days.

The Committee were unanimous in agreement with the draft lease, specifically point 1.2 which would address the season dates and specific conditions by which Witney Swifts would be required to adhere to should the season extend beyond those dates.

Additionally, The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO concerning the reformation of Witney Town Football Club and a mutually beneficial strategic partnership with Witney Town Council for the benefit of Witney and its residents.

Members were pleased to see the reformation had been successful, with the Club at the top of their league. Their community work and aspirations were to be commended, particularly

regarding health and wellbeing and should be supported. The benefits of a strategic partnership as set out in their business plan were clear, but due diligence was required to ensure the Council did not overcommit operationally at this stage without further financial analysis.

Recommended:

1. That, the confidential reports be noted and,
2. That, Officers proceed with the lease discussions with Witney Swifts CC and,
3. That, cricket training fees are not waived and
4. That, Witney Town FC be endorsed as a community partner of Witney Town Council, recognising its significant contribution to local sporting and community development and,
5. That, Witney Town FC be permitted to use the Corn Exchange to advertise published material, ensuring broader community engagement and accessibility and,
6. That, financial, operational and community benefits of a more extensive strategic partnership between Witney Town FC and Witney Town Council be undertaken and presented at a future meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 7.24 pm

Chair