

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre on Tuesday 11 April 2023 at 8:00 pm**

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**Present:** *Councillors B. Soane (Chairman); N. Al-Sanjari; R. Horskins; A. Heap; C. Jewell; A. Swaddle*

**Officers present:** *K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk; E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager; M. Filmore, Committee Officer*

**Also present:** *1 member of the public*

49. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Deputy Town Clerk introduced the meeting and asked for nominations for a Chairman. Cllr Swaddle proposed, seconded by Cllr Horskins, and following a vote it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To appoint Cllr Soane as Chairman for the meeting.

Voting: For: 6 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 0

Councillor Heap took the opportunity to thank all previous Chairman and Vice Chairman of the committee, including Councillors Stares, Bragg and Smith, as well as Officers, for their hard work during the past four years.

50. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bragg, Gilder, Lewis and Smith.

51. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

52. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2023**

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 17 January 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

53. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

Members reviewed the Budgetary Control report.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the reason expenditure in relation to the allotments currently appeared low was because the figures did not yet include the lease charge from Reading Borough Council for the year.

In relation to a query regarding income recorded against events, it was explained that this was in relation to income received for the Town Mayor's Charity event and relates directly to expenditure for the event, which includes items purchased as well as the money raised for the Mayor's charity.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 7/23.

54. **WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES**

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 8/23.

In relation to the paddling pool, it was confirmed that it may be possible to open the paddling pool in time for the Coronation weekend, dependent on the availability of the Amenities team.

Following a query, the Leisure Services Manager confirmed the current gym equipment lease was due to end in mid-November and that he is currently reviewing options.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 8/23.

55. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 9/23.

Further to the information contained in the report regarding the ruling which confirmed that charges for local authority sports facilities falls outside the scope for VAT, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that the council's accountants have been asked to prepare quarterly VAT partial exemption figures for the four-year period for which back payments can be claimed.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that a couple of street lamps owned by the council on Woodford Park were known to be broken. He confirmed that the council has now set up an account with Volker Highways and are awaiting a date for these to be fixed.

Members noted that Beeches Funfair, which had been in operation on the Memorial Ground for two weeks in March, had initially set up in an incorrect position which ultimately led to the cancellation of Park Run on one weekend. Whilst the incorrectly positioned vehicles had been moved in time for the weekend, Park Run have to make a decision earlier in the week regarding cancellation so this unfortunately was not prevented. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that additional ground markings and specific site plans would be provided to hirers of the Memorial Ground to prevent this from re-occurring.

In relation to the delayed installation of the water supply to the Town Centre Garden by Thames Water, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that watering using the water bowser could continue to take place this year, as it did last year, if the installation continues to be delayed. He confirmed that the council has no option but to arrange the installation through Thames Water who own the supply.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that the council were reviewing options for installing a second toilet at the site. Members noted that, when installed, the existing toilet had been situated by the entrance to the site where most plots were at that time. The number of plots has been increased significantly in the last few years, and the area covered is now larger, meaning there is demand for an additional toilet situated towards the back of the site. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that council would be reviewing sustainable options.

In response to an issue raised regarding unacceptable language being used by the parents of children playing league football on weekends in Woodford Park, the Leisure Services Manager agreed to write to the football league to highlight the issue to them. He advised that the league has contact with the clubs so could filter a message down.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/23.

56. **YOUTH SERVICES**

The Deputy Town Clerk provided members within an update on the current position with regards to the provision of Youth Services.

He confirmed that the council were currently trying to arrange a date for a follow up meeting with Earley Town Council and potential providers regarding the potential for joint working on the provision of youth services. He also advised Members that a meeting of the Youth Services Working Party, which reports to the Strategy & Resources Committee, had been arranged for Monday 17 April, at which another potential provider would be meeting with the committee to provide a presentation on their offering.

In response to a query as to whether we are going to consider using a facility at Woodford Park Leisure Centre for the provision of youth services, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that, whilst the Strategy & Resources Committee had not instructed this option to be considered at present, there was an understanding that no option was currently off the table.

57. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items highlighted by Members.

In response to a query regarding the provision of additional benches, picnic benches and bins in Woodford Park in time for Summer, the Deputy Town Clerk advised there is budget for this but this would be dependent on the workload of the Amenities team.

58. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

Members asked that good news regarding the work to the paddling pool, the bowling green, and the pickleball trial be publicised.

Following a query, the Leisure Services Manager advised that he was still looking into the possibility of opening up the council's gym facilities to under 16's. He was currently reviewing what would be required to enable this, including whether the gym would need to be supervised, as well as whether this might only be permitted at specific times, for example after school.

The meeting closed at 8:56 pm

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