

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH 2018

Sport and Recreation Committee

The Sports and Recreation Committee was newly formed in May 2017 with responsibility for play areas, recreation grounds, sports pitches, the Lake and Country Park and allotments. The 2017/18 municipal year has been a very positive and exciting time to Chair the committee, with a range of completed projects and forthcoming initiatives to improve recreational opportunities for the residents of Witney.

Play and Recreation Areas

The Leys

This year has seen some significant improvements to the Leys facilities, including agreed investment in the sports facilities, pitches and pavilion. We have been working in close partnership with Parks Tennis to support refurbishment and upgrade of the mini-golf facilities and future improvements to the tennis courts, with a family friendly pricing structure.

We look forward to supporting improvements to the cricket pavilion roof and replacement sight screens and will be working with the Witney Swifts Cricket Club agreed to informally support grant funding for changing area improvements. The Council has significantly invested in its sports pitches over the past year and has agreed that the football pitches would close down for maintenance from the third week of May until the first weekend of July.

The Splash Park continues to be extremely popular and to preserve the site we recommended a 2-week autumn downtime period and a revised opening schedule from 29th March (Easter Holidays) to closure at the time of Witney Feast.

During the year we experienced ongoing concerns about parking pressures at the Leys on both weekdays and summer weekends. We have considered how to balance these concerns and investigate potential future solutions working with all local partners and will investigate parking restrictions. We also continue to encourage users to visit the site on foot and bike to minimise pressure on the site.

Oxlease Play Area

The new Oxlease play equipment and outdoor gym was installed and opened to users in October 2017 after a significant joint fundraising effort by the Cogges Meadow Park Community Group in addition to a £45,856 WREN Landfill Communities Fund Award and £12,000 Tesco Bags of Help grant. The site has been exceptionally well used over the winter period and work will continue to ensure the area is finished by end January 2018 and continues to be maintained to a high standard. The accessible picnic benches enable users with disabilities to enjoy the site and it is hoped that this will be a good outdoor picnic area for the spring and summer period. We are most grateful to all of the local businesses and community partners who supported grant funding and provided donations for this project.

Raleigh Crescent Play Area

The Town Council has appointed a Project Manager for regeneration of this play area and a consultation has been performed. The process should move forwards in the 2018/19 municipal year in liaison with West Oxfordshire District Council.

Unterhaching Play Area

The Town Council has recently offered to take over responsibility for this Play Area and copse from WODC and seek S106 funding associated with local residential development to support regeneration.

Park Road Play Area

Councillors hoped to deliver improvements to this area which remains closed; however the land ownership is under investigation by appointed solicitors and this issue will need to be resolved before any definitive plan for this site can be pursued.

West Witney Sports and Social Club

A proposal to host a Witney Parkrun at the West Witney Sports Ground received unanimous and we have been working closely with the organising committee in preparation for the launch event on 3rd March 2018. This free participatory event is the first in West Oxfordshire and encourages community participation for all ages and abilities to enjoy outdoor exercise. At the time of writing the initial event is yet to take place but we hope it will be a success and provide new support for the West Witney site.

Burwell Recreation Ground

The Town Council agreed to set aside an earmarked reserve of £25,000 for improvements to changing facilities at this site; a future project to be progressed in the next municipal year.

Play Area Survey

The Town Council recently undertook a survey of play area users to identify their preferences for development of these spaces. The findings of this survey will be considered at the next committee meeting on 19 March 2018 and we hope to focus our efforts to deliver what is most wanted by users.

BINS and BENCHES

An ongoing programme of replacement of Town Council bins with recycling bins has been continued to help reduce our environmental footprint, including new bins at The Leys, King George V Field and Moorland Road. Funding for new bins at the Oxlease Recreation Area was supported by a Greggs Foundation Environmental grant.

ALLOTMENTS

The Town Council has supported proposed improvements to enable disabled access at Lakeside Allotments and set aside funding for a new fence at the Hailey Road allotment sites in 2018/19.

WITNEY LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK

In summer 2016 the Town Council conducted a survey of Country Park users to identify a long-term vision for the site which is now approaching its 30th Anniversary Year. Committee members continue

to work closely with the Lower Windrush Valley Project to formulate a vision and land management plan for the site and have allocated £10,000 in the 2018/19 budget to support this programme.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

Witney is a growing town with several new housing developments included in the submitted West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan. Part of our remit is to meet these challenges and respond in the way we organise and deliver services. This year the BMX and Skatepark Working Party met to discuss a new adventure BMX track and skatepark which has been designated to accompany the North Curbridge housing site. We hope to also have input to future activities and support the changing needs of our town.

Cllr Dr Suzanne Bartington, Chairman – Sports and Recreation Committee