

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

**Held on Monday 20 May 2013  
at 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present**

Councillor: C K Woodward (Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs J C Baker	R F N Curry
	A K Beames	P J Dorward
	Mrs B J Churchill	J S King
	Ms C Curry	
Non- Committee Members :		D S Enright
		C Holiday
Officers:	Town Clerk	Facilities Manager
	Deputy Town Clerk	Events & Communications Officer

Also present: 13 Members of the public, 1 member of the press

L202 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

L203 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

L204 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor J S King be appointed Vice Chairman of this Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

L205 **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** The minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

L206 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

PS L Phillips – Graffiti Walls

Sergeant Phillips explained she was in attendance to support the request of the Witney Neighbourhood Action Group for graffiti walls to be erected in strategic sites across the town. She highlighted the spate of graffiti incidents in the town and the recent arrests of two people. Subsequently there had been no new offences during the past few weeks. Over the long term the police had seen fourteen offences in Witney.

Sergeant Phillips mentioned that to combat graffiti the Police had invited a previous offender to talk about why they offended and asked them how they could help deter offenders in the future. The offender suggested erecting graffiti walls where individuals could paint legally.

The Police have been working with other parishes to establish how they combat graffiti and mentioned that graffiti walls had been installed in Eynsham and Carterton and those areas had found them to be very effective.

Sergeant Phillips mentioned that there seemed to be a link with skate groups and graffiti and suggested putting a graffiti wall on the Skate Park. In conclusion she said the Police force fully supports graffiti walls and are working with youths to get something organised.

One member queried the size of a wall and Sergeant Phillips suggested installing double sided walls to maximise space. Two members of the Council agreed to work together to seek funding and share ideas for the walls in consultation with the Facilities Manager.

Ms Melanie Jones – Tower Hill Cemetery

Ms Jones spoke to the Council and shared her experience about the loss of her Mother who was buried next to her Brother in Tower Hill Cemetery. She explained that she is permanently on crutches and can't walk very far. She felt that making an appointment was not appropriate as sometimes she is too emotional. She went on to explain that she recently tried to make an appointment but was told it was not at a convenient time. She rescheduled the appointment but was left on her own waiting for some time to be let in to the cemetery. She also explained that when her elderly Father walked in to the cemetery he was very breathless and has a heart condition. She feels that the elderly don't like making appointments. She was also aware of another visitor to Tower Hill Cemetery who had made an appointment but was left waiting 30 minutes before she could gain access. She asked whether Witney Town Council could appoint a warden. Ms Jones commented that she was aware lots of vandalism happened at night and she had seen people in the cemetery. She also mentioned that she was aware that dogs were fouling in there too. She remarked the offending tyre tracks were too big to be a car. Ms Jones asked the Committee members whether it would be possible to get some keys cut for the gates or possible access through Ceewood Hall. In conclusion she asked whether a more flexible approach could be made to those with disabilities.

Ms Vicky Baker – Park Road Play Area

Ms Baker spoke to the Council and mentioned that she had found out there was a pot of money to modernise some parks in Witney. She explained that lots of people use the park and residents wanted to ask the Council whether the park could be modernised. She mentioned she was aware of previous anti-social behaviour in the park some eighteen months ago and that residents felt this was due to the fact the park was in disrepair with very old equipment. The residents were aware of one person who was against children being in the park due to the level of noise they created while playing. She explained that 82% of the local Park Road residents have signed a petition and wanted the park to stay as a park – not allotments. She commented that the area had one set of allotments already which in her opinion were not being fully utilised. She also explained that there are no parking facilities at Park Road and the pathways are very old (one elderly resident had a fall recently).

In conclusion the residents of Park Road would like to see the decision to close the park and turn it in to allotments overturned. The Park Road residents are happy to help fundraise for a new park and the residents want to stress the park is being used to the Council. She also mentioned that residents talked about being key holders to lock up the gates at night and that residents would like benches in the park for social events.

Members of the Council received the petition from the residents of Park Road.

L207 **COMMITTEE VISION**

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

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the Committee consider its objectives and aspirations for the coming year/term of office and it was agreed to come back to this point at the end of the meeting.

- 2) that having given consideration to any changes required to the Committee structure or calendar of meetings for the forthcoming year it was agreed that the Committee should not be split, but that meetings should be held more regularly - once a month.
- 3) that the Committee Terms of Reference be agreed.

L208 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

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

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

L209 **OPERATIONAL REPORT**

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

7.1 Update on play area resurfacing project - The Facilities Manager explained that she had been working with Oxfordshire Play Partnership to look at all of the Council's sites. Following the health & safety audit some of the priorities had changed and it was agreed that the most urgent site was the Burwell Recreation area. Quotations for works and applications for funding were being sought by the Officers and the funding application deadline was 17<sup>th</sup> June.

7.2 Tree risk survey and policy requirement - The Facilities Manager explained that having a tree plan was a requirement of Health and Safety and outlined some of the key benefits of creating a Tree Policy including having a central plan which would outline all of the trees the Council were responsible for. This would include the tree age, species, condition and any danger or risks which would highlight needs over the coming year(s). The Policy would also be used as a point of reference for the public so that residents could be informed of what they could and could not expect the Council to do.

Following the discussion on the difficulties faced at Deer Park, members raised concerns for the North Curbridge development and asked whether Officers could liaise with West Oxfordshire District Council to ascertain what types of trees were going to be planted and who would be responsible for them. One member explained that developers plant fast growing species and by the time the trees or hedges have grown the developer is no longer on site. He also went on to say that the District Council was asking developers to plant sensibly.

Members asked whether a list of what trees are appropriate for the area could be agreed between West Oxfordshire District Council and Witney Town Council.

7.3 Ditch to allotments / Four Pillars area - The Facilities Manager explained that the whole ditch area could be cleared for £1,800 from existing budgets. Members agreed that it would be good to see the ditch cleared as they were aware that it had caused flooding in the past.

7.4 Letter appealing fence decision from Mrs Saunders - The Facilities Manager asked the members to consider the appeal for a new fence from Mrs Saunders. The Town Clerk explained that she had sought legal advice, the boundary was not defined however there was no stipulation as to what type of fence should be used to replace the original. Members voted unanimously that a low cost 3 ft. fence should be the only fence offered.

7.5 War Memorial update - The Facilities Manager explained that works on the War Memorial were now complete. Members expressed their gratitude for the work that had gone in to the Memorial. A member asked about the Newland War Memorial and the Facilities Manager explained that the Council were waiting for a quote for works to be carried out and that plants had been stolen when it was planted up recently.

The Committee expressed their thanks to OG Stonemasonry for their work.

7.6 Unterhaching Park - The Facilities Manager explained that following negotiations the maintenance for the street lighting within the park would remain with the District Council.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that the West Oxfordshire District Council's Tree Policy be adopted.
- 3) that a 3 foot fence be the only option offered to Mrs Saunders.

L210 **CEMETERIES REVIEW**

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

Members thanked the Facilities Manager for a good report which was well set out. On discussing the report Members made the following comments:

- The decision to close the gates was not a new policy.
- The Facilities Manager acted in the best interest of the Council by enforcing an existing policy.
- Cemetery Regulations were signed by Judy White, the previous Town Clerk, many years ago.
- The Cemetery was originally closed due to joy riding and damage many years ago.
- That the Council would not accept individuals driving over the unmarked babies graves.
- Cemeteries should be places of quiet reflection.
- Parking on Curbridge Road and Tower Hill can be difficult at busy times.
- There is a slight incline for which can make it difficult for mobility aided people to get in to the cemetery.
- During the meeting questions were raised and answered as follows:
- Anyone with a mobility problem can gain vehicular access with permission of the Council, the existing policy does not just relate to blue badge holders..
- There is a large non-vehicular gate which can accommodate mobility scooters and this gate is open 365 days a year.
- That the Council cannot adapt the main entrance as there are unmarked babies graves just inside entrance on the left hand side.
- That the road cannot be made wider at any point in the cemetery as there are marked and unmarked graves all along the road.

The question of whether anybody with mobility issues could be issued with a key instead of using the appointments system was raised. The Facilities Manager showed a photograph taken earlier that morning where three cars came in to the cemetery in the space of twenty minutes and parked on the lawn section; these were unauthorised vehicles who were aware of the restrictions in place and still accessed the cemetery in full

knowledge that a funeral was taking place. She raised concerns that if the gates were not closed on entry and exit this would become a major problem again.

Members asked whether a key pad entry system could be installed and asked the Facilities Manager to investigate how much this would cost.

A Member commented that the Memorial Wall at Tower Hill needed looking at as it was unsightly and should be refurbished.

In conclusion members agreed that the Council should keep the appointment system as it is as present and that this would be kept under review.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that Officers revise the information leaflet for relatives regarding the choices they have within the cemeteries.
- 3) that a cost for memorial benches be agreed as £150 (siting cost) and a continued budget of £30 per bench per year for maintenance.
- 4) that the number of benches be limited to a practicable number within the Windrush cemetery.
- 5) that the stability project be noted and future budgets for continued works and repairs to be carried out agreed
- 6) that masons used by Witney Town Council register with the BRAMM scheme (with 12 months leeway to comply).
- 7) that a report on the Windrush Cemetery access be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration

**L211 PARK ROAD PLAY AREA/ALLOTMENTS FEASIBILITY STUDY**

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

Following the representation and petition received from Vicky Baker on behalf of the Park Road residents the Facilities Manager said she would be happy to facilitate a way of looking at funding for the park. She explained she had been informed the park wasn't well used and was aware that the equipment in the park was really old. She said she was happy to engage with the residents in planning an updated park for the community.

Committee members agreed to look at making the park a nicer space for residents.

The Town Clerk mentioned that in line with standing order the six month rule applied and would need to lapse before a decision could be changed.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted
- 2) that in consideration of the discussion and petition, it be agreed to look into the feasibility of turning the area back into a play area and undertaking further consultation with the residents and users.

**L212    THE LEYS PLAY AREA**

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

10.1 Witney Music Festival - The Facilities Manager explained that the Witney Music Festival was a great success, however a small amount of damage had been caused resulting in costs of £200 which would need to be deducted from the deposit paid in agreement with the members.

Members agreed that it had been a good event and it was well attended despite the weather on the day.

10.6 Graffiti Walls - The Facilities Manager gave an update on her report and said that Eynsham and Carterton schools had confirmed how successful it was installing graffiti walls in their towns.

A member explained that Witney College were happy to design 6-7 graffiti walls for the Council and that through their contacts the Council may be able to obtain free breeze blocks and to build them. The Head of Art was happy to ask artists to speak to children about the use of graffiti walls and a suggestion was made to have a competition.

Members discussed whether the underpass to Witney Lake and Meadow could be repainted and tidied up either by those in community service or as part of the graffiti wall plan.

A member mentioned that Base 33 and the HUB were looking at graffiti classes this summer and the Police had asked whether a graffiti wall could be installed on the leys before the children break up this summer.

A member mentioned that the underpass on Ducklington Lane was untidy and asked whether we could get the schools involved in painting it.

The Facilities Manager also mentioned that the Skate Park was in need of being cleaned up and asked whether Base 33 would be interested in helping with that. Members agreed it was a good idea to get the Skate Park repainted.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that £200 be deducted from the damage deposit held for the Witney Music Festival.
- 3) that Councillors Brenda Churchill, Chrissie Curry, Alan Beames, Jim King, David Snow meet with Alison Leask (Leys Master Plan) in the Chamber on 5th or 6th June at 2pm (to be confirmed by the Facilities Manager).
- 4) that it be agreed to trial a graffiti wall made from external ply in the first instance.
- 5) that the summer activity operating hours be noted.

**L213    EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communication and Events Officer as circulated with the agenda.

The Communication and Events Officer explained to members what events were coming up in the future.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that with regard to this year's Christmas Festivities the Communications and Events Officer contacts local groups and organisations informing them of the dates - to be spread over a full weekend – Friday to Sunday, to see what they are able to provide by way of entertainment and events and report back to the next Committee meeting with a suggested programme.
- 3) that Chrissie Curry, Jim King, one Rotarian, one member of staff from Hill Top Nurseries and the Office Admin Assistant judge the Schools in Bloom competition.
- 4) that a budget of £1200 for the Burwell Dedication Ceremony - Fields in Trust Day be agreed.

L214 **REQUEST FOR SKATE PARK**

The Committee received and considered the correspondence for the request of a Skate Park on Smiths Estate as circulated with the agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the correspondence be noted and the local member to speak to District Council to see if there is a suitable site available.

L215 **REQUEST FOR CONCESSIONARY HIRE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk explained that the Public Halls have a budget to assist with subsidised lettings and a similar process could be used for the use of recreational spaces.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that the application for subsidised funding be agreed.
- 3) that a budget for future funding requests be set up and that it should follow the usual grant making process.

L216 **TOWN CENTRE FORUM**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Town Centre Forum held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013 as circulated with the agenda.

A further meeting took place on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013 the minutes of which will be considered at the next of this Committee.

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

L217 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & 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.

(The members of the press and public left at this point)

L218 **EXCEL TENNIS ACADEMY**

The Committee received and considered a confidential report from Excel Tennis Academy as circulated with the agenda.

Edward Large spoke about Leys Tennis Club and his involvement with teaching lots of youths in the area and the successful outcomes from his work.

Members were generally keen to support the idea, but would like to see a rent review at end of year three. Some members asked about the play areas and queried what would happen with the Crazy Golf funding after year one. One member queried the court cleaning and it was established that this would include jet washing the court.

Members queried how often the courts would need resurfacing and the Town Clerk confirmed this was every 15 years and that the courts were currently in excellent condition.

There was a discussion whether to wait until the Sports Feasibility Study come back, but it was agreed that this study was looking at the overall sports in the town and not directly looking at tennis facilities.

Concerns were raised that Witney Lawn Tennis Club were paying £600 per annum for the use of each court and that costs should rise annually in line with inflation. Members were concerned about the risks of setting something up for 25 years and wondered whether a break out clause at 5 year cycles would be appropriate.

The Town Clerk suggested that the Committee consider the financial implications in order to weigh up the costs involved such as the resurfacing every 15 years and any potential savings to be made, and report back to the next meeting.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that Members agree to Excel Tennis Academy using the site in principle, subject to receiving the costings with possible revisions.

L219 **RECREATION REVIEW**

The Committee receive and considered an interim report from SSGB as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk said that the full report would be available in July.

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

L220 **COMMITTEE VISION**

The Committee reconsidered the Committee vision and decided upon monthly meetings. The Town Clerk suggested that the Officers compose a list of current projects along with a time line and report back to the next meeting.

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The meeting closed at 8.15pm

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Chairman