

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 8:00 pm**

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

Officers present: *K. Murray, Town Clerk; D. Coe, Finance Manager;
E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager*

Also present: *2 member/s of the public*

29. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jewell

30. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

31. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2025**

RESOLVED:

- ♦ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 9 September 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

32. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**

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

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 24/25.

The Leisure Services manager advised that tender submissions had been compared in the best way possible given the inherent differences between the systems and that he was currently going through the detailed contract terms with preferred provider. It was noted that none of the providers provided integration with current mail boxes.

It was noted that some costs associated with the system may be subject to increase as they were based on number of transactions – which would also be reflected in increased income. Members also noted that the launch of the new system would be likely in Summer 2026 to allow time for significant training of all staff.

The Leisure Services Manager advised that consideration of an increase in gym charges to offset the cost of the new system would be considered in the wider context of other leisure centre charges in January. In answer to a question about the inclusion of an increase in the 2026/27 budget projections it was confirmed that the projections allowed for an increase from September 2026. This was in order for the improvements of the new system to be in place for customers before any increase is implemented.

RESOLVED:

- ♦ To note Report No. LS 24/25.

34. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

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

The Town Clerk advised that works had been carried out to the foul drainage from the leisure centre and that following a re-survey, additional works were required. It was noted that the sports pitch works were ongoing and that the usage model for the pitches was being considered to provide for a rotation of pitch use and opportunity for ground repairs.

It was noted that two successful Remembrance events had been held and that the officers would looking at ways to support the community event on Remembrance Sunday going forwards, as this event has grown in numbers year on year.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 25/25.

35. **YOUTH SERVICES SUB COMMITTEE**

Councillor Gilder, as Chair of the Youth Services Sub Committee, presented Report No. LS 26/25 of the Sub Committee's meeting held on 4 November 2025.

Councillor Gilder advised that the work of the group had been very successful and that the Deputy Town Clerk has done lot of work in developing the options with providers and reporting to the group. It was noted that the first round of projects took place in the October half term and went very well with good engagement from the young people involved. The Town Clerk advised that 9 young people attended the first youth club on Friday of the preceding week and that the provider - Berkshire Youth reported very good engagement with those attending.

It was considered that the youth offer currently in place was very good and provided tangible outcomes and that the proposed Leadership Training would be a valuable addition to this. It was noted that the budget for youth services had been around £30,000 for many years and that the proposed budget of £40,004 was considered appropriate, given the detailed activity provision.

Members wished to recognise the immense amount of work carried out by the Deputy Town Clerk in supporting the sub committee and moving the project forwards.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 26/25.
- ◆ To recommend that the Strategy & Resources Committee, whilst noting the £1,500 reduction in costs associated with the youth club provision, continue to consider the recommendation to provide an additional £5,030 to fund the provision of a Leadership Training Course, thus allowing the Sub Committee to re-allocate the £1,500 budget saving to fund additional holiday activities for young people.
- ◆ To include a budget of £40,004 in the Leisure Services Committee's 2026/27 budget recommendation to the Strategy & Resources Committee to fund delivery of the youth service provision set out in Report No. LS 26/25.

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

36. **PROVISIONAL BUDGET 26/27**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 27/25, setting out the provision Leisure Services Committee's budget for the 2026/27 financial year.

The Town Clerk advised that the format of the report was different to the basic budgetary control report that the committee has received historically and that going forwards this would

provide the committee with much better oversight of the financial position of the services under its remit, projections for the following year, and the rationale behind it.

The Finance Manager explained the intention was to provide a transparent, high level summary along with the more complex work underpinning it. It was noted that the budget gave consideration to detailed changes including contract cost increases, staff salary increments, demographic impacts, anticipated demand for services and wider economic factors. It was noted that there were some necessary assumptions where increased costs were expected but not yet certain e.g. pension costs and national pay award. Members noted that the report provided a breakdown and commentary on unavoidable increases along with those that are decision based.

It was noted that the budget going forwards would also take into account any potential impacts from the Central Government Budget in November.

A comment was made that the format and content of the report was excellent and that the budget should be recommended to the Strategy & Resources Committee, in recognition of the Leisure Services Committee's support for it, rather than just noted.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To recommend the budget as set out in Report No. LS 26/25 to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

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

37. **ALLOTMENTS SURVEY, WASTE & DISPOSAL REPORT**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 28/25.

Members noted the results of the tenants survey and the Town Clerk commented that a more regular survey of tenant satisfaction may be useful going forwards in engaging with tenants and improving the management of the site.

It was noted that a high percentage of tenants considered the overall condition of the site to be fair or good and the services provided by the Council to be fair, good or excellent. It was also noted that there was a demand for more skips through the year.

In response to a question regarding the percentage of tenants not currently using the skips provided The Town Clerk advised that this can be due to dates that the skips are on site and their location, and that the intention is to provide more skips on different dates through the year and at different locations – to be discussed further with the Tenants Committee.

With regard to the charging of deposits for new tenants and tenants wishing to keep hens/rabbits, it was noted that there was a mixed response in the survey. It was noted that the number of tenants wishing to keep hens/rabbits was likely to be low with only a small number of enquiries at this stage.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 28/25.
- ◆ To not introduce of a refundable deposit for tenants wishing to keep hens and rabbits, and to recommend this to the Strategy & Resources Committee.

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

- ◆ To refund new tenant deposits currently held.

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

- ◆ To approve the budget provision for additional skips as set out in the report and budget projection.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 1 No Vote: 0

38. **ALLOTMENTS RENT REVIEW**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 29/25.

Members noted that the rent review was based on an RPI increase (Sept 2025) as had been the case in previous years and that the water charge element was now included in an inclusive rent figure. The Town Clerk advised that consideration is given to balancing increasing costs of running the service with providing affordability and value for money.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 29/25.
- ◆ To recommend to the Strategy & Resources Committee approve the following allotments rent rates, to commence from January 2027.

Poles		Rent		Rent
10	Woodley Resident	£71.10	Pensioner Woodley Resident	£53.50
	Non-Woodley	£106.60	Pensioner Non-Woodley	£80.00
Poles		Rent		Rent
5	Woodley Resident	£35.50	Pensioner Woodley Resident	£26.60
	Non-Woodley	£53.30	Pensioner Non-Woodley	£40.00

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

39. **ALLOTMENTS REPORT**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 30/25.

Members noted that the amendments to the Tenancy Agreement and the revised draft of the Animal Keeping Agreement had been developed through consultation with the Tenants Committee. The Town Clerk advised that the Animal Keeping Agreement was essential to ensuring tenants understand their responsibilities and demonstrating that the Council is carrying out its due diligence in relation animal welfare and potential impacts on other tenants. In response to a question the Town Clerk confirmed that the tenancy agreement contained a clause stating the tenant's responsibility in terms of any waste materials left on the plot at the end of the tenancy.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 28/25.
- ◆ To approve the updated 2027 Tenancy Agreement, as set out in the agenda.
- ◆ To approve the introduction of the Animal Keeping Agreement, as set out in the agenda.

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

40. **WHEBLE PARK**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 31/25.

Members noted that the images were for illustrative purposes only and that a tendering process and consultation would be carried out before a final design was agreed. It was noted that no works would be commissioned until the new lease for the site was finalised. A comment was made that the stated legal cost being levied by Reading Borough Council for drafting the new lease was not appropriate. The Town Clerk advised that he had challenged this and was awaiting a response.

It was noted that accessibility to the site was poor and that any new installation must include an appropriate pathway to the play area and seating.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 28/25.
- ◆ To recommend that £40,000 funding be allocated for the replacement of play equipment in Wheble Park.

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

41. **FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK UPDATE**

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

Members wished to record their thanks to the Friends of Woodford Park for their efforts and to the Council team in achieving and maintain the Green Flag Award.

42. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items raised by Members.

43. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

Members wished to publicise the youth service provision at an appropriate time – once budget has been agreed.

The meeting closed at 9:22 pm
