

March 2020

Dear Resident

*As Leader I recognise that it is a great privilege to work on behalf of residents. Whilst we have a strong vision for the future of Woodley it relies on a whole host of individual residents and organisations to help us turn that vision into a reality. Every day, including weekends, a host of silent volunteers work to make Woodley even better. Many residents are completely unaware of their efforts. Can I take this opportunity to thank them all for their huge contribution in making Woodley a great town.*

*This is the first budget since we had full Town Council elections last May. The results meant several councillors making way for new councillors and I would like to thank them all for their efforts in previous years. In addition, one councillor lost his 4-year battle against cancer and our thoughts are with his family and friends.*

*After 3 years of the Town Council precept being unchanged financial pressures have forced a small rise in the precept. The precept is still lower than when the previous political party was in control. You have to look back to 2008, 12 years ago, to see a lower precept than we have today. It is amazing that the Town Council has absorbed so much extra costs around staff such as the enforced pension enrolment and significantly higher national insurance rates.*

*At the same time as holding our Town Council tax rates to 2007 levels we have been busy investing large amounts of capital on a number of projects. You can find more details later on in this leaflet.*

*We continue to provide funds to key charities, a total of £13,882 distributed to the Citizens Advice, Keep Mobile, ARC and Revitalise. This is on top of £45,211 on service level agreements with JAC and Readibus and £13,000 to the Town Centre Management Initiative. That is a total of £72,093 to volunteer organisations to provide that extra level of support, especially for the more vulnerable.*

*At this point I would like to publicly thank all the staff, both full and part time, for all their hard work during the year.*

*Finally, may I thank you, the residents, for the continuing support you give the Town Council through your participation in everything we do. We will never forget that this is your money that the Council is spending so it is important that we know how you feel about this and would welcome any feedback you might have.*

Councillor Keith Baker MBE, Leader of the Council



The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ

0118 9690356 [www.woodley.gov.uk](http://www.woodley.gov.uk)

The Town Council precept is the part of your Council Tax bill that funds the services provided by Woodley Town Council. This year, the precept (annual charge) for a Band D house will be increased to £112.88 for the year, adding 12p a week on last year's charge.

Woodley Town Council is your local council providing local services to you. The Town Council offices are based at the Oakwood Centre, and we are always happy to hear from our residents and customers. Contact us on 0118 9690356 with any issues or enquiries you have, or go to our website at [www.woodley.gov.uk](http://www.woodley.gov.uk) for more information.

**Over the last year we have been working on several projects to improve our services and range of activities including:**

The lake regeneration project at Woodford Park followed a public consultation and extensive environmental and topographic surveys to develop a plan to enhance the lake habitat as well as amenity value. The aim of the project was to improve the biodiversity of the lake and its surrounds, protect wildlife and provide a better environment for plants and pond dipping areas for children. The main elements are now complete and have transformed the lake and its surrounds – with a nature area, native planting, water lilies, boardwalk, dipping ponds, new paths, de-silting and reshaped banks.

The lake is home to many native ducks, geese, coots and moorhens with occasional visits from herons and even cormorants. The resurfacing of the path around the lake was carried out last September and we have more marginal planting to do in 2020 as well as installing a new knee rail fence around the eastern bank.

The new hogging path along the north bank will be completed this year and the area will be sown with wildflowers.

The project was a significant investment in the future of the park and has been very well received by residents. The project is also providing opportunities to develop knowledge and skills within our grounds maintenance team in enhancing and managing the lake environment. The funding for the project included a loan approved by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and funds from the Council's reserves.

On 6 June 2019 we opened the new semi-automatic toilet in the town centre. This project was the result of surveys on the need for a public toilet carried out face-to-face with residents and online. Funding for the toilet and its installation came from Section 106 developer contributions.

At Woodford Park Leisure Centre we have reorganised and refurbished the foyer area to make the reception area more inviting to customers and more practical for the leisure team when they are on duty. The duty managers and Leisure Services Manager now have dedicated office space to work in and the reception area is more customer friendly. Funding for the project to improve the reception area at the leisure centre came from a loan approved by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

We also refurbished and refitted a new liner at the very popular paddling pool and relaid the paving around the pool. Unfortunately, this delayed the pool's opening in spring but the rest of the summer saw the pool being very well used.



Woodley Town Mayor Kay Gilder with  
Woodley Deputy Town Mayor Dave Mills



Former Woodley Town Mayor,  
Sam Rahmouni, with  
Citizens Award winners 2019  
Sue Twose, Jackie Yule and Bill Rodda  
and the Mayor's Award recipient, Colin Lott

The Gym on the Park at Woodford Park Leisure Centre continues to attract new members and over the last year we have again increased the number of classes that are available free of charge to gym members.

At the Oakwood Centre we have reupholstered the seating in the Alan Cornish Theatre and improved the stage flooring. We have also had solar panels installed on the sloping roofs as part of our agreement with Reading Community Energy Society, who installed the panels free of charge. The Council benefits from a lower daytime electricity tariff that remains at the same rate over the 20 year agreement period, at the end of which the panels are transferred to the Town Council.

At Coronation Hall asbestos in the roof area has been removed and the hall has been refurbished and redecorated. A new ceiling and LED lighting, as well as new ladies and gents toilets, have been installed.

Last year the Council maintained its Green Flag status (an award for its management and stewardship of Woodford Park and the Memorial Ground). The international award is a sign to the public that our park boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. Past and present members of our Grounds Maintenance team and the Friends of Woodford Park have all contributed to creating a wonderful green space in the our town. The Council has submitted this year's application to maintain the award. Judging will take place between March and June and the outcome will be announced in August 2020.

In October 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 and to actively participate in the creation of the Borough-wide climate change strategy to ensure that the Town Council be fully engaged in this strategy for the benefit of its residents. In addition, the Council agreed to explore with all parts of the community the development of a local action plan in support

of, and to compliment, the Borough Council's climate change strategy. A working party for this purpose has been established. In the meantime, the Town Council has provided information on steps it is taking to reduce its carbon footprint on its website.

Last October the volunteer group Friends of Woodford Park, with the help of the Rotary Club of Loddon Vale and 1st Woodley Beaver and Cubs, planted more purple crocuses in the park as part of the Rotary's Purple4polio awareness campaign throughout the world. Over the last year the Friends of Woodford Park have also planted new shrubs and flowers at the Rotary Garden, behind the Oakwood Centre, and this area has become a popular place for people to sit on their way through the park.

In our parks and open spaces regular maintenance and work on trees damaged by winds has been undertaken throughout the year.

The Council has continued to support Woodley Business Club and its activities.

#### **Future projects in the coming year:**

At the Oakwood Centre we will be refurbishing the ladies and gents toilets and carrying out repair works to the envelope of the building in 2020. We will also be fitting out the Alan Cornish theatre with new audio visual equipment and connectivity.

The Council will be providing better premises from which its maintenance teams can operate at the depot site. This will include the reorganisation of workshop areas inside the existing depot building, a modular welfare building with toilet and shower and a new tractor shed. The project will be funded from a loan approved by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

In 2019 Wokingham BC approved a bid from the Town Council for £200,000 of funds from Section 106 contributions (made by developers relating to the building of new homes in Woodley)

to provide a new 'destination' play area to replace and extend the existing playground behind the Oakwood Centre. We have met with landscape and play consultants and will be seeking to appoint a contractor to move this project to the next stage. We will be consulting with residents on the scheme design and equipment, which will have a focus on inclusivity.

The Friends of Woodford Park volunteers are planning to establish a new bed to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. The Council and the Town Centre Management Initiative will be hosting a free event on the Memorial Ground – this will be advertised more fully on our website and on banners and posters around the town and in the town centre.

The Rotary Club of Loddon Vale, the Friends of Woodford Park and the Town Council will be joining together to provide a Rose Garden at the edge of the Rotary Garden, behind the Oakwood Centre. Residents can have a rose planted and a plaque on display in memory of a relative or friend. Please see our website for more details.

Last year the Council suspended all charges for the use of the Centre Stage in the town centre to help encourage local groups and organisations to runs sales and provide entertainment at the in the town centre through the warmer months of the year. If you are a member of a musical group/band, choir or drama group and would like to use the space to entertain shoppers please give us a call – we look forward to hearing from you – call 0118 9690356 or email [admin@woodley.gov.uk](mailto:admin@woodley.gov.uk).

The Town Council's Community Youth Partnership will continue with its project to provide activities for young people at Loddon Mead and the area underneath the A3290 on Loddon Bridge Road. With the help of the Just Around the Corner charity (JAC) and a group of artists we hope to work with young people on an art project at this space and to develop Parkour (or Freerunning).

*Newly upholstered seating at the Alan Cornish Theatre in the Oakwood Centre*



*Last year's wildflowers in Woodford Park*



Works to create a garden in the town centre in order to reduce the impact of tree roots will be underway by April 2020. The plans include a built up garden area around the four trees using wood or brick, with seating paid for by the Town Council at the north and south ends of the enclosed garden.

We will be installing new knee rail fencing in Woodford Park because the existing fencing is starting to fail. We will also be carrying out works to reinforce the grass on areas of the Memorial Ground that are regularly damaged by vehicles at the gate entrance to the ground and along the informal path across the ground.

For more information on our planned projects see our website and newsletter – the Woodley Herald delivered to your door three times a year.

### **Summary of the services the Town Council provides:**

#### **Meeting places**

The Oakwood Centre on Headley Road is the home of the Town Council offices as well the Alan Cornish Theatre, a café (run by Brown Bag), a base in the town for the neighbourhood police and a popular venue for business meetings, parties and other social and community events.

Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall are also available for hire. A large number of community groups meet in our halls. Discounted rates for hall and room hire are available for Woodley residents.

#### **Open spaces**

Parks and open spaces – 28 acres of parkland at Woodford Park, play areas at Malone Park, the Memorial Ground and Wheble Park, as well as open spaces at Loddon Mead and Bulmershe Park.

The Garden of Remembrance in Woodford Park is a peaceful place, valued by many who wish to remember their loved ones. To find out about having an inscribed plaque in the garden, call the Town Council offices.

### **Friends of Woodford Park**

The Friends of Woodford Park, a voluntary group of residents, continue to grow and their flower beds at the Memorial Ground have been beautifully maintained throughout the year. If you would like to find out more about the Friends of Woodford Park email [fowp.woodley@mail.com](mailto:fowp.woodley@mail.com).

### **Allotments**

Over the past few years the Council has opened up 100 new plots at the Reading Road site in response to the increase in local people wanting to grow their own produce. If you are interested in renting an allotment contact the Town Council offices or complete an online form available on our website.

### **Representation**

The Town Council speaks for Woodley on many matters and in response to consultations – national and local. Our Planning and Community Committee also lets residents know about planning applications near them and we pass comments from these meetings to Wokingham Borough Council, where the decisions on planning matters are made.

All Woodley residents are very welcome at the Town Forum, held before each meeting of Full Council. This is an opportunity to meet your Councillors in person and ask questions or make representations on issues of importance to you. The meetings in 2020/21 will be held at 8.00pm on the following dates: 12 May, 23 June, 29 September, 8 December and 9 February (2021).

### **Sports and recreation**

Woodford Park Leisure Centre – fitness gym, 3G artificial grass pitch, badminton courts, tennis, bowling green, grass football pitches, cricket field (artificial and grass wickets), keep fit courses, holiday sports camps, children's parties and function and committee rooms for hire.

At the Gym on the Park the monthly membership fee is £24.99 for Woodley residents and £26.99 for those living outside the town. The "Sunshine" membership, valid between 8.30am and 3pm, costs £19.99 for Woodley residents, £21.99 for others. The price includes free of charge access to a variety of fitness classes which run throughout the week as well as use of the gym equipment. For more information see the Woodford Park Leisure Centre pages on our website.

We continue to welcome small groups (5 or 6 people) of up to 18 year olds to pay and play for £2 per person on the 3G pitch at holiday times and weekends. Please ring 0118 9216969 to check availability.

### **Our young people**

The Council provides support to young people and outreach youth work in the town through funding the work of the Just Around the Corner charity, and ARC, a youth counselling service, which operates locally from the Oakwood Centre. We also have a Community Youth Partnership bringing organisations working with young people together to pursue youth centred projects.

### **Grants**

Woodley Town Council will be supporting Keep Mobile, ARC (youth counselling service), Revitalise and Citizens' Advice, Woodley. We also have a three year Service Level Agreement with Readibus to support the provision of their services to Woodley residents.

Grants of up to £250 to organisations and community groups and grants of up to £100 for individuals under 21 who are excelling in sport or cultural activities and bringing credit to the town are considered twice a year – see our website for information on qualifying for a grant and application forms to download or apply online.



*The newly installed boardwalk over the lake at Woodford Park*



*Refurbished paddling pool*

### Local economy

The Town Council is a partner in the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative which promotes the centre and organises events – the Farmers' Markets, the Winter Extravaganza, Saturday Music in the summer and the popular Saturday Market.

As your local council our aim is to provide services that are valued in the town – in our most recent Residents' Survey (2018) we found that 61.5% of households thought our services excellent or good. Respondents thought our parks, community halls, grants to services for local people and community groups and children's play areas were important to local people. The survey results are available to view on our website: [www.woodley.gov.uk](http://www.woodley.gov.uk)

Find out more about your town and your council at [www.woodley.gov.uk](http://www.woodley.gov.uk) and in the newsletter published three times a year and delivered to all households.

The Town Council's Financial Statements and Auditor's report for 2018/19 are available on our website or printed copies can be provided by calling into our offices at the Oakwood Centre.

## Woodley Town Council

**The Oakwood Centre**  
**Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ**  
**0118 9690356**

**[www.woodley.gov.uk](http://www.woodley.gov.uk)**  
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Budget Estimates 2019/20				Budget Estimates 2020/21		
Income	Expenditure	Net Exp		Income	Expenditure	Net Exp
237734	884995	647261	Strategy and Resources	264594	975346	710752
478908	652440	173532	Leisure Services	497693	677624	179931
	31581	31581	Planning		33093	33093
	316610	316610	Capital and Projects		311506	311506
716642	1885626	1168984	Total Revenue Exp/Income	762287	1997569	1235282

Budget Summary 2020/21	
Estimated opening balance 1 April 2020	488581
Precept	1203188
Less: Net Expenditure Budget 2020/21	1235282
Budgeted balance as at 31 March 2021	456487