

Woodley Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Electors Meeting held at the Oakwood Centre on
Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 8 pm

Present: *Councillors J. Cheng (Chairman); C. Dixon; B. Franklin; R. Horskins;
J. MacNaught; D. Mills; D. Smith; B. Soane; D. Stares; J. Trick; M. Walker;
P. Wicks*

WTC Officers: *D. Mander; K. Murray; L. Matthews*

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Baker, T. Barker, S. Brindley, R. Dolinski, P. Etherington, M. Forrer, D. Fradley, K. Gilder and M. Green.

2. **MINUTES OF THE TOWN ELECTORS MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2016**

It was proposed and agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1 March 2016 be agreed and signed as a true record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

4. **ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Leisure Services Committee

Councillor Bill Soane, Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, explained that following changes to the Council's committee structure in May 2016, the Leisure Services Committee had taken on some of the duties and responsibilities of the former Community Services Committee, including the receipt of reports from the Community Youth Partnership and Just Around the Corner charity and updates about the Reading Road allotments. He then presented the Leisure Services report, as follows:

Woodford Park Leisure Centre: Sports development and activities

The following new courses started during the year:

- Circuits
- HIIT (high intensity interval training)
- PiYo (mixture of pilates and yoga)
- Toddler Dance
- Stretch and Tone
- Just Play (football)
- Various small group exercise classes within the gym (4 per week)

The centre currently ran ten children's courses and twenty-three adult classes throughout the week, an increase of eleven adult classes from last year.

The centre provided Racquet Attack – play for £1 per person (tennis, table tennis and badminton) over the school holidays and offered a variety of school holiday camps across the year. The centre also provided "play for £1" on the new 3G pitch for individuals aged sixteen years and under, which had proved very popular with local children.

New bookings that came to Woodford Park Leisure Centre during the year were Walking Netball (through the SHINE programme), JTK Freestyle kickboxing club, Sport in Mind - Badminton, regular FA coaching courses and a host of new hirers on the new 3G pitch.

Funding achieved for activities

The following funding had been gained:

- Estimated £1,500 to put three members of staff on a level two gym instructor course.
- £1,000 to assist in the creation of a transition football league between under eighteens and men's football from the FA.
- £385 from Sportivate project for 16 weeks of badminton coaching and £310 from Sportivate project for 16 weeks of football coaching; both for Addington School.
- £1,380 from Sportivate project to run two separate summer fitness sessions for females linked to the national "This Girl Can" campaign.

Total funding secured: £4,575

Woodley Sports Week: May 2016

In partnership with the local School Games Organiser the Town Council hosted the fifth Woodley Schools Sports Week from 23 - 27 May. An estimated 3,000 children took part across the week from nine different local primary schools. Highlights included the opening ceremony Dance Festival and the highly competitive Swimming Gala (hosted at Bulmershe Leisure Centre in partnership with 1life).

Tournaments

The Sid Hopkins Football Tournament, the Wokingham schools' badminton and football tournaments and the Wokingham schools' orienteering competition were held at Woodford Park.

3G pitch project

The 3G pitch in Woodford Park was opened by the Mayor on 3 June 2016 and the first Woodford Park 3G Football Festival took place on the same day. The pitch had been extremely popular for both organised and casual football and the Council was working closely with partner clubs to ensure the continued development of football in Woodley while providing income to the Council.

Gym on the Park

The Gym on the Park was formally opened by the Mayor on 24 January 2017. The gym already had a strong membership and provided a high quality, good value fitness facility in the heart of Woodley as well as providing income to the Council.

Woodley 10km Road Race and Junior 3km Race

The return of the Woodley 10km Road Race in May 2016 was a success with over 500 runners taking part. Barnes Fitness, who organised the event, donated £1,200 to DrugFAM, the Mayor's chosen charity for that year. In 2017 the race would again be organised by Barnes Fitness and would take place on Sunday 7 May. The Junior 3km Race was returning to Woodley and would be held on the same day.

Parkrun

Parkrun continued to be a popular weekly event on Saturday mornings, with the 5km timed free runs open to all ages and abilities. Junior Parkrun took place weekly on Sunday mornings.

Healthy Habits and Healthy Habits Kids

These sessions continued to be well supported.

Community Coaching Scheme - Football Scholarship Scheme

This scheme was launched in 2016 by the Community Coaching Scheme and used 10 hours of 3G pitch time and 12 hours of classroom time at Woodford Park Leisure Centre each week. Initially there were 10 students on the scheme and it was hoped that this would increase in year 2 of the programme.

Buildings

Woodford Park Leisure Centre

The following work was carried out at the leisure centre:

- Following the closure of the Inn on the Park in October 2015 the flat that had been used by the pub manager was refurbished and had been let to new tenants since April 2016.
- The area where the pub was located had been extensively refurbished and remodelled to provide a new fitness gym. This was officially opened by the Mayor in January 2017 and was known as the Gym on the Park.
- The water heating system broke down over the New Year period and had been repaired.

Coronation Hall

Coronation Hall was broken into over the Christmas period resulting in minor damage to the back door and the kitchen cupboard doors. Additional security measures had subsequently been implemented.

Parks and play areas

Woodford Park

- The play area was re-turfed and reseeded where necessary, the safety surface under the zip wire was replaced and the timber edge and steps to the sand pit were replaced.
- Repairs were carried out to the paddling pool liner and the water pump and some seating from the leisure centre patio area was relocated to the padding pool enclosure.
- Maintenance work was carried out to trees in Woodford Park and two specimen trees were planted near the 3G pitch to complement the existing line of mature trees.

Green Flag Status application

The Council had submitted an application for Green Flag status for Woodford Park and the result of this would be known later in the year. The Council was already using the Green Flag criteria as a basis for improvements and future management of the park.

Friends of Woodford Park

The Friends of Woodford Park was set up in the spring of 2016 and were a group of volunteers who helped with the upkeep of some areas of Woodford Park. The Friends met regularly with a representative of the Town Council to plan their projects, report on progress and receive updates on work that the Council was undertaking in the park. The Friends' first project was the very successful Queen's 90th Birthday Commemorative Garden, which was opened by local MP the Rt Hon Theresa May in June 2016, and which received an award from Britain in Bloom. The Friends had received sponsorship for specific projects from local companies and were awarded a grant from the Council. Other work carried out by the Friends included maintenance of flower beds and shrubs, including the Rotary Garden, crocus bulb planting near the Haddon Drive entrance and a survey of the dog fouling problem in the park.

Volunteer Park Warden

The Council had appointed its first Volunteer Park Warden – Paul Morris, who had been active in the park, talking to park users and dog owners, litter picking and liaising with the Council team.

Woodford Park Lake

The project to restore Woodford Park Lake was progressing, with public consultation days due to be held in the park during April. Proposals included the reduction of silt, creation of a wildlife area and nature trail, dipping platform, boardwalk and improvements to seating and paths. Information about the proposed scheme was displayed on the Council's website and at the Oakwood Centre, and comments requested.

Bowling Green

Hedging would shortly be planted along the western boundary of the bowls club. The trees and old railings along the southern boundary would be removed and replaced with fencing and hedging to match that of the western boundary.

Malone Park

Permission was obtained to fell a silver birch that had damaged the fence of a neighbouring property, as all trees in this area are protected under a woodland order. Maintenance work was carried out to other trees.

Garden competition

Due to the very low number of entries in recent years the garden competition did not take place in 2016 and the future of the competition was under review.

Allotments

The allotments continued to be popular with people wanting to grow their own fruit and vegetables. During the year the Council's Maintenance Team transplanted brambles from some unused areas of the site to bolster the perimeter inside the fence and discourage unauthorised access to the site. Road planings from the car park at Woodford Park Leisure Centre were used to repair roadways at the allotments site, with work being carried out by volunteers from the allotment tenants supported by the Council's Grounds and Maintenance Teams. Council officers continued to meet regularly with representatives from the Allotment Tenants Committee.

Community Youth Partnership

Plans to work with young people on the development of activities at the Loddon Mead site under the A3290 had progressed and the Council had agreed to seek a lease with Wokingham Borough Council for the use of this area, and to work with Just Around the Corner charity on the development of projects for the site.

Just Around the Corner Charity (JAC)

The Council had a service level agreement with JAC to provide outreach youth work in the town and Sam Milligan attended the Leisure Services Committee meetings to update Members on the work of JAC and also provided regular reports.

JAC continued to run mentoring sessions in the community and at Rehoboth, their equine centre. Equine sessions were also held at Rehoboth. In addition to providing a physical presence in the community JAC were using social media to engage with young people, via twitter and Instagram.

JAC worked with volunteers from MacDonalds resaurants to clear the overgrown Loddon Mead area, and worked with a team of PCSOs and local young people to refurbish the youth shelter in Woodford Park.

Public toilet in the town centre

The planning application for the new public toilet had been submitted and a decision was awaited. The Town Clerk had held discussions with Danfo, the chosen contractor, about connections to utilities.

Consultations

- The committee responded to Wokingham Borough Council's consultation about its 21st Century Leisure Strategy.
- The committee also received a presentation from Wokingham Borough Council regarding possible options for the future of Bulmershe Leisure Centre.

Councillor Soane concluded by thanking the members of the Leisure Services Committee, the Council officers, the Leisure Services Manager and his team and the Grounds and Maintenance teams for making the past year such a successful one. He especially thanked Kevin Weller, the Grounds Team Manager for all he had done over the past 39 years and wished him a very happy retirement.

Planning Committee

Councillor Mary Walker presented the Planning Committee report, as follows:

The Committee had considered 222 planning applications since March 2016. Members of the public either attended the Planning Committee meeting or wrote to the Town Council about 39 of the 222 applications.

The Committee also received information about planning decisions and appeals, enforcement matters, tree preservation orders and planning policy documents through the year.

Following changes to the Council's committee structure in May 2016, the Planning Committee took on some of the duties and responsibilities of the former Community Services Committee, including the receipt of information regarding highways matters, the awarding of annual grants to local organisations and consideration of nominees for Citizens' Awards.

Planning applications of particular concern

- A planning application for the proposed change of use of the former pumping station in Tippings Lane to create a two-bedroom dwelling was opposed by local residents and by the Town Council, and planning permission was refused.
- Land to the rear of Woodley House, 65-73 Crockhamwell Road – An application for the construction of a three-storey block of flats above the parking area in this location was refused planning permission.

Street names

The Committee suggested the street name to be used for the properties on the site of the former Courtyard Offices at the Sandford Farm development.

Highways

The Town Council continued to be represented at the Wokingham Borough Council major projects co-ordination meetings by Councillor Walker, who reported to all councillors after each meeting.

Bus shelters

- Wokingham Borough Council had agreed to install a bus shelter in Lytham Road, following requests by Town Councillors and residents.
- The damaged bus shelter in Headley Road was to be replaced.
- The Town Council had purchased a bus shelter to replace the old shelter in Beechwood Avenue and this would be installed before the end of March.

Grants

Annual grants would continue to be given to CAB, ARC, Readibus, Keep Mobile, Wokingham Job Support and the Lend and Play Toy Library as part of the 2017/18 budget. A grant would also be given to the newly formed Friends of Woodford Park.

Citizens Awards

Once again awards would be presented to citizens who had made a real difference in the community. This year's chosen recipients would receive their awards from the Town Mayor at a reception on Friday 24 March.

Consultations

The committee responded to the following consultations:

- From Wokingham Borough Council:
 - Library offer
 - Draft economic development strategy
 - Housing and economic land availability assessment methodology
 - Land drainage byelaws
 - Sustainable drainage systems strategy
 - Local Plan update: Issues and options consultation
 - Draft CIL Regulation 123 list
 - Local Plan update: Site assessment engagement
 - New local transport plan
 - Gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment update 2017
- From Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service:
 - Integrated risk management plan consultation
 - Response standards consultation
 - Service redesign consultation
- Other consultations:
 - Shinfield draft Neighbourhood Plan
 - Methodology for the Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Green Belt review
 - Performing Rights Society tariffs consultation

Wokingham Borough Council also asked for the Town Council's comments on applications for Goods Vehicle Operators' Licences, premises licences and proposed prohibition of waiting orders for roads in Woodley.

Presentations

- In April, at the last meeting of the Community Services Committee, Nick Durman from Healthwatch Wokingham Borough gave an interesting presentation on the work of the independent consumer watchdog for health and social care services.
- In November the Committee received an informative presentation from Inspector Alastair Lloyd, Thames Valley Police, about recent changes in neighbourhood policing. Among other topics Inspector Lloyd spoke about an initiative to set up community speed watch groups to help tackle the problem of speeding traffic and this was being investigated by the Town Council.

Following her presentation of the report Councillor Walker thanked the Committee Officer for compiling the information.

Strategy and Resources Committee

Councillor Jenny Cheng presented the report of the Strategy and Resources Committee, as follows:

Working parties and sub committees

Investments Working Party

Members met with the Council's investment manager in November to receive an annual report on the Council's portfolio – being built up to pay the principal of the loan to build the Oakwood Centre. Over the past year the fund had increased in value over the targets set in the investment plan. Last year the Committee had agreed to change some of its equities investments from tracker funds to actively managed funds in order to reduce a perceived risk of the tracker funds being overly weighted towards oil and mining. The Council was monitoring the impact of this and it appeared to have been a beneficial addition to the Council's investment portfolio.

The Treasury Management Strategy was considered by committee and approved at Full Council.

Catering Partnership Management Panel

Brown Bag had been running the café at the Oakwood Centre for a year and the centre team and councillors met regularly with Brown Bag to review and discuss café operations and the business and social function catering and how to jointly enhance services at the centre. The arrangement with Brown Bag was working very well and the Council was pleased to be working in partnership with them.

Risk Management Working Party

The working party reviewed the risk management register and strategy and these were approved in May 2016 following recommendation from the Committee.

Personnel Sub Committee

The Council had reviewed its personnel policies and had issued a new employee handbook to all existing members of staff. New staff would receive a handbook when starting work at the Council.

The Maintenance Team posts had been reviewed and a Maintenance Trainee post had been established.

Two posts in the Grounds Maintenance Team had been reviewed and regraded to more properly reflect their levels of responsibility.

Posts in the central offices had also been reviewed to establish a Venues Manager to oversee the operation of the Oakwood Centre and Coronation and Chapel Halls, and some responsibilities had been reallocated to other officers.

Publicity

A part time post of PR/Marketing Coordinator had been created and work was underway to increase publicity about the Council and its activities, develop social media, modernise the newsletters, and to review and introduce new websites for the Council, the Oakwood Centre and Woodford Park Leisure Centre. The number of Town Council news stories in local papers had already increased. The Committee also approved a short-term marketing plan for the Oakwood Centre and the Council had adopted a new, more up to date logo.

Financial/Licences/legal

The Committee reviewed allotment rents and agreed an increase of 2% on the charges with effect from 1 January 2018. In addition, discount on retired tenants' charges would be reduced from 30% to 25%.

The Committee also:

- Established a charge for 10 years further display of plaques in the Garden of Remembrance.
- Adopted a Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy.
- Reviewed Bowling Club House ground rent – as required in the lease.
- Agreed to borrow funds of £110,000 to fund the refurbishment of the former pub space at Woodford Park Leisure Centre and turn it into a fitness gym.
- Cancelled the licence to hold civil weddings at the Oakwood Centre, as very few bookings had been received following the increase in registrar fees to come out to wedding venues.
- Successfully lobbied on the Wokingham Borough Council proposal to increase car parking charges at Woodley at weekends and evenings and proposed instead that an additional 10p be added to the hourly rate in existing charge periods.
- Made representations to government on the proposals to include town and parish councils in the referendum requirements relating to budget setting increases.

Projects

Woodley Town Centre regeneration

This project was currently underway and would provide a new tensile covered performance area, new seating and a play area for children at the north end of the town centre. The Town Council, Wokingham Borough Council and the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative had all contributed to the scheme. The works were scheduled to take 16 weeks.

Woodley Pre-School

The pre-school, which was currently based at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, had been awarded a grant to set up its services in a separate building and following the Council's agreement, officers were working with the pre-school's team to identify a suitable location in the park for their building.

Bus shelter – Beechwood Avenue

Following a recommendation from the committee the Council had agreed to fund the cost of a new bus shelter at Beechwood Avenue.

Financial

Internal Audit Plan

The 2015/16 internal audit report was received by the committee with any items identified either already or in the process of being addressed.

The report of the 2016/17 year's internal audit was due to be received at the next meeting of the committee.

External Auditor

Mazars Ltd were the Council's external auditor until 2016/17 – and gave an 'unqualified' report on the 2015/16 Annual Return and Financial Statements. From 2017/18 onwards the Council's external auditors would be PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Grants

Eighteen grants totalling £3,850 were awarded during the year to community groups and organisations, including four to young athletes.

Budget Monitoring, 2017/18 budget and charges

Each meeting received a monitoring report on its budget (as did the other committees).

The 2017/18 Budget and precept charge had been agreed at the Council meeting on 7 February. The Band D charge would be increased by 1% to £106.71 a year, to provide a contribution to the projects planned.

Commemoration of the Queen's 90th birthday

The Committee had agreed to allocate £5,800 towards the cost of purchasing coins marking the Queen's 90th birthday and these were presented by the Mayor to all primary school children and all Addington students.

Councillor Cheng ended by reporting that the Council had been very pleased to hear that Councillor Brian Franklin would be going to the Queen's garden party this summer after being nominated by the Council and chosen by the Berkshire Association of Councils for this honour.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**
No correspondence had been received.
6. **GENERAL PARISH AFFAIRS**
No matters were raised under this item.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm
