

**SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 1 March 2021**

**At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom**

**Present:**

Councillor V Gwatkin (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	L Duncan
	L Ashbourne	A Prosser
	D Butterfield	R Smith
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	John Hickman	Operations & Estates Advisor
Others:	1 member of the public.	

**SP96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr T Ashby.

**SP97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr V Gwatkin and Cllr L Ashbourne declared non-pecuniary interests for agenda item 5 where a community hub facility were to be discussed as they had involvement with Witney Community Fridge.

**SP98 MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Sport & Play Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the minutes of the Sport & Play Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a true and correct record and should be signed by the Chair.
- b) There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting, which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**SP99 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

Punam Owens addressed the committee supporting the provision of space for a Community Hub on the Town Council's estate.

*The Committee reconvened following public participation.*

**SP100 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN/OPEN SPACES STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered a verbal update from the Town Clerk regarding the Corporate Strategic Plan and Open Spaces Strategy.

A draft Corporate Strategic Plan would hopefully be presented to members during the next cycle of meetings, from May 2021. It had regrettably been delayed due to the staffing restructure and the transition of officers into new roles.

Members were advised that consultation on the Open Spaces Strategy had begun and a report, based on the feedback was expected towards the end of April. The Chair raised the prospect of a community hub on Council owned land which could form part of the strategy and members agreed, while this was building on open space, the Town Council should support local organisations in locating suitable land for a community hub. There was discussion on what form this assistance should take, what rental charge should be applied and what funding might be available to groups but at this stage it would simply be an affirmation in principle in the emerging strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the verbal update be noted; and
2. That Witney Town Council supports in principle proposals from community groups and organisations looking to secure land to place a community hub on; and
3. Agrees to include a suitable referent to this in the Town Council's draft Open Spaces Strategy.

**SP101 OPERATIONAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor concerning updates on play areas, the Splash park annual maintenance, third party events, football and pedestrian access and the provision of toilets at West Witney Sports Ground.

Members heard that temporary toilet facilities would be delivered to West Witney Sports Ground during the next three weeks and understood the necessity on remedial works at the Leys Play Area.

With the express permission of the Chair, members received an additional update regarding football, and particularly the extension of the season until June as agreed by the FA due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This would result in competing demands on the Council's sports pitches over the summer including cricket, additional training, events and annual renovation works. Members agreed this was a complicated issue, a delicate balancing act was needed with no simple answer likely. There was a possibility of less favourable sites being used as well as facilities outside of the Council's control; if these were required there would need to be further discussion on what assistance the Town Council could offer. The issue would have to be investigated further by Officers with a report brought back to a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted; and,
2. That the creation of a flexible plan to accommodate the competing demands on the Town Council's sports pitches during this summer be delegated to Officers and brought back to the next meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. If all demands are unable to be met, this could include the subsidised use of other facilities.

**SP102 LEYS SKATE PARK - UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from Cllr Butterfield on the Leys Skate park upgrade.

This project had been branded as 'Ramp up the Leys' and the community group formed to spearhead fundraising were keen to progress. There were several grant pots available, as well as the funds earmarked by the Town Council, but a design and specification would be needed before the tender process began and these could be applied for.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That Officers provide project management details and specification for the previous Skatepark refurbishment; and
3. That the Vice Chair, Cllr D Butterfield holds meetings with the 'Ramp Up the Leys' group and the Town Clerk to understand the fundraising procedures, in line with the Council's financial regulations, and potential timeline around the project.

**SP103 BOWLS IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor concerning transfer of the bowls club's irrigation systems.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.

**SP104 OLD BOWLS BUILDING - THE LEYS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor concerning the future of the old bowls building at the Leys.

Given that the building was structurally sound, and its use was currently an addition to the Leys Depot storage area, members agreed that the building should remain in situ. However, members noted its unsightly appearance directly opposite the bowls club and agreed that the area around it should be tidied and planted with shrubs and climbing plants. It would also be an opportunity to erect bird boxes and bee habitats if appropriate.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That the old bowls building be left as it is structurally, but the immediate area be tidied and planted with shrubs and climbing plants. Consideration should also be given to biodiversity, including bird boxes and bee habitats if possible.

SP105 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions 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.

SP106 **WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND - UPDATE**

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Town Clerk concerning West Witney Sports Ground.

There was concern from members that the current Covid-19 lockdown would be ending in the forthcoming months and due to the compliance issues at the Sports & Social Club, temporary facilities for clubs would imminently be needed.

Quotes for several temporary sports facilities were provided but members were mindful that these would need to be FA compliant, and they would be a large outlay for the Town Council. A firm plan was needed on the future of the site and the Town Clerk had held conversations with consultants on this very issue.

As previously delegated, officers would continue to hold dialogue with the clubs and consultants to try and find a solution as soon as possible. In the meantime, an earmarked reserve for sports improvements could be given over for the temporary facilities, subject to approval by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. That the confidential verbal update be noted; and
2. That the Town Council's earmarked reserve (EMR) for Sports Improvement be allocated towards temporary measures and facilities at West Witney Sports Ground, subject to approval by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

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The meeting closed at: 7.07 pm

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Chair