

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

Held on Monday, 1 September 2025

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillors:	J Treloar	D Temple
	R Smith	G Doughty (In place of J Doughty)
	A Bailey	D Newcombe (In place of J Aitman)
	D Edwards-Hughes	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Adam Cook	Project Officer
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager
Others:	Three members of the public. Councillor Georgia Meadows	

PR481 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Aitman and J Doughty, Councillors D Newcombe and G Doughty attended as substitutes respectively.

PR482 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

PR483 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 June 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 June 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR484 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from representatives of Witney Vikings and Tower Hill Football Clubs concerning Agenda Items 7 & 8.

The representative for Witney Vikings led the participation outlining the clubs plans to work better with the Council and the proposed changes to streamline administration, fee collection and how they could work alongside the Council in the application of grant funding.

The representative from Tower Hill, expressed their pleasure at hearing of the potential collaboration between teams and the Council.

The Committee reconvened.

PR485 FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING FEES

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the members of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager, who also provided a verbal explanation. He confirmed the main issue with training was that it took place on match pitches during the time that renovations works were ongoing.

The football club representatives present acknowledged that training did take place without booking with the Council. The clubs also agreed with the comments of the Operations Manager that training should never take place on match pitches and that they were aware this was the directive of the Football Association (The FA), with the outcome being that this may potentially affect grant funding from the FA.

In order that a full discussion took place, with the permission of the Chair, the representatives present participated in the discussion.

Members had heard earlier from the football club representatives who had asked that the implementation of training fees be delayed as training fees had not been factored into the club's fee charging structure for 2025.

In response to a Member's question regarding the impact to membership if training fees were enforced by the Council, the representative for Witney Vikings advised that with such demand for places he did not expect a drop in their membership due to a potential higher registration fee needing to be charged. However, he hoped that the collaboration with the Council to seek grant funding could mitigate the need for training fees.

Members discussed various options which resulted in a proposal to which all members unanimously agreed that:

1. Training sessions be allowed to proceed without charge this season and,
2. That all training must be booked via the bookings office to determine demand and so the correct maintenance can be carried out by the Council's work team and,
3. The Council identify and prepare other grassed areas, with a maximum 9 x 9 pitch being made available for training and,
4. That areas designated for training are used instead of match pitch areas (in line with FA guidance) and,
5. Absolutely no training must take place on match pitches outside of the football season (During renovation periods) and,
6. Storage containers be considered at the additional training sites identified and,
7. That the demand for training be monitored and its success reviewed in March 2026.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the above decisions, numbered 1-7, be communicated to the football teams at the upcoming new season meeting with clubs on 4 September 2025.

PR486 SPORTS PITCH UPDATE

Also, with the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the members of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee received and considered the report and accompanying verbal update from the Operations Manager outlining the position of the sports pitches as the new football season approached.

Members heard that following a dry spring and summer the renovations had not been fully successful with areas of newly seeded ground not taking properly due to a lack of rain. The Operations Manager explained that the decompaction work had not taken place and in hindsight this was the correct decision as it would have led to create drying of the ground and creation of dangerous playing surface due to large cracks.

An update was provided on the grant funding that the Council was in receipt of, it was hoped that further funding may be sought from the Football Foundation to carry out further drainage consultations, specifically at West Witney. Members welcomed this having heard earlier from the representative of Witney Vikings that the club would look to support the Council in any grant applications.

The Operations Manager highlighted the potential risk of ground allocation for junior teams in so much as if one recreation ground was to suffer from poor weather, this would lead to the potential cancellation of all of that club's games and therefore adversely affect them. It was agreed that a trial allocation be discussed further with the football clubs at the meeting on 4 September.

The Committee discussed the request from Witney Vikings for the siting of a storage container at King George's field, Members were very supportive of this and highlighted the need to ensure that consideration also be given to storage for the Witney Wolves Basketball team who intended to make use of the court in the Multi Use Games Area.

Discussion regarding the request for additional inseting of pitches took place, it was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr G Doughty that this should not be undertaken. Members heard this was the advice from the Football Association and was further supported by the news of damage witnessed from the overuse of the Burwell pitches in previous years.

A vote was taken with six members supporting the proposal, one member abstained.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, Officers discuss ground allocation with the junior football clubs and,
3. That, no marking of inset pitches take place and,
4. That, agreement to install a storage container at King George's field be granted and consideration given to storage for Witney Wolves and,

5. That, potential grant funding opportunities is explored by Officers.

The representative of Witney Vikings left the meeting at 6:58pm.

The remaining members of the public left the meeting at 7:07pm

During the following Agenda Item Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly between 7:10 and 7:12pm

PR487 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 heard that the net expenditure was at 22% of budget- it being three months into the financial year the news was welcomed.

Members considered items for inclusion in the 2026/27 budget, Members highlighted the potential need to set funds for improvements to the Basketball Court at King Georges Field, the path at West Witney to enhance the Park Run, Consideration for pitch drainage at any sites that require it and for consideration by Officers of an increase of benches in the Council's recreation areas.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, consideration be given to the suggested budget items listed above and,
3. That, the management accounts of the Parks & Recreation Committee for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025 be approved.

PR488 PLAY AREA REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer along with a verbal update explaining how the play review tied into the Council overall strategy. Councillors agreed that age and diversity along with the provision of seating and shade for parents should be prioritised by Officers when considering future improvements

The Committee were pleased to see the additions to the inclusive play range and particularly the play panels and welcomed the suggestion for Ralegh Crescent, to replace once of the current inclusive swing with a traditional swing. This would resolve the need to install a path and would allow for funds to be utilised instead provide an additional inclusive play item in an area with existing suitable access.

Officers explained further how consideration would be given to improve the access to inclusive equipment in all the Council's parks to ensure that their use is maximised, this would be carried out in conjunction with users and their families. Following a proposal from Cllr G Doughty, seconded by Cllr A Bailey it was agreed unanimously to delegate to Officers the installation of this equipment.

A paper with three options of replacement swing equipment for Burwell and The Leys play parks was tabled, members discussed each of the options. It was proposed by Cllr J Treloar, seconded by Cllr R Smith that Option One be selected as it provided a piece that could be used by up to four users at a time and could be used by children five and older.

The Committee welcomed the suggestion to install non-verbal communication boards in the play parks at Woodgreen, Oxlease and Quarry Road. These would be provided by Oxfordshire County Council Councillor priority funding and members were appreciative that Officers were carrying out this work alongside the ICE Centre.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, inclusive play equipment as detailed in the report should be purchased for the sum of £16,980 from the play areas budget and,
3. That, officers be authorised to procure and implement access/surfacing or a new inclusive swing at Raleigh Crescent Play Area as a high priority, within a maximum budget of £8,000, to be funded as a supplementary estimate from the General Reserve, the most expedient and cost-effective solution being sought, subject to RFO confirmation.
4. That, Option One (Agito Cyclone) be selected for the replacement swing at both Burwell Recreation Ground and The Leys for the sum of £19,240 from the play area budget.
5. That, prior to placing orders for the inclusive equipment listed in the report, the Project Officer engages with the residents who previously raised accessibility concerns and were promised involvement, to ensure suitability and siting within the available budget.
6. That, before procurement and installation of inclusive items, officers undertake proportionate access checks (edging, thresholds, approach surfacing and gate convenience) and minor enabling works to be authorised under existing delegation, with any material cost brought back to Committee.

PR489 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.

PR490 PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer.

Members were provided with updates on the West Witney Sports & Social Club building, the Raleigh Crescent new sports and social area and new works depot.

West Witney Projects.

Members heard that the Project Officer was confident that the tender document was progressing well and that it would be advertised in the following two weeks, they received an outline project timescale and were pleased to see that this showed that both projects would be completed by spring of 2026.

Raleigh Crescent

The Committee heard that the amended tender was due to be reviewed by WODC earlier the following week and, providing it was acceptable then it too would be advertised in the coming weeks.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal updates be noted.

PR491 **PROJECTS UPDATE - COURTSIDE/THE LEYS**

The Committee received the confidential update prepared by Jeff Hunter, Courtside CIC Chief Executive.

Members were extremely disappointed to learn of a potential funding gap for the project and how this may impact on the Council.

The Town Clerk reported that she had been in contact with West Oxfordshire District Council in order to request their consideration in helping to resolve the issue

A Members asked that the Chief Executive of Courtside be invited to the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025 in order that Members heard directly from him.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential Courtside update be noted and,
2. That, Courtside Chief executive, Jeff Hunter be invited to the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025.

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair