

RECREATION COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 10TH JULY 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the **RECREATION COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 10TH JULY 2024 at 7:00pm**

PRESENT

Councillor Michael Stead (Chairman) and:
Councillors: Eddy Adam, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M Chandran, John Clark, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Sandra Kirby, Brian McAnaney, John Moore, Ken Robson, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs Judith Thexton (Head of Leisure and Events)
Mr Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)
Mr Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)
Mrs Vikki Anderson (Corporate Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Peter Musa
One member of the public.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Armstrong, Peter Bergg, Neil Collinson, Sandra Haigh, Neville Jones and Carl Robinson.

19. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest had been received.

21. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions from the public were received.

22. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and:

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 29th May 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. OAKLEAF GOLF COMPLEX REPORT

The Golf Administrator and Head of Leisure and Events presented a report setting out statistical information related to usage, income and improvements at the Oakleaf Golf Complex.

It was verbally updated that in the region of 1,200 plugged driving range balls had been recovered to date during the ongoing drainage works and put back into circulation.

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator gave a verbal update regarding the issue with geese on the golf course. A small green laser has been purchased and is being tested. Whilst this does temporarily move the geese on, due to its short range they do come back. A higher-powered version would have a range of 600 metres. Reflective metallic streamers have been successful on the 13th green protecting the green and keeping the birds off, so these are now being used on the 15th green.

Councillor Jed Hillary proposed to hold off on making any decisions regarding the management of the geese until the outcome of the trials have been reported to members. This was seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston,

Councillor Arun M. Chandran agreed with proposal but observed that this is the first time he's heard of geese causing an issue on the course and asked if officers could establish what other golf courses do with this problem.

RESOLVED - that it be recommended that:-

- i) The report be received.
- ii) A further report be brought to the next meeting with an update on the outcome of trial resolutions to the geese issues.

24. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX USAGE COMPARISONS

The Head of Leisure and Events presented a report updating members on statistical information in relation to the attendance and income at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex for the month of May, compared with the last five years.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran wished to record thanks on behalf of the committee and the council, to the officers and staff regarding their handling of the challenges involved with the recent unauthorised travellers encampment. Councillor Jed Hillary seconded this.

Councillor Eddy Adam asked if there were any issues with the placement of the new dart board. The Head of Leisure and Environment advised that none had been reported at moment, although there may be comments once the indoor bowls season returns. Any issues will be reported back to the committee.

Councillor Ken Robson asked what is being done to prevent a repeat of the travellers encampment issues in future.

The Town Clerk advised that officers had met with the crime prevention officer and local police inspector to conduct a 'target hardening' site survey, and were awaiting a report with recommendations to make the site more secure in future.

Any proposals would be brought forward to the Council for consideration.

Anti-vehicle bollards are already being considered and a report regarding the sports and golf complex CCTV system upgrade is on the agenda at next week's Policy and Resources Committee meeting.

An internal protocol is being developed for key staff, looking at lessons learned and ensuring all staff know how to respond and when, in the event of another encampment.

Councillor Ken Robson asked if the survey was covering all sites.

The Town Clerk confirmed the survey looked at the Oak Leaf playing fields, lorry park and back field and was focussing on those areas where disruption to Council services would be more pronounced.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran commented that the powers available to the police under Section 61 of the Crime and Prevention of Disorder Act 1994, were crucial in removing unauthorised traveller encampments.

RESOLVED - that it be recommended that:

- i) the report be received.
- ii) thanks be recorded to the officers and staff regarding their handling of the challenges involved with the recent unauthorised traveller's encampment.

25. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Members considered a report from the Oak Leaf Sports Complex Manager with an update on new developments relating to the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

26. PARKS UPDATE

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report providing Members with an update relating to Parks.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and:

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

27. OAKLEAF GOLF COMPLEX – 2024/25 SERVICE PLAN

The Head of Leisure and Events submitted the 2024/25 Oak Leaf Golf Complex Service Plan for Members' consideration and approval.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The 2024/25 Golf Complex Service Plan be approved.

28. FOOTBALL PITCH ALLOCATIONS FOR THE 2024/25

The Works and Environment Manager submitted a report for members' consideration regarding the proposed allocation of the football pitches for the 2024/25 season and other related matters, including a request from the team using Simpasture football pitches that the Council considers undertaking pitch drainage works to increase the time that the pitches are playable.

Councillor Eddy Adam stressed the importance of ensuring the services we provide are efficient and that the Simpasture pitch hasn't had much investment over recent years other than reseeding. There is a need to ensure that teams are able to use the pitches as much as possible throughout the year and the Council should seek to improve the drainage. He stated that he and Councillor Ken Robson would be happy to donate some of their Durham County Council Neighbourhood Budget towards the costs.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran commented that the income for football pitches at Simpasture is very low at £585 per annum, and there was a need to be mindful of such a considerable investment for a small return. However he understands that the pitches are also used for local children as well as football teams.

Councillor Jed Hillary asked if there would be any external funding available from Sport England and the Football Association to offset the cost and how long the work would take.

The Works and Environment Manager advised that any improvements realistically needed to be part of a long-term plan, rather than over the next few months. Investigations are needed into what is and is not possible. He suggested an initial investigation to look at the drainage route underneath the multi-use games area to be funded from the Parks Maintenance Budget which would inform what possible options are available are for improved drainage and then to consider any long-term financial implications. Historically Football Association and Sport England funding was not available for non-accredited pitches and teams but, that said, changes are currently occurring and so the Council may be able to look again at this funding.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead that the recommendations of the report be agreed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The football pitches be allocated to all returning teams and officers be given discretion to fill the remaining pitch allocations, on a first come first served basis, if any teams fail to meet the application or payment criteria.
- iii) Following the request from Simpasture football team, officers to complete initial feasibility investigations of the drain under the MUGA, using contractors to attempt to clear it, and to use a CCTV camera to survey the drain under the MUGA.
- iv) Following receipt of the outcome of these surveys, officers to seek options and quotes for the required drainage improvements.
- v) Officers consider the funding of the project, make initial budget provision of £20,000 in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, and research external funding opportunities.
- vi) A further report on findings and costs will be reported to the Committee in due course.

Chairman