

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

Held on Monday, 13 May 2024

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

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	T Ashby	R Smith
	O Collins	S Simpson
	R Crouch	J Treloar
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	Two members of the public.	

PR241 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Aitman

PR242 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

PR243 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Crouch and seconded by Councillor Collins that Councillor R Smith be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Ruth Smith be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

PR244 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 were received.

P121 – The Leys Parking Restrictions – The Head of Estate & Operations provided an update to say that the Project Officer continues to work with OCC Legal advisors towards a resolution. An Update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR245 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from a member of Witney parkrun who gave an update on their activity at West Witney Sports Ground which had been affected greatly by the poor weather over the winter season. They offered their appreciation for the support received from the Council's Works Team in supporting them to improve the troublesome areas of the course.

He expressed the importance of ensuring that the course remains in good condition as many of the 200+ runners did not participate in other parkruns if the Witney event was cancelled; for some of individuals who don't travel it was an important element of their wellbeing.

The Committee reconvened.

PR246 **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 were pleased to receive this positive set of figures, however noted that these may be subject to further adjustment for year-end accruals and prepayments.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

PR247 **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO along with a verbal update concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

A Member thanked Officers for their continued hard work pressing West Oxfordshire District Council to take over projects in order for them to achieve delivery.

The Head of Estates & Operations provided additional information in relation to the Town Council taking on the management of the project to improve the facilities in the Raleigh Crescent area. He advised that a public consultation would take place to establish the needs of residents and users to ensure there was inclusivity. He was positive that the Town Council would deliver an improved environment.

Members were pleased to hear these views and were confident that Officers would build on the success of the recent Skatepark consultation and implementation.

Resolved:

That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted.

PR248 **SPORTS PITCHES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager regarding the use of the Council's sports pitches at West Witney Sports Ground for Cricket by Witney Swifts.

The Head of Estates & Operations gave a verbal summary to Members confirming that the Works Team had achieved the necessary standard of grounds preparation required by the league in which Witney Swifts played.

A request had been made by Witney Swifts for the purchase of a lawnmower, Members heard that the Works Team mower could cut to a level of 1mm, the mower requested by the club would cut to 4-5mm. It was therefore agreed that the preparation by the Works Team would be sufficient, and the expense of a mower was not necessary.

A Member reminded the Committee that with the improvements to be made in late 2024 to the WWSCC building, all the sports clubs would soon be experiencing a much-improved facility which, it was hoped, would show the clubs in a good light to visiting teams.

The Town Clerk explained that historically, when the Council's contractors undertook the wicket maintenance, Witney Swifts would do any last-minute maintenance on match day – on occasions this did have some issues – hence why clarification on any arrangement via an agreement was recommended. Members agreed that Officers would draw up a user agreement with Witney Swifts for the avoidance of doubt as to what preparations would be carried out by the Council and which would be the responsibility of the Cricket Club at West Witney Sports Ground. The Chair & Vice Chair would also meet with the club to verbally discuss the Council's reasons for the decisions being made.

Regarding the cost of booked sessions, Members asked for a breakdown to be supplied at a future meeting for them to better understand what value the cricket users receive. All Members agreed that charges remain unchanged.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee meet with Witney Swifts and,
3. That, booking charges remain unchanged and,
4. That, the request from Witney Swifts for a green's mower be refused.

(Cllr Treloar left the meeting at 6:40pm)

PR249 **MAJOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer regarding the major projects within the Town along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations (HE&O)

Leys Skatepark

Members were pleased to hear that the £57,975 grant provided by the FCC Communities Foundation was due to be received imminently following the key achievements being met and evidenced. Members reflected on what a great reception the park has had from users.

West Witney Sports Social Club

Members heard that Officers continued to progress grant funding opportunities and were now at the stage of drawing up the final specification and design. Members welcomed the advances on the project and were pleased to hear that renewable energy sources, including a ground source heat pump and photovoltaic panels were being explored. The HE&O advised that they hoped to meet the next grant funding window which was due to be open for June/July.

Also, during the public participation item earlier in the meeting the representative from Witney parkrun had asked to be included at an early stage in the Work Depot development so that they may be aware of the proposed layout and if this would impact on the parkrun course, particularly the proximity of the entrance to the Depot. The Head of Estates & Operations offered his contact details so that an onsite meeting could be arranged to discuss this further.

The representative also raised an issue with a bollard that protects the sports field and asked that this be fixed to prevent unauthorised access of vehicles to the field.

Witney parkrun were also pleased to see via a members social media feed that £30,000 had been budgeted for improvements to the section of their course which ran adjacent to Deer Park Road. It was, however, understood this would not be sufficient to complete the whole project and Officers would discuss this further when they meet with the representatives in order to identify specific needs and assist with potential further funding/grant resources.

Courtside Hub/Leys Redevelopment

The HE&O explained the issues regarding drainage and the works on the building foundations being experienced by Courtside which had delayed the delivery of the project. It was expected that completion would now be in the late summer. Members were disappointed to hear this however, they were pleased to hear officers were in regular contact to provide support in order that residents were kept up to date.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, an onsite meeting be arranged with representatives of Witney parkrun to discuss the plan for the new depot at West Witney as well as the possibility of improvement to the Deer Park Road path and,
3. That, the broken bollard at West Witney Sports Ground be repaired.

PR250 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.

(Members of the public left the meeting at 7:04pm)

PR251 **FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO provided on future ownership and management of sports pitch provisions in the town.

Members were pleased to receive a comprehensive summary of the progress of discussions between the Town Clerk and West Oxfordshire District Council. Each of the individual proposals and recommendations in the report were discussed and Members were unanimous in agreement of the recommendations below.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, WTC take on the grassed area of Deer Park Road Training Pitch on a freehold basis and,
3. That, WTC take on the grassed area including the MUGA/MUSA at Raleigh Crescent Training Pitch on a freehold basis. The grassed area from Spring 2025 and the MUGA/MUSA project when completed and,
4. That, ownership and maintenance of trees and hedges at both Deer Park Road and Raleigh Crescent remain with WODC and,
5. That, WODC be requested to re-establish the perimeter ditches at both Deer Park Road and Raleigh Crescent to stop illegal encampments and,
6. That, in respect of the Windrush Place Pavilion, Pitches and Play Zone/MUGA, WTC runs the site in line with its other sports pitches/pavilion/changing rooms dealing with allocation of the pitches and,
7. That, WTC confirm no changes are required to the internal layout of the Windrush Place Pavilion and,
8. That, should the 3G Pitch be situated at West Witney Sports Ground that the ownership will be transferred to WTC, and the Council establish a sinking fund in order to budget for the ongoing financial & maintenance commitments and,
9. That, WTC will establish demand for municipal pitches at Madley Park and,
10. That, subject to sufficient demand WTC offer to take on the freehold of the Madley Park Playing Fields and maintain from 2029 when the dual use agreement ends providing the pitches are brought back to specification and,
11. That, the Town Clerk reviews the administrative and maintenance resources required as a result of taking on these additional facilities, including a new bookings system.

The meeting closed at: 7.35 pm

Chair