

**LEISURE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday 14 January 2013  
at 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present**

Councillor: C K Woodward (Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs J C Baker	Mrs S Davies
	A K Beames	P J Dorward
	R F N Curry	H B Eaglestone
Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer
	Facilities Manager	Deputy Town Clerk

Also present: 11 members of the public

L013 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

L014 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made in matters to be considered at the meeting.

L015 **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 5 November 2012 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

L016 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Mark Hubbert wished to speak with regard to agenda item 7 - Provision of facilities for disabilities.

Mr Hubbert commented that he had already been in contact with some of the Members to raise important points regarding disabilities in sport and issues with DDA compliance. He remarked that there were a lot of good intentions involved in the delivery of this service; however, in his view money can be wasted in trying. Compliance with DDA was important but this did not necessarily meet disability needs. The provision required more thought and discussion input - People with disabilities wanted to be comfortable in their surroundings, with a good structure in place to give assistance. Account needed to be taken of all disabilities – he advised that the Council should not get defensive, but accept where it is and look forward; there are plenty of people who would be pleased to help if asked.

A Member enquired what facilities Mr Hubbert would like to see in Witney. He replied that he would like to see better provision of hard surfaces – tennis courts, artificial turf pitches, as well as a running track which he believed had a far wider use than just for athletics. It could be used in many different ways, but there would need to be understanding on how it could be adapted for all.

Following a comment from a Member, Mr Hubbert agreed that he would be willing to present a similar report to West Oxfordshire District Council.

A Member commented that with the possible development of West Witney Sportsground this would be the right time to capitalise on these suggestions. Mr Hubbert replied that he would be happy to get involved and reiterated that a lot of money can be wasted on good intentions. He remarked that mainstream

education and clubs often offered little on-going support. Mr Hubbert was keen to push forward and take any opportunity to advise.

Mr Ed Large wished to speak with regard to agenda item 12 - Excel Tennis Academy

Mr Large commented that he was Head Coach at Witney Tennis Club and at Standlake tennis club. He had received many comments on how reluctant people were to join a club - questioning their own skill and fitness. If the Excel Tennis Academy were given use of the tennis courts at the Leys, this would be an opportunity for people to be involved in tennis without having to join a club. He remarked that his proposal would involve no extra cost to the Council and would be beneficial to the community. It would be open to everyone and would give an opportunity to receive professional coaching, playing and competing. People could turn up to pay and play or sign up for a term. Everyone (4-18 year olds, adults, seniors and those with disabilities) would all be taught by LTA coaches and would not require any previous experience. He also envisaged running holiday courses.

In his proposal, the Council would remain responsible for maintaining the courts and providing the duty attendant, Mr Large would be responsible for running the programme. He did not see that the Council would be required to do any extra work. If agreed, they could be ready to start immediately.

Mr David Reef, who was attending with Mr Large, explained how a similar scheme was working successfully in Didcot.

A Member queried whether the officers had any observations. The Facilities Manager confirmed that she had talked through issues with Mr Large and believed that, subject to further negotiations, the proposals could be accommodated.

Claire Crowther wished to speak with regard to agenda item 7 – Paddling Pool at the Leys.

Mrs Crowther read a statement in support of a splash park to replace the paddling pool. An online campaign had received over 200 supporters on each site. She commented that the paddling pool was well used, however, there were health and safety issues, with limited space and in light of the expansion of Witney over the years, was no longer fit for purpose. There were many issues with the pool and she believed that the area could be reinvigorated with a splash pool, which would provide for a range of ages and abilities.

Mr Chris Pyne – wished to speak with regard to agenda item 5 – Operational Report (West Witney Tennis Courts).

Mr Pyne reminded Members that there was an on-going issue regarding the condition of the surface of the courts. He was aware of a number of inspections and believed that the Facilities Manager had now received a condition report.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that the report had been completed and quotations for the work, using the report of the specification had been requested. Unfortunately only 2 companies had submitted quotations and therefore she was unable to report back until the next Leisure & Recreation Committee meeting scheduled for 14 March. (Due to the potential value of the work, three tenders were required under the Council's Standing Orders). She confirmed that the report had been written by an expert and it was for the Members to make their own judgement on the scientific results. Each contractor submitting a tender had been requested to put forward their recommendations on what they considered was the best course of action.

Mr Pyne queried the timetable for carrying out the work before he finalised the club's fixtures. The Facilities Manager confirmed that none of the contractors seemed keen to start before June. It was confirmed that the Leys courts could be used by the club while the work was carried out.

(The Chairman thanked the members of the public for attending and they all left at this point, being 6.35pm)

L017 **OPERATIONAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager, as circulated with the agenda.

A Member was concerned that the Tennis Club seemed to be under the impression that the courts would be resurfaced, however it was his understanding that this decision had not been agreed by the Council, any improvements would be as per the specifications in the tenders.

It was agreed that further discussion was needed on the West Witney Sportsground as a whole before money was committed to the tennis courts. The Town Clerk confirmed the level of rent paid by the club over the past few years and commented that a contribution towards the cost of improving the tennis courts might be required from the tennis club.

The Town Clerk confirmed that she would need to discuss the progress with Alder King regarding the proposals for the whole site and that a special meeting of this committee could be called if necessary.

The Facilities Manager advised the Committee that the bus shelter at Newland had been vandalised.

The Facilities Manager gave further information on the suggestion to create allotments in the defunct Park Road play area. After investigation there appeared that there was no standard plot size and suggested that there could be space for 10 small plots, together with sheds and paths. She also suggested the creation of raised beds to accommodate tenants with disabilities.

With regard to the proposed music festival, the Facilities Manager advised that the organisers were applying for the license and it was hoped that this could be processed in time. She confirmed that the Town Council were facilitating the event only and that this was a charity event (Cllrs Beames and Woodward declared a disclosable pecuniary interest at this point).

The Facilities Manager was awaiting the invoice for the reparation of the diesel spill on the Leys. This cost would be sought from Bob Wilson & Sons Funfairs. A Member commented that in view of these potential costs, the £500 deposit retained for this type of event appeared to be inadequate.

The Facilities Manager explained the work required to improve the war memorial. It was suggested that the Town Hall Charity could be approached for a grant. It was confirmed that any expenditure would be in next year's budget.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that while aware of the concerns of West Witney Tennis Club, the Committee seeks advice on the condition of the courts with a view to seeing what is involved. Prior to any work taking place, consideration is given to the finance, the lease and the future of West Witney Sportsground as a whole.
- 3) that a press release be issued regarding the further damage to bus shelters.
- 4) that investigations continue into converting the old play area in Park Road to an allotment site.
- 5) that the deposit charged for larger events on amenity land be increased and the legal requirements for these events are also reviewed.
- 6) that the charge for the Music event at the Leys be at cost.

- 7) that a sign be commissioned for Burwell Recreation Ground and that local school children be requested to submit their designs for this. (Cost to be in next year's budget).
- 8) that the design of the flowerbed in Langdale Gate commemorates 770 years of St Mary's Feast.
- 9) that the work on the war memorial be progressed, obtaining grants where possible, with any Town Council expenditure falling in next year's budget.
- 10) that, following the vandalism at the Leys, officers investigate the cost for erecting bollards to prohibit vehicles accessing this area.

(Cllr Mrs J Baker left the meeting at this point, being 7.15pm)

**L018 PADDLING POOL AT THE LEYS**

The Committee received and considered the reports of the Facilities Manager, as circulated with the agenda.

A Member commented that given the contents of the report the Committee should accept that this is the appropriate time to consider a replacement for the paddling pool. He remarked that this would be a very emotional issue and therefore it was important that the Council took the correct approach. He was in favour of a splash pool, the question was how to raise cover the costs of this project. The Town Clerk confirmed that there was £12,000 in the preparation pool budget.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that there were many members of the public (including Claire Crowther) who were very keen to help in facilitating grants and getting involved. She envisaged changes to the whole play area in removing fences and creating more space. A Member also suggested looking at providing toilets closer to the site. A Member commented that this was an opportunity to look at the whole of The Leys, with the splash pool being only the first phase of a larger project. The Town Clerk reiterated that there was £12,000 in the preparation pool budget, and that there might be earmarked reserves which could be diverted (and later replaced) from other projects to ensure that the replacement of the paddling pool could take place as soon as possible.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the reports be noted.
- 2) that a working party be formulated (Facilities Manager to invite relevant people to join), to prepare a vision for the Leys and to report back to the next meeting of this committee.
- 3) that a statement be issued advising that the Town Council has been advised that the paddling pool is unsafe to open for the summer of 2013, and rather than spending money on refurbishment, which would only be for short term improvements, it is investigating the creation of a new water facility to be opened as soon as possible.
- 4) that a figure of £70,000 be included in the new budget to enable the progression of recommendation (3) for opening in 2014.

(Cllr Mrs S Davies left the meeting at this point, being 7.50pm)

**L019 PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR DISABILITIES**

**RECOMMENDED:** that this item be deferred to the next meeting of this Committee in order to consider ideas and receive further progress information on the future of the West Witney Sportsground.

L020 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Town Clerk introduced Miss Nicky Clargo, the new Deputy Town Clerk/RFO

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, as circulated with the agenda.

a) Income and expenditure report for the period 1 April to 30 November 2012

The Town Clerk advised that the Deputy Town Clerk would be producing the reports in the future and that she would have the time to provide a written report in order to give more explanation to the figures.

With regard to the low income for King George V field, the Town Clerk explained that there were no direct changing facilities for this site. The Town Clerk also confirmed that the Alder King report would contain details on each of the amenity areas.

b) Revised revenue budget 2012/13 and base revenue budget for 2013/14

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO would be undertaking a three year budget projection for a rolling period once this year's budget was finalised. She also advised that there would be a Special Finance & General Purposes meeting prior to the next Council meeting to discuss the budget figures.

In answer to questions the Town Clerk estimated the material costs for the rectification of vandalism to be around £10,000 per annum. She also confirmed that the charges had been set in the last cycle of meetings; however these could be re-examined if requested by the committee.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the reports be noted.

L021 **REQUEST TO PURCHASE AMENITY LAND**

The Committee received and considered the request, as circulated with the agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the request be noted.
- 2) that the resident be advised that the Council does not agree to the sale of the land adjoining her property.

L022 **TOWN CENTRE FORUM**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held 14 November 2012, as circulated with the agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the minutes be noted.

L023 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**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.

L024 **EXCEL TENNIS ACADEMY**

The Committee received and considered the confidential proposal, as circulated with the agenda.

The Committee considered that should the proposal be agreed, the Council should be looking to at least recover the loss of revenue from the hire of the courts and that the tennis academy should be required to book the courts in advance.

It was confirmed that there would always be courts available for use by the public.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the proposal be noted
- 2) that the Facilities Manager continues discussion with Excel Tennis Academy in order to formulate a proper agreement and negotiate a fee for the hire of the courts to cover the number and times of courts booked (subject to a 25% discount).

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The meeting closed at 8.15pm

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Chairman