

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

Held on Monday, 9 September 2024

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

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch	J Treloar
	J Aitman	T Ashby
	S Simpson	R Smith
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Adam Cook	Project Officer
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager
Others:	Four members of the public.	

*Ahead of the business of the Committee a period of reflection was held for Mr John Hickman.
John passed away in August having served the Council as an Officer for many years.*

PR473 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins.

PR474 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Newcombe declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 10 as he was a member of Witney Rifle Club, based at West Witney Sports Ground Projectile Range.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

PR475 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 1 July 2024 were received.

PR365 – In response to a Members question, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the arrangements for the Licence agreement with Witney Swifts Cricket Club were ongoing.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 1 July 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

PR476 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representation from Jeff Hunter of Courtside CIC concerning Agenda Item 10 & 12.

At 6:50pm additional representation was made by a member of Witney Mills Bowls Club concerning Agenda Item 7. The representation was allowed at the discretion of the Chair as the member of the public had mistaken the start time of the meeting.

The Committee reconvened.

PR477 **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.

The Committee were pleased to hear the committee's spending was in line with the agreed yearly budget.

A Member raised that cost centre 206 in the report did not appear on the breakdown of accounts. The Committee Clerk apologised for the error in the RFO's report which should have read Cost Centre 216.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised members that the budget cycle would soon commence and that Members may wish to consider items for inclusion in the 2024/25 Budget.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the report and management accounts of the Parks & Recreation Committee for the period 1 April – 31 July 2024 be approved.

PR478 **RESIDENTS SATISFACTION SURVEY**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) which provided details of actions taken in response the residents survey conducted earlier in the year.

The DTC provided a correction to the report to say that the wet pouring of the new entrance surface at the Leys play area was not yet complete, it would be carried out in the less busy months so as not to impact users.

Members were advised that the inclusion of a piece of disabled access equipment was in planning with the intention that it could be installed soon at The Leys.

The Committee were advised a schedule of notifications would be issued to advise residents of the actions taken so that they may see that their comments had been taken on board.

A Member enquired of the budget required to maintain the Cricket Square at The Leys; the arrangement was due to be reviewed in the next budget year. The Operation Manager advised whether the decision is to retain the square or return it to parkland there would be cost implications. It was therefore decided that the subject be discussed further at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, budget requirements for the continuance or removal of playing of Cricket at The Leys should be added to the next committee meeting agenda.

PR479 WITNEY MILLS BOWLS CLUB – REQUEST FOR CLUBHOUSE IMPROVEMENTS

The Committee received and considered correspondence from Witney Mills Bowls Club regarding a request for their facilities to be improved as part of the development of the new Council works depot.

Members also heard from a member of the Witney Mills Bowls Club explaining the history of the club and the needs of members to enhance their experience and use of the Bowls rink.

The Project Officer and Operations Manager were also able to provide members with details of how the request may fit with the proposals for the depot and how the current use of the bowls green fitted into the overall work of the operations team when compared to other sports clubs across the town and district.

Members asked for clarification of the agreement between the club and the Council in respect of the green fees and rent that were paid by the club for the facility but agreed the provision of water and electricity to the Witney Mills Pavilion should be explored further by officers as part of this project

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted,
2. That, Officers provide clarification of the financial agreement between the club and the council,
3. That, Officers investigate further the proposal to provide utilities to Witney Mill Bowls Club and provide details so that a budget can be considered.

PR480 SPORTS PITCH UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report and verbal update of the Deputy Town Clerk which provided an update on the Council's sports pitches and the administration of sports bookings.

The Leader thanked the Booking and Operation Teams for the work they did despite the criticism they face particularly when it is magnified by social media.

Members believed that an online bookings system would be more transparent and could potentially be expanded to Halls Bookings. They welcomed Officers exploring the idea further and looked forward to receiving detailed information and quotes for the software.

Members also received correspondence from Witney Town Bowls Club (WTBC) regarding the maintenance of their bowling greens. In response, the Operations Manager advised he had met with the club and the issues raised had in the main been dealt with by his team and the club were happy with the resolutions. He added that WTBC was a very active club with over 800 members and an extensive playing calendar; the Club were a pleasure to work with and did all they can to facilitate access for maintenance of the green.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers investigate the online booking system and report back their findings at the next meeting and,
3. That, the correspondence from Witney Town Bowls Club be noted.

PR481 RECREATION GROUND SECURITY UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk along with verbal updates from him and the Operations Manager regarding the security of facilities following two unauthorised traveller encampments during the year.

Members heard that a replacement gate for Burwell Recreation Ground had been ordered and would be installed on receipt. They were disappointed to hear that the council would be unable to recover costs for the damage caused, therefore once again the cost would be met by the residents of Witney along with the costs of any other additional security measure that were needed.

The Committee were also advised of the loss of income resulting in the cancelled hall booking at Burwell Hall for the evening of 30 August 2024.

Lastly, the Leader of the Council asked that members of the council considered carefully any social media posts for these incidents as, in the case of the unauthorised traveller entry, hateful comments had been made on the back of them.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal updates be noted.

PR482 MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report along with a verbal explanation of its content from the Project Officer.

Wheeled Sports Park

The date of the Street Art Competition had been amended at the request of the supporting partner to 5 October 2024. This would allow more experienced national artists to participate with the hope of leading to better quality artwork.

Members, having received reassurance of the code of conduct, were all in agreement with the event taking place and welcomed the introduction of the temporary display boards for artist to use on ad-hoc basis.

West Witney Sports & Social Club

Members were disappointed to hear that a decision to reopen the Community Ownership Fund had not been made by the Government, however, were pleased to hear that the potential funding opportunity available from the Football Association would be explored further.

The Project Officer explained that the project would now be considered as one whole project rather than individual smaller projects. More information would be provided once West Oxfordshire District Council executive met on 11 September 2024 to decide on the funding for the 3G pitch project.

Raleigh Crescent

The Project Officer thanked all Councillors that helped assist the consultation events to gather feedback, this was now being worked through and a report would be made available at the next Committee meeting.

The Leys Splashpad

Members heard that the splashpad had been in operation for the majority of the summer with only minor repairs being required. The Project Officer would be progressing the project by obtaining tenders for the splashpad upgrade works.

Parking at the Leys

Officers were continuing to progress with the Traffic Regulation Order application to limit the parking time at the Leys parking area. It was expected that this would run 8am to 6pm with no return within 2 hours. Officers would request that Saturdays & Sundays would be exempt from the restrictions.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal updates be noted.

PR483 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND 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.

PR484 **LEYS COURTSIDE HUB**

The Committee received the confidential report prepared by Courtside CIC on the progress of the Leys community hub development. Members had also earlier received a verbal update from Jeff Hunter, CEO of Courtside CIC during the public participation item.

Members expressed their disappointment at the delay in commencement of construction and the communications with Courtside CIC. Members asked that a letter be sent to Courtside CIC to

recognise and welcome the confirmed September start date and request that project governance documentation be forwarded in order that the Committee had confidence in the timescale of the delivery.

All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report and verbal update from Courtside CIC be noted and,
2. That, Officers send a letter to Courtside CIC to request project governance documentation on behalf of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 7.59 pm

Chair