

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 19 November 2019 at 8:00 pm**

- Present:** *Councillors K. Gilder (Chairman); K. Baker; D. Bragg; A. Heap;
S. Rahmouni; R. Skegg; B. Soane; A. Swaddle*
- Officers present:** *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk;
E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager; L. Matthews, Committee Officer*
- Also present:** *Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity
3 members of the public*

Before opening the meeting, Councillor Gilder called for a minute's silence in memory of Councillor David Stares.

23. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE**
Following the death of Councillor David Stares, it was proposed by Councillor Baker, seconded by Councillor Gilder and
- RESOLVED:**
- ◆ To appoint Councillor Bragg Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.
24. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Green.
25. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were no declarations of interest made by Members.
26. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE**
Councillor Gilder remained as Vice Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee.
27. **WORKING PARTY MEMBERSHIP**
Following the death of Councillor David Stares, the following appointments were made to the vacant positions on working parties:
- a) **Community Youth Partnership**
- RESOLVED:**
- ◆ To appoint Councillor Rahmouni to the Community Youth Partnership for the remainder of the municipal year.
- b) **Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Task and Finish Group**
- RESOLVED:**
- ◆ To appoint Councillor Swaddle to the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Task and Finish Group for the remainder of the municipal year.

c) **3G Pitch Steering Group**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To appoint Councillor Baker to the 3G Pitch Steering Group for the remainder of the municipal year.

28. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2019**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 3 September 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity (JAC), was welcomed to the meeting and presented the JAC report. The monthly number of contacts made by the detached youth team during the previous six months were provided in the report and Sam Milligan pointed out that recently the numbers had been very variable. He informed Members that in recent months the skate park in Woodford Park had been the most popular area for young people to congregate, but that the numbers had reduced over the past two weeks and the town centre was starting to get busier, with afternoons being busier than evenings. The detached youth team would be varying the times that they go out over the coming weeks in order to determine the best times to make the most contacts.

Members questioned Sam Milligan about some of the specific cases mentioned in the JAC report and Sam Milligan reported that the greatest concern being reported by agencies across the borough was the level of high anxiety, often leading to depression, in many young people. During the discussion of this issue, Sam Milligan informed Members that there seemed to be many reasons for the levels of high anxiety, including high expectations from teachers, parents and young people themselves for high educational achievements. The problem of anxiety often showed more readily in girls because boys often reacted to anxiety by misbehaving, which masked the underlying problem.

30. **COMMUNITY YOUTH PARTNERSHIP**

Sam Milligan presented Report No. LS 19/19 of the Community Youth Partnership meeting held on 6 November 2019.

Members noted that the Partnership had discussed the way forward with regard to establishing more parents' self help groups for dealing with anxiety in young people and it had been agreed that three Woodley schools would be approached to help with setting-up further groups. Members were also informed that, during a discussion on youth provision in Woodley, it had been suggested that a survey of young people be undertaken to determine what youth activities they would like to be available in Woodley.

Sam Milligan updated Members on the Loddon Mead Project, reporting that the Art and Parkour event would now take place early in the New Year and that the Art Departments at Waingels College and The Bulmershe School would be invited to participate.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 19/19.

The Chairman thanked Sam Milligan for coming to the meeting.

31. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 20/19 and noted that the income received from all income streams, except the public toilet, was ahead of what would be expected at this point in the year. In particular, the income from Woodford Park Leisure Centre was already at 76% of the budgeted income for the whole year, as a result of the Leisure Services Manager and his team developing the centre into such a popular venue.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 20/19.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 21/19 and informed Members of the plans for a Christmas Charity Open Day at Woodford Park Leisure Centre on 23 December during which the centre's facilities would be open to all for no charge other than a minimum donation of £1.00. There would also be a cake and biscuit sale and all proceeds would go to the Mayor's charity, Prostate Cancer UK.

Members were informed that a complaint had been received from a resident whose son was now too old to take advantage of the £2 turn-up rate for the 3G pitch, which was available to under 16s. The Leisure Services Manager asked Members to consider extending the age limit to include those aged 16 and explained the reasons for reducing the age limit from 18 at the start of 2019, which included bullying of younger children by the older users and abuse of staff. After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the age limit for this offer should be raised to 18 and under and that this arrangement would be reviewed by the Committee at the meeting in April 2020.

The Leisure Services Manager reported on the completion of refurbishment work to the leisure centre reception, the employment of two new part-time receptionists, repairs to the dividing curtains and goals on the 3G pitch, and the purchase of new badminton nets and new attachments for one of the machines in the gym. Members were also pleased to note that a new Thursday morning walking netball session would be starting in January 2020.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 21/19.
- ◆ To change the age limit on the £2 turn-up rate for off peak use of the 3G pitch to 18s and under.
- ◆ To review the age limit on the £2 turn-up rate for off peak use of the 3G pitch in April 2020.

33. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 22/19 and updated Members on matters relating to Woodford Park. He informed Members that two memorial seats had been installed near the Garden of Remembrance and that there had been several enquiries about memorial trees. Members were also informed that knee rail fencing had been installed to the area in front of the pre-school building and that officers were investigating the possibility of installing ground reinforcement mesh to areas of the Memorial Ground where high footfall and vehicles entering the park often caused damage to the grass.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that there had been an increase in the amount of bagged domestic waste and domestic green waste being deposited in the litter bins around the park and informed Members of the measures being taken to attempt to identify the culprits.

Members were pleased to note that officers would be meeting with landscape architects and play companies over the coming weeks to develop a design brief for the Woodford

Park Play Area project, which would focus on inclusivity and natural play. In reply to a question the Deputy Town Clerk said that it was hoped that the design brief would be reported at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that Woodford Park would be included in the full judging round for Green Flag status in 2020, involving the submission of a revised management plan and a full visit from the judging team.

Members noted the minutes of the Friends of Woodford Park Liaison Meeting held on 17 September 2019 and the Friends of Woodford Park meeting held on 29 October 2019, both of which had been included in the agenda. When questioned about the removal of tree stumps around the perimeter of the lake, the Deputy Town Clerk replied that there had been a lot of problems with rapid growth from the tree stumps in the spring and the decision had therefore been taken to remove the stumps and replace them with wild flowers. He agreed that it was better for the encouragement of wildlife to leave stumps in position and assured Members that this was done whenever possible. Members considered the request from the Friends of Woodford Park that a representative from the Council be appointed to the Friends of Woodford Park committee.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on matters relating to the allotments, including the problems that had been caused by bonfires, particularly through the summer months, when there had been several instances of fires getting out of control. Members considered a proposed change to the allotment tenancy agreement that would only permit bonfires from 1 October to 30 April and only after 4pm. Under the terms of the Allotment Act 1950, one year's notice was required for changes to be made to the tenancy agreement, however it was proposed that the changes with regard to bonfires would be made from January 2020 on the basis of safety concerns, and it was believed that most allotment holders would abide by this even though the appropriate notice would not have been provided for it to be legally enforceable until January 2021.

Members were pleased to note the draft beekeepers agreement for the allotment site, which had been produced with advice from members of the Reading Bee Keepers Association. It was anticipated that the beekeeping initiative would start with one or two keepers managing two hives each, and prospective beekeepers would be required to hold a suitable qualification and be a member of the Bee Keepers Association. Members suggested that school children might be able to visit the allotments on field trips to observe the beekeeping.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the damaged fencing at Rivermead Open Space, along the boundary with properties in Colemansmoor Road, had been replaced with a new 6' chain link fence and said that the possibility of installing netting to a higher level, to keep balls out of residents' gardens, was being investigated. He confirmed that the bushes and small trees that had needed to be removed would be replaced. In reply to a question about hedgehog tunnels, the Deputy Town Clerk said that this would be investigated and if it was too late to install them in this location, they could perhaps be installed in another area.

Members noted the information on the Council's wildlife and environmental initiatives, which had been provided in the agenda, and suggested that this could be displayed on the Council's website to show the actions that were being taken to increase wildlife. The need to provide information boards to explain why logs etc. were not being cleared away was stressed.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 22/19.
- ◆ That the following clause be added to the allotment tenancy agreement;
"That bonfires are permitted after 4pm between 1 October to 30 April only. No bonfires are permitted outside these times."

◆ To make the following recommendation to Council:
That a representative be appointed to the Friends of Woodford Park committee.

34. **ACCESSIBLE PLAY EQUIPMENT IN WOODLEY**

Members noted that an assessment of the Council's play areas was being carried out and would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee. This would include a breakdown of condition, age and accessibility, and recommendations to form the basis for a longer-term replacement/upgrade programme. The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the Maintenance Team Manager was a ROSPA qualified Play Equipment Inspector.

35. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no suggestions for future agenda items

36. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To publicise the following:
 - The Christmas Charity Open Day at Woodford Park Leisure Centre.
 - The change to the age limit for the £2 turn-up rate for the 3G pitch.
 - The bee-keeping initiative at the allotments.
 - The proposal to limit bonfires at the allotments.
 - The initiative to encourage wildlife.

Councillor Baker asked that items be publicised on all the Woodley Facebook pages, not just the Town Council website and Facebook pages.

At this point in the meeting, before the exclusion of public and press, Councillor Soane thanked all the Council's staff for the successful Remembrance event on 11 November, which he thought had been very well organised. Councillor Soane also thanked the Friends of Woodford Park for their work in the park, which was looking very good.

37. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted in relation to commercial and legal matters, it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press were temporarily excluded and asked to withdraw for the following agenda items.

38. **UPDATE ON PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update on property matters and informed Members that these would be reported to Full Council for approval.

The meeting closed at 9:50 pm