

WITNEY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FROM CHAIR OF TOWN COUNCIL'S PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

CLLR VICKY GWATKIN

This Committee has responsibility for all recreation grounds, parks, public open spaces and sports activities upon any ground under the control of the Town Council.

The Committee is overseeing a number of projects in Witney.

Open Spaces Strategy (OSS)

The OSS provides a framework for developing a number of projects and longer-term ambitions for a wide range of open spaces in the town. The committee remains committed to this strategy, as a means of transparently setting and prioritising objectives and allowing us to move forward with a clear sense of direction and purpose.

Play Areas

Work is continuing to improve existing play areas.

We have now put in place the formal rolling programme for the replacement and upgrade of existing play areas, to ensure a planned, budgeted, and consistent strategy going forward. This includes the addition of an inclusive piece of play equipment in each park.

Splash Pad repairs were carried out last year with further repairs due in Spring 2023. As part of ongoing management, repairs to existing equipment and bark replenishment have taken place through the year.

The Committee supported the Smoke Free Parks initiative to try and discourage park users from smoking in these valuable and well used community areas, signs will be installed in the coming months.

Playing Pitches

We have continued our focus on bringing unused pitches on-line as soon as possible to support our local sports teams. Over the last few months, we have gained some traction, working alongside West Oxfordshire District Council to discuss improvements to existing sites, and the development of new sites, including locating the new Astro-turf pitch.

Since the Town Council's grounds maintenance contract has been brought in house, we have been able to improve the maintenance regime and invest in new equipment.

Extensive annual maintenance has taken place - pitches have been linearly aerated and seeded and pitch goal mouths have been heavily sanded to help with surface drainage and impact damage.

A defibrillator is due to be installed at King George V playing field in the coming weeks. This will mean all playing pitches will have access to this life-saving piece of equipment, maintained by the town council.

Three swamp-variety trees have been planted at West Witney to establish if this could be a partial solution to the excess water around one of the pitches.

Sports Facilities

Sports facilities, including playing pitches, remain heavily subsidised by Witney Town Council.

We have continued to work with consultants and local stakeholders to try and bring about much needed improvements to existing facilities, including large scale projects at West Witney and the Leys and informing plans for new facilities at Windrush Place. A pre planning application has been submitted for the skatepark to help inform this project.

At West Witney the tennis courts have been recoated and negotiations have commenced with the tennis club regarding a new lease which will provide them with increased control and enable them to better access funding.

The hugely successful Witney Parkrun has been granted a 4-year licence extension to run until March 2027.

We have undertaken bowls green renovation work at West Witney and the Leys, installed new ditch liners and new boarding.

At Burwell we are currently looking at improvements to existing changing facilities. The toilets are being refurbished and a new, energy efficient heating system will be installed.

The Lake & Country Park

In addition to the work undertaken under the remit of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee to improve the site, the pathway around the lake is being widened and stabilised to assist users with limited mobility.

Overall signage is also being improved, new no-swimming signs have been installed and fencing is being upgraded along the Windrush River to aid the safety of users.

General Maintenance & Improvements

The Hedge line dividing the fields at Burwell Recreation ground has had all dead wood removed. In spring they will be planted with whips and fenced to help it re-establish.

Five new trees have been planted at Quarry Road and a large diseased tree has been removed from Pensclose. Remedial work has also been undertaken on a tree damaged by storms on Woodgreen.

A memorial picnic bench has been installed at Oxlease.

Cllr Vicky Gwatkin, Chair of Parks & Recreation Committee