

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 9 September 2025 at 8:00 pm**

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

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

Also present: *Cllr R Horskins (virtual attendance)
1 member of the public*

17. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bragg and Errawalla.

18. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

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

RESOLVED:

- ♦ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 3 June 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

RESOLVED:

- ♦ That the minutes of the extraordinary Leisure Services Committee meeting of 15 July 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**

Members noted the update on the actions and follow ups from previous meetings, as provided in the agenda.

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Following a request for an update on the desire to upgrade play equipment in Wheble Park, the Town Clerk confirmed that the heads of terms for an extended lease have been received from Reading Borough Council and those, along with associated legal fees, are due to be presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee on the 16 September for consideration. Following a query as to whether progress could be made on sourcing relevant play equipment, the Town Clerk reminded Councillors that the Strategy & Resources Committee had previously indicated they wished an extended lease to be resolved first and to not utilise resource looking into equipment until then. Members requested that the tender for the play equipment run concurrently with the work to extend the lease to avoid any further delays, and the Town Clerk confirmed he would take this request to the Strategy & Resources Committee.

22. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

Members reviewed the Budgetary Control report.

The Town Clerk advised Members that the adverse expenditure associated with the Memorial Ground related to historic expenditure figures which were outstanding on the Council's balance sheet and linked to previous accounting arrangements for the charity.

Following a query regarding the higher than anticipated energy and water charges relating to the town centre public toilet, the Town Clerk advised that Officers do regularly test the market and procure supply via the Council's broker to ensure best value.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 20/25.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 21/25.

In relation to any gym membership cancellations relating to injury or medical reasons, the Leisure Services Manager confirmed that none of these related to any injury or accident which took place at the Leisure Centre.

Regarding the Sunshine Programme in development, the Leisure Services Manager confirmed that this was currently being linked to the centre's Sunshine membership option, which provides access to activities during the daytime. He clarified there was no intention to restrict membership to any particular demographic, but that the programme would be focussed on daytime sessions. It was also noted the deliver the programme across Council venues, not just the leisure centre, which would help alleviate capacity issues at the centre. The Leisure Services Manager stated that, whilst it was early days in the development of the programme, the types of sessions being considered were those such as physio support, menopause coaching, and injury recovery. Members were positive over the plans, noting the benefit of providing a social programme likely to be accessed by the older adult community.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 21/25.

24. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 22/25.

Members noted the positive response received with regards to the Council's recent Party in the Park and VJ Day events.

A comment was made regarding the need for additional picnic benches near the destination play area. The Town Clerk advised that a funding request for 5 new benches for the park was to be presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee on 16 September. Regarding the issue of capacity for other benches around the park, the Town Clerk confirmed there would come a time when Woodford Park wouldn't require additional memorial benches, but that interest in memorial trees had increased and was being encouraged, and Officers would also be reviewing the need for benches at other Council parks. The Town Clerk also confirmed that was an annual inspection regime in relation to Council owned benches around the town.

Following a query regarding the Council's new allotments software, it was confirmed this did link to the Council's new finance system.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 16/25.
- ◆ To reinstate the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group, with the approved terms of reference set out at **Appendix A**.

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 0

- ◆ To note the appointment of Councillors Edwards, Firmager, Gilder and Smith to the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Development task & finish working group.

25. **FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK UPDATE**

Members noted the update report from the Friends of Woodford Park (FoWP), provided at the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised that he had responded directly to the Friends of Woodford Park in relation to two comments raised in the report.

In relation to concerns regarding the condition of the access road off Western Avenue, the Town Clerk advised that the Council does not own the road and, despite multiple efforts since the 1990's, including contacting HM Land Registry, the Council had been unable to ascertain who does. He confirmed the Council had regularly undertaken temporary repairs to the surface due to the need for the Council to access the park via the road, and that legal advice was being sought as to the Council's options regarding the potential for claiming the land.

In relation to original design proposals to relocate fencing and clear additional land to the western end of the lake, the Town Clerk advised that this was not undertaken at the time of the project 10 years ago due to difficulty in clearing the land and relocating the fence, with the area heavily wooded, as well as posing security issues for the Maintenance Depot.

26. **LEISURE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 23/25 which proposed the provision of funding for the purchase of a new leisure management booking system.

Following a query regarding whether cost savings would be made to cover annual revenue costs, the Leisure Services Manager advised that some reduction in staff costs could be expected through efficiency savings but that the precise level was unknown. It was also noted that additional savings would be made through a more robust method of charging for classes; at present, attendees do not pay in advance and so, where they book and do not turn up, revenue is lost. Members also acknowledged that an improved booking system would also improve the customer experience, which would help increase and retain memberships.

Members agreed that the recommendation due for consideration should also reference the on-going annual revenue costs associated with the proposed new system.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 23/25.
- ◆ To recommend to the Strategy & Resources Committee that they approve £22,000 funding from the WPLC VAT Reclaim earmarked reserve for the purchase and implementation of a new leisure management solution, noting the associated on-going annual revenue costs (£18k in 2026/27).

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 0

27. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items raised by Members.

28. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

There were no publicity and website items raised by Members.

The meeting closed at 8:56 pm

DRAFT

WPLC DEVELOPMENT TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP

VERSION	DATE	AMENDED?	COMMENTS
0.0	31/10/23	No	Draft
1.0	07/11/23	Yes	Minor wording changes – approved at LS Committee
1.1	16/01/24	Yes	Addition of end date & associated re-numbering – approved at LS Committee
2.0	03/09/24	Yes	Expanded remit (6.1 c & d / 6.3 g) and extended end date – approved at LS Committee
2.1	09/09/25	No	Reinstated and End Date removed – approved at LS Committee

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.