

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held remotely
on Tuesday 17 November 2020 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors D. Bragg (Chairman); K. Baker; M. Doyle; A. Heap; D. Smith;
B. Soane; A. Swaddle*

Officers present: *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk;
E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager; L. Matthews, Committee Officer*

Also present: *Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity
1 member of the public*

19. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N. Al-Sanjari and S. Rahmouni.

20. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

21. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Minute No. 4: Just Around the Corner (JAC)

Councillor Doyle commented that Sam Milligan had said that JAC worked closely with other agencies but had only mentioned one, which was ARC. Sam Milligan informed the meeting that JAC also worked closely with PCSOs, schools and social care providers.

Minute No. 9: Equality Impact Assessment - Service level agreement for the provision of detached youth work in Woodley

Councillor Doyle wanted it to be recorded that he did not agree with the minutes relating to this item.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 1 September 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. **JUST AROUND THE CORNER (JAC)**

- a) Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity (JAC), was welcomed to the meeting. Before presenting the JAC report, Sam Milligan asked for his thanks to be passed to the former Mayor, Councillor Kay Gilder, who had honoured him with the Mayor's Award earlier in the year.

During his presentation of the JAC report, Sam Milligan highlighted how popular the skate park in Woodford Park had been and he informed Members that the young people who used the skate park had expressed a wish to have the landing area widened. Sam Milligan passed on a request from the young people who used the skate park later in the evening - students in years 11 and 12 - that the Council consider installing lights on a timer to enable the skate park to be used when the evenings were dark.

In reply to a question about paint cannisters being left at the Loddon Mead site, Sam Milligan said that the group that were creating art work at this site had already been

spoken to about this matter and had suggested that the provision of rubbish bins at the site would help the situation.

When asked about groups of young people that seemed to be gathering during lockdown, Sam Milligan reported that the number of groups gathering had reduced during lockdown and the small groups that were around said that they were meeting in their school bubbles.

In response to a question about drug use, Sam Milligan said that JAC had not seen any evidence of drug use in Woodley, but had smelt drugs.

The Chairman thanked Sam Milligan for the JAC report.

- b) Members discussed the letter received from JAC requesting a suspension of the remaining period of the roll-over year of their service level agreement for detached youth work in Woodley. The letter also suggested that the tendering of the next service level agreement be delayed in order to allow time to evaluate and plan what youth provision would be required in Woodley after the pandemic.

Concern was expressed by some Members that youth work was still required during the pandemic and others commented that it was difficult to determine what the requirements were in the current circumstances and what the situation would be when Covid restrictions started to be lifted. Sam Milligan clarified that JAC would still continue their work in Woodley, but it would not be provided under a service level agreement with the Town Council. He stressed that this request was not being made because JAC was unable to provide the service, but because the number of young people out on the streets had declined and the service requirements needed to be re-evaluated. It had been hoped that the results of the youth survey being carried out for the Community Youth Partnership would help to determine the requirements for youth provision, but the survey had not yet been concluded.

It was noted that matters regarding a service level agreement came under the remit of the Strategy and Resources Committee and the concerns raised by some Members at this meeting - that provision should not cease and that tendering for the next service level agreement should not be delayed - would be passed on to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the letter from JAC requesting a suspension of the remaining period of the roll-over year of their service level agreement with the Town Council for detached youth work in Woodley.

23. **COMMUNITY YOUTH PARTNERSHIP**

a) **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Doyle to the vacant position on the Community Youth Partnership.

b) **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 14/20 of the Community Youth Partnership meeting held on 15 October 2020.

- c) Members discussed the progress of the survey of young people, which Councillor Al-Sanjari had sent to the secondary schools in Woodley. Concern was expressed that members of the Community Youth Partnership were not aware of the contents of the survey. The Town Clerk confirmed that it had previously been agreed that Councillor

Al-Sanjari would circulate the survey to the Community Youth Partnership before it was sent to the schools. The Town Clerk agreed to contact Councillor Al-Sanjari to ask her to share the contents of the survey.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 15/20 of the Community Youth Partnership meeting held on 4 November 2020.

24. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 16/20 and informed Members that revised budget estimates for 2020/21 would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting, on 12 January 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/20.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. 17/20 and informed Members that Woodford Park Leisure Centre and all associated facilities had been closed from 5 November, in line with the latest Government restrictions to limit the spread of Covid-19. He noted that the forced closure was disappointing as business at the leisure centre had only recently returned to a good level following the first national lockdown. All Centre staff had been re-furloughed.

Members were informed that the leisure centre was ready to open on 2 December, the scheduled end of the national lockdown, but backup plans were in place in case a longer lockdown was necessary, or if only a partial reopening was possible.

Members noted that budgets had been prepared that related to the three-tier system for national lockdowns and that these were currently being restructured to reflect full closure for varying lengths of time.

The Leisure Services Manager reported that the leisure centre had been acting as a drop-off point throughout the lockdown for people wishing to donate to the First Days Children's Charity Christmas campaign, which encouraged people to donate items for potential Christmas presents to be distributed to children living in poverty in the local area. Discussions were underway with the Woodley Food Bank and it was hoped that a similar drop-off point could be set up at the leisure centre for people to donate to the food bank.

The Leisure Services Manager informed Members that he was developing a survey to gauge how customers had felt whilst using the leisure centre with the new restrictions and protocols in place.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 17/20.

26. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. 18/20 and reported on matters relating to Woodford Park. Usage of the park had been high over the first lockdown period and during the summer and the park provided a much needed recreation space for residents at a particularly difficult time. The play areas had been permitted to stay open during the second lockdown, subject to the restrictions and guidelines set out by the Government to limit the spread of Covid-19. Members noted that the pandemic had caused the cancellation of Woodley Carnival and the suspension of Park Run, and it had not been possible to accommodate visiting fairs and circus events.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that a number of poplar trees that were in a dangerous condition had been felled along the boundary with St Dominic Savio School and would be replaced to reinstate wildlife habitat. Rose bushes had been planted in the Rotary Garden Memorial Rose Bed and Rotary had funding for further plants. Members noted that a new memorial seat had been installed near the Garden of Remembrance and also received an update on the antisocial behaviour that continued to be a problem in the Garden of Remembrance in the summer months. The Friends of Woodford Park continued to maintain the beds around the park, along with other tasks.

Members were very pleased to note that Woodford Park had been awarded Green Flag status for the third year running and also noted the progress of the Woodford Park Play Area project, for which a public consultation would be carried out in the new year on submissions received from specialist play companies by the deadline of 18 December 2020. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that funding for the Play Area project would come from Section 106 funds and would not require capital funding by the Town Council.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on maintenance work that had been carried out by the Maintenance Team at Woodford Park Leisure Centre and at Chapel Hall. Bookings had remained very quiet at Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall after the first lockdown was relaxed and officers were maintaining contact with hirers with a view to accommodating as many bookings as was possible, whilst observing the Covid restrictions in place at the time.

Members received an update on the Depot project in Woodford Park and noted that the tractor building, the office space and the Grounds Team workshop were all almost complete. The toilet/shower unit had been completed and was in use.

Members also noted the updates provided in the agenda on the Council's wildlife and environmental initiatives, and on matters relating to the allotments, which had been very busy over the summer and where there was currently a waiting list of 60 prospective tenants.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 18/20.

27. **TOWN CENTRE TREE GARDEN**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 19/20 and informed Members of the proposed planting options for the garden, the offers of community involvement for initial planting and ongoing maintenance, the factors that would be considered when putting together proposals for seating around the garden and the sources of funding for the garden.

In reply to a question, the Deputy Town Clerk said that the manhole covers within the garden would be raised so that they would not be covered by topsoil. He also noted the concern that raising the level of top soil too high might cause the trees to die and agreed to seek advice from the Tree Officer at Wokingham Borough Council regarding this matter.

Members considered the following two planting options:

Option 1

30 tonnes topsoil	£700
Shade wildflower woodland seed mix	£260
3,000 snowdrops	£450
3,000 bluebells	£510
2,000 mixed crocus	<u>£180</u>
Total =	<u>£2,100</u>

<u>Option 2</u>	
30 tonnes topsoil	£700
5 tonnes compost	£375
300 assorted plants/shrubs	£1,500
Larger central shrubs	£500
3,000 bluebells	£180
2,000 mixed crocus	£180
100 wood anemone	<u>£200</u>
Total =	<u>£4,500</u>

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 19/20.
- ◆ To proceed with the planting scheme set out in Option 2.
- ◆ To allocate £4,500 from available Section 106 monies for the material and plants itemised in Option 2.

28. It was proposed by the Chairman and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That as business was unlikely to be completed by 10pm the meeting continue in order to complete the business set out in the agenda.

29. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
There were no suggestions for future agenda items.

30. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To publicise the following:
 - The wildlife initiatives being undertaken by the Town Council.
 - To note on the website that the Scouts will not be carrying out their usual Christmas card deliveries this year.

31. **URGENCY COMMITTEE**

a) Members discussed Report No. LS 20/20, in particular the proposal considered by the Urgency Committee to apply for an extension of the Council's seven annuity loans.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 20/20 - the minutes of the Urgency Committee meeting held on 5 October 2020.

b) **RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 21/20 - the minutes of the Urgency Committee meeting held on 9 November 2020.

The meeting closed at 10:10 pm
