

## SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE

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<b>Date:</b>	Monday 22 June 2020
<b>Title:</b>	Progress on improvements and repairs since last meeting & COVID-19 Update
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Operations and Estates Officer - John Hickman

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### Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of improvements and repairs since the last meeting of Halls & Green Spaces Committee and the impact of COVID-19 on facilities under the auspices of this Committee.

Members should be mindful of the fact that COVID-19 pandemic has affected the operation of a lot of the Council's facilities and the day to day operation of the Council has been very limited during these extraordinary times.

### Current Situation

**Football:** Unfortunately due to COVID-19 progress on transferring the pitches at Woodgreen from WODC to WTC has halted. WTC has therefore not been able to carry out any works to these pitches in preparation for the 2020/21 season. New goal post sockets have also still to be purchased and installed by WTC and planned end of season pitch and hedge works have not been able to be carried out at this site.

Vikings football youth teams were found to have started training again on the Leys Recreation Ground following F.A. guidance, despite not seeking permission from the Council. Under the Council's terms and conditions of hire clubs have also not provided the necessary documentation of Risk Assessments and Public Liability Insurance for these sessions. It has been discovered that Vikings intend to start training 15 of its teams from 17<sup>th</sup> June with a further 11 teams starting training from the 1<sup>st</sup> July. Training sessions were planned to be held at the Leys, Burwell and King Georges Field. Currently WTC is not allowing any organised activity to take place on its grounds, this is expected to be reviewed again following further Government advice after 4<sup>th</sup> July, although Officers are now working with the Clubs to ensure they can operate safely and consideration of the general public using the site for their recreational purposes is also taken in to account.

All football pitches other than Leys pitch one, two and five at the Leys and the pitch at King Georges Field received end of season pitch renovations including verti draining, top dressing and over seeding during April as the football season had ended early. It would be hoped that the early renovation and reduced use of pitches before and after the end of season will have given the pitches a chance to rejuvenate well before the start of this coming season.

**West Witney Cricket:** Swifts cricket is getting on well with its preparations of the glass house at West Witney, the base for the new cricket score shed has been laid and the shed should be built in the near future.

A total of 5 tables and 20 chairs second hand have been given to Swifts for the glass house at West Witney for their cricket teas. The water tap cover has been lowered slightly next to the square by the works team. The Swifts are intending to cover the water tap cover and winter fence steel sockets with an artificial grass covering.

**Leys Cricket:** Changing rooms and toilets have been fully redecorated and tiling/showers etc. during lock down by the works team. There has been issues with the lack of water pressure at the Cricket table making getting enough water onto the cricket table a real issue for the Grounds Contractors given the current dry weather. This can be an issue when the Splash Park when in operation as the splash pad draws lots of water however it is not usually an issue when the splash pad is not operating as is the current position.

The Operations & Estates Officer is of the opinion that Thames water has cut the water pressure in the main to reduce water consumption in the current dry weather.

The water main to the cricket square is a 22mm supply directly of the main so should really not be an issue as long as there is reasonable pressure in the main. WTC need to consider how to provide increased water supply to the Cricket Square in the future as the lack of water getting to the square is a real issue.

**Bowls:** Both Witney Town Bowls and West Witney Bowls have started to play again in line with current government guidance. Witney mills Bowls has opted not to re-start play at this current time.

There has once again been an issue with West Witney Bowls irrigation system this has now been repaired and watering systems are back to normal at West Witney.

**Play Areas:** All new play area installations by Proludic have now been completed and signed off at the Leys, Burwell, Fieldmere, Moorland and King Georges Field play areas.

All play areas at the time of writing this report remain closed and fenced off due to COVID-19; during this period the works team have:

- Topped up the play bark at Fieldmere and Oxlease.
- The Leys play area has had a lot of ground repair, turfing and reseeding works carried out by the works team.
- And they are currently carrying out repairs to play equipment and wet pour safer surfaces at all sites.
- Play Area inspections are taking place to ensure all equipment is safe when lockdown restrictions are relaxed, and RoSPA are booked to come and carry out the annual inspections later in the month.

**Skate Park:** At the time of writing this report, the skate park is currently closed, but it is hoped it will be open again with appropriate signage etc. prior to this meeting, in line with government guidelines.

**Splashpark:** The splash park was prepared to open for the Easter Holidays as agreed by Council, however due to the lockdown restrictions imposed it has not been able to open to the public and is currently shut down. The Maintenance Company will still need to visit at the end of the season whether the pad has or has not been used to carry out the relevant de-commissioning for the winter.

**Hard Court Areas:** Hard Court areas at Burwell and King Georges Field have been re-opened with appropriate signage in place for Social Distancing etc in line with government guidelines.

**Tennis:** Tennis at both West Witney under Witney Lawn Tennis and the Leys under Parks Tennis have resumed again under Government and the Lawn Tennis Association Covid 19 Guidance.

**Crazy Golf:** This facility operated by Parks Tennis has resumed at the Leys Recreation Ground under Government Covid 19 Guidance.

**Leys Recreation Ground Toilets:** These remain closed at this time as it is impossible to make suitable arrangements for social distancing within the toilets under current guidance. This is obviously an area of great concern considering the usage of the Leys Recreation Ground, however the public toilets run by WODC are open.

**Events:** With the exception of Witney Feast, all events have been cancelled. Witney Feast Operators Mr and Mrs Wilson believe that the event will still go ahead in September.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **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.

Obviously the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in undertaking a lot of risk assessments in order to put in place measures for safe operation of facilities including social distancing. This has been a big draw on the Council's resources and Officer time working through guidance etc.

### **Financial implications**

There has been some significant impact on the Council's budgets due to the COVID-19 situation such as loss of rental hire income from pitch hire as well as possible losses or expectations of rent reductions for tenants, whilst facilities have still had to be maintained by

the Council. The Town Clerk will be presenting a full report to the next Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

**Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report of the Operations & Estates Officer.