

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 30 June 2025

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

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Mayor in the Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	G Doughty (In place of J Treloar)
	J Doughty	R Crouch (In place of S Simpson)
	D Edwards-Hughes	G Meadows (In place of J Aitman)
	D Temple (In place of T Ashby)	

Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Adam Cook	Project Officer
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager

Others: Two members of the public.

PR389 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Ashby, J Aitman, J Treloar & S Simpson, Councillors D Temple, G Meadows, G Doughty & R Crouch attended respectively as substitutes.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Committee that Cllr T Ashby had advised he would be stepping down from the Committee and had proposed he should be replaced by Cllr D Temple. The request would be considered at the meeting of the Council on 28 July 2025.

PR390 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

PR391 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 12 May 2025 were received.

PR265 – Officers advised that the owners of the basketball court adjacent to Windrush Leisure Centre were the responsibility of West Oxfordshire District Council.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 12 May 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR392 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from two residents of Edington Road concerning Agenda Item 7 – Projects Update.

The residents raised concerns of the lack of additional consultation regarding the proposed Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Raleigh Crescent. They understood through recent engagement with the Town Council's Project Officer and Cllr T Ashby how the scheme would progress however, felt that alternative locations and designs had not been fully explored.

Concerns were also raised regarding Anti-Social behaviour, noise, lack of parking provision and potential nuisance if the nearby wooded copse was used inappropriately.

The Committee reconvened.

The members of the public left the meeting at 6:30pm following the discussion regarding the Raleigh Crescent MUGA.

PR393 **PROJECTS UPDATE**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the Members of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer.

Raleigh Crescent MUGA

Members were provided with an update on the project. They heard that it was still in the early stages with no decision yet on the size, design or exact position. He confirmed that the areas under consideration were owned by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and currently designated as a play area.

The financing of the MUGA was reliant on funds from a Section 106 contribution from a development in the Curbridge Parish to provide recreation facilities. Once the procurement process was complete then WODC would move forward with finalising the design and placing a planning application. Residents would at that stage be able to submit their comments for consideration.

It was agreed that the Project Officer would liaise with WODC to ensure that communications with residents were maintained.

Courtside Hub at The Leys

Members received an update and heard that progress had once again slowed due to supply issues and this had led to an updated completion date of December 2025.

The Committee was very disappointed to hear that delays continued and raised concerns of the effect of the overall delay would be having on Courtside's business forecasts. A Member also added the concern of whether some of the clubs and individuals, in particular tennis, would

return to the Leys when it was complete as they were now established in using other facilities during the hiatus.

Members were somewhat reassured that no financial contributions had been made to Courtside and that payments were tied to Courtside reaching set milestones, such as completion of changing rooms, the access road and the completion of the hub building. The Town Clerk/CEO confirmed that she would continue to engage Courtside to obtain assurances before the release of any funds.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, the Chair write to WODC Planning Department to highlight potential issues regarding noise, lighting & use of open space as a toilet and,
3. That, Town Council Officers liaise with WODC Officers to ensure residents are kept informed and,
4. That, the Committee write to Courtside to express the Councils disappointment with continued delays to the project.

The Project Officer left the meeting at 6:40pm

PR394 RECREATION COSTS

With the permission of the Chair, this item was also moved up the agenda.

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager regarding the costs of maintenance of recreation grounds in respect of the provision for football.

Members heard that the pitches at Burwell were well used, hence the lower subsidy however, this was having an effect on the quality of pitches due to the demand placed on it from the increasing number of teams that used the facility.

It was highlighted that the maintenance of the football pitches also provided benefits to all recreational ground users, including dog walkers and that the annual STRI review of the Council's grass pitches would take place soon to support the work.

A Member noted the absence of the Leys Cricket pitch from the report, in response the Operations Manager confirmed that little was spent to maintain the cricket square as it was not and had not been in use for many years.

A Member was pleased to see that the Council was providing such quality of grass pitch provision for what was an overall subsidy of £34,240. Which in his opinion offered great value.

An issue that did arise during the discussion was that of unofficial training by football clubs who had been witnessed on a number of occasions using the recreational grounds without agreement. This impacted the recovery of pitches as they were not receiving the necessary rest and continued to be compacted from this off-season activity. Teams had been reminded recently of the need to book their use or make use of the alternative locations provided by the Council.

Cllr D Temple, seconded by Cllr R Crouch suggested that the Committee consider the introduction of a fee to cover the annual out of season training and make a recommendation to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee during budget-setting.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Committee consider the introduction of an annual fee for out of season training.

The Operations Manager left the meeting at 7:03pm

PR395 ANNUAL RESIDENTS SURVEY 2025

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the resident's annual satisfaction survey which was held at the beginning of the year.

Members were advised the report represented the survey results for the services under the remit of this committee and showed the combined satisfactory and above percentages against poor ones. Previous years data was also included to help benchmark the results. The report also contained all unedited comments on the services.

The Committee were pleased to see a number of positive comments interspersed with the negative ones however overall, it was noted that there was a decline in the overall satisfaction of respondents. It was agreed that any issues that had a simple and quick to action solution, such as the posting of "No Dogs" signs at Underhaching Park should be introduced without delay and communications should be published to highlight facts around pitch booking and minimal cancellations.

The Town Clerk/CEO confirmed to Members that the decision to bring the Council's grounds maintenance contract back in house was not based on cost cutting, rather it was to improve the response and quality of work. There was a budget available to increase the workforce which would have an impact on the delivery of expected Council and resident's standards.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers review the comments and schedule work to resolve any simple tasks.

The meeting closed at: 7.18 pm

Chair