PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 1 June 2026

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

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	S Simpson	D Edwards-Hughes
	J Treloar	R Smith
	R Crouch	T Ashby (In place of J Doughty)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Adam Cook	Project Officer
Others:	None	

PR262 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Doughty, Councillor T Ashby attended as a substitute.

PR263 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

PR264 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

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

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor S Simpson be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Sandra Simpson be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

PR265 **MINUTES**

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 9 March 2025 were received.

PR125 – Members heard there was no further update on the Ralegh Crescent MUGA/MUSA owing to other projects utilising Officer resources.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 9 March 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR266 **PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

There was no public participation.

PR267 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The committee considered whether any changes were needed to the current Terms of Reference.

Recommended:

1. That, no amendments be made to the Terms of Reference and;
2. That, the Terms of Reference be recommended for approval by the Full Council at the meeting of 13 July 2026.

PR268 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received the written and verbal report of the Responsible Financial Officer detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

It was noted that the year-end process had been completed, with the AGAR to be presented to Council on 30 June within the required statutory timescales. Members were advised that income and expenditure had been aligned to the correct financial year to ensure accurate budget reporting.

Members raised questions regarding reduced football income at The Leys and professional fees associated with the Courtside project. Officers confirmed that reduced income reflected fewer games played, and that legal costs related to lease arrangements and the overall protection of Council assets.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Committee for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 be approved.

The Responsible Financial Officer left the meeting at 6:13pm.

PR269 **ANNUAL RESIDENTS SURVEY RESULTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the resident’s annual satisfaction survey which was held at the beginning of the year.

The survey had received a relatively small number of responses, with the majority of respondents being older residents. It was further noted that many of the issues and comments raised were already in the process of being actioned by officers.

A Member requested that additional analysis be undertaken to determine the percentage of satisfactory or above responses from those under 30. It was also reported by the DTC that officers were exploring the possibility of amendments to future surveys in order to obtain more meaningful and representative feedback from residents.

A suggestion was made that a survey could be carried out at the Witney Carnival to increase engagement and reach a greater audience. It was agreed that this proposal would be raised at the Stronger Communities meeting on 15 June 2026.

A specific request was made for Raleigh Crescent play area to be considered for the inclusion of picnic benches, with a suggestion that the Witney Shed may be able to assist.

It was also suggested that the Witney Past, Present and Future Committee could explore the idea of organising a community "Big Lunch".

Recommended:

1. That the report and verbal update be noted and;
2. That officers undertake further analysis of survey data to identify the percentage of younger respondents reporting satisfaction levels of "satisfactory" or above; and;
3. That the above additional engagement suggestions be referred to the relevant Committees for consideration.

PR270 **LEYS SPLASH PARK - SUMMER SEASON**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the splash park operating arrangements for the summer period based on a briefing document from the Head of Estates & Operations which was circulated at the meeting.

Members held a detailed and constructive discussion exploring the most appropriate operating hours, recognising the need to accommodate both pre-school children and families earlier in the day, as well as school-aged children accessing the facility after school.

It was acknowledged that the level of demand would clearly be influenced by weather conditions, which remained uncertain however, members were mindful of the potential additional financial implications of water usage.

Officers advised that, where possible, grey water from the splash park was reused to water areas close to The Leys, although extending this further presented logistical and operational challenges.

A proposal was made by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr R Crouch, to extend operating hours to 10:00am to 5:00pm, with Officers preparing a report for Full Council on 13 July detailing the impact of these extended opening hours on water usage including overall water consumption, the extent of grey water reuse, and the potential offset where grey water replaced freshwater use.

A counter proposal was put forward by Cllr D Edwards-Hughes, seconded by Cllr J Treloar, to amend the operating hours to 10:00am to 6:00pm.

Following a vote, 4 Members voted in favour of the proposal by Cllr Smith and 3 Members in favour of the counter proposal. With five members of the Policy, Governance & finance Committee being present it was further agreed that rather than have to wait for ratification at a future meeting that the changes be applied with immediate effect.

It was therefore:

Resolved:

1. That, the update be noted and;
2. That, splash park operating hours be amended to 10:00am to 5:00pm with immediate effect and;
3. That, an update on water usage and associated costs against budget be presented to the Full Council meeting on 13 July inn order that the Council can review the position and make any necessary adjustments.
4. That, given the quorum of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee Members present, the revised operating hours be implemented with immediate effect rather than awaiting formal ratification.

PR271 **SPORTS PITCHES**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Estates and Operations along with a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC).

Members heard that the bowls green had received positive feedback from visiting clubs regarding its appearance.

The Committee was advised that the first few games of Witney Swifts Cricket Club had been relocated away from West Witney, as the facility was not ready for use. It was confirmed that the cost of this relocation had been met by the building contractor and therefore had no financial impact on the Council.

In response to a question from a Member, the DTC confirmed that quarterly football liaison meetings were scheduled; however, engagement from clubs at the most recent meeting had been limited.

Regarding the playing pitches located at Windrush Pavilion, it was reported that a further review of grass coverage and condition was expected to take place within the next 2 to 3 weeks, with any potential budget implications for remedial works by the town council to be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on 22 June if appropriate.

A Member requested information on the cost of maintaining the cricket square at The Leys. Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed that a final approach be made to local clubs to determine whether there was interest in re-establishing cricket use at The Leys. Should no interest be received, it was suggested that the area be returned to a grass playing pitch and utilised for football, where there was a known demand.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, a final expression of interest be sought from clubs regarding cricket use at The Leys, with the area reverting to grass football provision should no interest be received and;
3. That, potential budget implications be prepared in respect of football pitch maintenance at Windrush Place pitches and presented to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 22 June 2026.

PR272 **WEST WITNEY PROJECTS**

The Committee received the Project Officer's update on the West Witney projects.

Members welcomed the completion of the new Works Depot and expressed their satisfaction at this milestone.

An update was provided regarding the electricity installation, which had unfortunately been delayed due to the actions of the electricity utility company. Members noted the delay with disappointment. Whilst Members shared in officers' disappointment, regarding the delay to the refurbishment of the clubhouse, they noted that contractual penalties would be applied to and recovered from the contractor. It was further confirmed that there would be no additional cost to the Council arising from the extended hire of temporary toilet facilities required as a result of the delay in the delivery of the clubhouse refurbishment.

The Committee welcomed that a full breakdown of project costs would be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on 22 June.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

PR273 **THE LEYS REDEVELOPMENT**

The Committee received the report of the Project officer on the Courtside Hub redevelopment.

Members were pleased to note the target opening date provided by Courtside. Members also noted that the remaining contribution from the Council would only be made upon full completion and satisfactory demonstration that the original specification and requirements had been achieved.

The Committee received an update on the progression of a Traffic Regulation Order at The Leys, noting that work was ongoing and that enforcement would be supported by Oxfordshire County Council.

A Member raised ongoing concerns regarding parking demand and suggested that the neighbouring housing association be approached for potential weekend use of their car park, when it was understood to be underutilised. The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) advised that discussions had previously taken place; however, the arrangement had proved complex due to shared tenancy of the car park, requiring a joint agreement which it was understood would be unachievable.

Members considered proposals for cycle storage as well as additional bins and seating at recreation ground, and it was unanimously agreed that these works be fully funded by the Council to a cost up to £5,600, to be met from the Infrastructure Earmarked Reserve.

It was further agreed that the fencing surrounding the skatepark should be reviewed to ensure it was sufficiently robust and provided appropriate safety, height, and protection for all users of both the skatepark and the new Courtside Hub.

Resolved:

1. That, the update be noted;
2. That, up to £5,600 be allocated from the Infrastructure Earmarked Reserve for cycle storage, bins and seating at the Leys recreation ground and;
3. That, the fencing around the skatepark be reviewed to ensure appropriate safety and robustness with quotes being presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee later in the month.

Cllr R Smith left the meeting at 7:15pm, just prior to its conclusion.

The meeting closed at: 7.18 pm

Chair