



The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JZ
www.woodley.gov.uk

To: **Members of the Leisure Services Committee**

Councillors: D. Bragg; Y. Edwards; D. Errawalla; M. Firmager; K. Gilder; C. Jewell;
M. Kennedy; V. Lewis; P. Singh; D. Smith

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee is to be held at the Oakwood Centre at 8:00pm on Tuesday 3 June 2025, at which your attendance is requested.

The Town Council reserves the right to record and broadcast this meeting. Anybody attending the meeting will, by virtue, consent to having their image and audio recorded for this purpose.

Kevin Murray
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

To appoint the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2. **APOLOGIES**

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members on agenda items.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2025**

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held on 25 March 2025 and for the Chairman to sign them as a true and accurate record.

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5. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**

To review the actions and follow ups arising from previous meetings of the committee. **(Appendix 5)**

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6. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**
To note **Report No. LS 14/25.** Page 10
7. **WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES**
To receive **Report No. LS 15/25.** Page 11
8. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**
To receive **Report No. LS 16/25.** Page 13
9. **ALLOTMENTS**
To receive **Report No. LS 17/25.** Page 15
10. **FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK UPDATE**
To receive an update from the Friends of Woodford Park – to be provided at the meeting.
11. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
To propose future agenda items for the Committee's consideration.
12. **PUBLICITY & WEBSITE**
To consider which items to publicise.

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held at the Oakwood Centre
on Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 8:00 pm**

Present: *Councillors D. Smith (Chairman); D. Bragg; Y. Edwards; D. Errawalla;
M. Firmager; K. Gilder; M. Kennedy; P. Singh*

Officers present: *K. Murray, Town Clerk; M. Filmore, Deputy Town Clerk;
E. Whitesmith, Leisure Services Manager*

Also present: *Councillor J. Taylor
Councillors R. Horskins; V. Lewis (Virtual Attendance)
3 members of the public (1 attended virtually)*

53. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jewell and Lewis. Councillor Lewis attended the meeting virtually.

54. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

55. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2025**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That the minutes of the Leisure Services Committee meeting of 14 January 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

56. **ACTIONS / FOLLOW UPS**

Members noted the update on the actions and follow ups from previous meetings, as provided in the agenda.

7 November 2023 – Minute 34

A request was made to update the town council's website information which references, in an article from 2022, that the council is planning to install a hard standing area for the sports wall in Wheble Park.

57. **BUDGETARY CONTROL**

Members reviewed the Budgetary Control report.

Following clarification that the council's lease for the Reading Road allotment site is currently £9,673 per annum, it was noted that the allotment site is currently subsidised to the sum of around £11k, with this projected to be around £34k in 2025/26 due to changes to the apportioning of staff costs.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 8/25.

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

The Leisure Services Manager presented Report No. LS 9/25.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/25.

60. **PARKS AND BUILDINGS**

The Town Clerk presented Report No. LS 9/25.

In relation to the duck feed station, the Town Clerk advised Members that the unit is environmentally friendly, being made of recycled materials and solar powered, and that it was free to install, with the council receiving 10% of all purchases. He confirmed the money received would be put into an earmarked reserve for improvements to parks and outside spaces.

With regards to the incidents of vandalism highlighted in the report, the Town Clerk advised Members these had been reported to Thames Valley Police, both as a formal report and through informal discussions with PCSOs. He also confirmed that damage repairs were already underway.

In relation to the lack of netting on the basketball hoop in Woodford Park, the Town Clerk advised Members that ROSPA guidelines with regarding the safety of netting suggest nets are not put on hoops as they can potentially trap fingers. However, it was confirmed that the Amenities Team were investigating potential other options which would be deemed appropriate.

Following a query regarding the misuse of swings in the Woodford Park destination play area, the Town Clerk confirmed there had been a reported incident where a child had been struck by a seat on the tornado swing unit when it was in use. He advised that the swing unit was safe and ROSPA approved, but that the position of the unit was being reviewed with Officers aware its current location might increase the chance of incidents like this. In the interim, seats have been removed from the unit.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 9/25.

61. **3G PITCH STEERING GROUP SUB COMMITTEE**

Members noted Report No. LS 11/25 of the 3G Pitch Steering Group Sub Committee meeting, which was held on 3 March 2025.

In relation to actions which had arisen from the meeting, the Leisure Services Manager advised he had been in contact with the Berks & Bucks FA representative who had determined they did not have a spare Respect banner to replace the damaged banner at the 3G pitch. He also confirmed that the council was already receiving a greater discount on equipment than the Berks & Bucks FA were receiving.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. LS 11/25.
- ◆ To approve the 2025/26 3G Pitch Management & Development Plan.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 1

62. **YOUTH SERVICES**

62.1 Members considered the draft revision to the Council's Strategy for Youth Service.

RECOMMENDED

- ◆ That the Strategy & Resources Committee recommend to Full council the approval of the draft Strategy for Youth 2025-2030.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 1

- 62.2 In relation to the Town Council's invitation to providers to quote for the council's Youth Service provision for 2025/26, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed he had received two responses. One provider was not in a position to assist at this time, whilst a meeting was being arranged with another to discuss the opportunity.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To extend the end date of the Youth Support Service Task & Finish Working Group to 10 September 2025.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 1

63. **ALLOTMENTS**

Members considered Report No. LS 12/25 regarding the introduction of allotment deposit payments and a hen / rabbit keeping agreement.

The Town Clerk read out a statement provided in advance of the meeting by a member of the public who is an allotment tenant. In the statement, the tenant stated they felt it was unfair to implement plot and animal keeping deposits as this would disproportionately impact lower income individuals. They also indicated that the National Allotment Association was against the implementation of deposits. They suggested the council needed to reconsider and seek a fairer way to manage the issue unacceptable levels of waste being left on plots at the end of tenancies.

The Town Clerk clarified that, historically, deposit arrangements had been determined by Officers and had not been approved by council. In future, he explained that the intention was for deposit charges to be agreed alongside other charges by council. He confirmed that the intention of the introduction of the deposits was to address the issue of plots being left in poor condition at the end of tenancies and, in part, go towards the cost of clearing such plots, the frequency and cost of which was increasing yearly. Members noted the rental charges for the allotment site were relatively low compared to other local sites.

The Town Clerk also confirmed that Report No. LS 12/25 included the recommendation to introduce a hen and rabbit keeping agreement following the recognition that the Reading Road allotment site is deemed a statutory site, as confirmed recently by Reading Borough Council, and therefore tenants were permitted to keep hens and rabbits on the site in line with the Allotment Act 1950.

Councillor Kennedy proposed, seconded by Councillor Edwards, that the council rejects the concept of introducing deposits for allotment holders and refund those tenants who have been charged since this was introduced for new tenants in January 2025. Members discussed this proposal and the implementation of allotment deposits in general, with varying opinions expressed.

During the discussion, it was noted that the site had increased significantly over the last ten years, from just over 200 plots to around 380 plots, and that inspections had become more difficult. Members noted that the Allotment Tenants Committee undertake these inspections on the Council's behalf and that, after a reduction in capacity two years ago following the death of the previous committee chairman, inspections were now taking place regularly, resulting in an increased number of unworked plots being relinquished in the past year.

Councillor Kennedy restated his proposal and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To reject the proposal.

Voting: For: 2 Against: 4 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 2

The Chairman proposed, seconded by Councillor Gilder, and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ♦ To defer the decision on implementing allotment plot deposits until further consultation and feedback from the Tenants Committee has been sought, with a survey of existing tenants undertaken to seek views on alternative methods of resolving the issue of clearing excessive waste from plots, with the deposits which have already been taken held until a final decision is made on the matter.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 1 Abstain: 1 No Vote: 1

Members agreed it would be beneficial to arrange a site visit for all Members. It was also noted that no Councillors were appointed to the Tenants Committee, and it was suggested the Committee be contacted to ask if they would like any Councillors to be appointed. If agreed, it was noted this appointment would need to take place at Full Council.

On the matter of introducing a hen / rabbit keeping agreement, the Chairman proposed, seconded by Councillor Firmager, and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ♦ To defer the decision on approving a hen / rabbit keeping agreement to allow more time for Officers to contact other councils with hens and rabbits on their sites to understand the issues presented, and to consider the conditions which would need to be imposed to ensure the keeping of animals is appropriate.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 1

64. **COMMUNITY HALL AND LEISURE CENTRE DEPOSITS**

Members considered Report No. LS 13/25 regarding the charging of refundable deposits for the hiring of community hall and leisure centre spaces.

RESOLVED:

- ♦ To note Report No. LS 13/25.

RECOMMENDED

- ♦ That the Strategy & Resources Committee approve the deposit rates in relation to the hire of Community Hall and Leisure Centre spaces, as set out in Report No. LS 13/15.

Voting: For: 6 Against: 0 Abstain: 0 No Vote: 2

65. **FRIENDS OF WOODFORD PARK UPDATE**

Members noted the update report from the Friends of Woodford Park, as provided in the agenda.

Members noted that the path to the north of Woodford Park remained an issue, and that the area was wetter than ever.

It was noted that the issue of parking would be reviewed alongside the Woodford Park Leisure Centre refurbishment project.

66. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items raised by Members.

67. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

There were no publicity and website items raised by Members.

The meeting closed at 9:27 pm

DRAFT

ACTIONS & FOLLOW UPS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Meeting Date:		5 September 2023	
Minute	Action	Progress Update	Last Updated
17	Add potential re-installation of a 'graffiti wall' to the Council's projects list.	Matter to be raised by Town Clerk and discussed at this meeting (LS 3 rd June 2025).	02/11/23

Meeting Date:		7 November 2023	
Minute	Action	Progress Update	Last Updated
34	Consider options for improving play equipment at the Wheble Park, to be reported back to the Committee at the next meeting.	S&R (26 Nov 24) determined to pursue extension of lease with Reading Borough Council (RBC) and then design fully costed proposal for improvements, to be presented to a future S&R Committee meeting. RBC are drafting the new lease, with a finalised version expected shortly.	29/05/25

Meeting Date:		16 January 2024	
Minute	Action	Progress Update	Last Updated
56	For a report on the potential installation of paths at the northern end of Woodford Park to be provided at a future LS meeting.	Initial costings for different surface options along with repairs to other areas have been obtained. Solid path options are likely to be in the region of £150,000 - £200,000. This will be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee in the context of the potential redevelopment of Woodford Park Leisure Centre.	14/11/24

Meeting Date:		25 March 2025	
Minute	Action	Progress Update	Last Updated
56	Update website information on Wheble Park which suggests hard standing area is due to be installed by the play wall	COMPLETE Website updated 26/03/2025	29/05/25
63	Seek further consultation and feedback from the Tenants Committee and undertake survey of existing tenants to seek views on alternative methods of resolving the issue of clearing excessive waste from plots	Update provided in report to Committee at this meeting.	29/05/25
63	Visit to be arranged for Members at the allotment site.	COMPLETE Visit took place Saturday 17 May 2025.	29/05/25
63	Allotments Tenants Committee to be contacted to ask if they would like a Councillor / Councillors to be appointed to the committee.	COMPLETE The Tenants Committee have considered and approved the appointment of a Councillor to the committee. Nominations for appointment will be considered at the next Full Council meeting.	29/05/25
63	Contact other councils with hens and rabbits on their sites to understand the issues presented, and further consider the conditions which would need to be imposed to ensure the keeping of animals is appropriate	Update provided in report to Committee at this meeting.	29/05/25

Once reported as complete, actions / follow ups will be removed from future reports.

**LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

BUDGETARY CONTROL

Month
1
8.33%

2025/26

**Actual Exp
as % of
Budget
2025/26**

**Original
Budget
2025/26**

**Actual Exp as
at
30/04/2024**

**Actual Exp as
at
30/04/2025**

EXPENDITURE

Woodford Park LC & 3G pitch	578,456	32,121	30,408	5.26%
Grounds Maintenance	73,442	2,504	3,541	4.82%
Football	32,216	766	3,287	10.20%
Cricket	20,596	1,201	3,826	18.58%
Bowling Green	25,664	1,049	3,357	13.08%
Woodford Park	76,482	4,780	8,870	11.60%
Memorial Ground	26,076	0	2,738	10.50%
Garden of Remembrance	12,915	953	1,250	9.68%
Play areas and open spaces	40,746	2,101	3,909	9.59%
Coronation Hall	50,541	2,298	2,976	5.89%
Chapel Hall	55,692	1,812	2,636	4.73%
Allotments	51,832	1,514	1,809	3.49%
Amenities	13,039	508	547	4.19%
Events	31,942	2,253	3,670	11.49%
Public toilet	7,085	454	283	3.99%
Youth Services	15,000	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL	1,111,724	54,314	73,107	6.58%

INCOME

Woodford Park LC & 3G pitch	541,634	50,508	55,036	10.16%
Grounds Maintenance	551	72	143	25.94%
Football	13,407	2,386	445	3.32%
Cricket	7,586	910	0	0.00%
Bowling Green	8,659	6	4	0.05%
Woodford Park	6,362	37	3,000	47.15%
Garden of Remembrance	1,365	0	0	0.00%
Play areas and open spaces	0	0	0	0.00%
Coronation Hall	49,187	8,502	1,437	2.92%
Chapel Hall	48,003	8,018	2,043	4.26%
Allotments	17,560	277	156	0.89%
Amenities	0	0	0	0.00%
Events	400	100	0	0.00%
Public toilet	150	10	0	0.00%
Youth Services	0	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL	694,866	70,826	62,264	8.96%
NET	-416,858	16,512	-10,843	2.60%

WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES

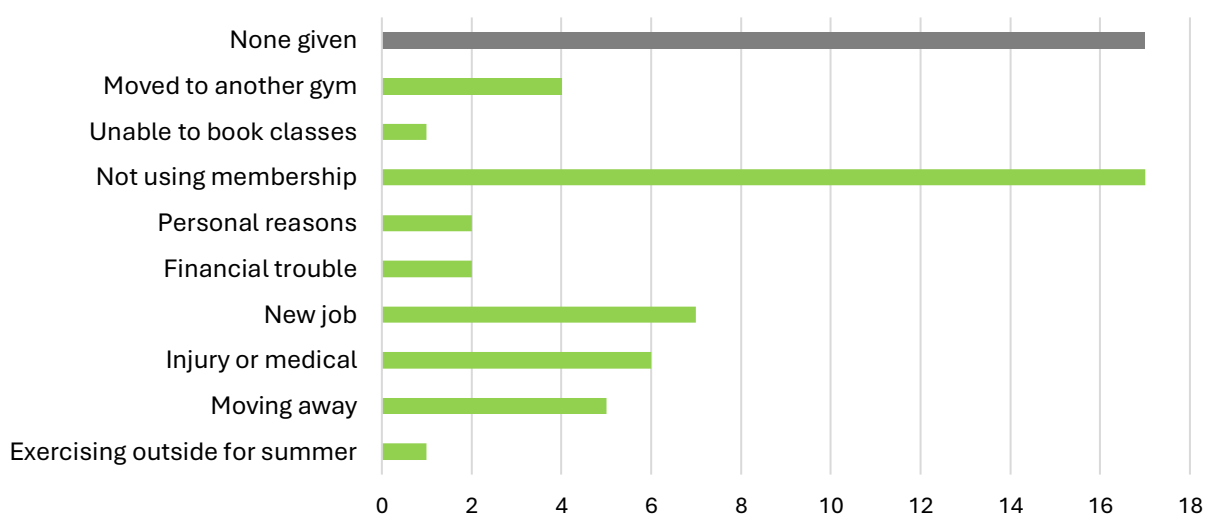
REPORT OF THE LEISURE SERVICES MANAGER

PURPOSE OF REPORT

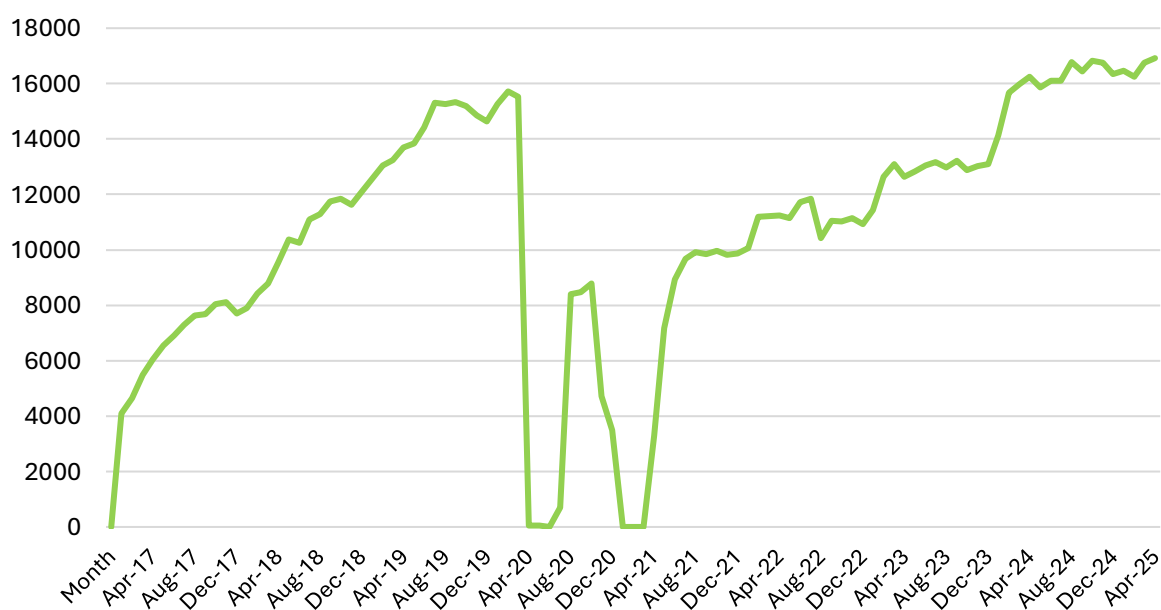
To inform and update Members on developments at Woodford Park Leisure Centre and The Gym on the Park.

Gym Member Turnover

Through the period 18th March to 18th May 2025 we welcomed a total of **70** new members and through the same period **62** members cancelled their memberships, the reasons for which are presented below:



Monthly Gym Membership Income



Family Racket Attack

A total of 970 individual transactions were recorded for Family Racket attack across the Easter holiday. Details of which, and a comparison with the previous year, can be seen in the table below:

	Easter Holiday 2024	Easter Holiday 2025
Badminton	321	842
Tennis	19	84
Table Tennis	33	44
Total	373	970

3G Pitch Maintenance Works

Works aimed at both improving the playing surface performance and prolonging the life of the 3G Pitch took place on Thursday 8th May. These works included a Revite® and a Powergrade®, brief descriptions of which can be seen below:

- **Revite®**; machinery penetrates deeper into the carpet to help lift the top 20mm of infill which is then cleaned, redressed and redistributed evenly across the surface.
- **Powergrade®**; includes a decompaction of the infill both widthways and lengthways to ensure that it is completely fluid and supporting the carpet pile appropriately.

The total cost of the above works was £2493.00.

3G Pitch Repairs

Repair works totaling £675 were also carried out on the 3G Pitch on Thursday 8th May. The main areas that required repairs had only been replaced as recently as twelve months ago. It has since been discovered that the cause of the ongoing damage is a magpie, which is “plucking” the white pile from the penalty spots. In an attempt to help prevent ongoing damage two cage covers have been purchased that cover and protect the penalty spots when the pitch is not in use.

3G Pitch Testing & Certification

The testing process that assesses whether or not the 3G Pitch is in a suitable condition to remain on the FA 3G Pitch Register took place on Monday 12th May. The 3G Pitch successfully passed the test and will remain on the register for a further three years.

Gym Membership Promotion

The April 2025 edition of the Woodley Herald contained a voucher for discounted gym membership. A total of fourteen vouchers were used throughout the promotion, which has now ended.

Woodley Schools Sports Week

Local schools visited Woodford Park Leisure Centre throughout the week commencing Monday 19th May to take part in the Woodley Schools Sports Week. Events included an opening ceremony dance festival, Kwik cricket tournament, Paralympics themed event and a multi-skills festival. An estimated 850 children visited Woodford Park Leisure Centre throughout the week.

Paddling Pool

The Paddling Pool is due to open on Saturday 24th May and remain open until Sunday 6th September.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ That Members note the contents of the report.

PARKS AND BUILDINGS

REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of matters concerning the Town Council's buildings and maintenance of the facilities.

Woodford Park Leisure Centre

Repairs and Maintenance

A survey of the waste drainage has been carried out following ongoing problems with blockages. The work involved camera investigation of approximately 460 meters of drainage pipework. The survey showed a number of areas with tree root ingress and damaged pipework and a quote for repair works has been requested.

Paddling pool

The pool was cleaned and prepared and opened for the late May bank holiday weekend. The Amenities Team have also installed a new resin path to the paved pool area.

Tennis court

The Amenities Team have jet cleaned the surface and are carrying out tarmac repairs where tree roots have caused damage. The perimeter boarding has also been repainted.

Woodford Park

Memorials

4 new memorial trees have been planted and 7 new memorial benches installed.

Tree works

Essential contracted tree works were carried out in paddling pool enclosure/play area. These works required a two-day closure to allow safe working. Further contracted works are being scheduled to x3 Willow trees in the park and x2 trees at the allotments. The Amenities Team will carry out low level dead wood removal in July.

Coronation Orchard

The Coronation Orchard was opened by the Mayor on 14 April at a well attended event. The garden was designed and created by the Amenities Team and provides a tranquil area of the park to sit, with fruiting orchard trees and herbs available to the public.

VE Day Anniversary beacon lighting

A beacon lighting event was held on 8 May commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE Day. The event was well attended and a number of Councillors volunteered their time to assist as marshals. The Mayor was joined by the Town Crier, Town Clerk and local volunteer Ronnie Goodberry in lighting the beacon.

Garden of Remembrance

A number of new roses have been planted in the Garden, replacing some old hedging plants that were in poor condition. Unfortunately, several plants have been cut back significantly, presumably by members of the public taking cuttings. A sign will be installed to request that people refrain from doing this.

Bee Friendly Trust Award

The Council has achieved this award from the Bee Friendly Trust thanks to the work and efforts of the Amenities Team and the Friends of Woodford Park in planning and planting bee friendly flowers and flowering shrubs in the park.

Launched by the Bee Friendly Trust in 2021, the Bee Friendly Trust Awards highlight and celebrate outstanding efforts by communities across the UK to protect bees and other vital pollinators. The awards commend:

- Habitat-forming initiatives that create safe, diverse homes for wildlife
- Collaborative efforts that expand pollinator pathways across urban and rural spaces
- The individuals and teams making real change on the ground.

"The Bee Friendly Trust was established to create sustainable, nature-rich spaces in which bees and other pollinators can thrive, especially in urban environments where green corridors are disappearing. This award is a symbol of what can be achieved when local authorities, staff, and the community come together for the planet," said a spokesperson for the Bee Friendly Trust.

A 'Buzzing Bee Trail' activity was run through the May half term, encouraging children to get out in the park and learn something about bees in the process.

Town Centre Garden

The wood chip in the town centre garden has been replaced by the Amenities Team.

Duck feed station

The duck feed station has proved popular with over 2000 uses since installation in February.

Allotments

The Amenities Team have works planned for fencing around the rainwater ditch area and the installation of additional drainage gulleys to alleviate flooding around the entrance gate area. The waiting list is currently 55. An update on other allotment matters is included in a separate report on the agenda.

Recommendations

- ♦ **That Members note the contents of the report.**

ALLOTMENTS

REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK

Purpose of Report

To update Members of matters concerning the Reading Road Allotments site.

Background

Discussions at the last meeting of the Leisure Services Committee on 25 March raised several matters regarding the allotment site. This report provides the Committee with a progress update on these matters and includes a supplementary report provided by Councillor Mike Kennedy (**APPENDIX A**). A number of suggestions in Councillor Kennedy's report have or are being progressed, as detailed in the report.

Councillors site visit

It was requested at the last Leisure Services Committee meeting that a site visit be arranged for Councillors to walk the site with representatives of the Tenants Committee. This visit took place on Saturday 17 May and was attended by Councillors Bragg, Chadwick, Charles Bey and Taylor, along with the Town Clerk and several members of the Tenants Committee. The visit was very informative and showed the hard work being done at the site, along with the issues and matters to be progressed.

Woodley Allotments Tenants Association (WATA) Committee

Officers continue to meet monthly with the WATA committee, discussing any matters that need attention. These meetings are productive and collaborative and attended by the Town Clerk, Amenities Manager and the Democratic Support & Allotments Officer.

The newly appointed committee is very active and has been working on the following in its first few months;

- Carrying out plot inspections
- Updating and bringing the WATA Facebook page and website back into use
- Updating the new tenant welcome pack
- Engaging with Council Officers on matters such as potential plot deposits, waste issues and draft hen/rabbit keeping agreement
- Facilitated Councillor site visit
- Arranging a social event / onsite BBQ for tenants
- Preparing the return of a Best Kept Allotment competition

Plot inspections

Officers work closely with the committee representatives on plot allocations and inspections. Inspections are currently carried out by the Tenants Committee three times a year – with follow up inspections of failed plots one month after initial inspection. There are clear criteria for inspections, with standard letters sent to tenants whose plots have failed. Where there is any kind of dispute, plots are reinspected by a member of the Tenants Committee and the appropriate officer of the Council. This process is currently working well in identifying plots that require attention.

Plot numbering

The inspection process also picks up on plots that do not clearly display the plot number. Tenants are reminded of the requirement to display the number on their plot and the Council has provided stakes for plot numbering which are available to the tenants committee.

Town Councillor Representative

The Tenants Committee has considered and approved the appointment of a Councillor representative on the committee. Nominations for this appointment will be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

Deposits

The potential for charging plot deposits has been discussed with the tenants committee and although there is general support in principle, there are concerns about affordability. This will be included in a survey of all tenants to gain a wider understanding of the issues and views at the site, with this information coming back to the Leisure Services Committee for consideration.

Hens & rabbits

The draft terms & conditions for the keeping of hens and rabbits is being reviewed following input and proposed amendments from the tenants committee and will come to the Leisure Services Committee for consideration.

Bore Hole

Two companies have been contacted and asked for a quote to provide an assessment of the potential benefits and scale of a bore hole at the site. This was a request made by the Strategy & Resources Committee.

Tenant Survey

Following the resolution from the Leisure Services Committee on 25 March, a survey of allotment tenants is being drafted to seek views on alternative methods of clearing excessive waste from plots. There is also an opportunity to use the survey to obtain further views e.g. value for money, service provided by the Council etc and questions will be included to cover these areas. The Tenants Committee have offered to assist in the distribution and publicising the survey to tenants.

Recommendations

- ◆ **That Members note the contents of the report.**

Report of Councillor Mike Kennedy to the Leisure Services Committee

Reading Road Allotments

Executive Summary

This report deals with the Reading Road Allotments, my observations following a site visit undertaken on 3 April 2025 in the presence of Mr Peter Wheat, and makes recommendations for Members' further consideration.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to consider the following:

1. The appointment of an Allotments Sub Committee - *Leisure Services to consider*
2. The introduction of an Annual Meeting of Allotment Holders hosted by the Council - *Leisure Services to consider*
3. The introduction of a range of measures to improve the site including:
 - i) A site plan at the entrance to the site – *Complete*
 - ii) Clearer numbering of plots – *Being addressed though plot inspections with numbering stakes provided by the Council.*
 - iii) Regular inspections of plots undertaken by the Allotments Sub Committee – *Being undertaken three times a year plus follow up inspections - by Tenants Committee with support from Council Officers. This is working well at present.*
 - iv) Improvements to the drainage at the site entrance – *The Amenities Manager has designed additional drainage gulleys to be installed in the coming months to further alleviate problems.*
 - v) The filling in of the Pond at the site entrance – *The Tenants Committee have asked that the pond area remain but be fenced off. The Amenities Team will carry out this work.*
 - vi) *A comprehensive clearance of overgrown and abandoned plots – The new inspection regime will progress this with the Amenities Team clearing waste from plots – albeit as time allows. x2 skips were brought in over the late-May bank holiday weekend for tenants' non-green waste. Further skips may be considered going forwards.*
 - vii) *A best Kept Allotments Competition – The Tenants Committee are doing some work to resurrect this – with support from officers.*
 - viii) *Improvements to the abandoned garage on the site to bring this back into use – We are speaking with the Tenants Committee about how they would use the building. I am looking at potential grant funding that may be available to bring it back into use – once we have some project aims in terms of use/benefits.*
 - ix) *Attention to overhanging trees – Contracted tree works have been scheduled and overgrown hedging on the roadside has been cut back.*

Detailed Consideration

I accepted Peter Wheat's invitation to visit the allotments and accompanied him on a tour of the site chatting to a number of allotment holders along the way. My overall impression of the site was one of considerable surprise and delight at just how tidy the site was despite a few problems. I was impressed by the Launchpad Allotments and those managed by Addington School. These are a fantastic addition to the site as is the area allocated for beekeepers and young people in need of support following drug addiction.

Generally, plots are well maintained although a better inspection regime undertaken by the Town Council through a newly appointed Allotments Sub Committee consisting of Councillors and Tenants in the ratio 4:2 would improve plot management. An inspection mid-April followed up by letters to tenants where those plots are overgrown and unworked and a further inspection 4 weeks later with notices to quit issued where no improvement was found would improve the overall appearance of the site and bring in new allotment holders currently on the waiting list.

Allotments is the one statutory service this Council must provide and it seems to me that the Council should better invest in site improvements possibly via CIL and/or capital receipts. A number of quick wins would include plot numbering which is generally poor and a site plan at the entrance off Reading Road.

Tenants highlighted the poor drainage at the Reading Road entrance which floods during heavy rainfall. The ditches that have been constructed take some of the surface water but this remains a real problem. The compacted roadway does not help drainage. Perhaps a drainage engineer could be engaged to investigate and make recommendations for improvement. The pond needs to be filled in as this presents a hazard. Those plots that have been abandoned or where tenants have allowed their plots to become completely overgrown should be issued with notices to quit so that they can be cleared and rotated so that new tenants can take up occupation. Perhaps smaller micro plots of 2.5 poles could be introduced to reduce the waiting list. I still maintain, as I said at the meeting, that anyone not living in the parish of Woodley (or Reading Borough) should be removed from the waiting list.

I was shown a disused garage that could be brought back into occupation for use by the allotment holders to store valuable machinery and equipment or used as a pop-up shop during the spring to sell seed potatoes etc. and a number of large overgrown trees within the site that require urgent attention, certainly pruning and in one case possibly felling.

An annual meeting of allotment holders called by the Council to hear the views of tenants would certainly improve communications as would a regular quarterly newsletter, open days and competitions such as Best Kept Allotment.

These are my personal views but I hope you will find these beneficial ahead of your visit.