

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held remotely
on Tuesday 1 September 2020 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors D. Bragg (Chairman); N. Al-Sanjari; K. Baker; M. Doyle;
A. Heap; D. Smith; A. Swaddle*

Officers present: *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk;
E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager; L. Matthews, Committee Officer
T. Gough, Grounds Maintenance Manager*

Also present: *Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity
2 members of the public*

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Rahmouni and B. Soane.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2020**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 14 January 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. **JUST AROUND THE CORNER (JAC)**

Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity (JAC), was welcomed to the meeting and presented the JAC report. He informed Members that both JAC and the equine centre, Rehoboth, were recognised as essential agencies and had been allowed to keep operating during the restrictions introduced to limit the spread of Covid-19. JAC had continued their outreach work during the pandemic and had also helped with the delivery of food parcels, which had helped them to maintain contact with vulnerable families.

Sam Milligan answered questions about JAC's outreach work and confirmed that they visited the Sandford Farm development but did not go over the river. He also confirmed that JAC worked closely with other agencies, such as ARC, and referred young people to these agencies when necessary. In reply to a question about how the Council could ensure that the work JAC was carrying out was providing value for money, Sam Milligan said that JAC was providing the services specified in the service level agreement and that this could be itemised and reported on at future meetings, if necessary.

In reply to further questions, Sam Milligan informed Members that JAC had not seen any evidence of domestic violence during the pandemic, but were aware that there had been a significant increase in the levels of anxiety among young people. He also reported that JAC had not seen signs of drug activity in Woodley, but that did not mean that it was not occurring.

Sam Milligan updated Members on the Loddon Mead project and reported that young people had started to visit again in the past month and had continued working on the art work, which was being done on boards that could be stored away from the site. He confirmed that Councillor Richard Skegg had been in contact with JAC and had visited the

Loddon Mead site and the land over the river formerly used for park and ride. The mention of Borough Councillor Richard Dolinski in the report was an error.

The Chairman thanked Sam Milligan for his report and for attending the meeting.

5. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 9/20 and reported that overall expenditure was below the level that would be expected at this point in the year, mainly due to many of the facilities being closed for several months due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Members were informed that income for leisure services was well below the expected level and mainly consisted of furlough payments from the government for staff that were unable to work because of the Covid-19 restrictions. When asked whether income predictions taking into account the effect of the pandemic had been produced, the Town Clerk replied that predictions had been made previously, but now that more activities were possible at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, the August income figures would allow a more accurate prediction to be made. The spreadsheet would be updated later in the week and would be circulated to all Councillors. The Council's financial situation would be discussed at the next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee on 15 September 2020.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/20.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 10/20 and informed Members that Woodford Park Leisure Centre had been closed from 21 March until early in July, when lockdown measures started to be eased. During that time, all Centre staff (apart from the Leisure Services Manager) had been furloughed and the only activity within the Centre had been maintenance work and routine building checks. Some outdoor activities were able to resume from 6 July and the "Gym IN the Car Park" programme was launched to provide outdoor exercise classes for gym members. The leisure centre officially reopened on 27 July for certain activities, in line with Government advice. By the end of August approximately 50% of the Centre staff had returned to work.

When asked about the staff members who were currently not working, the Leisure Services Manager replied that they would return to work as more business returned. Business would normally be expected to increase in September, as hirers returned when the school holidays ended, and it was hoped that all leisure centre staff would therefore be back at work by October.

In reply to a question, the Leisure Services Manager said that it was difficult to gauge what impact the opening of the new Bulmershe Leisure Centre would have, but the main effect was likely to be on gym membership. Many gym members had stayed at Woodford Park Leisure Centre because they did not want to be tied in to a long-term contract and also because they appreciated the more friendly and personal nature of the centre. Members suggested that the marketing strategy should stress the community links and personal approach of the leisure centre and note that it is funded and supported by the Town Council.

The Chairman thanked all the staff at the leisure centre for the wonderful job they were doing.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 10/20.

7. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 11/20 and informed Members of the work undertaken at the leisure centre to allow the function room to be utilised as an extension to the gym, enabling the gym to operate more effectively while observing social distancing requirements. Members noted that it was not feasible to open the paddling pool while current restrictions were in place. The Deputy Town Clerk advised members that work to replace the poor quality felt roofing previously installed at the leisure centre was on-going and a report on the current situation would be presented to the next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on matters relating to Woodford Park and informed Members that the Rotary Club had provided funding for rose bushes, in order to establish a rose garden within the Rotary Garden. The rose garden would also provide residents with an opportunity to purchase a rose bush in memory of a loved one. Members noted that essential safety works had been scheduled to address issues with dead and dying poplars along the boundary with St Dominic Savio School and would take place during the October half term holiday. At the bowling green, three rinks had been prepared for practice sessions, but all fixtures had been cancelled for the season. New goal posts had been installed on the football pitches, with funding from the Football Foundation, and football bookings were beginning to return.

Members were pleased to note that the Council's play areas had re-opened to the public on 4 July in accordance with Government guidance, and signage had been installed at all sites advising of social distancing and other measures. In reply to a request that grass not be cut right up to the park boundaries, in order to leave an uncut margin for wildlife, the Deputy Town Clerk replied that this was being done where it was safe to do so, for example in Woodford Park, but that in play areas the nettles had to be kept under control to prevent children being stung and it was therefore necessary to cut right up to the boundary.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the allotments had been exceptionally busy during the lockdown period and there were currently 70 people on the waiting list. The project to install bee hives at the site was running successfully, with 11 bee hives in place and routine inspections being carried out by a representative from the National Bee Unit. The first batch of honey had already been produced by one of the bee keepers.

Members noted the update on the work undertaken this year by the Friends of Woodford Park and the information provided on the Council's wildlife and environmental initiatives.

Members were informed that bookings in Chapel Hall and Coronation Hall remained very quiet, as many of the bookings in these halls tended to be social gatherings, which were not currently taking place. Appropriate safety measures had been put in place in the halls so that bookings could be accommodated whenever possible. A broadband line and wifi router would be installed in Chapel Hall to enable virtual dance classes to be run by the dance school.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 11/20.

8. **TOWN CENTRE TREE GARDEN**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 12/20 and reported on the suggestions for planting and use of the space received from members of the public during a consultation conducted via the website and social media. In addition, he informed Members that the Rotary Club had volunteered to plant crocuses in the garden. Members considered the suggestions and also stressed the aim of making this a community garden, with local residents involved in helping to maintain the garden.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 12/20.
- ◆ That the Council's ground staff produce a shortlist from the submitted suggestions, for consideration by the Committee. The short list should consist of a variety of different types of plants that would survive in the available conditions and should include fragrant plants for the enjoyment of the blind and partially sighted.
- ◆ That the proposals also include a variety of seating solutions suitable for all members of the community, in particular the elderly and disabled.

9. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR THE PROVISION OF DETACHED YOUTH WORK IN WOODLEY**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 13/20. Members considered whether to arrange for an Equality Impact Assessment to be carried out on the current provider of detached youth work in Woodley, who's contract ran until the end of March 2021, or to carry out this work when the new contract was awarded, possibly with a new provider, from 1 April 2021.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 13/20.
- ◆ That an Equality Impact Assessment be carried out after the appointment of a contractor to provide detached youth work in the town from 1 April 2021.

Voting:

FOR	AGAINST
K. Baker	N. Al-Sanjari
D. Bragg	M. Doyle
D. Smith	A. Heap
A. Swaddle	
For: 4	Against: 3

At this point in the evening Councillor Doyle left the meeting.

10. **WOODFORD PARK DESTINATION PLAY AREA**

Members noted the results of the online questionnaire that had been carried out to obtain initial data and suggestions from users of the play areas in Woodford Park. This data would be included in the tender invitation pack, which would be advertised shortly. Further public consultation would be carried out on the project designs in the submitted tenders as part of the selection process. In reply to a question, the Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that, in order to reach people who did not currently use the park, the consultation would be publicised on the Council's website and social media, in the Woodley Herald and via displays at the Oakwood Centre and Woodford Park Leisure Centre.

11. **MAINTENANCE DEPOT**

Members noted the update on the project to provide a new building at the maintenance depot in Woodford Park, given in the agenda. The new building was expected to be erected in late September/early October, with the project being completed before the winter months.

12. **DRAFT CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan, which it had previously been agreed would be provided to the Leisure Services Committee for information prior to approval at the next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee (Leisure Services Committee meeting, 14 January 2020, minute number 51).

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan.

13. It was proposed by the Chairman and

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That as business was unlikely to be completed by 10pm the meeting continue in order to complete the business set out in the agenda.

14. **WOODLEY BOWLING CLUB**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To accept the offer from Woodley Bowling Club of a contribution of £4,160 towards the Council's costs in the current year in respect of the annual ground rent fee and costs incurred in order that the quality of the green was maintained for future years by the Grounds Maintenance team.

15. **WOKINGHAM CULTURAL STRATEGY**

Due to the lateness of the hour and the limited time available to agree a response to the Wokingham Cultural Strategy consultation on behalf of the Council, it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That Members submit their own individual comments to the Wokingham Cultural Strategy consultation.

16. **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF WORKING PARTIES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) **Community Youth Partnership**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the Terms of Reference of the Community Youth Partnership.

Voting: For: 4 Abstentions: 2

b) **3G Pitch Steering Group**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the Terms of Reference of the 3G Pitch Steering Group.

Voting: For: 5 Abstentions: 1

c) **Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Task & Finish Group**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To approve the Terms of Reference of the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Task & Finish Group.

Voting: For: 5 Abstentions: 1

17. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no suggestions for future agenda items.

18. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To publicise the following:
 - The status of Woodford Park Leisure Centre as a Town Council owned community asset with a personal approach towards service.
 - The progress of the bees project at the allotments.
 - The environmental and wildlife initiatives being undertaken by the Town Council.

The meeting closed at 10:10 pm

DRAFT