

1st March 2018

Dear Resident

Recently there was an interesting debate on a Facebook page on the quality of the Town Centre. This prompted me to reflect on what has happened both in the town centre and the town in general since there was a change of political control in 2015. The outcome of that reflection was a confirmation that we live in an amazing town – which was the overwhelming view of those in this debate.

As Leader I recognise that it is a great privilege to work on behalf of residents. Whilst I and my fellow councillors have a strong vision for the future of Woodley it relies on a whole host of individual residents and organisations to help us turn that vision into a reality. Every day, including weekends, a host of silent volunteers work to make Woodley even better. Many residents are completely unaware of their efforts ranging from planting in Woodford Park through to litter picking in a road near you. Can I take this opportunity to thank them all for their huge contribution in making Woodley a great town.

Our ambitious plans for Woodley Town continue to become reality. Youngsters will see brand new inclusive play areas in both Woodford Park and the Town Centre. Woodley Pre-School, currently operating out of the Leisure Centre will soon be moving into a brand new building in Woodford Park. The “lake” area refurbishment is now reaching the point of finalised designs and work will commence this year. In the Town Centre the new toilet has been ordered and the aged green planters totally replaced.

I am pleased that there will be no change in the town council precept. The precept is still 7% lower than when political control changed and you have to look back to 2007, over 10 years ago, to see a lower precept than we have today.

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 Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ

0118 969 0356 www.woodley.gov.uk

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 remain at £106.71, with no change to last year's charge.

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 969 0356 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:

Gym on the Park, our new fitness gym at Woodford Park Leisure Centre which opened last year, has proved very popular and we have built up the number and variety of courses club members can take up, as part of their gym membership.

The 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 was mostly completed last April, with the final touches of new planters around the town installed in January.

Works to improve the area around the popular skate spot in Woodford Park were carried out over the summer.

In March 2018 the Council's Community Youth Partnership will host a conference to provide parents and local practitioners (mainly teachers/GPs/youth workers) working with young people with a better understanding of the local provision available to

support young people experiencing anxiety – with an emphasis on spotting the signs and levels of anxiety and early interventions to address these. This came about as a result of youth workers in the town spotting a real increase in the number of young people suffering from anxiety.

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

We have also updated signs at our premises around the town.

In December we launched our new council website – www.woodley.gov.uk. Our aim was to make information on the site clearer and more easily accessible. If you have any feedback about the site please do let us know by contacting admin@woodley.gov.uk.

Future projects in the coming year are:

Under an agreement with the Town Council, Woodley Pre School will be moving from its base at Woodford Park Leisure Centre to its own new building within the park in April 2018. The former horticultural shed, just off the Haddon Drive entrance, has been demolished and a new modular building is being installed. The Council has agreed a lease arrangement for the school's use of the land.

With the demolition of the shed the Council plans to provide a new workshop from which its maintenance team can operate and has agreed to raise the funds to cover the cost through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board. We hope to start construction of the new building this year.



Community and individual grant recipients in 2017



2017 Citizens' and Mayor's Award recipients pictured with the Mayor, Cllr Jenny Cheng

The 800 plus new homes in the town have meant that there are significant developers' contribution funds, collected by Wokingham Borough Council, for additional leisure provision in the town. At the end of March Wokingham BC will be considering a bid from the Town Council for £200,000 of these funds. If successful, we plan to provide a new play area to replace and extend the existing play ground behind the Oakwood Centre.

With the licence agreement for the site of the town centre public toilet now completed the Town Council has finally been able to place an order for a new public toilet. The unit will be a semi automatic single toilet and should be fully accessible. It is hoped that the new toilet will be available by the summer.

The Council has allocated funds to encourage local groups and organisations to provide entertainment at the new Centre stage in the town centre through the warmer months of the year. If you are a member of a musical group/band, choir or drama group and would like to use the space to entertain shoppers please give us a call. There will be no charge for groups wishing to provide entertainment – we look forward to hearing from you – call 0118 969 0356 or email admin@woodley.gov.uk.

The project to improve the lake in Woodford Park is well underway with tree works and clearance of overgrown areas taking place over the winter months. The Council has applied for additional funding for the project which includes the creation of a wildlife area, a habitat for insects, amphibians and reptiles, repairs to the bank edges, planting of native flowering species and a redistribution of silt from the lake. We also plan to install a boardwalk with pond dipping platforms for children to explore and learn about the environment as well as improving the pathways and seating for people to enjoy this important feature in the park. These elements of the work are expected to start after the bird nesting season, from September 2018. The plans for the project and progress on the works can be viewed on the Town Council website.

The Town Council's Community Youth Partnership will continue with its 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). The Town Council is in discussion with Wokingham Borough Council about the potential use of this area and the possibility of leasing this to the Town Council.

Over the next year members of the Town Council's Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration group will be considering plans for the refurbishment of the centre and its facilities.

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 home of the Town Council offices as well the Alan Cornish Theatre, a café (run by Brown Bag), a base in the town for the neighbourhood police and a popular venue for business meetings, parties, other social and community events.

Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall are also available for hire. A large number of community groups meet in our halls.

Discounted rates for hall and room hire are available for Woodley residents.

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.

Friends of Woodford Park

The Friends of Woodford Park, a voluntary group of residents, continues to grow and their projects this year include the creation of sensory shrub beds in the Rotary Garden behind the Oakwood Centre. The group is also engaging with SAGE, based in Winnersh Triangle to provide volunteers on specific days through the year, to carry out work in Woodford Park. If you would like to find out more about the Friends of Woodford Park email fowp.woodley@mail.com.

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 2018/19 will be held at 8.00pm on the following dates:

8 May, 26 June, 2 October, 11 December and 5 February (2019).



Flowers and flowerbeds in Woodford Park

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.

At the Gym on the Park 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.

We continue to welcome small groups of under 16 year olds (5/6) to pay and play for £1 per person on the 3G pitch at holiday times and weekends. Please ring 0118 921 6969 to check availability.

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 – our conference to help parents and practitioners working with young people to know where to turn to get help and support for young people who are experiencing anxiety is our most recent event.

Grants

Woodley Town Council will be supporting Keep Mobile, ARC (youth counselling service) and Citizens' Advice in Woodley. This year will see the start of a three year Service Level Agreement with Readibus to support the provision of their services to Woodley residents.

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.

As your local council 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 for 2016/17 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 2017/18				Budget Estimates 2018/19		
Income	Expenditure	Net Exp		Income	Expenditure	Net Exp
225688	799503	573815	Strategy and Resources	229634	841455	611821
408091	568465	160374	Leisure Services	445251	619998	174747
	31498	31498	Planning		31662	31662
	307429	307429	Capital and Projects		307428	307428
633779	1706895	1073116	Total Revenue Exp/Income	674885	1800543	1125658

Budget Summary 2018/19	
Estimated opening balance 1 April 2018	494753
Precept	1101119
Precept support grant*	17288
Less: Net Expenditure Budget 2018/19	1125658
Budgeted balance as at 31 March 2019	487502

*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.