

Parks & Recreation

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 3rd November, 2025 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Parks & Recreation Committee - J Aitman, S Simpson, J Treloar, R Smith, A Bailey, J Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes and D Temple (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 8(e)(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 4 - 9)

a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee held on 01 September 2025;

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 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

5. **Finance Report: Revised Revenue Budget 2025/26 and Draft Base Revenue Budget for 2026/27**

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and the Draft Revised Revenue Budget for 2025/26 and Draft Budget for 2026/27.

(Report to Follow)

6. **Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects**

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) with an update on the current year's work programme relating to Capital and Special Revenue Projects; as well as projects identified during the course of the year for inclusion as Revenue Growth Items or Special Revenue Projects in the Council's Revenue Budget or Capital Projects for 2026/27 and beyond.

(Report to Follow)

7. **Schedule of Proposed Fees & Charges 2026/27**

During the Budget Setting Cycle the Council reviews its Fees and Charges for various facilities and services it operates.

Included is the schedule of charges in respect of the assets and services which fall under the responsibility of this Committee, and the Committee is requested to review and approve or amend, as necessary.

(Report to Follow)

Parks

8. **Sports Pitches Update**

To receive the report of the Operations Manager with an accompanying STRI (formerly the Sports Turf Research Institute) report following the evaluation of the Council grassed sports provision.

(Report to Follow)

Recreation

9. **Major Projects (Pages 10 - 18)**

To receive and consider the report of the Project Officer concerning the progress of projects under the remit of this Committee being undertaken by the Council or Stakeholders.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 1 September 2025

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

Present:

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

Councillors:	J Treloar	D Temple
	R Smith	G Doughty (In place of J Doughty)
	A Bailey	D Newcombe (In place of J Aitman)
	D Edwards-Hughes	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Adam Cook	Project Officer
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager
Others:	Three members of the public. Councillor Georgia Meadows	

PR481 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Aitman and J Doughty, Councillors D Newcombe and G Doughty attended as substitutes respectively.

PR482 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

PR483 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 June 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 June 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR484 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from representatives of Witney Vikings and Tower Hill Football Clubs concerning Agenda Items 7 & 8.

The representative for Witney Vikings led the participation outlining the clubs plans to work better with the Council and the proposed changes to streamline administration, fee collection and how they could work alongside the Council in the application of grant funding.

The representative from Tower Hill, expressed their pleasure at hearing of the potential collaboration between teams and the Council.

The Committee reconvened.

PR485 FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING FEES

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 Operations Manager, who also provided a verbal explanation. He confirmed the main issue with training was that it took place on match pitches during the time that renovations works were ongoing.

The football club representatives present acknowledged that training did take place without booking with the Council. The clubs also agreed with the comments of the Operations Manager that training should never take place on match pitches and that they were aware this was the directive of the Football Association (The FA), with the outcome being that this may potentially affect grant funding from the FA.

In order that a full discussion took place, with the permission of the Chair, the representatives present participated in the discussion.

Members had heard earlier from the football club representatives who had asked that the implementation of training fees be delayed as training fees had not been factored into the club's fee charging structure for 2025.

In response to a Member's question regarding the impact to membership if training fees were enforced by the Council, the representative for Witney Vikings advised that with such demand for places he did not expect a drop in their membership due to a potential higher registration fee needing to be charged. However, he hoped that the collaboration with the Council to seek grant funding could mitigate the need for training fees.

Members discussed various options which resulted in a proposal to which all members unanimously agreed that:

1. Training sessions be allowed to proceed without charge this season and,
2. That all training must be booked via the bookings office to determine demand and so the correct maintenance can be carried out by the Council's work team and,
3. The Council identify and prepare other grassed areas, with a maximum 9 x 9 pitch being made available for training and,
4. That areas designated for training are used instead of match pitch areas (in line with FA guidance) and,
5. Absolutely no training must take place on match pitches outside of the football season (During renovation periods) and,
6. Storage containers be considered at the additional training sites identified and,
7. That the demand for training be monitored and its success reviewed in March 2026.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the above decisions, numbered 1-7, be communicated to the football teams at the upcoming new season meeting with clubs on 4 September 2025.

PR486 SPORTS PITCH UPDATE

Also, 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 and accompanying verbal update from the Operations Manager outlining the position of the sports pitches as the new football season approached.

Members heard that following a dry spring and summer the renovations had not been fully successful with areas of newly seeded ground not taking properly due to a lack of rain. The Operations Manager explained that the decompaction work had not taken place and in hindsight this was the correct decision as it would have led to create drying of the ground and creation of dangerous playing surface due to large cracks.

An update was provided on the grant funding that the Council was in receipt of, it was hoped that further funding may be sought from the Football Foundation to carry out further drainage consultations, specifically at West Witney. Members welcomed this having heard earlier from the representative of Witney Vikings that the club would look to support the Council in any grant applications.

The Operations Manager highlighted the potential risk of ground allocation for junior teams in so much as if one recreation ground was to suffer from poor weather, this would lead to the potential cancellation of all of that club's games and therefore adversely affect them. It was agreed that a trial allocation be discussed further with the football clubs at the meeting on 4 September.

The Committee discussed the request from Witney Vikings for the siting of a storage container at King George's field, Members were very supportive of this and highlighted the need to ensure that consideration also be given to storage for the Witney Wolves Basketball team who intended to make use of the court in the Multi Use Games Area.

Discussion regarding the request for additional inseting of pitches took place, it was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr G Doughty that this should not be undertaken. Members heard this was the advice from the Football Association and was further supported by the news of damage witnessed from the overuse of the Burwell pitches in previous years.

A vote was taken with six members supporting the proposal, one member abstained.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, Officers discuss ground allocation with the junior football clubs and,
3. That, no marking of inset pitches take place and,
4. That, agreement to install a storage container at King George's field be granted and consideration given to storage for Witney Wolves and,

5. That, potential grant funding opportunities is explored by Officers.

The representative of Witney Vikings left the meeting at 6:58pm.

The remaining members of the public left the meeting at 7:07pm

During the following Agenda Item Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly between 7:10 and 7:12pm

PR487 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 heard that the net expenditure was at 22% of budget- it being three months into the financial year the news was welcomed.

Members considered items for inclusion in the 2026/27 budget, Members highlighted the potential need to set funds for improvements to the Basketball Court at King Georges Field, the path at West Witney to enhance the Park Run, Consideration for pitch drainage at any sites that require it and for consideration by Officers of an increase of benches in the Council's recreation areas.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, consideration be given to the suggested budget items listed above and,
3. That, the management accounts of the Parks & Recreation Committee for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025 be approved.

PR488 PLAY AREA REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer along with a verbal update explaining how the play review tied into the Council overall strategy. Councillors agreed that age and diversity along with the provision of seating and shade for parents should be prioritised by Officers when considering future improvements

The Committee were pleased to see the additions to the inclusive play range and particularly the play panels and welcomed the suggestion for Ralegh Crescent, to replace once of the current inclusive swing with a traditional swing. This would resolve the need to install a path and would allow for funds to be utilised instead provide an additional inclusive play item in an area with existing suitable access.

Officers explained further how consideration would be given to improve the access to inclusive equipment in all the Council's parks to ensure that their use is maximised, this would be carried out in conjunction with users and their families. Following a proposal from Cllr G Doughty, seconded by Cllr A Bailey it was agreed unanimously to delegate to Officers the installation of this equipment.

A paper with three options of replacement swing equipment for Burwell and The Leys play parks was tabled, members discussed each of the options. It was proposed by Cllr J Treloar, seconded by Cllr R Smith that Option One be selected as it provided a piece that could be used by up to four users at a time and could be used by children five and older.

The Committee welcomed the suggestion to install non-verbal communication boards in the play parks at Woodgreen, Oxlease and Quarry Road. These would be provided by Oxfordshire County Council Councillor priority funding and members were appreciative that Officers were carrying out this work alongside the ICE Centre.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, inclusive play equipment as detailed in the report should be purchased for the sum of £16,980 from the play areas budget and,
3. That, officers be authorised to procure and implement access/surfacing or a new inclusive swing at Raleigh Crescent Play Area as a high priority, within a maximum budget of £8,000, to be funded as a supplementary estimate from the General Reserve, the most expedient and cost-effective solution being sought, subject to RFO confirmation.
4. That, Option One (Agito Cyclone) be selected for the replacement swing at both Burwell Recreation Ground and The Leys for the sum of £19,240 from the play area budget.
5. That, prior to placing orders for the inclusive equipment listed in the report, the Project Officer engages with the residents who previously raised accessibility concerns and were promised involvement, to ensure suitability and siting within the available budget.
6. That, before procurement and installation of inclusive items, officers undertake proportionate access checks (edging, thresholds, approach surfacing and gate convenience) and minor enabling works to be authorised under existing delegation, with any material cost brought back to Committee.

PR489 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.

PR490 PROJECTS UPDATE

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

Members were provided with updates on the West Witney Sports & Social Club building, the Raleigh Crescent new sports and social area and new works depot.

West Witney Projects.

Members heard that the Project Officer was confident that the tender document was progressing well and that it would be advertised in the following two weeks, they received an outline project timescale and were pleased to see that this showed that both projects would be completed by spring of 2026.

Raleigh Crescent

The Committee heard that the amended tender was due to be reviewed by WODC earlier the following week and, providing it was acceptable then it too would be advertised in the coming weeks.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal updates be noted.

PR491 **PROJECTS UPDATE - COURTSIDE/THE LEYS**

The Committee received the confidential update prepared by Jeff Hunter, Courtside CIC Chief Executive.

Members were extremely disappointed to learn of a potential funding gap for the project and how this may impact on the Council.

The Town Clerk reported that she had been in contact with West Oxfordshire District Council in order to request their consideration in helping to resolve the issue

A Members asked that the Chief Executive of Courtside be invited to the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025 in order that Members heard directly from him.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential Courtside update be noted and,
2. That, Courtside Chief executive, Jeff Hunter be invited to the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025.

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Major Capital Projects Update

Meeting Date: Monday 3rd November 2025

Contact Officer: Project Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update regarding the major capital projects that are currently in flight.

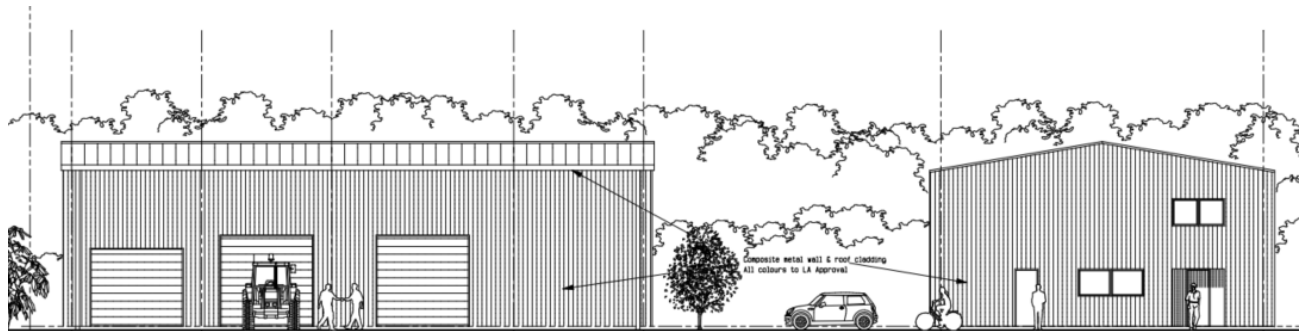
Background

As you are aware, Witney Town Council's Open Spaces Strategy cited 5x themes to deliver improvements for our community: Parks, Sport, Leisure, Infrastructure & Effectiveness.

This report aims to provide you with an update on the major capital projects linked to Parks and Recreation, which are: 'West Witney Project', 'Courtside Hub at the Leys' and 'Ralegh Crescent MUGA'

West Witney Project

New Depot



West Witney Clubhouse



Current Situation

- The West Witney Project combines the construction of a new works depot and the refurbishment of the existing Clubhouse.
- All mandatory documentation—including technical drawings and surveys—has been completed and approved. This enabled the creation of a tightly defined, specification-led tender document designed to ensure submissions deliver best value for money, meet quality compliance standards, and align with required delivery timeframes.
- In accordance with the Council's financial regulations, the project tender was published on 16th September 2025 and remained open for five weeks, closing on 20th October 2025.
- The tender process has significantly surpassed initial expectations. While Officers and Berry's (consultant) projected up to 8 site visits resulting in 4 submissions, the actual outcome was 15 site visits and a substantial number of formal tender submissions
- Officers and Berry's are currently evaluating all submitted tenders in accordance with the Council's financial regulations. A report containing the award recommendation will be issued in time for the scheduled meeting on 10th November 2025.
- Work to satisfy planning approval conditions has been completed and submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council. Confidence is high that we will obtain a positive decision, which is due at the beginning of December.
- The Loan Application to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has been successfully approved.
- Following contractor consultations, the revised project delivery dates are as follows:
 - New Works Depot = 13th February 2025
 - Clubhouse Refurbishment = mid- April 2025

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – n/a
- b) Biodiversity – In accordance with planning conditions the new depot satisfies the required uplift in BNG rating.
- c) Crime & Disorder – security of both buildings have been specified in the tender to ensure the building remains safe and potential thieves are deterred. This includes required ratings of locks, doors and windows together with window bars, external lighting and CCTV.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – building construction consists of environmentally friendly materials, which will also improve thermal efficiency. PV roof panels have also been included in specification to reduce energy consumption.

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.

- To reduce the risks typically associated with construction projects, the council is working in partnership with Berry's, a specialist construction consultancy. This collaboration provides assurance that the project will deliver value for money, meet the required specifications and be completed within the agreed timeframes
- The council's rigorous procurement protocols and use of financial regulations significantly reduces the risk of engaging substandard contractors, thereby safeguarding public funds from corrective costs and legal disputes.

Social Value

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

- New depot will improve the team's ability to maintain and enhance the valuable services they provide the town. This improves the appearance of the town and its green spaces, making it a cleaner, neater and more pleasant environment for our residents.
- A refurbished Clubhouse will provide the community with a new modern building to socialise and rent function rooms. It will also provide the community with refurbished changing rooms facilities for sports teams and eliminates the current safeguarding issue restricting its use for youngsters.

Financial implications

- The financial implications have been documented comprehensively in our RFO's Full Council Report dated 23rd June 2025

Recommendations

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

Courtside Hub at the Leys



Current Situation

- Councillors attended a site visit on 30th September 2025 for an in-depth tour and update.
- Currently contractors are working on the interior fit out, changing rooms and drainage infrastructure.
- Project is on track for opening in January 2026

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- e) Equality – n/a
- f) Biodiversity – the project plans to achieve over 100% improvement in BNG
- g) Crime & Disorder – contractors are on site, which ensures site security and reduces risk of trespassing, vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- h) Environment & Climate Emergency – building construction consists of environmentally friendly materials, which will also improve thermal efficiency and reduce energy consumption.

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.

- Officers intend to phase the council's £250,000 contribution to Courtside at set milestones that are weighted towards the end of the project, to minimise the risk of any financial loss.

Social Value

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

- Increased variety of sports will encourage Witney's residents to exercise and feel the physical and social benefits
- The completion of the Courtside Hub, coupled with new skatepark, mini-golf, renovated splashpad and excellent play area, establishes the Leys as a destination park for the area.

Financial implications

- Witney Town Council's contribution of £250,000 will be segmented and phased in accordance with project milestones and acceptable level of risk.
- Work is underway to renegotiate the lease between the council and Courtside

Recommendations

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

Ralegh Crescent MUGA



Current Situation

- Officers have received clarification from District Council on the conditions of use for the S106 money allocated to provide a MUGA at Ralegh Crescent.
- Officers have re-issued the tender document to reflect the S106 requirements for WODC to approve and publish in November 2025.

- WTC Officers have collaborated with WODC Officers to respond to several complaints from a local resident who is concerned with location of planned MUGA. Officers have captured relevant concerns and included within proposed tender to WODC. Resident has also been given guidance on formal process they can follow to comment on planning when design and location has been confirmed.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – inclusivity and accessibility to everyone are important design features of this park, which are highlighted in tender and subsequent evaluation process.
- b) Biodiversity – the project plans to deliver above the minimal uplift in BNG
- c) Crime & Disorder – location is an area subjected to occasional anti-social behaviour, which was raised at consultation events. We have asked for this issue to be addressed within the design and lighting/CCTV innovations.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – building construction consists of environmentally friendly materials and lighting will be energy efficient. Muga specification includes soundproof materials to reduce sound of ball strikes.

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.

- Differences in Town Council and District Council protocol, processes and cultures could present challenges agreeing tender specifications and transferring ownership to Witney Town Council. We are managing risk by learning from previous experience with Play Park and effective comms through robust procurement process and project management.
- Officers recognise that concepts which were presented at public consultation last year will be different to what is being delivered due to S106 spending criteria. Officers are taking relevant feedback from consultation event to incorporate into new design scope. In addition, officers are working with WODC officers to re-engage community to reset expectations.

Social Value

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

- A key objective of the park is to encourage exercise through fun activities, which attracts users from every segment of the community to encourage social, generational, cultural and physical integration.

- Another key objective is making a safe and fun area for girls to participate in sporting activities.
- The park will address a growing concern of anti-social behaviour in the existing park, due to its covered seating areas, which are poorly lit.

Financial implications

- The project budget is reliant on S106 monies from District Council, which means the town council must work in partnership to deliver project. Robust processes need to be in place to ensure robust contracts are in place and smooth transfer of ownership is achieved.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated

The Splash Park



Current Situation

- In preparation for the winter period, the seasonal closure and protective maintenance of the splash park have been successfully completed. The park has now been secured for colder weather to ensure its longevity and readiness for reopening next year.
- The park experienced a successful summer season, operating without any faults or technical issues. Community feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, even with the introduction of reduced operating hours due to the hosepipe ban.

- Notably, the park has significantly improved water efficiency, allowing for extended operating hours while reducing our water bills. This has resulted in the Council achieving cost savings on water consumption, coming in under budget for the season.
- All outstanding defects have now been resolved with Ustigate. This included the correct sizing of water jets and the installation of water efficient features, which were initially capped off. These enhancements will contribute to an improved user experience when the park reopens in 2026.
- The project is now formally classified as complete.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

1. Equality – WTC aim to ensure that all children, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to safe, inclusive, and engaging play environments with good accessibility, diverse equipment, safe spaces that are welcoming and enjoyable for everyone, helping to break down barriers and promote social equality from a young age.
2. Biodiversity – Integrating biodiversity into playground design not only enriches the play experience but also fosters a deeper connection between children and the natural world. WTC aim to incorporate natural elements like trees, shrubs, and wildflower meadows, which help support local wildlife and create more engaging environments for children.
3. Crime & Disorder – consideration is given to equipment that can withstand vandalism and reduce risk of anti-social behaviour. Efforts will be made revitalise spaces leading to improved community relations and a reduction in crime and disorder, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for residents.
4. Environment & Climate Emergency – consideration is given to ensuring equipment is manufactured from sustainable and recycled materials for equipment and surfaces. Equipment and sequencing indicates we will reduce our water usage by 60%.

Risk

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

- n/a

Social Value

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

- A key objective of the play areas review is to identify parks that can be improved to encourage exercise through fun activities to attract users from every segment of the community which encourages social, generational, cultural and physical integration.

Financial implications

➤ n/a

Recommendations

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