

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 16 January 2024 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors D. Smith (Chairman); K. Charles Bey; Y. Edwards;
D. Errawalla; M. Firmager; K. Gilder; R. Horskins; C. Jewell; M. Kennedy;
V. Lewis*

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

Also present: *2 members of the public*

40. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
No apologies for absence were received from Members.

41. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were no declarations of interest raised by Members.

42. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 7 November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

43. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**
Members noted the update on the actions and follow ups from previous meetings, as provided in the agenda.

44. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**
Members reviewed the Budgetary Control report.

Members noted that expenditure linked to horticultural supplies was over the expected amount due to additional purchases made earlier in the year. They also noted that staffing costs were over budget due to the increased national pay award agreed in the year.

The Town Clerk highlighted that income was very good and remaining strong, especially in relation to Woodford Park Leisure Centre.

Following a query, the Town Clerk clarified that the expenditure in relation to Cricket and the Bowling Green were shared, hence the amounts appear identical in the report.

In relation to the budget and expenditure of £0 in relation to Youth Services, it was reiterated that this was because this year's budget had been transferred into an earmarked reserve for the provision of youth grants.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 1/24.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 2/24.

With regards to the £275 spent on replacing the battery in the defibrillator at the leisure centre, the Leisure Services Manager advised that the life expectancy of the battery was expected to be 7 years.

Members noted that the leisure centre closes at 6pm on a Saturday, and a query was raised as to why. The Leisure Services Manager advised that, after the coronavirus pandemic, many of the room bookings that used to be made after 6pm transferred to the Oakwood Centre and there was no longer the demand for the leisure centre to stay open beyond 6pm.

In relation to the income received from Cricket activities, the Leisure Service Manager advised that the £2,600 quoted in the report related to Saturday matches on the grass wicket only. He went on to state that around £4,300 is made from hire of the grass wicket, whilst around £2,690 is made from hire of the artificial wicket.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 2/24.

46. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 3/24.

A query was raised as to whether all vacant plots at the allotment site were being re-tenanted. The Town Clerk advised that there had been issues with plot allocations during the current year, but the Council were working with the tenants committee to resolve this.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 3/24.

47. **CHARGES 2024/25**

It was noted that the Town Clerk had reissued the budget appendix, originally provided with the agenda, to all Councillors, via email, with a hard copy presented to Members of the committee at the meeting. The Town Clerk explained that an adjustment had been made to figures in relation to the provision of memorial benches and trees.

The Leisure Services Manager set out the proposed charges in relation to the Leisure Centre and outdoor sports facilities.

Members noted that room hire charges were being raised by around 6.8% - 7.8%, with indoor and outdoor sports charges raised at a lower amount, in part due to the decision in the year that VAT on sports provision was outside the scope.

Members noted that Gym Membership costs are not included as part of the budget setting process, but the Leisure Services Manager confirmed that there was no increase being applied for the coming year.

The Town Clerk set out the proposed charges in relation to community halls, explaining that the format of these had now been changed to set a standard hire rate, from which discounted rates are then applied for Woodley residents (35%) and Charity / Community Groups (58%). Members noted this format is in line with the used for both room hire charges at the Oakwood Centre, and the allotment rent charges.

The Town Clerk explained that, generally, standard rates had been increased by 8.9%, in line with the RPI figure from September 2023, which was also the rate used for setting the allotment rent charges. One exception to this was the charge for plaques in the Garden of Remembrance, where the RPI rate increase had been applied to the Woodley resident rate and not the standard rate as, in reality, it was exceptionally rare for plaques to be purchased by non-Woodley residents.

The other exception was the cost of memorial benches. The Town Clerk explained that, historically, the Council sought a donation towards the cost of benches of £625 but that costs had increased recently, with the current price of purchasing a bench at around £980 including delivery. Members also noted that, previously, the Council's bench stock was low and poor, and the scheme had helped to improve this. However, now, the stock is better, and there is less demand for replacement or new benches. In view of this, the Town Clerk advised Members that the Council were promoting the purchase of memorial trees instead. The Town Clerk confirmed that purchasers could indicate a preferred location for memorial benches and trees. They would then discuss this with the Amenities Manager to find a suitable location.

Following a query, the Town Clerk confirmed that the reason the hire rate for Brownie and Guide groups was increased by RPI, and not awarded a discount, was the fact that the rate was already heavily discounted for these groups.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 4/24.
- ◆ To recommend that the proposed charges for 2024/25, as set out in the Budget Appendix, be approved.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 0

48. **REVISED ESTIMATES 2023/24**

The Town Clerk set out the revised estimated for 2023/24.

The Town Clerk acknowledged that the inclusion of the return of VAT money from HMRC in respect of historic sports provision did skew the income figures, explaining that these were to be framed differently in the report going to the Strategy & Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 5/24.
- ◆ To recommend that the Revised Budget Estimates for 2023/24, as set out in the Budget Appendix, be approved.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 1

49. **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2024/25**

The Town Clerk set out the budget estimates for 2024/25.

Members noted that increase expenditure was mainly due to increased staffing and supply costs, but these had been balances against charge increases.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 6/24.
- ◆ To recommend that the Budget Estimates for 2024/25, as set out in the Budget Appendix, be approved.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 0

50. **YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Gilder, as Chairman of the working group, provided Members with an update on the group's activities, with Members noting that a lot of good work and progress had taken place to date.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 7/24 of the Youth Support Service task & finish working group meeting held on 15 November 2023.
- ◆ To note Report No. LS 8/24 of the Youth Support Service task & finish working group meeting held on 20 December 2023.
- ◆ To note that the Youth Support Service task & finish working group's actions are targeted for completion by the Leisure Services Committee meeting due to be held on 19 November 2024
- ◆ To amend the working group's terms of reference to include 20 November 2024 as the specified 'end date' for the group's activities, as required by Standing Order 8.2 f), as provided at **Appendix A**.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 0

51. **WPLC DEVELOPMENT TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that Councillor Charles Bey has been appointed as the Labour group representative to the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group.
- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/24 of the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group meeting held on 9 January 2024.
- ◆ To amend the working group's terms of reference to clarify that 'Members' refers to Members of the Council (terms of operation C) and to include 4 September 2024 as the specified 'end date' for the group's activities, as required by Standing Order 8.2 f), as provided at **Appendix B**.
- ◆ To approve the procurement of a condition survey in relation to Woodford Park Leisure Centre.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 0

52. **YOUTH GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Members noted that four of the applications due to be considered had originally been submitted as Annual Grant applications. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the total sum requested by Annual Grant applicants for 2024/25 was an increase of nearly 50% on the budget for 2023/24. At their meeting on 9 January 2024, the Planning & Community Committee had determined they would be unable to fund such an increase and determined to direct four of the applications, those relating to organisations whose services impact young people, to the Leisure Services Committee for consideration for funding under the Youth Grant earmarked reserve, with their full endorsement for approval.

A question was raised as to whether Leisure Services were the right Committee to be considering these applications. It was suggested that, if the Planning & Community Committee were unable to fund the applications, but endorsed their approval, that perhaps their budget needed to be increased, rather than being funded from the Youth Grant budget which was specifically set up to support youth projects, not revenue costs.

Members raised concern that, by not considering these applications at this meeting, some organisations providing important youth services in the area, and who the Council have historically supported, might miss out on funding. In view of the endorsement for approval by the Planning & Community Committee, which it was noted was not binding on the Leisure Services Committee, the Chairman suggested the Committee would have flexibility with regards to the application of the Youth Grant guidelines in respect of these applications. However, it was highlighted that the Committee felt uncomfortable using the Youth Grant budget in this manner, and requested that the nature and purpose of Youth Grant funding be referred back to the Strategy & Resources Committee for review.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To recommend to the Strategy & Resources Committee that the following youth grants be awarded:
 - ARC Youth Counselling - £5,000
 - Promise Inclusion Limited - £2,500
 - First Days' Children's Charity - £5,100
 - Home-Start Wokingham District - £5,660
 - Parenting Special Children - £2,500

Voting: For: 10 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 0

- ◆ To request that the Strategy & Resources Committee review the nature and purpose of the Youth Grant guidelines, approved by Strategy & Resources in September 2023, in light of the Planning & Community Committee's referral of Annual Grant applications to the Leisure Services Committee for consideration under the Youth Grant budget, which the committee were uncomfortable considering under the existing guidelines.

53. **ALLOTMENTS TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note that the Allotments task and finish working group has now achieved its overall purpose, as set out in the terms of reference, and so has been automatically disbanded.

54. **3G PITCH – OPERATING TIMES**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the responses received to the consultation, issued in November 2023 to 27 properties in Farriers Close, regarding the potential increased operating times of the 3G Pitch, as provided in the agenda.
- ◆ To apply for planning permission to extend the operating hours of the 3G pitch until 9.30pm on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote: 1

55. **FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK UPDATE**

Members noted the report from the Friends of Woodford Park (FoWP), as set out in the agenda.

In relation to the comments about the state of the desire line path across the Memorial Ground, Members noted that capital project funding had been approved for the installation of a reinforced grass path. Members asked that this issue be captured on the committee's actions and follow ups document.

With regards to the potential to implement improved paths to the northern end of Woodford Park, the Town Clerk advised that initial investigations had indicated this could cost upwards of £40k-£50k, but that further options were being reviewed.

56. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

It was requested that a report on the potential installation of paths to the northern end of Woodford Park be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

It was also requested that the Council consider introducing a directory of local community groups and charity organisations on the Council's website. The Deputy Town Clerk advised this would be possible, and would add this to his list of projects for the year.

57. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

There were no publicity or website items raised by Members.

The meeting closed at 9:14 pm

YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES (YSS) TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP

VERSION	DATE	AMENDED?	COMMENTS
0.0	29/08/23	No	Draft
1.0	05/09/23	No	Approved by LS Committee – 5 Sep 2023
1.1	16/01/24	Yes	Addition of end date by LS Committee & associated re-numbering – 16 Jan 2024

1. TYPE OF COMMITTEE => Task and Finish Working Group

2. PARENT COMMITTEE => Leisure Services Committee

3. 6 MONTH MEETING RULE VALID (see 6.1.k) => Yes

4. SIZE => 4 Councillors

5. END DATE => 20 November 2024

6. DUTIES AND POWERS

6.1 OVERALL PURPOSE

- a. In line with the Council's Strategy for Youth Services 2022-27, and in recognition of the Council unsuccessfully being able to secure a youth service provider against an agreed SLA to date, the working group's role is to consider how best to further and achieve the Council's aims to provide youth support services to children and young people in Woodley, in line with the priorities set out in the aforementioned Strategy for Youth Services, and to make a recommendation to the Leisure Services Committee as to how to achieve this within a prescribed timescale.
- b. To understand the current demand for youth support service provision in the Woodley area so as to help inform the Council's decisions and ensure its own youth support service compliments and adds to the existing provision.

6.2 MEETINGS

- a. The first meeting of the working group will take place within one month of the Leisure Services Committee meeting at which the committee is formed. Further meetings will take place as and when required in order to best achieve the stated purpose within any timescales prescribed by the working group.
- b. Members of the Community Youth Partnership will be invited to attend meetings of the working group to provide advice and insight, but will not be voting members of the committee.
- c. Officers will be in attendance at all meetings.

6.3 TERMS OF OPERATION

- a. To engage with Wokingham Borough Council to understand their targeted youth service provision; in particular, to understand how the identification and referral of children and young people in the Woodley area currently takes place, and to ascertain

if the methods of identification and referral are sufficient.

- b. To compile a list of organisations and providers currently supplying youth support in the Woodley area in order to understand the provision available.
- c. To appropriately engage and communicate with children and young people in Woodley to gauge their needs and help inform Council service provision.
- d. To engage an organisation with appropriate expertise to carry out a survey of young people in Woodley, to gauge needs and inform Council service provision. Survey to be funded outside of the SLA.
- e. To undertake a short survey of Members to capture current suggestions for potential youth support services the Town Council might wish to consider providing in the area.
- f. To compile a list of possible youth support options, including those raised by Members and local young people in relevant surveys; to investigate those options in order to consider initially their appropriateness / effectiveness against the priorities set out in the Youth Strategy, along with their potential feasibility and cost; to provide the outcomes of these investigations in an appropriate pro-forma which effectively demonstrates how each potential option meets or does not meet the priorities set out in the Strategy, the current estimated cost, and a list of pros, cons and potential issues.
- g. To make a recommendation to the Leisure Services Committee as to which youth support activities / options should be progressed, and how this may best be achieved.
- h. To consider possible activities to give young people stronger voices at local community and local government levels, including the possibility of setting up a Woodley Youth Town Council, and to make a recommendation to Leisure Services as to how this should be progressed.
- i. To involve the Community Youth Partnership in discussions to help advise and inform decisions.
- j. To consider whether the Council's Strategy for Youth Services 2022-27 is fit for purpose and, if changes are required, to make a recommendation, via Leisure Services, to Full Council to approve amendments to the Strategy.

WPLC DEVELOPMENT TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP

VERSION	DATE	AMENDED?	COMMENTS
0.0	31/10/23	No	Draft
1.0	07/11/23	Yes	5.1 a) & 5.3 f) - maximise/maximising changed to optimise/optimising. Approved by LS Committee – 07/11/2023
1.1	16/01/24	Yes	Addition of end date by LS Committee & associated re-numbering – 16 Jan 2024

1. TYPE OF COMMITTEE => Task and Finish Working Group

2. PARENT COMMITTEE => Leisure Services Committee

3. 6 MONTH MEETING RULE VALID (see 6.1.k) => Yes

4. SIZE => 4 Councillors

5. END DATE => 4 September 2024

6. DUTIES AND POWERS

6.1 OVERALL PURPOSE

- a. To consider the best way in which to enhance, and optimise the revenue potential from future leisure services offered at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, primarily considering potential enhancements to the building, infrastructure and outside spaces.
- b. To identify potential income generating services which might be provided at the centre for further feasibility investigations.

6.2 MEETINGS

- a. The first meeting of the working group will take place within two months of the Leisure Services Committee meeting at which the committee is formed. Further meetings will take place as and when required in order to best achieve the stated purpose within any timescales prescribed by the working group.
- b. Officers will be in attendance at all meetings.

6.3 TERMS OF OPERATION

- a. To engage with the Council's Leisure Services Manager to better understand the leisure services provided at the centre, take up from residents, and income generated.
- b. To compile a list of existing leisure services offered within Woodley and the surrounding area to better understand local competition and the provision available to residents.
- c. To undertake a short survey of Members to capture suggestions for leisure services the Council might wish to consider providing at the centre in the future.

- d. To understand the buildings, infrastructure and outside spaces currently available at the leisure centre, including the age, capacity, and suitability of available spaces.
- e. To identify potential enhancements to be made to buildings, infrastructure and outside spaces at the leisure centre, with the aim of increasing the Council's leisure service offering for residents and optimising revenue, and to make a recommendation to the Leisure Services Committee as to how to progress these.
- f. To consider potential leisure services which might be offered at the centre in future, in light of any recommended building, infrastructure and outside space enhancements, and to make a recommendation to the Leisure Services Committee as to how these may be progressed.