

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 31 May 2022 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors D. Bragg (Chairman); N. Al-Sanjari; K. Gilder; A. Heap;
C. Jewell; D. Smith; A. Swaddle*

Officers present: *K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk; E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager;
M. Filmore, Committee Officer*

Also present: *Councillor K. Baker
1 member of the public*

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Deputy Town Clerk asked for nominations for the position of Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Gilder, seconded by Councillor Swaddle, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That Councillor Bragg be appointed to the position of Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Voting: For: 3 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2 No Vote Recorded: 1

Councillor Bragg invited nominations for the position of Vice Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year. It was proposed by Councillor Swaddle, seconded by Councillor Gilder, and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That Councillor Smith be appointed to the position of Vice Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Voting: For: 3 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2 No Vote Recorded: 1

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Horskins.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 APRIL 2022**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 12 April 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

Members reviewed the Budgetary Control report.

With regards to a query regarding £4k expenditure relating to Woodford Park, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed this was in relation to the purchase of memorial benches for which income has yet to be received.

Councillor Al-Sanjari entered the meeting at this point.

A query was raised as to why there was no income against the Bowling Green this year, but the income stated for the same period in 2021 was £4,160. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the terms of the lease agreement had been renegotiated, but that he would need to check when payment was due. It was raised that the report issued last year for the same period had stated income as £0, whereas this report lists the actual income for the same period in 2021 as £4,160. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that this was a correction and this report was correct.

In response to a query as to why Public Toilet income was listed as £0, whilst expenditure was listed as £165, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that expenditure relates to contract cleaning costs and is invoiced monthly, whilst income is only processed when money has been collected from the toilet and banked, which hadn't taken place at the time of issuing the report.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 10/22.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 11/22.

The Leisure Services Manager confirmed that the damage to the 3G pitch is located near to one of the penalty spots, which is one of the higher usage areas of the pitch. He explained that it was most likely to have been caused accidentally by a stud but a report is due in the next week with more detail as to how the damage might have been caused and whether it could've been vandalism. The cost of repair is £545. It was confirmed that the repair is not covered by the maintenance contract on the pitch, but that the Council's insurance could cover the cost of the repair, although an excess would need to be paid. No decision has been made yet regarding this until the damage report has been received.

The Leisure Services Manager confirmed that electrical works at the Leisure Centre would be commencing on 1 August, and confirmed that this would result in the centre being shut for up to 8 working days. He confirmed that plans were being put in place to minimise disruption. In response to a query regarding the paddling pool being closed during the electrical works at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, the Leisure Services Manager confirmed that he is in discussions with the contractor to see if there is any way of avoiding this, including the possibility of using a different power source, such as a generator. However, even if this was possible, the Leisure Centre would have no power which means people could not use the toilets. A temporary toilet facility has been looked into which would cost around £500 a week. Any decision is pending information from the contractor.

Members asked for good communications regarding paddling pool closures. It was noted that it is frustrating and disappointing for residents and children who visit the pool only to find that it is closed. The Leisure Services Manager confirmed that FaceBook is being used for messages regarding the opening and closure of the paddling pool and this has been successful. Any decision to close the pool is made early in the day based on an inspection of the quality of the water to give as much notice as possible. He explained that the pool sometimes needs to be shut for a day to improve the water quality, especially after heavy usage.

Following a query regarding Leisure Centre membership, the Leisure Service Manager confirmed that membership is open to anyone aged 16 or over. Children under 16 would need supervision in the gym. He confirmed that membership had recovered pretty well following Covid, with membership currently estimated to be around 70-80% of capacity. Pre-Covid membership was at around 95% of the capacity, whilst at its lowest membership it had been around 40%. He confirmed that membership deals are offered at various points of the year to encourage membership growth.

A question was asked as to whether the Leisure Centre had considered offering virtual workout opportunities. The Leisure Services Manager confirmed they do not currently. They tried this during Covid but didn't get much interest due to the amount of competition around; it was found that a lot of free content was available which people tended to use, and those who were willing to pay would go for higher level providers. However, he confirmed this was something which could be revisited.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 11/22.

7. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 12/22.

Members were very concerned about graffiti on and inside the youth shelter in Woodford Park. It was noted that the shelter was located in close proximity to the new play area, with the graffiti highly offensive in nature and especially inappropriate to be seen by families and children. Members also noted that it was believed the shelter is used by drug users.

Members commented that it might be preferable to move the youth shelter to a more appropriate location within the park, although it was agreed that a shelter was needed. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the existing shelter could not simply be relocated as it would need to be cut out of the ground, but it could be removed and then a new shelter placed elsewhere in the park to replace it. For now, Members asked that the shelter be painted with anti-graffiti paint, and that the situation be monitored.

Members noted that an email had been sent out the previous day arranging a date for the first meeting of the Youth Strategy Working Party, which it is hoped will be held on 13 June.

In response to a comment regarding the need to replace bushes in Rivermead which were removed to undertake fence work, the Deputy Town Clerk stated he would raise this with the Amenities Manager.

In relation to the water supply at the Town Centre Garden, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the Council is waiting on Thames Water to connect the supply. The Council is also looking into an irrigation system, although no decision has been made on this yet.

Following a query which had been submitted prior to the meeting regarding whether every area of the allotment site had been cleared and prepared for plots, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that over 100 plots have been added in the past 8 years and the Council is looking at clearing more areas.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 12/22.

8. **WOODLEY PRESCHOOL GARDEN PROPOSAL**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 13/22.

Members discussed the request from the preschool to fence off and use additional space directly behind the existing building as additional outdoor space for their children. Members were broadly supportive of the proposal. They noted that the preschool own the building but lease the land from the Council. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that a 20-year lease commenced in 2018, with a 5-year rent review. It was also noted that the proposal is for a margin to be left around the area in order that Council staff could access and maintain the shrubs behind.

Concerns were raised regarding fencing off additional space in the park, and the potential that additional temporary structures might be built on this area. It was noted that the space is directly behind the existing building. It is sloping land with a tree on it, and it is not believed to be significantly used by park users due to its location. It was also noted that the only temporary structure being proposed to be built on the land would be a shed. This would likely be out of sight, immediately behind the main building, and also could be taken down easily if requested. The Deputy Town Clerk also confirmed that the details of any structures permitted by the Council to be built on the land could be stipulated in the conditions of the lease.

Concern was also raised about who would maintain responsibility for the tree which, if the proposal was agreed, would sit within the preschool's area, and also who would have responsibility should any injury or damage be caused by the tree. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed this would need to be considered as part of the terms of the lease. Members noted that there would need to be agreed access for Council staff to maintain the tree.

Members noted that the preschool is a registered charity.

The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that at present the preschool were seeking a decision as to whether, in principle, the Council would be willing to proceed with the proposal. The potential rent increase had yet to be calculated.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 13/22.
- ◆ To agree, in principle, to Woodley Preschool enclosing the area to the rear of the existing preschool building, as set out in the proposal, for use as an additional, secure outside space, subject to the agreement of amended terms and ground rent.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 No Vote Recorded: 0

9. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Councillor Jewell proposed, seconded by Councillor Heap, that a regular item be added to all Leisure Services agendas which covers Youth Services. Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To add a regular item to all Leisure Services agendas which covers Youth Services.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 1 Abstentions: 1 No Vote Recorded: 1

Councillor Baker advised that he had spoken to a resident who had asked if the Town Council would be raising a Union flag during the Jubilee celebrations.

It was noted that the Council does not own a Union flag and a request was made for anyone with a flag to contact the Deputy Town Clerk. Members noted that this flag would need to replace the Ukrainian flag currently being flown in Woodford Park as the Green Flag should not be taken down.

10. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

Members requested publicity regarding the new play area.

The meeting closed at 9:24 pm
