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**Agenda Item:** Witney Basketball

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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The purpose of this report is to inform Members on the popularity of basketball as a team sport and available facilities in Witney.

### Background

The Town Council has a long-standing history of supporting football and cricket teams in Witney, including the provision of and subsidised use of pitches for these sports. It also manages projects and facilities for a range of other sports, such as MUGAs and MUSAs, and leases an area of the Leys to Courtside CIC for tennis, as well as the upcoming padel and pickleball courts.

### Current Situation

Officers met with representatives from Witney Wolves Basketball Club in April which is based at Wood Green School. They shared some compelling insights about the growth of basketball in the UK — noting it is now the second most played team sport after football, with participation at its highest levels since records began. Source: [Basketball participation in England at its highest levels since records began | Basketball England](#)

The Club's ambitions strongly align with the goals of the Town Council, particularly around increasing youth engagement in physical activity. From the meeting it was evident the Club is enthusiastic about expanding opportunities for young people to play basketball in the area and are looking to grow their presence and access to facilities in Witney. Some key points where the town council is able to help are:

- Assisting with the promotion of basketball as a sport
- Lobbying for upgrades to existing basketball courts and facilities in Witney – Windrush Leisure Centre/OCC courts
- Incorporating full-sized basketball courts into future town council projects
- Seeking developer contributions (£106 requests) from new developments (along with further sports pitch provision)

Officers have engaged with West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council regarding facilities outside the Town Council's control—such as those at Windrush Leisure

Centre and other external courts—to explore whether they can be upgraded to a semi-professional standard using existing budgets or Section 106 funding.

Witney Wolves have also indicated they would like to get more involved with initiatives in the community, potentially holding basketball sessions during the summer holidays.

## **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 – improving inclusive, low-cost activity that brings together people from diverse backgrounds
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – improving facilities so that more young people have access to further opportunities to engage and help divert from antisocial behaviour or crime.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Any refurbishment or new project should consider construction materials.

## **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.

## **Social Value**

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

Promotion and facilitation of basketball encourages physical activity and social cohesion which in turn assists with positive mental health.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider assisting with the promotion and facilitation of basketball in Witney through the ways listed in the report above.