

RECREATION COMMITTEE OF WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 9 March 2015

At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: C Holliday (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs J C Baker P J Dorward
A K Beames D Enright
Mrs B J Churchill

Officers: Town Clerk Facilities Manager
Democratic Services Officer

Also present: David Hanson (part of the meeting)
Joe Cartledge, Premier Tennis (part of the meeting)

R099 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for their absence was received from Councillors Mrs M J C Curry, A D Harvey, C K Woodward, J S King, B J Woodruff.

R100 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

R101 MINUTES

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- b) There were no matters arising from the minutes.

R102 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr David Hanson was in attendance to give his presentation on his proposal for the future management of the Leys Recreation Ground – Tennis & Café facility. The Chairman invited him to address the Committee and in doing so

RESOLVED: that the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting in accordance with Section 1 of the Local Government Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Mr Hanson explained his background and what had attracted him to respond to the expression of interest advertised in the Witney Gazette recently. He considered he was offering four key benefits and had a vision for this facility.

The first - he guaranteed payback to Witney Town Council of £60k over the term of the 10 year lease. With additional payback generated when revenue reached certain levels as

detailed in his presentation. The second point was around the provision of 'open to all, affordable, community tennis and cafe facility'. Which, he considered would complement the exciting plans of the Splash Park -creating a real destination for the people of Witney.

The third point was the injection of a capital sum of around £40k into the café facility to refurbish the existing pavilion. The fourth would be that the café/tennis facility was being run and developed by a local person, i.e. himself, utilising his sporting and business background, to deliver this exciting facility with passion and energy.

His vision and what he wanted to achieve was to provide the Council with a significant level of payback given over a ten year lease, which would ultimately resurface the tennis courts. He went through the mechanics of the proposed operation and the possible charging structure for the tennis. Mr Hanson had taken the time to produce visuals on what the café would look like with the investment, and how it would be run.

The Chairman invited questions from Members. A Member raised the provision of tennis for disabled people and asked how Mr Hanson suggested he could provide this. Mr Hanson had a contact that operated similar facilities in Manchester and was going to do further research into this. A Member asked Mr Hanson how he would manage bookings for tennis. In the first instance he said that someone would be available all the time by telephone until he was able to introduce on-line booking. It would be a manual system until then.

He talked about the types of people he could attract to use the café, and felt it was a prime location with lots of passing customers from dog walkers to people working on Station Lane. A member asked if he had already thought of this facility before he saw it advertised. He said that he had as it plays to his strengths for a business opportunity. He knows the Leys and uses it all the time he is a local business man, a considered it was a 'no brainer' for him. He was asked about the funding for getting it off the ground and the staffing. He said he needed to look into the HR side but from his background he had the knowledge of setting up stores and what they needed to run successfully.

Councillor Enright left the meeting at 18.45

Referring to the visuals he had shown earlier, a Member asked about planning permission and licensing. Mr Hanson confirmed that he hadn't looked into this at this stage. A Member asked about the maintenance of the tennis courts whether it would be his domain and who was liable for the costs. He said he would need to consider this, subject to the outcome of this meeting. There was a discussion on what would happen if after two years he went out of business and the impact on the Council. He said, we the Council would have the benefit of the £40k capital investment in a refurbished pavilion but said he would like to go away and think about it. The Facilities Manager said there were three considerations on the tenders, the continued management of the crazy golf, the franchise we allow for the sale of ice cream on the Leys to be affected and the potential for income for the Town Council in terms of an attendant at the other facilities.

Mr Hanson left the meeting and Mr Cartledge from Premier Tennis joined the meeting who was invited to update the Committee and refresh them on his proposal of the idea to drive tennis participation from the café hub. There had been a few changes since his last presentation - they had appointed a new Chairman, Mike Appleton who had significant commercial experience and ran a company Big Apple Entertainment. He had also been the operations director at David Lloyd. He elaborated on the food and beverage revenue, and the added strength he would bring to this operation for running a cafe. Premier had been

re-appointed in Oxford to run a coaching programme over six sites, and also a café in Alexander Park in Summer Town so he felt able to share the staff and café expertise. He updated the Committee on funding streams particularly the fact that they had a very positive meeting with the tennis foundation for disability tennis. They remained keen and ready to go.

Mr Cartledge left the meeting.

R103 **MANAGEMENT OF THE LEYS RECREATION GROUND – TENNIS & CAFÉ FACILITY - PROPOSAL**

Having received the two presentations the Chairman brought the consideration of this item up the agenda.

Members discussed the pros and cons of both proposals. From what they had heard Mr Hanson was more focussed on the café side of the venture whilst Premier the tennis and members considered the synergies of them both working together.

The Town Clerk drew attention to the report of the RFO, which summarised the two proposals as well as detailing the current running costs to the Council based on its current model. Members were concerned with regard to the risk to the Council if the business went under and if considerable investment had been put into the pavilion it may have a detrimental effect on this asset.

Members considered a third option of the Council running the café as a new income stream. The pavilion would need investment. Officers agreed to bring a report back to Policy & Finance. Members suggested that the tennis could continue to be run properly by Premier.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. that the Officers provide the financial implications of the Council running the café on the Leys Recreation Ground to the Policy & Finance Committee on 23 March 2015;
2. that Premier Tennis be offered the continuation of the tennis programme on a small rental basis.

R104 **INCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC – REVERT BACK INTO OPEN SESSION**

The meeting reverted back into open session, this being 7.30pm.

R105 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. The report was to 31st December 2014.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

R106 **WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda. The report contained items which had been referred back to the Committee from the resolutions arising from the Council meeting of 9 February 2015. This included the recommendations from the Alder King Building Inspection.

The Facilities Manager updated the Committee on the outstanding compliance issues at the Sports & Social Club. She also highlighted the consideration required to agree professional fees to get a site survey for the changing room location, as well as the pitch drainage works. The Town Clerk said Sue Wilson had suggested that maybe there could be economies of scale if the club and the Council addressed the works in the Alder King report together. It might be possible for the Council to supply the materials and the Club membership could provide the labour from qualified tradesmen.

A Member raised the need to look at the site entrance to make it safer. The Town Clerk also reminded Members of the issue with the water being drawn in from the Witney Industrial Park, which was still unresolved.

The Town Clerk informed Members that the section 106 due from the Curbridge Development and Springfield nurseries was in staged payments. However the legal agreement had not yet been signed.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the reports be noted;
2. that with regard to an action plan pertaining to the works identified in the Alder King report this be delegated to Officers to discuss with the Sports & Social Club;
3. that professional fees be sought on the pitch drainage works and the site survey for the changing rooms and brought back to a future meeting of Policy & Finance.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.
