

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 15 November 2022 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors D. Smith (Chairman); K. Gilder; C. Jewell; V. Lewis;
A. Swaddle*

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

Also present: *Councillors A. Heap; N. Al-Sanjari (Virtual Attendance)
Councillor K. Baker
1 member of the public*

21. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bragg and Horskins. It was noted that Councillors Al-Sanjari and Heap would be attending the meeting virtually.

22. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

23. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 AUGUST 2022**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 30 August 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

24. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

Members reviewed the Budgetary Control report.

Following a query regarding why expenditure relating to the Grounds Maintenance budget was higher than targeted, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that some yearly provisions, for example fertiliser, are bought earlier in the financial year. On the same budget line, it was noted that income attributed to grass cutting at Bulmershe Open Space was higher than expected, despite the dry weather. The Deputy Town Clerk committed to looking into this.

In response to a query as to when revised estimates would be provided, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that these were being worked on but he was unable to confirm when they would be made available to Members.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 19/22.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 20/22.

The Leisure Services Manager expanded on the chart provided which gave reasons for gym membership cancellations during September and October. He explained that, of the six people who had cancelled membership in order to move to another gym, one had advised that this was based on price, two had received free membership to another gym after commencing new jobs, whilst two had cancelled due to the planned electrical works at the leisure centre.

The final individual had cancelled to join a gym where her younger daughter could also join. The Leisure Services Manager explained that, due to the gym being unmanned, under 16's have historically not been allowed to use the gym. He advised that he was now investigating the potential for allowing family memberships where under 16's might be allowed to use the gym with a supervising adult, however there would be matters, such as insurance, which would need careful consideration.

Following a query, the Leisure Services Manager advised that approximately 60 members had cancelled during the electrical works which had taken place at the leisure centre recently, although about the same number of new members had signed up during the same period. He explained that the centre currently has around 550 members. Immediately prior to the covid pandemic the centre was almost at capacity, and discussions were taking place at that time to cap the membership number at 750.

It was suggested that membership deals, such as offers to users of the Town Council's allotments or local business, might be considered to increase membership. The Chairman confirmed this could be considered in future as part of a marketing strategy, although it was noted that the membership value was already considered to be a competitive, low rate. It was also suggested an item on the gym could be included in the Herald.

The Leisure Services Manager confirmed that the external defibrillator was now due to be installed on 6 December. Following a query, he confirmed that the centre would be opening on the 2 January, despite it being a bank holiday, as historically this is a date on which a lot of people want to go to the gym.

With regards to Woodley Cricket Club, the Leisure Services Manager advised that the Berkshire Cricket League had been looking to revitalise the club. As part of these plans, another local team had been invited to join Woodley CC in using Woodford Park for their matches. Should Woodley CC expand to running a 2nd XV in future years, the team assigned to use Woodford Park have agreed to relinquish use of the space.

Following a suggestion, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that he would attempt to engage with the Wildlife Trust representatives, due to attend the leisure centre later in the month, to learn from their experience and seek advice on matters relating to Council activities.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 20/22.

26. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 21/22.

It was noted that two Remembrance events had taken place this year; one held by the Town Council on the 11 November, and a community led event on the 13 November, which the Council had provided support towards. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that both events had proved popular and successful, especially the community led event which was a good example of the Town Council supporting the community. He confirmed there would be a de-brief with the organisers of the community led event.

It was noted that purchasing of memorial trees and benches had proved popular this year, and that the Amenities Manager was working on formalising an offer for the purchase of a memorial tree in a similar fashion to that of the purchase of memorial benches.

In relation to the bulbs planted around the lake in Woodford Park and the Town Centre garden, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that he would find out if these are both spring and summer bulbs.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that there is a plan to implement a small rainwater harvesting system in order to service the new polytunnel purchased and installed at the allotments site.

Following a query regarding anti-social behaviour in the Garden of Remembrance, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that this was still ongoing but that it had decreased. It was believed this was in part to do with the change in the seasons, but may also be due to the fact that certain foliage had been cleared meaning the area was now slightly more open, with few hiding places.

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that no further progress had been made with regards to the provision of seating by the Town Centre garden, stating there needed to be a review of a number of projects and current capacity. He advised that the plan would be to engage with residents and consult on the type of seating provided and where.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 16/22.

27. **SUB COMMITTEE & WORKING PARTY MEMBERSHIP**

Members noted that the change to the political composition of the Council following the death of Councillor Rahmouni and resignation of Councillor McCann meant that committees comprising of four Members were no longer viable due to proportionality rules.

Councillor Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Jewell, and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To amend the number of places for Councillors on the Community Youth Partnership to 5 and to amend the Terms of Reference accordingly.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Recorded: 0

- ◆ To note that Councillor Doyle has been appointed to the newly allocated Labour & Independent Group place, as advised by Councillor Al-Sanjari.

28. **YOUTH SERVICES UPDATE**

The Deputy Town Clerk provided Members with an update with regards to the Youth Service procurement exercise, confirming that, following the procurement exercise, no tender submissions had been received.

Councillor Gilder stated that Sam Milligan (Just Around the Corner) approached the Council 26 years ago to provide mobile, outreach support for young people in Woodley. At the time, Woodley had two static youth centres but there were problems with youngsters who did not want to engage with these centres. During the time JAC provided an outreach service in Woodley they won awards and were seen as a leader in the provision of youth services. Councillor Gilder stated she was very disappointed that now Woodley was left without a youth service provision. Following a query, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the next step was for the Strategy & Resources Committee to consider the outcome of the procurement exercise and determine how to proceed.

It was suggested that a letter be sent to Just Around the Corner (JAC) thanking them for their previous work for the Council, and the Chairman stated this would be appropriate once the Strategy & Resources have resolved the matter of procurement.

Following a comment from Councillor Al-Sanjari, stating that Councillor Baker had previously responded to a query at another meeting advising that JAC's Reheboth centre was not able to be accessed for free by Woodley residents, other members of the Committee advised that this was not the case. The Chairman stated that it was the established knowledge of the Committee that any young person previously accessing the mobile outreach unit in Woodley could, where appropriate, be referred on to other services, including the Reheboth centre, and that Woodley residents could access that for free. Councillor Baker commented that he had not provided the response Councillor Al-Sanjari had suggested he did, and stated that he had urged Councillors to visit the Reheboth to see the good work being done, although Councillors had not taken up this offer.

Councillor Heap queried whether the Council should now consider in full Councillor Doyle's previous suggestion of providing a youth café at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, commenting that full costings for such a provision had not been provided previously. Members noted that the Council's Youth Strategy did include the potential provision of a café but this had been discounted due to its effectiveness. The Chairman directed Members to review the Youth Strategy document for details.

29. **ALLOTMENTS WORKING PARTY**

The Chairman advised Members that he did not believe the Allotments Working Party terms of reference should be amended to delegate power to the working party to make changes to the allotment tenancy agreement, stating that he believed final approval for any changes should be made by Leisure Services.

Councillor Smith proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilder, and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ Not to amend the terms of reference of the Allotments Working Party.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1 No Vote Recorded: 0

30. **BENCHES AND SEATING AROUND WOODLEY**

Members noted and thanked Councillor Heap for his hard work in compiling a list and maps of seating locations around Woodley. He advised that the list included any item on which residents could potentially sit, for example benches, bus stops and even fallen trees.

Members noted that the intention was to identify gaps where additional seating may be required. The Deputy Town Clerk suggested, once potential locations had been identified, the Amenities Manager could undertake site visits with a view to bringing the identified locations back to Leisure Services for approval. If additional funding was required then this could be sought from the Strategy & Resources Committee. It was suggested that local business may wish to sponsor benches, or local residents might wish to bequeath benches in memory of individuals.

Councillor Heap asked anyone who identifies seating not included in his list to let him know. It was also recommended that the list should identify which seats were Council owned. Members suggested there was a need for seating along Woodlands Avenue, as well as a bus shelter on Church Road opposite Brandon Avenue.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that there is a standard bench currently used by the Council, which costs around £600 including delivery fee.

In response to a query, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that most memorial benches are placed in Woodford Park, but this is usually at the request of the individual purchasing the bench, and not as directed by the Council. It was noted that some memorial benches take the place of older benches in the park which require replacing. Members suggested that a list of possible seating locations around Woodley could be provided to those wishing to purchase a memorial bench to promote the placing of these elsewhere than Woodford Park. It was also suggested that residents could be asked where they would like to see additional seating.

31. **LODDON BRIDGE DISASTER PLAQUE**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that a memorial tree and plaque were due to be unveiled at Dinton Pastures on Wednesday 16 November in memory of the Loddon Bridge Disaster.

32. **LODDON MEAD OPEN SPACE UPDATE**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that he did not have an update on the Loddon Mead open space. He stated that he would be looking to get in touch with Sam Milligan (JAC) to get an update on the parkour project. It was agreed this would be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Heap commented that on visits to Loddon Mead open space he often sees empty aerosol paint canisters discarded around the site, and wondered if the Town Council might be able to do anything to promote companies to move towards a reusable canister design. The Chairman asked whether the provision of a suitable recycling bin might be possible. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the main area is owned by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) so it would be down to them to consider this, but also stated there would obviously be a cost involved in the management of any waste. He confirmed he would raise this with WBC.

33. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items highlighted by Members.

34. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

There were no publicity and website items highlighted by Members.

The meeting closed at 9:10 pm
