

***Please note all information was correct at the time of publishing**

New Mayor and Deputy Mayor

At the Council meeting held on 23 June, Councillor Dave Mills was elected as the Town Mayor for the 2020/21 municipal year, while Councillor Anne Chadwick was elected as the Deputy Town Mayor. The Mayor's charity for this year is Macmillan Cancer Support.



Woodley town centre community garden

In a joint initiative between Woodley Town Council, the Town Centre Management Initiative and Wokingham Borough Council, the previously dislodged slabs around the trees in the town centre have been redesigned as a community garden area. The plants and vegetation to be installed in the garden have yet to be decided, with current thoughts of a school community garden, a variety of grasses or even the use of moss to absorb carbon from the atmosphere or a mixture of both. Seating will also be installed along with a noticeboard for Council information.

"For many years the beautiful tree area at the Crockhamwell Road end has been marred by the serious trip hazard caused by their roots," said Cllr Keith Baker, Leader of Woodley Town Council. "We ended up with two choices, remove the trees or remove pedestrians from the extensive root areas. For the town council and many residents, removal of the trees was simply not an option, so the concept of surrounding the root areas with a community garden started to emerge."

"We have been concerned for some time about the dangerous tree roots causing some very nasty accidents in Woodley," said Brian Fennelly, Woodley Town Centre Manager. "The new tree garden will address this issue and has the potential to be a very attractive feature in Woodley town centre. We are delighted to be receiving lots of great ideas from local residents on how best to landscape the new garden." If you have suggestions for the use of the garden or would like to be involved please email feedback@woodley.gov.uk.



Woodley Town Council update

During the Covid-19 pandemic, officers have continued working, mostly from home, to ensure the Council continues to operate and remains compliant in all areas including our finance and reporting responsibilities. Some staff were furloughed due to the forced closure of the buildings and we have been supporting our staff teams in preparation for their return to work. We have been and are continuing to explore all avenues to mitigate and manage the financial situation that the Council is facing, due to the sudden closure of its leisure and venues businesses and the associated loss of income. We have used this period while the buildings are closed to carry out maintenance works and prepare our buildings and speak with our customers in readiness for reopening. By closely following the Government guidance we hope to reopen for business as soon as possible and ensure that cleaning, hand washing and social distancing can be effectively delivered so that we can welcome customers back to a safe environment.

We have continued to provide up to date local and national information to residents through our website (www.woodley.gov.uk) and social media channels (@WoodleyCouncil). Please follow these pages for further information. We have also supported the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative installing banners and public information in the town centre as businesses return.

Council meetings are currently virtual

While the Covid-19 guidelines remain, the Council is hosting all of its meetings via video conferencing as authorised by the Coronavirus Act (2020), Section 28. Access to the meetings can be requested from Linda Matthews (linda.matthews@woodley.gov.uk) if you would like to speak to the committee about an issue. All meetings can be viewed on our YouTube channel. All meetings will be advertised on our website and social media pages.

Oakwood Centre

While the Oakwood Centre remains closed to the general public due to Covid-19 guidelines, the centre has undergone some refurbishments to improve the facilities and to ensure that all social distancing rules can be met once opened. We have continued to accommodate donation sessions for the Blood Service, with the appropriate provision for hand sanitising and social distancing and have been able to support this essential service with additional sessions in May and June. The Oakwood Centre website is also undergoing a redesign and we hope to launch the new website by the end of July, when we will be able to remove the current website which is out of date. All updates about the Centre can be found on the Woodley Town Council website (www.woodley.gov.uk) and the Centre's Facebook page (@OakwoodCentreUK).



WPLC

Woodford Park Leisure Centre remains closed due to Covid-19 guidelines; however, the building has benefited from several maintenance projects, including boiler servicing and refurbishment of the sports hall flooring, in addition to ensuring the centre is ready to meet social distancing guidelines when it reopens. Please continue to follow the centre's Facebook page (@WoodfordParkLC) for updates and information.

Woodley's volunteer C19 response group

Woodley Volunteer for Covid-19 Facebook Group was set up on 15 March in response to the pandemic to provide comprehensive support to every household in Woodley. Run from a members-only Facebook page, over 1,370 members from across Woodley or those who have a relative who lives in Woodley are offered support from 250 volunteers.

Ronnie Goodberry, a key administrator of the group, started collecting donations at his house on 27 March. "When I first started coordinating the donations, I wasn't aware of the demand upon the food banks and other charities which issue parcels to vulnerable people within the Woodley area. At times, our living room was like a warehouse with a mass of baskets and carrier bags full of tinned items, toiletries, plus other food items; it was actually quite overwhelming at times."

Former Woodley Town Mayor, Cllr Kay Gilder was delighted to be able to donate the 20,000th food item to the scheme on 15 May. "I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all residents who have donated, helped, and contributed to keep everyone safe and in food and essentials during the Covid-19 pandemic and thank you for your continued support."

The group is also particularly proud of how it has responded to individual needs and, often, in record time. "We managed to provide one family in isolation with food parcels that were sourced and delivered within two hours of the call going out. We also received donations including new toys, a cake, banners and balloons for a nine-year-old's birthday as his family were in isolation, alongside food parcels and essentials," said Ronnie.

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We're going on a bear hunt...

To help spread some joy during the lockdown period of Covid-19, a group started on 8 April inspired by Michael Rosen's popular book *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, asked local residents to put teddy bears in their windows with an allocated number to create a bear hunt across Woodley, Earley and Lower Earley. By 26 April, the group had reached 100 bears and by 19 May it had reached 1000 and at the time of writing it had reached 1037 bears. The Facebook-led group has many daily posts, including amusing commentary from some Mr Men characters and includes a link to a JustGiving page to raise money for NHS charities. Sharon Bushnell, one of the founding members, has announced that the bear hunt will continue over the summer holidays to give people who have been shielding the chance to go out and see all the bears, as well as for the children to enjoy again. If social distancing rules allow, a picnic may be organised for all members and bears to get together. For more information, please see the Facebook page: Earley, Lower Earley and Woodley goes on a bear hunt.



VE Day 75

While our VE Day 75 celebrations were cancelled due to Covid-19, we were very grateful for the photos we received from residents showing the social distancing celebrations that still took place. Thank you to Tony Roper, Woodley Town Crier, for still reading out the Cry of Peace from his street, and a member of Woodley Concert Band for playing the Last Post from their house.

Lest We Forget

Woodley Town Crier, Tony Roper reading out the Cry of Peace on VE Day 75

Woodley Concert Band member playing the Last Post on VE Day 75



Council Leader Cllr Keith Baker, who is also a member of the group, said: "During the weeks, months, Woodley residents have come together as a community, demonstrating what a caring group of individuals they all are. The character of a town only becomes visible when a serious incident occurs and the Covid-19 pandemic lit up there at the top of the pile. Residents have come together in a remarkable way that most of us have never experienced before. The passion and care for the vulnerable seen by residents working together has been exceptional. Whether it is donating prescriptions, going shopping, groceries delivered to Royal Berkshire Hospital, parcel deliveries, donating non-food items or even donating a bed and putting up its replacement, everyone has played a magnificent part in proving what a wonderful town Woodley is." The group will continue to run for as long as it is needed.





Friends of Woodford Park

Thank you to members of the Friends of Woodford Park for continuing to look after the planting in Woodford Park, while adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines. Much of the work was initially carried out on an individual basis, progressing to socially distanced groups spread across the beds. The group are delighted with the higher than average support they have received, including a new recruit via the Council's website.

WASP's youngest member is only two years old!

WASP (Woodley Adopt A Street) has been delighted to welcome a number of new members during lockdown; it's been particularly good to have interest from families, their children and young people. For more information please contact Shelagh.flower@googlemail.com.



Beehives at the allotments

The beehive project at Woodley Town Council's allotments is proving to be a great success.

Reading Road allotment tenants involved in the bee keeping project, which was introduced last year, are under the guidance of bee expert and allotment tenant Steve Cook, who is an official swarm collector. The bee keeping group is a mixture of experienced and new keepers, which has created a lovely friendly, supportive and educative group, as described by Carolyn Davies, a committee member of the Reading Road Allotment Tenants Association. "There are currently eight active hives at the allotments, however, another allotment tenant recently got her first hive in kit form and is planning to put it together using a spare donated hive," said Carolyn. "One of the allotment tenants offered some old empty hives for the bee keepers. Shortly after these were left a new swarm of bees moved in and it was very exciting to watch! There is one spare hive left from this donation, which will shortly be populated with bees and we have interest from a further three tenants who are interested in joining the group and cultivating hives. "I'm hoping we might get a taste of Woodley Allotment's honey special brand!"

Play area survey

Woodley Town Council would like your views on the type of play equipment and features you would like to see in the new play area in Woodford Park. The project is in the planning stages and we are looking for feedback from play area users to help us develop the design brief. Once we have some design proposals we will be carrying out further consultation to choose the final design elements. If you would like to contribute your views, please visit the Town Council website and complete the short online survey.

Woodley Youth Survey

The Just Around the Corner youth charity, who provide outreach youth work in the town on behalf of Woodley Town Council, are carrying out a survey to find out what young people are doing in their free time and what they would like to see provided for young people in Woodley. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete and will help JAC and the Town Council's Community Youth Partnership to consider and develop youth activities and provision for the future. Direct link to the survey – <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/H952ZYV>



Alternatively, please use the QR code.

