

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 3 November 2025

At 6.01 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillors:	J Treloar	D Edwards-Hughes
	R Smith	D Temple
	A Bailey	R Crouch (In place of J Aitman)
	J Doughty	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	Eight members of the public.	

PR614 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Aitman, Councillor R Crouch attended as a substitute.

PR615 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

PR616 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 1 September 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 1 September 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

Cllr D Temple joined the meeting at 6:08pm

PR617 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representation from the Chair of Witney Wolves Basketball Club concerning Agenda Item 6. Members heard about the issues faced by the Club due to a lack of suitable facilities for them to train and host games and inconsistent access to those facilities.

The Committee also heard from a further member of the Witney Wolves Basketball Club regarding the costs of accessing indoor courts at the Leisure Centre facilities in Witney & Carterton. As these were not facilities that the Town Council had control over, the club were advised to speak with West Oxfordshire District Council however, they were encouraged to consider an application to the Town Council grant scheme.

The Committee reconvened.

PR618 **CAPITAL PROJECTS - WITNEY BASKETBALL COURTS**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the members of public present could hear the discussion and outcome relating to potential funding of improvements to the Basketball Court at King Georges Field and outdoor court adjacent to Witney Leisure Centre.

Members received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer along with details provided by the Chair of the Witney Wolves Basketball Club earlier, who had provided an indication that the cost of each court refurbishment to bring them up to an acceptable playing standard would be approx. £45,500, a breakdown of how that estimate was received was also provided.

Members heard that basketball was Europe's most popular urban sport and about the impact it has on Community cohesion and the opportunities it provides in preventing anti-social behaviour. They expressed their initial support for the refurbishment project and provided details of alternative funding avenues, such as the Westhive scheme offered by West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Committee unanimously agreed to request Officers to look further into options for the King George's court and to progress discussions with Oxfordshire County Council who owned the central Witney court, known as "The Cage" located adjacent to the Windrush Leisure Centre.

Recommended:

1. That, the report of the Responsible Financial Officer be noted and,
2. That, Officers progress work to look at options to refurbish the courts at King George's Field and the OCC owned Basketball court.

All Members of the Public left at 6:29pm

PR619 **FINANCE REPORT: REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26 AND DRAFT BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2026/27**

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 provided with a verbal explanation of the report with the RFO answering their questions as they arose which included the potential for adding the volunteer OCC flood wardens to the Town Council insurance policy.

The Committee commended Officers on the water savings at the Splashpark as well as the preparation of a prudent and balanced draft budget.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and
2. That, the draft estimates as detailed in the report be approved.

PR620 REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS, SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS, AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

Having considered individually the proposal for improvements to basketball courts the Committee considered the remaining points of the Responsible Financial Officers report.

Members heard of the proposed improvements to Burwell Hall which would be commenced with the installation of new lockers, additionally they received an update on the introduction of parking restrictions at The Leys which was being progressed by Officers.

Regarding the needs for path improvements at West Witney to enhance the Parkrun, it was agreed that these should be considered and any works tied in with the 3G pitch installation. They heard that Officers would pursue the social community funding from the Shores Green Project as an option for the £30,000 funding gap.

The Committee also considered the need for pitch drainage across all its green spaces estate. It was agreed that grant funding over that offered by the Football Association be explored and that a report be prepared outlining the costs associated with the installation at each of the recreation grounds.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers prepare a report with further details of the Basketball, Park Run & drainage proposals for further consideration at the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 24 November 2025.

PR621 SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES 2026/27

The Committee received and considered the proposed recreational charges for 2026-27 as part of the budget setting process.

The RFO explained the reasoning behind the proposed increase of 3.8 -4% to each of the charges, Officers would further review the charges sheet and remove those which no longer were relevant such as the hire of bowls woods, sports equipment hire and the services provided by Courtside.

Members recognised that the increase was necessary to ensure the Council adhered to its medium-term financial forecast and additionally recognised the level of financial subsidy that the Council provided to all sporting activity.

Members asked that for consistency that all fees rise by 4% as it was noted that with the effect of rounding the charges this made no material difference.

Recommended:

That, the proposed 4% increase for recreational fees and charges for 2026-27, be agreed.

The Responsible Financial Officer left the meeting at 7:05pm

PR622 SPORTS PITCHES UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager which was accompanied by a report on the Council's grass sports pitches by STRI (formerly the Sports Turf Research Institute).

Members also received a verbal report from the Head of Estates & Operations on the salient points of the STRI report and the actions of the whole operations team to address issues faced at the Councils grassed recreational and sports areas. The majority of actions had already been completed, some additional work such as dealing with weed coverage on football pitches would be carried out in the Spring of 2026.

Members welcomed the positive comments within the report which again outlined the continued improvements and praised the impact the Council's in-house ground's maintenance regime. Members expressed their thanks to the Operations Manager and his team.

The Committee were disappointed to hear that despite the football training pitches being made available at Ralegh Crescent, these had not been booked by teams. Members heard that the next scheduled meeting with football clubs was planned for the following day and Officers hoped to gain feedback on the lack of use. It was reported that there had been some issues experienced with the goal post sockets following damage caused by West Oxfordshire District Councils contractor.

Discussion turned to the use of recreational areas for third party events with it being noted that the damage caused following Witney Feast had been repaired. Members asked that Officers carry out a feasibility review of all third-party events at The Leys to ensure these are scheduled to limit potential damage and impact to sporting activity.

Members were frustrated to hear that the cricket square at The Leys had again been unused for another year. A request for two sight screens had been received; however, the Committee was reluctant to fund these if there were no signs of cricket returning. Officers were asked to explore the potential use further with clubs and for friendly ad-hoc use and report back to the Committee.

Finally, the Committee heard of the plans for Officers to meet with specialists to consider the introduction of enhanced drainage for sports pitches, the cost of such work was estimated at £75,000 per 11v11 football pitch, however this could be offset in part by funding from the Football Association should they authorise grant funding. It was unanimously agreed that once the initial discussions had taken place that officers prepare a report for presentation to a meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee and the decision be deferred to that Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, two portable sight screens be budgeted for and,
3. That, the continued improvement in the Council's grass sports pitches be welcomed and,
4. That, officers evaluate the use of The Leys for third party events and,
5. That, Officers prepare a report outlining the proposal for enhanced drainage for each of the councils recreational and sports grounds and any decision on how to proceed be deferred to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Cllrs D Edwards-Hughes & D Temple left the meeting at 7:37pm.

*Also, during the following item Cllr A Bailey left the meeting
between 7:42pm and 7:46pm*

PR623 MAJOR PROJECTS

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer providing an update on the various major projects that the Council was currently engaged with.

Members were pleased to hear the positive progress with the West Witney Project and welcomed the upcoming meeting on 10th November to appoint the contractor.

Additionally, the Committee were buoyed with the news that the Courtside development was still on track be delivered in January 2026 and that Officers continued to be prudent in the allocation of the Council's financial contribution to the project.

Members were also pleased to hear of the progress of the Raleigh Crescent MUGA and looked forward to receiving further updates once WODC advanced the project to the tender stage which was hoped to be later in the month. The Committee expressed their thanks to the Project officers for his work in keeping local residents abreast of project delays and developments.

Finally, the Committee were delighted to hear of the success of the redeveloped Splashpark which had now been decommissioned for the winter. Members heard of the work carried out to ensure that the water use was monitored throughout the summer season and that usage had reduced significantly from that of the previous Splashpark.

It was requested that a new sinking fund be created to ensure that funds were put aside for replacement of the Splashpark in 10 years' time, as it was clear it was a well-received facility by both residents of Witney and those families that travelled from further afield.

Recommended:

1. That, the major project update report be noted and,
2. That, the sinking fund for a replacement Splashpark be maintained.

The meeting closed at: 7.47 pm

Chair