

Dear Resident

Entering a new financial year as Council Leader of this exceptional Town I recognise it is a great privilege working on behalf of residents. Every year I am amazed by the activities of individuals who quietly work to make Woodley even better. They will have the full support of the Council. Can I take this opportunity to thank them all in their huge contribution in making Woodley the great town that it is.

The town centre continues to thrive with new shops renting empty units quickly. Simultaneously we have seen a revolution of the centre at night with some new restaurants and coffee shops opening. It has gone from an unwelcoming area at night to a bustling centre enjoyed by all.

Last year I spoke of our ambitious plans for Woodley Town. Those plans are becoming reality. We now have one of the best 3rd generation artificial grass football pitches in the Borough, opened a new fitness gym at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, the regeneration of the north end of the town centre (partly funded by the Town Council) started in February and the planning application for the new public toilet has been submitted. We are not stopping there - with work to improve Woodford Park's lake area underway and potential projects to replace the play areas in the town centre and Woodford Park. More details can be found elsewhere in this leaflet.

All of these projects have to be funded and we have managed to find the funds from a variety of sources including reserves. In order to continue our ambitious plans for the future we need to replenish those reserves to pay for them. Therefore, we are increasing the Town Council precept by 1% or £1.06 per year for a band D property. The extra income from this will be ring fenced for projects.

At this point I would like to publicly thank all the staff, both full and part time, for all their hard work during the year.

Finally, may I thank you, the residents, for the continuing support you give the Town Council through your participation in everything we do. We will never forget that this is your money that the Council is spending so it is important that we know how you feel about this and would welcome any feedback you might have.

Councillor Keith Baker, Leader of the Council

The Town Council precept is the part of your Council Tax bill that funds the services provided by Woodley Town Council. This year, the precept (annual charge) for a Band D house will be £106.71, an increase of £1.06 on last year's charge. The Council intends to allocate funds this year to a project reserve for future projects (see below).

Woodley Town Council is your local council providing local services to you. The Town Council offices are based at the Oakwood Centre, and we are always happy to hear from our residents and customers. Contact us on 0118 9690356 with any issues or enquiries you have, or go to our website at www.woodley.gov.uk for more information.

Over the last year we have been working on several projects to improve our services and range of activities including:

The new 3rd generation artificial grass pitch opened in June 2016 and has been a popular addition to the sports and activities available at Woodford Park. The project included the pitch, refurbishment of a tennis/netball court, an additional 59 parking spaces and the resurfacing of the access road and main car park. This was funded by a loan of £255,000 taken out by the Council and a grant of £277,000 from the Premier League and the FA Football Facilities Fund. Our local football partner teams have made good use of the new pitch over the winter and we also welcome small groups of under 16 year olds (5/6) to pay and play for £1 when the pitch is available at holiday times and weekends. Please ring 01189 216969 to check availability.

The Gym on the Park, our new fitness gym at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, opened on 3 January. This brand new addition to our range of activities at the leisure centre has taken over the area used by the former pub. The refurbishment works to open the space out and install the services were coordinated by the Council's Maintenance Team and funded by a £110,000 loan from the Public Works Loan Board. The monthly membership fee is £24.99 for Woodley residents and £26.99 for those living outside the town. The price includes free of charge access to a variety of fitness classes which run throughout the week as well as use of the gym equipment. For more information see the Woodford Park Leisure Centre pages on our website.

A joint project led by Wokingham Borough Council, in partnership with Woodley Town Council and Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative, to refurbish the north end of the town centre (the Headley Road end) began in February and is due to be completed in 16 weeks. The main works will be the removal of the pagoda and the installation of a new covered area. This will be set further back towards Headley Road to open up the space between the shops. New seating to match the existing stainless steel seating, as well as lighting and new play activities for children, will also be installed. A video of the planned improvements is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hod3n-EP9-o.

Works to improve the zip wire and sandpit areas in the play area next to Woodford Park Leisure Centre were carried out last spring.



In our parks and open spaces regular maintenance and work on trees damaged by winds has been undertaken throughout the year.

Future projects in the coming year are:

We are working on a project to improve Woodford Park lake and its environs. We have appointed landscape architects Landshape Design and had various surveys on the quality of the water, surrounding trees and wildlife in the lake carried out. We now have an improvement plan to reduce the overshadowing trees and hedging at the eastern end of the lake, reduce the levels of silt in the water, reinforce eroded banks with marginal planting, utilise the silt to create reed beds and an area for native flowering plants to improve the ecosystem. The plans also include the creation of a platform and boardwalk through the new wildlife habitat area and improvement of the pathways and seating. We will be carrying out consultations with residents through our annual residents survey, online via our website and on site consultation days. More information on the project can be found on the Town Council website.

We have also made progress on the installation of a public toilet in the town centre and a planning application for the single, standalone, semi-automatic and accessible toilet, sited at the southern end of the town centre was submitted in January to Wokingham Borough Council for decision. It is not possible at this point to be definite about the installation date because of the permissions to be agreed before work can start and the lead in time for the toilet unit.

The Town Council's Community Youth Partnership is looking at a potential project to provide activities for young people at Loddon Mead and the area underneath the A3290 on Loddon Bridge Road. With the help of the Just Around the Corner charity

(JAC) we will be working with young people on plans for the use of this space and looking at what may be possible. The most popular suggestions have been BMX biking and Parkour (or Freerunning). Parkour was recently recognised by Sport England as a sport. It is a non competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body through running, jumping and climbing. It helps develop strength and fitness, balance, spatial awareness, agility and coordination. The Town Council is in discussion with Wokingham Borough Council about the potential use of this area and the possibility of leasing it to the Town Council.

We will also be looking at the Council's communications and promotion of its services and facilities. A new Town Council logo has been adopted by the Council and we will be replacing signs at all our properties. Plans are also underway to develop and improve our websites and to increase our presence on social media.

Potential projects for the future include refurbishment of Woodford Park Leisure Centre and its facilities and a replacement play area at the Memorial Ground.

For more information on our planned projects see our website and newsletter – the Woodley Herald delivered to your door three times a year.

Summary of the services the Town Council provides:

Meeting places

The Oakwood Centre on Headley Road is the home of the Town Council offices as well as Woodley's own theatre, a café (now run by Brown Bag), a base in the town for the neighbourhood police and a popular venue for business meetings, parties and other social events.

Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall are available for hire. A large number of community groups meet in our halls – discounted rates are available for Woodley residents.

Open spaces

Parks and open spaces – 28 acres of parkland at Woodford Park, play areas at Malone Park, the Memorial Ground and Wheble Park, as well as open spaces at Loddon Mead and Bulmershe Park.

The Garden of Remembrance in Woodford Park is a peaceful place, valued by many who wish to remember their loved ones. To find out about having an inscribed plaque in the garden, call the Town Council offices.

The Friends of Woodford Park, a voluntary group of residents, have been working on a several projects in the park including a survey on dog fouling which has led to the introduction of the 'We're watching you' campaign, a set of beautiful flowerbeds by the war memorial to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday and smartened up the Rotary garden, behind the Oakwood Centre. We thank them for all their work. If you are interested in joining this group or finding out more please see our website for contact details.

Allotments

Over the past few years the Council has opened up 100 new plots at the Reading Road site in response to the increase in local people wanting to grow their own produce. If you are interested in renting an allotment contact the Town Council offices or complete an online form available on our website.



Representation

The Town Council speaks for Woodley on many matters and in response to consultations – national and local. Our Planning Committee also lets residents know about planning applications near them and we pass comments from these meetings to Wokingham Borough Council, where the decisions are made.

All Woodley residents are very welcome at the Town Forum, held before each meeting of Full Council. This is an opportunity to meet your Councillors in person and ask questions or make representations on issues of importance to you. The meetings in 2017/18 will be held at 8.00pm on the following dates:

9 May, 27 June, 3 October, 12 December and 6 February (2018).

Sports and recreation

Woodford Park Leisure Centre – fitness gym, 3rd generation artificial grass pitch, badminton courts, tennis, bowling green, grass football pitches, cricket field (artificial and grass wickets), keep fit courses, holiday sports camps, children's parties and function and committee rooms for hire.

Our young people

The Council provides support to young people and outreach youth work in the town through funding the work of the Just Around the Corner charity, and ARC, a youth counselling service, which operates locally from the Oakwood Centre. We also have a Community Youth Partnership bringing organisations working with young people together to pursue youth centred projects.

Grants

Woodley Town Council supports Readibus, Keep Mobile, Citizens' Advice in Woodley, the Friends of Woodford Park and The Lend and Play Toy Library to provide their services in the town.

There are also grants of up to £250 to organisations and community groups and grants of up to £100 for individuals under 21 who are excelling in sport or cultural activities and bringing credit to the town – see our website for information on qualifying for a grant and application forms to download or apply online.

Local economy

The Town Council is a partner in the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative which promotes the centre and organises events - the Farmers' Markets, the Winter Extravaganza, Saturday Music in the summer and the popular Saturday Market.

Our aim is to provide services that are valued in the town – in our most recent Residents' Survey we found that 59% of households thought our services excellent or good and respondents thought our parks, community halls, grants to local organisations and indoor sports facilities were important to local people. The survey results are available to view on our website: www.woodley.gov.uk

Find out more about your town and your council at www.woodley.gov.uk and in the newsletter published three times a year and delivered to all households.

The Town Council's Financial Statements and Auditor's report are available on our website or printed copies can be provided by calling into our offices at the Oakwood Centre.

Woodley Town Council

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Budget Estimates 2016/17				Budget Estimates 2017/18		
Income	Expenditure	Net Exp		Income	Expenditure	Net Exp
217653	779669	562016	Strategy and Resources	225688	799503	573815
351716	529666	177950	Leisure Services	408091	568465	160374
	30481	30481	Planning		31498	31498
	305640	305640	Capital and Projects		307429	307429
569369	1645456	1076087	Total Revenue Exp/Income	633779	1706895	1073116
Budget Summary 2017/18						
Estimated opening balance 1 April 2017				422701		
Precept				1081303		
Precept support grant*				25932		
Less: Net Expenditure Budget 2017/18				1073116		
Budgeted balance as at 31 March 2018				456820		

*The precept support grant is funding from Government via Wokingham Borough Council to mitigate the impact of changes to the council tax benefit arrangements which were introduced from 1/4/13.