

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Committee Objectives & Work Programme for the Municipal Year

Meeting Date: Monday, 12 May 2025

Contact Officer: Town Clerk - Sharon Groth

The purpose of this report is to give consideration to this Committee's objectives/priorities for the municipal year in order for the Town Clerk to ensure there is a manageable programme of works, and to deploy the necessary resources appropriately.

Background

The Parks & Recreation Committee is responsible for overseeing the Town Council's parks, open spaces, recreational facilities, and sporting provisions. The Committee has been working through a comprehensive Open Spaces Strategy Action Plan, as well as projects generated through s.106 developer contributions, and long-term aspirations, with several major and minor projects completed, in progress, or scheduled for the future.

Current Situation

Members are referred to information provided at the later agenda items on major strategic projects (11 and 13), and to below where this Committee's projects are detailed in the following categories: in progress; preparation pool/part or unfunded; s106 projects.

This Committee continues to manage several large and complex projects, along with significant projects planned to transfer to the Council via s106 developer funding arrangements. West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) requires the Town Council's Officers to project manage these accordingly as they do not have the resources to assist.

Projects In Progress:

- **Leys Masterplan:** Partnership project with Courtside CIC to create a multi-sports hub and café with sports changing rooms. Construction well underway with anticipated opening in Autumn 2025. The Town Council pledged £250,000 towards the project. Requires continued Officer coordination due to impact on other WTC assets. Updates have been provided through previous committee meetings. More information provided at agenda item 11.
- **Leys Parking Restrictions:** Discussions are ongoing with OCC and WODC to support the development of facilities at the Leys. The aim is to ensure their long-term viability and to prevent visitors from being deterred by the lack of controlled parking, which currently allows spaces to be taken by town centre workers.

- **Splash Park Renewal:** Project underway for replacement facility to be open by May 2025 half-term holidays. Funded from EMR account 361. More information provided at agenda item 11.
- **West Witney Clubhouse Refurbishment:** Major refurbishment of clubhouse social facilities and toilets/changing rooms, funded through a combination of Loan (to be applied for), S106 contributions, and EMR account 319. Regular updates have been presented by Officers to committee meetings.
- **Works Depot:** New facility at West Witney Sports Ground as a result of the old depot being displaced by the improvements at the Leys Recreation Ground. Planning permission granted. In the process of applying for a Public Works Loan – factored into 25/26 agreed budget. More information provided at agenda item 13.

Projects in Preparation Pool/Part or Unfunded:

- **Play Equipment Renewals Programme:** 2024/25 budget of £75k – Officers scheduling Programme of Works for play equipment renewals.
- **Burwell Sports Changing Rooms:** Considering options to fit current project fund through EMR (A/c 368) £47,030 and S106 funding £25,000, with possible FA grant funding needs exploring.
- **Leys Ground Sewerage:** Problems identified by the Bowls Club approx. 3 or 4 years ago – with the sewage pipe not buried deep enough which cause pipes being damage by ground renovation spiking. EMR account 367 stands at £57,900 with additional budget allocation required.
- **Parkrun Path WWSG:** Revised project scope coordinated with potential 3G pitch location. Project not fully funded.
- **Green Flag Status Applications:** Following completion of the Leys Masterplan project, begin preparation for Green Flag status applications for The Leys and other suitable parks, as per Open Spaces Strategy objective PO2.
- **Playing Fields Maintenance Enhancement:** Following STRI report recommendations, develop enhanced maintenance programme for sports pitches with focus on drainage improvements at West Witney and King George's.

S106 Projects:

- **Raleigh Crescent MUSA:** Multi-Use Sports Area, replacing basketball/youth shelters on Raleigh Crescent playing field. Project managed by WTC with s106 funding from Windrush Place development. More information provided at agenda item 11.
- **Windrush Place Pavilion/Pitches:** Project managed by Developers Consortium/WODC with anticipated completion spring 2026.
- **Windrush Place Adventure Play:** WODC want WTC to undertake the project management. Due to workload ODS have been appointed to support via WODC. Project in early stages, no planned date for commission/completion.

- **Waterford Road Play Area:** Legal freehold transfer from WODC ongoing along with remedial/improvement works.
- **3G Pitch:** WODC Cabinet decision confirmed West Witney Sports Ground as location (June 2024). Additional funding needs to be identified to supplement s106 contribution, before the project can be tendered.
- **Madley Park Play/Teen Zone & Playing Fields:** Continuing to work towards transfer of the play park under a lease; Teen Zone is attached to complex arrangements of a dual agreement with the school, OCC and WODC which expires in 2029, with interim management arrangements under review.

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** - Projects are designed to improve accessibility to recreational facilities for all residents. Specific attention is being paid to inclusive play equipment and accessible pathways in all new developments.

b) **Biodiversity** - The Committee continues to integrate biodiversity enhancements into parks and open spaces management, including pollinator-friendly planting schemes, reduced mowing regimes where appropriate, and habitat creation.

c) **Crime & Disorder** - Projects incorporate design principles to minimise anti-social behaviour, including appropriate lighting, natural surveillance, and youth engagement initiatives.

d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** - The Committee has incorporated sustainable design elements into facility improvements, including energy-efficient systems in the West Witney Clubhouse and Works Depot, water conservation measures for the Splash Park renewal, and sustainable materials in play equipment renewals.

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.

When considering its priorities the committee should be mindful of all resources -- financial as well as human resources.

Expectations also need to be managed on the timely delivery of these projects, in order not to jeopardise the Town Council's reputation.

Key risks identified:

1. Resource capacity constraints - Officers continue to manage multiple complex projects simultaneously
2. Rising construction and materials costs affecting project budgets
3. Coordination challenges with external partners (WODC, developers, sports clubs)
4. Maintaining aging infrastructure while developing new facilities

Social Value

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

The Committee's work programme delivers significant social value through:

- Providing high-quality recreational facilities that support physical and mental wellbeing
- Creating community hubs that foster social cohesion
- Supporting local sports clubs and community organisations
- Enhancing access to green spaces and natural environments
- Providing facilities for young people

Financial implications

The financial implications are detailed in the report as well as the other supporting agenda items at 11 and 13. Key points include:

- Several major projects are funded through Earmarked Reserves
- Additional external funding has been secured for specific projects
- S106 contributions fund significant developments
- Some projects may require additional budget allocations or public works loans
- Long-term maintenance costs need to be factored into future financial planning

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Review and approve the priority order of projects for the 2025/26 municipal year
2. Consider allocation of additional resources where required for priority projects
3. Support applications for external funding where appropriate