

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 3 September 2019 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors K. Gilder (Chairman); D. Bragg; A. Heap; R. Skegg; B. Soane;
A. Swaddle*

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

Also present: *2 members of the public*

12. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Green, S. Rahmouni and D. Stares, and from Sam Milligan, Just Around the Corner charity.

13. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

14. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 JUNE 2019**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 4 June 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

Members noted the contents of the JAC report and were pleased to hear that many young people had had the opportunity to talk to the outreach workers about the stress of their GCSE exams and had been able to release some of their emotional pressures by playing football or netball in Woodford Park and Sandford Park in the evenings.

Members noted the JAC mission statement contained in the report. In reply to a question about whether JAC carried out equality assessments with regard to their work, the Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the service level agreement that JAC had with the Town Council was currently being reviewed and the standard of equality assessment would be considered as part of this process. Members asked for the results of the review to be reported to this committee.

16. **COMMUNITY YOUTH PARTNERSHIP**

The Chairman presented Report No. LS 15/19 of the Community Youth Partnership meeting held on 28 August 2019. This report had been circulated after the agenda was issued, as the meeting had only been held the evening before the agenda issue date.

The Partnership's request for £500 from the Loddon Mead Project reserve, for the purchase of paint to create murals at the Loddon Mead site, was discussed. Members had visited the websites of the artists involved with the project and felt that the artwork would be a welcome addition to the site, however they asked for assurance that the art materials would all be cleared from the site when the artists had finished. Members noted that the JAC coffee van would be at the site and would act as a meeting hub while the art project was in progress.

Members asked that the question of lighting at the Loddon Mead site be considered, as it was very dark under the road bridge, and also asked that consideration be given to the problem of safe access to the site, as it was adjacent to a very busy road.

Members noted the report that young people felt there were few low-cost or free activities for them during the summer holidays and that many of the activities that were available, such as holiday camps, were expensive. The Chairman informed Members that Woodley Baptist Church was still looking for volunteers to help run the Friday night youth club.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 15/19.
- ◆ To approve the use of £500 from the Loddon Mead Project reserve, to fund the purchase of paint for the first stage of the project.

17. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 16/19 and noted that the level of expenditure was as anticipated for this point in the year and income was above the target level, due to advance payments for some activities and some payments being due early in the year.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 16/19.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 17 /19 and informed Members that this year the summer camps at Woodford Park Leisure Centre had been quieter than in previous years, particularly in the afternoons; however, the Family Racket Attack and the £2 per person per hour turn-up offer for the 3G pitch had been very popular. In reply to a question the Leisure Service Manager said that the comments on the feedback forms submitted by parents would be analysed to make the holiday camps more successful next year. Many of the comments indicated that parents were particularly looking for morning sessions for their children and the Leisure Services Manager informed Members that the same attendance preferences were also being reported by other centres running holiday camps. Members commented that the holiday camps were not just run to make a profit, but also to provide a service for families, and working parents in particular, during the school holidays.

The Leisure Services Manager reported that the changeable weather over the summer had resulted in the paddling pool being quieter than in previous years, but that as a result of the lower usage the water quality had remained high.

Members noted that the renovation of the reception area at the leisure centre and work to convert the former ladies toilets into an office had been completed and that work to renovate the remaining back office would start shortly. Members also noted the recent changes to the staffing structure at the leisure centre, which would give the two Sports Officers more time to plan and promote new income generating activities for the centre.

Members were pleased to hear that an educational football academy would be starting at Woodford Park Leisure Centre in September, and had booked to hire the 3G pitch four days a week during the day, as well as classroom bookings and occasional midweek use of the grass pitch. Members also noted the new after school sessions being run at the leisure centre by Woodley Netball Club, with the aim of encouraging more girls to take up playing netball. In reply to a question, the Leisure Services Manager confirmed that the sessions were also open to boys.

Members also noted the community events that had been held in Woodford Park during the summer for local community groups and charities, and the booking by the Wildlife Trust to have a stall in the leisure centre reception on four dates during the autumn to raise awareness for their charity.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 17/19.

19. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 18/19. He informed Members that the first phase of the refurbishment of the Woodford Park Leisure Centre reception area had been completed, that the Sports Officers office would be refurbished by the Maintenance Team in the coming weeks and that the exterior sign would also be replaced. The Deputy Town Clerk also informed Members that work to replace the flat roofing above the reception, changing rooms and Optalis office was scheduled to start in mid-September, and would replace the roofing that was installed in 2018 to an unsatisfactory standard. The work would be carried out at no cost to the Council and would be independently inspected and tested on completion to ensure a high standard.

Members noted the work that had taken place in Woodford Park during the summer – the replacement of two memorial seats and the ongoing work by the Grounds Team, funded by the Rotary Club, to create a rose bed in the Rotary Garden. The Friends of Woodford Park had also continued their work in the park.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on the progress of the lake regeneration project, with the contracted works to repair and resurface the footpath around the lake taking place in September and the Grounds Team working to install a hogging path along the northern bank and reinstating the low-level fencing at the eastern end of the lake.

Members were pleased to hear that Woodford Park had been awarded Green Flag status for the second year and remained the only park in Wokingham Borough to have achieved this award. They were also pleased to hear of the success of the Community Fun Day event, which was held in the park in August to mark the centenary of the Memorial Ground and attracted many visitors.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the Council had received notification of a proposal to install electronic communication apparatus in an area of Woodford Park, which was the legal right of electronic communications companies under the Electronic Communications Code, part of the Digital Economy Act 2017. Further information about the exact location and the nature of the equipment was being sought and would be reported to the Committee.

Members noted the update provided in the agenda on matters relating to the allotments and were particularly pleased to hear that officers and the Allotment Tenants Committee had been looking at various ways to encourage wildlife and biodiversity at the site, with an area having been designated for the siting of bee hives, areas identified as potential sites for wildflower planting and the installation of a small wildlife pond currently underway. Following a question about the provision of ladders to enable animals to get out of the pond, the Deputy Town Clerk agreed to ask the allotment tenants to look at this. The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that the rules regarding bonfires at the allotment site were being reviewed by officers and the Tenants Committee, as there had been an increasing number of issues with bonfires in recent years, including nuisance caused to residents living close to the site and problems with bonfires getting out of control. Members commented that it was important to inform all residents of the dangers and nuisance caused by bonfires, not just allotment holders.

The Deputy Town Clerk also reported on the work that had been undertaken to remove the asbestos from the roof space at Coronation Hall, the redecoration of the hall and refurbishment of the ladies toilets, the replacement of the boiler and water tank, the replacement of damaged chairs at Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall and the removal and imminent replacement of damaged fencing at Rivermead open space.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 18/19.

20. **ENCOURAGEMENT OF WILDLIFE IN WOODLEY**

The Deputy Town Clerk tabled the Council's Environmental Policy, which had been adopted in 2017, and also a list of the activities undertaken by the Council to encourage wildlife and biodiversity, for Members' information.

Councillor Heap introduced the discussion on the encouragement of wildlife in Woodley by saying that he had been impressed by the initiatives that were taking place at the allotments and he was interested to find out what steps the Council was taking to encourage wildlife in the parks and other areas throughout Woodley.

The Deputy Town Clerk referred to the overview of measures that were being undertaken and plans for the future, which had been tabled at the meeting, and suggested that this information could be reported at each meeting so that Members could see what was being done and monitor progress.

During the discussion that followed, Members suggested that the Council could develop a system for providing information to local residents about what the Council was doing to encourage wildlife and what residents themselves could do. This could be done through the website and social media, but it was also suggested that local experts could be asked to give talks on the subject. The Deputy Town Clerk suggested that the Council's website and social media could also be used to inform residents of national schemes, for example for the reporting of new species seen in back gardens.

Members suggested that advice could be sought from local experts on measures that could be taken in the parks and open areas, such as not cutting grass under some of the trees to allow invertebrates to multiply, or allowing nettles to grow in some areas to provide an important resource for insects. The importance of informing and educating residents with regard to the aims of these measures was noted, as these actions would be very likely to be the cause of complaints. The provision of information boards was suggested and also articles in the Herald that focussed on the aim of creating a greener Woodley and encouraging wildlife.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Councillor Heap said that he was impressed by the work already being undertaken by the Council and the plans for the future. Members commented that the encouragement of wildlife and biodiversity was a long-term project and they recognised that the Council had made a good start to achieving improvements.

Under this item, the Deputy Town Clerk was asked whether there had been any progress in arranging pond dipping sessions for school children at the Woodford Park lake. He replied that the local schools would be contacted now that they were back from the summer break and agreed that Brownies and Cubs would also be contacted.

21. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The following items were requested for inclusion in a future agenda:

- An update on measures taken to encourage wildlife and biodiversity.
- Progress on the parkour project at Loddon Mead.
- The provision for disabled children in Woodley parks.

22. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To publicise the following:
 - The redecoration of Coronation Hall, with photos of the new interior on the website.
 - The street art project at Loddon Mead.

The meeting closed at 9:25 pm
