



The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JZ  
www.woodley.gov.uk

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To: **Members of the Leisure Services Committee**

Councillors: D. Smith (Chairman) D. Bragg; Y. Edwards; D. Errawalla; M. Firmager;  
K. Gilder; C. Jewell; M. Kennedy; V. Lewis; P. Singh;

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee is to be held at the Oakwood Centre at 8:00pm on Tuesday 9 September 2025, at which your attendance is requested.**

**The Town Council reserves the right to record and broadcast this meeting. Anybody attending the meeting will, by virtue, consent to having their image and audio recorded for this purpose.**

Kevin Murray  
Town Clerk

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## **AGENDA**

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members on agenda items.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2025**

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held on 3 June 2025 and for the Chairman to sign them as a true and accurate record. ***(These minutes were provided in the Full Council agenda of 24 June 2025)***

4. **MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2025**

To approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Strategy and Resources Committee held on 15 July 2025 and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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5. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**  
To review the actions and follow ups arising from previous meetings of the committee. (*Appendix 5*) Page 5
6. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**  
To note **Report No. LS 20/25**. Page 6
7. **WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES**  
To receive **Report No. LS 21/25**. Page 8
8. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**  
To receive **Report No. LS 22/25**. Page 10
9. **FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK UPDATE**  
To note the update provided from the Friends of Woodford Park, as set out at **Appendix 9**. Page 14
10. **LEISURE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**  
To consider **Report No. LS 23/25**. Page 15
11. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**  
To propose future agenda items for the Committee's consideration.
12. **PUBLICITY & WEBSITE**  
To consider which items to publicise.

**Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre on Tuesday 3 June 2025 at 7:00 pm**

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**Present:** *Councillors D. Smith (Chairman); D. Bragg; Y. Edwards; M. Firmager; K. Gilder;*

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

**Also present:** *Councillors V. Lewis; C. Jewell (virtual attendance)  
1 member of the public*

13. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Errawalla, Kennedy and Lewis. Councillor Lewis and Jewell attended the meeting virtually.

Councillor Jewell and Edwards were not present at the start of the meeting.

14. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

15. **YOUTH SERVICE OPTIONS**

- 15.1 Councillor Gilder, as Chairman of the Youth Support Services task & finish working group, presented Report No. LS 18/25 of their meeting, held on 1 July 2025.

Members noted that four organisations had presented the working group with youth service options. Following a query, it was confirmed the three options selected were based on specific quotes which had been provided, totalling £15k, which matched the available budget for 2025/26. It was also noted that there had only been £15k budgeted for the year as, at the time budgets were set, it had been expected the youth service options would not commence until halfway through the year.

Councillor Gilder explained that the proposed leadership course would also be a wonderful addition, but that, as additional budget would be needed, the working group recommended that additional budget be allocated by the Strategy & Resources Committee to fund this.

**RESOLVED:**

- ♦ To note Report No. LS 18/25.
- ♦ To approve the activities to be provided as the Council's Youth Service offering for 2025/26 from within the available £15k budget, as set out in Report No. LS 18/25.

Voting: For: 3    Against: 0    Abstain: 0    No Vote: 1

**RECOMMENDED:**

- ♦ That the Strategy & Resources Committee approves an additional £5,030 funding be allocated from the general reserve to fund the running of a Leadership Training Course, as set out in Report No. LS 18/25.

Voting: For: 3    Against: 0    Abstain: 0    No Vote: 1

- 15.2 Members considered the proposal to convert the Youth Support Service task & finish working group to become the Youth Service sub committee in order to support the ongoing work required to monitor Council's youth service provision, as well as to advise on future provision.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To approve that the Youth Support Service task & finish working group be converted to the Youth Service Sub Committee, with the associated terms of reference set out at **Appendix A.**

Voting: For: 3    Against: 0    Abstain: 0    No Vote: 1

16. **WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 19/25. Members agreed that, whilst a potential full redevelopment of the leisure centre had been estimated to cost in excess of £10m, at this stage no option should be discounted, and the Council should remain aspirational. It was also commented that costs would only increase in future, and a long-term approach should be taken to ensure the longevity of the site.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that, currently, the repayment on a Public Works Loans Board loan of £2.5m would be around £100k a year, with repayment on a loan of over £10m likely to be nearer £400k a year. He suggested Officers deemed it unlikely this could be covered by additional income, but a business plan would be developed and presented as part of any proposals. A comment was made that, with loan payments linked to the Oakwood Centre due to finish this year, the Council would no longer be paying back around £108k a year. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that, whilst this was true, for the last few years the Council had been benefitting from around £100k investment income a year due to raising the total capital repayment amount early, which would now cease.

Councillor Jewell joined the meeting virtually.

Members noted that any decision relating to the approval of funding for undertaking surveys would not restrict the approach the Council takes in future with regards to the redevelopment, with the surveys needed to progress towards formulating costed options to be presented to the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group for consideration. Members also noted that additional surveys would be needed in future, with requests for funding presented to the Committee when known.

Councillor Edwards joined the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 19/25.
- ◆ To approve the use of funds held in the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Buildings & Facilities earmarked reserve to fund the following works in relation to progressing the redevelopment of the leisure centre:
  - Measured survey – estimated at £6,000
  - M&E (mechanical & electrical) condition survey – estimated at £6,000
  - Structural Engineering Assessment – estimated at £4,000

Voting: For: 4    Against: 0    Abstain: 0    No Vote: 1

The meeting closed at 7:27 pm

**ACTIONS & FOLLOW UPS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

<b>Meeting Date:</b>		7 November 2023	
<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Last Updated</b>
34	Consider options for improving play equipment at the Wheble Park, to be reported back to the Committee at the next meeting.	S&R (26 Nov 24) determined to pursue extension of lease with Reading Borough Council (RBC) and then design fully costed proposal for improvements, to be presented to a future S&R Committee meeting. RBC are drafting the new lease, with a finalised version expected shortly.	29/05/25

<b>Meeting Date:</b>		16 January 2024	
<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Last Updated</b>
56	For a report on the potential installation of paths at the northern end of Woodford Park to be provided at a future LS meeting.	Initial costings for different surface options along with repairs to other areas have been obtained. Solid path options are likely to be in the region of £150,000 - £200,000. This will be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee in the context of the potential redevelopment of Woodford Park Leisure Centre.	14/11/24

<b>Meeting Date:</b>		25 March 2025	
<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Last Updated</b>
63	Seek further feedback from the Tenants Committee and undertake survey of tenants to seek views on alternative methods of resolving excessive waste on plots	An online survey of tenants remains live and the feedback from this will be included in a report to the Committee in November.	29/08/25
63	Contact other councils with hens / rabbits on allotments to understand issues presented, and further consider conditions which would need to be imposed to ensure the keeping of animals is appropriate	Officers are collating information and this will be included in a report to the Committee in November.	29/08/25

*Once reported as complete, actions / follow ups will be removed from future reports.*

**LEISURE SERVICES  
COMMITTEE**

**Month  
4  
33.33%**

**2025/26**

**Report No. LS 20/25**

**BUDGETARY CONTROL**

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>Budget 2025/26</b>	<b>Actual Exp as at 31/07/2024</b>	<b>Actual Exp as at 31/07/2025</b>	<b>Actual Exp as % of Budget 2025/26</b>	<b>Notes on variances</b>
<b>Woodford Park LC &amp; 3G pitch</b>	<b>578,456</b>	<b>150,180</b>	<b>169,811</b>	<b>29.36%</b>	
<b>Grounds Maintenance</b>	<b>73,441</b>	<b>16,755</b>	<b>19,661</b>	<b>26.77%</b>	
<b>Football</b>	<b>32,216</b>	<b>5,009</b>	<b>11,556</b>	<b>35.87%</b>	
<b>Cricket</b>	<b>20,596</b>	<b>5,714</b>	<b>7,218</b>	<b>35.05%</b>	
<b>Bowling Green</b>	<b>25,664</b>	<b>5,714</b>	<b>8,871</b>	<b>34.57%</b>	
<b>Woodford Park</b>	<b>76,483</b>	<b>16,073</b>	<b>32,590</b>	<b>42.61%</b>	<b>Memorial bench purchases</b>
					<b>£42k historic expenditure</b>
					<b>remained on balance sheet in</b>
					<b>relation to previous accounting</b>
					<b>practices - now balanced off</b>
<b>Memorial Ground</b>	<b>26,076</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>50,930</b>	<b>195.31%</b>	
<b>Garden of Remembrance</b>	<b>12,916</b>	<b>3,004</b>	<b>4,331</b>	<b>33.53%</b>	
<b>Play areas and open spaces</b>	<b>40,747</b>	<b>7,080</b>	<b>14,288</b>	<b>35.07%</b>	
<b>Coronation Hall</b>	<b>50,542</b>	<b>9,071</b>	<b>15,931</b>	<b>31.52%</b>	
<b>Chapel Hall</b>	<b>55,692</b>	<b>7,038</b>	<b>12,232</b>	<b>21.96%</b>	
<b>Allotments</b>	<b>51,832</b>	<b>5,945</b>	<b>13,932</b>	<b>26.88%</b>	
<b>Amenities</b>	<b>13,039</b>	<b>2,672</b>	<b>3,618</b>	<b>27.75%</b>	
<b>Events</b>	<b>31,942</b>	<b>10,459</b>	<b>11,295</b>	<b>35.36%</b>	
<b>Public toilet</b>	<b>7,085</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>3,603</b>	<b>50.85%</b>	<b>Increased water / energy costs</b>
<b>Youth Services</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,111,727</b>	<b>245,591</b>	<b>379,867</b>	<b>34.17%</b>	

**LEISURE SERVICES  
COMMITTEE**

**BUDGETARY CONTROL**

<p><b>Month 4 33.33%</b></p>
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**-245,591**

**-379,867**

**2025/26**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Budget 2025/26</b>	<b>Actual Inc as at 31/07/2024</b>	<b>Actual Inc as at 31/07/2025</b>	<b>Actual Inc as % of Budget 2025/26</b>	
Woodford Park LC & 3G pitch	541,634	192,230	207,048	38.23%	
Grounds Maintenance	551	215	143	25.95%	
Football	13,407	4,085	4,510	33.64%	
Cricket	7,586	4,717	4,050	53.39%	
Bowling Green	8,659	15	26	0.30%	
Woodford Park	6,362	-3,939	7,938	124.77%	Memorial bench donations
Memorial Ground	0	0	0	N/A	
Garden of Remembrance	1,365	281	606	44.40%	
Play areas and open spaces	0	0	0	N/A	
Coronation Hall	49,187	17,777	16,670	33.89%	
Chapel Hall	49,003	18,304	14,576	29.75%	
Allotments	17,560	690	452	2.57%	
Amenities	0	0	0	N/A	
Events	400	0	300	75.00%	
Public toilet	150	27	62	41.33%	
Youth Services	0	0	0	N/A	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>695,864</b>	<b>234,402</b>	<b>256,381</b>	<b>36.84%</b>	
<b>NET</b>	<b>415,863</b>	<b>11,189</b>	<b>123,486</b>	<b>29.69%</b>	

## WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES

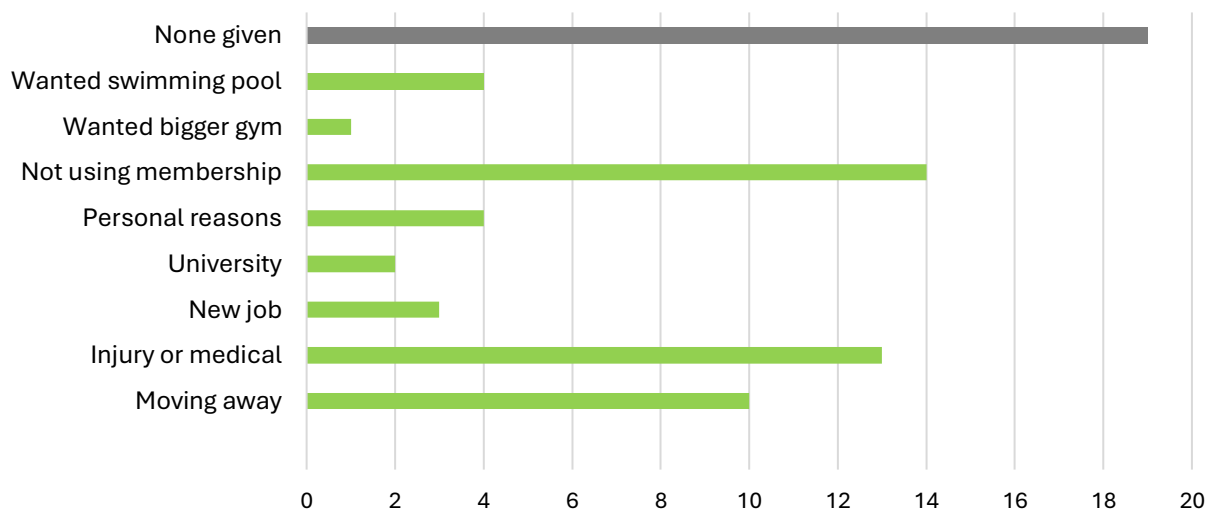
### REPORT OF THE LEISURE SERVICES MANAGER

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

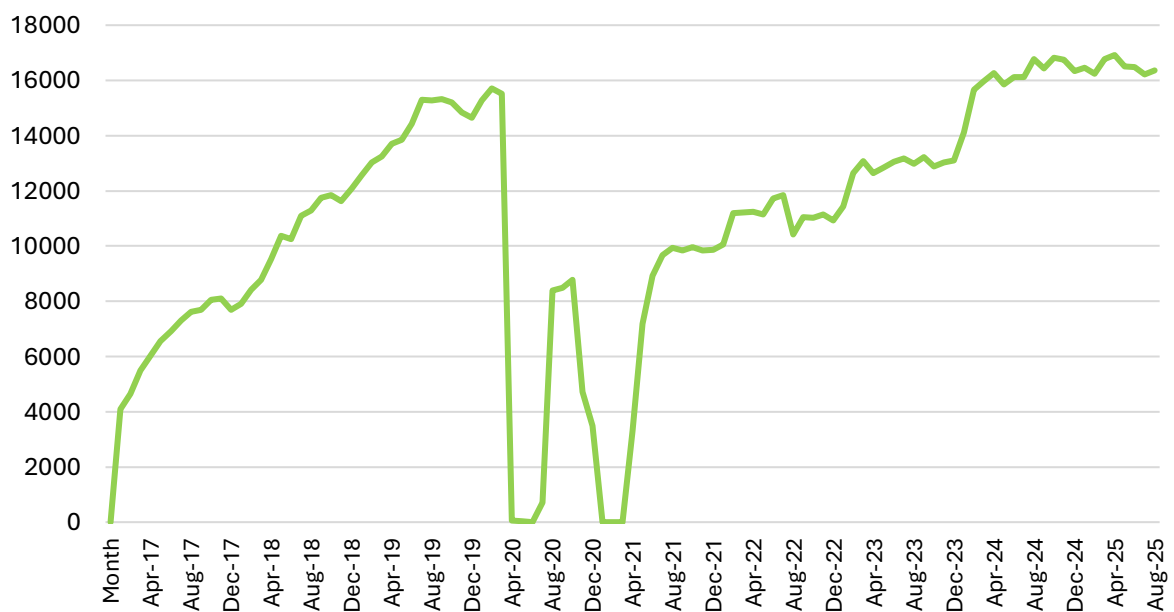
To inform and update Members on developments at Woodford Park Leisure Centre and The Gym on the Park.

#### **Gym Member Turnover**

Through the period 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 we welcomed a total of **84** new members and through the same period **70** members cancelled their memberships, the reasons for which are presented below:



#### **Monthly Gym Membership Income**





### Family Racket Attack

A total of **1418** individual transactions have been recorded for Family Racket attack across the Summer. Details of which, and a comparison with the previous year, can be seen in the table below:

	Summer 2024	Summer 2025
Badminton	1074	1211
Tennis	224	154
Table Tennis	126	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>1424</b>	<b>1418*</b>

\*Figures recorded on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025. Promotion finishes Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

### Paddling Pool

The Paddling Pool opened on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May and remained opened every day throughout the summer. The pool is due to close for the season on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

### Sunshine Programme

Early work has taken place to develop a health and exercise programme for older adults, to be known as “The Sunshine Programme”. The programme will be linked to membership at The Gym on the Park but will include a range of daytime sessions to be held across various Council facilities. Activities will include exercise classes, health education seminars and social sessions (such as coffee mornings, themed events and seasonal parties etc.).

A target launch date for the programme has been set for 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 and opportunities for how to best fund the programme are currently being explored.

### Christmas Opening Hours

The opening hours for Woodford Park Leisure Centre and The Gym on the Park over Christmas 2025 have been set as follows:

- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December: Open as normal (7:30am – 10:00pm).
- Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December – Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December: Closed.
- Monday 29<sup>th</sup> December – Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> December: Open as normal (7:30am – 10:00pm).
- Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> December: Amended hours (7:30am – 5:30pm).
- Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> January: Closed.
- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January: Open as normal (7:30am – 10:00pm).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ◆ **That Members note the contents of the report.**

## **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

### **REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

To inform Members of matters concerning the Town Council's buildings and maintenance of the facilities.

#### **Woodford Park Leisure Centre**

##### Repairs and Maintenance

The required building surveys are ongoing and will be used to inform initial building designs. These surveys include;

- ◆ Measured survey of the building
- ◆ M&E (Mechanical & Electrical)
- ◆ Drainage
- ◆ Structural

It is anticipated that a meeting of the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development Working Group will be convened in advance of the Leisure Services Committee in November. The Working Group technically ceased from 7 May so will need to be reinstated with the appointment of Members and approval of the terms of reference (**APPENDIX A**). Previous Members appointed were Cllrs Edwards, Horskins, Kennedy and Smith.

##### Fire Doors

An inspection of all fire doors in the building is being carried out by a specialist contractor in August/September, in accordance with regulations. The results of this inspection will be reported back to the Committee.

#### **Woodford Park**

##### Outdoor pitches

The condition of the sports pitches have deteriorated significantly over the last couple of years due to a combination of usage and weather, which do not allow enough time for sufficient maintenance and recovery of the grass. In order to carry out essential maintenance work x4 of the 6 mini pitches will be taken out of action for the coming season. The Berkshire Youth Football League will continue to use 2 grass mini pitches and the 3G pitch. There will be a financial impact of around £4,000 loss of income through these pitches being out of action. Officers are preparing a sustainable usage model that will provide for the rotation of areas used for active sport going forwards, enabling maintenance works and grass recovery.

##### Memorials

3 new memorial trees have been planted and 3 new memorial benches installed.

##### Tree works

Contracted tree works are scheduled to x3 willows and x1 silver birch in Woodford Park.

##### Party in Park event

The Party in the Park event was held on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August and was a great success. The event was very well attended, and we received very positive feedback from residents on the day about the nature and standard of the event.

The event was able to operate safely thanks to staff and Councillor volunteers who gave up their time on the day to act as marshals. Without this volunteer support we will not be able to run such events so this is greatly appreciated.

Future events of a similar kind will be considered through the PR & Marketing Sub Committee who will consider the programme of Council run events for the year.

#### Wokingham Borough Council HAF (Holiday, Activities & Food Team) event

WBC's HAF Team held an event in Woodford Park and Coronation Hall on Thursday 21 August. More than 150 young people were booked on to the event which included a number of activities to engage with and provide targeted support to young people and their families.

#### Youth Provision

Arrangements for the Council's new Youth Service provisions, as agreed at the extraordinary meeting in July, are progressing. Suitable contracts for the delivery of the three services have been written and are currently being finalised before signing by the relevant parties.

The Council's Youth Club offering, delivered by Berkshire Youth, is expected to begin on 19<sup>th</sup> September, with exact details being finalised. The sessions will take place during term time on Friday nights, between 7pm-8.30pm, at Woodford Park Leisure Centre. Sessions will be promoted by Berkshire Youth in local schools and by the Town Council, with the expectation that attendance may start low but should steadily increase over the first few months.

The Diversion and Disruption Project, delivered by Storyy Group, will take place for one week during each of the school holidays in October, December and February. A cohort of 7 children will take part in these sessions, identified by Storyy Group in collaboration with various partners, including the local secondary schools, police, and Wokingham Borough Council.

WBC's HAF team are in the process of contacting partners to develop a programme of holiday activities to be delivered during each of the school holidays in October, December and February. Further details will be confirmed once known.

It is intended that the Youth Service Sub Committee will meet after the October half-term break to consider feedback from the initial sessions, and review options for the 2026/27 offering.

#### Duck feed station

Following reports of increased activity in the area near the duck feed station a tray has been installed on the front of the dispenser to reduce the amount of duck feed that falls to the ground. There are bait stations located around the lake area and the Council's pest control contractor is monitoring the situation.

#### Allotments

The waiting list is currently 69. The online tenants survey is still active and the results will be reported back to the November meeting along with the consideration of allotment rent rates.

Officers are trialling a new allotment administration system with a view to introducing it from October 2025 with full implementation from January 2026. The system forms part of the application package already purchased through Cloudy IT as part of the Council's system upgrades and will bring additional benefits in the management of plot inspections and tenants correspondence.

The Allotment Tenants Committee are continuing their work in carrying out plot inspections. The Committee has also reintroduced a Best Kept Allotment competition, with winners announced on 27 July. The overall winner was Ruth Wilson of plot B24.

#### **Recommendations**

- ◆ **That Members note the contents of the report.**
- ◆ **That Members be appointed to the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development Working Group and the terms of reference be approved.**

## 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
2.0	03/09/24	Yes	Expanded remit (6.1 c & d / 6.3 g) and extended end date – approved by LS

**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 =>**

### **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.
- c. To create a formal proposal for the redevelopment of Woodford Park Leisure Centre, focusing on the inclusion of a café, dedicated exercise studio space, soft play area, and splash pad, with additional focus on making spaces multi-use, where possible, and ensuring parking capacity is taken into consideration.
- d. To present a formal proposal for redevelopment of the leisure centre to the Leisure Services Committee for consideration and, ultimately, to be recommended to the Strategy & Resources Committee for funding approval.

#### **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 of the Council 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.
- g. To engage with suitable architects / suppliers to create a formal proposal for the redevelopment of the leisure centre, focusing on the leisure services identified by the group as the priority for inclusion.

September 2025

**ACTIVITY REPORT BY FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK**

As reported in our last report (May) the problem of keeping the plants in the beds alive by careful watering has been very time consuming due to the exceptional hot summer. It has limited the number of new flowering bedding plants this year and will also require a number of lost shrubs to be replaced in the autumn.

In summarising the feedback from visitors to the park, as usual falls into two categories. It is pleasing to hear a great deal of praise for the park. Most appreciate and express just how Woodley is so fortunate to have such a nice park at its centre.

This time of year the children's play facilities are so popular and praised by many particularly parents of younger children.

However two long standing topics of complaint have come to the fore again. One is the state of access to the park from the west side (Reading Road/Western Avenue). For the main access, for residents in that area of the town, the state of the walk is not what you would expect to find in entering a well kept park. On social media it was pointed out that this was once the entrance to the farm land prior to the creation of the park. As WTC now own this land as the park and is also the main vehicle user of the access, it is surely right to expect that the Council maintains and presents this to a better standard.

The other subject that is so often raised, is that the original plans for the lake area have never been completed. The east and west ends of the lake were to be opened up for access and seating. Residents were shown these drawings and were encouraged by the opening up of waste land currently fenced off. In 10 years this has never been completed and is understood not to be part of any future undertaking. Completing this work would enhance what is already an area that is praised by so many.

## **LEISURE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

### **REPORT OF THE LEISURE SERVICES MANAGER**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

To ask Members to approve the allocation of funds to modernise the Leisure Management Software used to manage bookings and payments at Woodford Park Leisure Centre.

#### **Background**

Woodford Park Leisure Centre currently uses multiple, independent systems to manage bookings and payments. The current setup, through outdated software and lack of integration, no longer provides the level of functionality required to efficiently and effectively manage the Council's Leisure Services provision.

The biggest limitation of the current setup is that bookings and related payments cannot be made online. For example, single session sports bookings are made via telephone, recorded in a paper diary, and then paid for upon arrival. Similarly, bookings for exercise classes are also made via telephone.

For context, during July 2025, a total of 2,134 bookings were recorded for exercise classes, the vast majority of which were made via telephone, with an automated call queue system in place to help manage the high volume of calls.

During the same period, staff processed a total of 2,811 individual in person payments, comprising 2,196 card transactions and 615 cash transactions; of these, 1,213 were for single session sports bookings and exercise classes.

During 2024, the WPLC Development Task & Finish Working Group determined that the current setup required modernisation ahead of any potential redevelopment works, and in January 2025 a concern was raised by this Committee regarding the setup, with the suggestion that the Council might wish to consider introducing an online booking system.

#### **Solution**

Discussions have been held with potential suppliers regarding the provision of a fully integrated Leisure Management Solution to replace the existing systems used at the Leisure Centre; the objective being to implement a system which provides:

- The ability for customers to book and pay for leisure services online and via an app.
- Streamlined sign-up process for customers that empowers them to manage their own subscriptions and payments online and via an app.
- Fully managed direct debit collection service, including automated communications to customers who have defaulted on their payments.
- Enhanced reporting system and data analytics, providing improved insight into leisure service usage to support forecasting and ongoing decision making.
- Improved marketing through automated, targeted, data driven customer communications that assist in driving both member retention and income.
- Improved security features and online protection, helping to reduce the risk of data breaches and safeguard sensitive information from threats such as cyberattacks.

The disadvantage of introducing such a solution is the likely reduction in direct interactions between staff and customers. This could result in fewer opportunities for staff to build rapport with customers, a decline in informal feedback, and feelings of isolation amongst members who value personal engagement. Additionally, there may be accessibility concerns for individuals who are unable or unwilling to use online platforms for bookings, known as digital exclusion.

### **Costs**

Online supplier demonstrations have shown that solutions are available on the market, with initial quotes indicating upfront implementation costs in the region of £12,000. Ongoing monthly costs will vary depending on factors such as the volume of online payments and the number of direct debits processed but are expected initially to be in the region of £1,500 per month.

Additional costs associated with the purchase and installation of access control hardware will also be required. Multiple options are being considered and prices sought, from simple QR codes on doors to multiple turn-styles, with the maximum cost of installation expected to be in the region of £10k.

Costs will be offset by an estimated monthly saving of £400 relating to the retirement of redundant systems, alongside an anticipated increase in income due to a reduction in cancellations and non-attendance, estimated to be in the region of £200 a month. The introduction of online membership registration and booking functionality may also lead to an increase in both membership numbers and overall bookings.

### **Recommendation & Next Steps**

It is recommended that the Leisure Services Committee submit a recommendation to the Strategy & Resources Committee to approve funding for the purchase of a new Leisure Management Solution, with the initial implementation and associated access control hardware costs to be funded from WPLC VAT Reclaim earmarked reserve; following the reimbursement of claims, this reserve is expected to stand at around £117,500. Monthly costs will be covered by the relevant budget code, with the budget set accordingly for 2026/27.

Should approval be received, the next step would be to seek formal quotes from suppliers based on a detailed specification which has been developed following the initial demonstrations. Once procurement is finalised, it is envisaged the new system would be implemented by April 2026.

### **Impacts**

<b>Resources</b>	
Initial implementation costs: £12,000	
Ongoing monthly costs: £18,000 per annum	
Additional Access Control: £10,000	
<b>Equality Impacts</b>	
Improved public access to Leisure Service booking processes through the introduction of online booking systems.	
Potential isolation of those without access or familiarity of technology (key to retain ability to still book and pay via telephone or in person).	
<b>Environmental Impacts</b>	
Significant reduction in the use of paper and ink at the Leisure Centre, as the majority of membership applications, booking forms, diaries and registers will now be online.	
Longer term removal of need for plastic membership cards following upgrading of access control hardware to enable the use of QR codes to access the gym.	
<b>Full Project Impact Assessment YES/NO</b>	No



**Recommendations**

- ♦ **That Members note the contents of the report.**
- ♦ **That Members make a recommendation to the Strategy & Resources Committee to approve £22,000 funding from the WPLC VAT Reclaim earmarked reserve for the purchase of a new Leisure Management Solution.**