

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held remotely
on Tuesday 13 April 2021 at 8:00 pm**

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

Officers present: *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk;
M. Filmore, Committee Officer*

Also present: *2 members of the public*

Before opening the meeting, the Chairman asked attendees to observe a 2 minutes silence in memory of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and the Town Mayor, Councillor Dave Mills.

46. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kay Gilder, Sam Milligan (Just Around the Corner charity), Ed Whitesmith (Leisure Services Manager).

47. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D. Bragg - Disclosable pecuniary interest: Agenda item 6, 3G pitch – opening hours extension proposal, as he lives in the nearest residential street to the pitch.

48. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2021**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 12 January 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

Members received the report from Just Around the Corner.

Members were disappointed to note that anti-social behaviour is continuing to take place in the Garden of Remembrance, but acknowledged that the Police had been made aware and had been asked to patrol the area more regularly.

Councillor Heap enquired as to why there had been no meeting of the Community Youth Partnership (CYP) since January 2020. The Town Clerk confirmed that CYP members, along with Councillors Baker, Jewell and Al-Sanjari, had recently attended a meeting with Chris Moore of ACL Consultancy Solutions Ltd to discuss possible future strategies in relation to supporting young people in Woodley. These strategies, along with a new Service Level Agreement (SLA), are being written into a report to be presented at the next Strategy and Resources Committee meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed the Strategy and Resource Committee is the appropriate committee to receive this report as it relates to a new SLA. The Town Clerk clarified that the meeting was not an official meeting of the CYP, hence it had not been recorded in the Leisure Services agenda. The Town Clerk agreed to ensure meetings of the CYP were scheduled soon.

[Town Clerk's Note: Three meetings of the CYP were held during 2020 – 8 January 2020, 15 October 2020, 4 November 2020]

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the report received by Just Around the Corner charity.

50. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 8/21. Actual expenditure came in at 94.7% of the revised budget, whilst income had been far better than predicted, coming in at 237.1% of the revised budget. This was as a result of the unexpected Winter lockdown, leading to additional income from the government's furlough scheme, as well as receipt of a Tier 4 Local Restriction Support Grant (LRSO) to the sum of £31,171, which related to premises which were legally required to close due to restrictions.

Members were also advised that the overall NET percentage figure of actual income versus expenditure, quoted at 132.1%, was an error and should have been reported as 52.3%.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 8/21.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 9/21.

Members enquired as to when Parkrun would be returning. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed the Council was looking forward to the return of Parkrun as soon as practical; Parkrun are currently undertaking risk assessments to enable their safe return. The Council is also liaising with organisers regarding temporary trenching work being carried out within Woodford Park to provide of a new power supply to the maintenance depot. This temporary work would cause a safety hazard to runners so organisers are being kept informed of the likely completion date.

Members were informed that the gazebo at Woodford Park Leisure Centre had been removed, with the area now being used to undertake fitness classes which would otherwise be unable to take place due to Covid-19 restrictions on indoor activities. In the long term the plan is to neaten the area and continue to use it for classes as they have proved popular.

At this point in the meeting Councillor Bragg temporarily withdrew from the discussion and vote on the proposal to extend the opening hours of the 3G pitch. Vice Chairman, Councillor B. Soane, took over as Chairman for the rest of item 6.

Members noted the proposal was to seek an extension to the opening hours of the 3G pitch from 9pm to 10pm, on Mondays to Thursdays, throughout the year. An extension to opening hours was not being proposed for Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays.

At the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 12 January 2021, the Chairman of Woodley United Football Club highlighted that the growth of youth football in Woodley had created high demand for training facilities across the town. The Council subsequently sought the views of users of the pitch to identify if there was demand for increased opening hours. Members noted the responses from both Woodley United and Woodley Wanderers, both of whom voiced their support for an extension as they believed there would be demand.

Members asked whether any complaints had been received about the opening hours of the pitch since its opening. The Deputy Town Clerk could only recall complaints from one resident in the first season of opening.

Members asked whether the views of local residents had been sought. The Deputy Town Clerk explained the intention was to seek the views of residents should the proposal be supported by the Committee. Members asked that this be by direct approach from the

Council, as opposed to part of the planning process, as the planning application may not be subject to full consultation.

Members recommended any proposal should consider mitigating against additional noise created by the extension of the opening hours which might affect nearby residences.

Members considered the proposal and:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/21.
- ◆ To make an application to Wokingham Borough Council to vary planning permission in order to extend the permitted operating times of the 3G pitch from 9pm to 10pm from Monday to Thursday throughout the year.

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstention: 0

52. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 10/21.

It was highlighted that there had been a few concerning reports of anti-social behaviour in the Garden of Remembrance. Police had been advised, and residents had been asked to contact both the Council and Police if they spotted any unwanted activity. Members noted the Council had removed a bench which had been a hub for anti-social activities. The Deputy Town Clerk thanked members of the public reporting this issue. Members highlighted they may need to consider the location of the garden if serious incidents of anti-social behaviour continue.

Members acknowledged the excellent work undertaken by the Friends of Woodford Park; it was noted the flower beds were looking beautiful and were a credit to the park.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that seven tenders had been received in relation to the provision of a new play area in Woodford Park. This had been shortlisted to three designs which had been circulated as part of the agenda. Members were encouraged to view the plans in more detail, either online or by contacting the Deputy Town Clerk to arrange to view the plans in person.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members he had already met with representatives from Addington School to review the accessibility and inclusivity of the proposals, which were a key part of the original tender document, and had received some very helpful and informative feedback from this session. Members requested that this feedback be circulated to them for reference.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that a consultation would open shortly to seek the views of residents on the proposals. Specific users of the park, for example the Friends of Woodford Park, Rotary, Parkrun etc, would be contacted directly to seek their views. The consultation will cover a range of questions, including opinions on overall designs, individual equipment, and overall comments. Members suggested the views of the Police might also be sought with regards to, amongst other things, whether any particular designs or equipment are likely to attract anti-social behaviour. Members also requested consideration be made to setting up a display of the proposals in the town for residents to view in person, should this be possible in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

Members asked whether the plans included fencing around the park as it was not apparent in the proposals. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that they did not as the original tender did not request this; the cost of fencing is high. Members highlighted that fencing has the dual benefit of keeping children in and, for example, dogs out. The Deputy Town Clerk

acknowledged there were differing opinions on the benefits of enclosed and open play areas, and agreed that views on this should be sought during the consultation.

Members suggested consideration could also be made with regards to the provision of bike racks / push scooter parking.

Members asked whether maintenance costs had been taken into account during the shortlisting. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the longevity and robustness of equipment had been taken into account. The Deputy Town Clerk also confirmed that no trees would be removed as part of any of the proposals.

Members requested that the Deputy Town Clerk provide a proposed timetable in relation to the project, and that this be provided as soon as possible.

Members enquired as to the progress with planting in the town centre garden area. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Council were waiting for tree works to be undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council before commencing; any new plants under the trees would be at risk of damage if planted before these works took place. Wokingham have advised the works should take place in early Summer.

Councillor Heap asked for an update on some trees which the Council were due to receive. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed these had been received; some had been planted, whilst others were being cared for at the Depot whilst a suitable location was found. Councillor Heap enquired about an area of Rivermead Park where shrubs had been removed and asked if these were to be replaced, as well as the potential possibility for leaving margins of uncut grass in certain parks to encourage additional wildlife. The Deputy Town Clerk agreed to meet with any interested Members in person at Rivermead Park to consider suitable proposals.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 10/21.

53.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no suggestions for future agenda items.

54.

PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To publicise the following:
 - Wildlife in Woodley update
 - 3G Pitch Opening Hours Extension proposals

The meeting closed at 9:28 pm
