

## **RECREATION COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2026**

Minutes of the meeting of the **RECREATION COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 8<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2026** at **7.00pm**.

### **PRESENT**

**Councillor Kyle Robinson (Chairman)** and:  
Councillors Martin Ashcroft, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Richard Burchell, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Phil Hawkins, Sharon Hutchinson, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Brian Sowerby, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### **OFFICERS**

Mr Dan Austin (Town Clerk)  
Mr Steve Cooper (Works and Environment Manager)  
Miss Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)  
Mr Lee Williams (Grounds Maintenance Services Co-ordinator)  
Mrs Vikki Anderson (Corporate Assistant)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Eleven members of the public were in attendance.

The Chairman asked to the meeting to agree appointing Councillor Richard Burchell as Vice Chairman for the evening and this was agreed.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft asked to bring Agenda Item 13 forward for discussion ahead of Agenda Item 12, due to the possible budget implications of this report impacting upon the decision relating to Agenda Item 12. This was agreed.

### **23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Andy Hill, Sandra Kirby and Jackie McFadden Lewis.

### **24. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

No applications for dispensations had been received.

### **25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **26. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public asked if the volunteers for the Santa Tours undertaking meet and greets under the new format of the event would be subject to a background DBS check.

The Town Clerk advised this issue would be considered and brought to a future meeting of the Santa Tours Sub-Committee for consideration, as part of the next stage in event planning, following the public consultation.

## **27. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and:

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee, held on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **28. OAK LEAF GOLF COMPLEX REPORT**

Members considered a report providing an update on income, memberships and works undertaken at the Oak Leaf Golf Complex for the six weeks ended the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

The Town Clerk highlighted that the golf green fees income was up nearly 20% compared to last year and the driving range income was slightly down.

Memberships were up by 25 on last year. There is no need for restrictions on membership numbers at present, but officers will continue to monitor this.

Positive feedback had been received from golfers and members on the condition of the golf course.

Finally it was reported that the Oak Leaf Golf Club are looking into starting a ladies section, with a get together arranged and a ladies golfing afternoon being planned.

Councillor Carl Robinson commented that the improved balance between adult and senior members, together with the increase in female members, was positive and showed that membership was moving in the right direction.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft advised that he had been approached by some golfers commenting on the quality of the course and giving credit to the small team of operatives but they had asked if operatives could keep on top of the bunkers more and that the rough was very rough in areas and they were losing balls.

The Grounds Maintenance Services Co-Ordinator explained that some bunkers have recently had routine work renovations undertaken. Regarding the rough between the fairways and trees, greenkeepers had agreed to cut the rough between the trees couple times a year rather than weekly/monthly and the re-rating of the course has also been completed on that basis, but he agreed to pass on the feedback to the greenkeepers.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

## **29. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX USAGE COMPARISONS**

Members considered a report from the Sports Complex Manager setting out the Sports Complex usage comparisons for May and June.

**RESOLVED** - that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

### **30. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

Members considered a report from the Sports Complex Manager, with updates on new developments since the last meeting.

The Town Clerk gave an overview of the report, drawing members attention to the proposal from a local business to have an outdoor sauna located at the Sports Complex.

Members were therefore requested to advise officers on whether they wished to support this proposal in principle, subject to officers ensuring that key requirements such as insurance cover and risk assessments, were in place, and to consider engaging the Council's solicitors to assist in drawing up a relevant licence and a valuer to assess an appropriate rent for use of the land.

Councillor Kyle Robinson suggested that he would be happy for officers to investigate the proposal further and that in supporting this small business there was potential for bringing in further business to the sports complex..

Councillor Tony Beddard raised concerns that if this were to be approved, it could be setting a precedent for other businesses to set up on council land, querying how the Council would manage this going forward.

The Town Clerk clarified that any request of this nature is considered on its individual merits and previously some requests for catering units for example, had been turned down. This proposal would be given the same considerations such as whether it would benefit the sports complex or working in opposition to it.

Councillor Arun M Chandran questioned where exactly the saunas would be sited, how this affects any parking and do we know likely numbers involved.

The Town Clerk advised that these were all questions the Sports Complex Manager would be seeking to explore if it was agreed to investigate the proposal further. At this stage it is simply an expression of interest.

Councillor Chris Clement added that there needs to be consideration of unsupervised use, unsafe behaviour, opening times, effect on residents, and highlighted that alcohol use is a known risk factor with saunas, so these issues all need consideration.

Councillor Tony Beddard highlighted that as there was a cost involved in undertaking further investigations, including the officer time.

The Town Clerk suggested officers go back to the applicant with further questions and seek to provide answers to the various questions raised and bring back a full report to the next meeting.

Councillor Michael Stead suggested maybe the applicant could come to the next meeting, as he felt it would need a lot of footfall to make it worthwhile.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran that the Sports Complex Manager gather more information and bring a report back to the next meeting.

It was further proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson, that the Open Day proposed by the Sports Complex Manager be agreed.

**RESOLVED** - that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Sports Complex Manager liaise further with the mobile sauna applicant and gather more information, including answers to the councillors questions, and bring a report to the next meeting.
- iii) An Open Day be held at the Sports Complex in September or October with free sport offered to local residents and giving local clubs the opportunity to promote their sports.

### **31. PARKS UPDATE**

A report was received from the Works and Environment Manager providing an update on issues relating to the parks.

The Works and Environment Manager gave a verbal update advising that he had recently received a complaint from a user of the running track at the Oak Leaf who had been approached by a dog off the lead, running at speed. The Council's current policy is that dogs are not allowed on the pitches, but they are allowed, under control, on the running track. Generally, this is not an issue but as it has been highlighted, he asked for clarification from Council on whether they would want extra signage displayed, advising that dogs should be on a lead and kept under control or should they be excluded. Enforcement officers had previously advised that as dogs go on the track and grassed area, this creates confusion.

Councillor Richard Burchell suggested dogs be completely excluded.

Councillor Kyle Robinson commented that as a regular user of the pitches, he had not seen any dogs off the lead. He therefore proposed that the current rules remain the same for a trial period. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson.

Councillor Arun Chandran further proposed that more signage is installed and that officers continue to monitor the area and report back to the Council if there are further issues. This was agreed.

Councillor Michael Stead advised that he had received information from the police inspector advising that there had been eight serious incidents with dogs in the town within the last few weeks.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft asked for more information about the issues with the new play equipment installation at Aycliffe Village.

The Works and Environment Manager explained that there had been an issue which was identified at the post installation inspection, with the cantilever swing and proximity of the boundary fence. This has come back as 'low risk and to be monitored', which is not acceptable as the Council would be liable for any incidents. The invoice will not be paid until the issue is resolved.

Councillor Tony Beddard asked about the Town Park memorial plaque request and if there is a process in place for memorial plaques and how many are available.

The Works and Environment Manager clarified that authority had previously been delegated to officers to consider such requests on their merits and whether a plaque is in keeping with the area. In this instance there are no concerns about the location, and officers felt it was an appropriate request.

Councillor Arun M Chandran commented that if a memorial plaque is placed in a park or public area, then it must be stressed that no flowers, teddies or similar are to be placed on these benches, as a rigid rule.

The Works and Environment Manager confirmed that this rule was applied in all areas outside of the cemeteries.

Councillor Carl Robinson asked for an update on the Town Park CCTV camera.

The Works and Environment Manager confirmed that the camera had recently been sent to be repaired under the warranty.

The Works and Environment Manager provided a further verbal update regarding the dead ducks at West Park, linked to youths firing catapults in the area. This has happened several times again and the individuals in question are subject to the Exclusion Notice at Agenda Item 10.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) That the current rules regarding dogs using the Oak Leaf playing fields are retained for a trial period, that more signage is installed and that officers continue to monitor the area and report back to the Council if there are further issues.

## **32. PARKS EXCLUSION NOTICE**

Members considered a report from the Corporate and Policy Officer outlining a proposed Exclusion Notice for two local youths for a period of 12 months due to anti-social behaviour in the Council's parks.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft proposed to endorse the notice and to include an additional provision that the two youths are also excluded from all other council owned facilities.

Councillor Kyle Robinson seconded this proposal.

*Councillor Luke Ellis joined the meeting.*

Councillor Tony Beddard questioned if an exclusion for all council facilities was allowed under the Exclusion Policy.

The Corporate and Policy Officer confirmed that the policy is quite flexible and gives officers and the Council considerable leeway, based on what they feel is appropriate. There are some specific exclusions for specific offences, but it is completely acceptable and had been done on several occasions.

Councillor Arun M Chandran asked whose job it was to enforce the exclusion.

The Corporate and Policy Officer explained that copies of the exclusion order are given to the Park Patrol Team, the local police and PCSO who delivers it as officers generally don't know the addresses of the offenders. Park Patrol staff move them on from parks and facilities and can call the police if needed.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The Exclusion Notices of twelve months are endorsed and extended to cover all Council facilities.

### **33. 2026/27 FOOTBALL PITCH ALLOCATIONS**

Members considered a report from the Works and Environment Manager putting forward for agreement the proposed football pitch allocations for the 2026/27 season.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the recommendations of the report be agreed.

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The proposed allocation of football pitches for the 2026/27 season be agreed.
- iii) Officers be given discretion to appoint additional teams to the vacant pitches if the opportunity becomes available.
- iv) Officers are permitted to consider a second team on Moore Lane, for the 2026/27 season, if the opportunity arises.
- v) Grass matting be installed at Simpasture Park, and this investment be planned into the budget setting process.

### **34. SPORTS COMPLEX 2026/27 CAPITAL WORKS – SPORTS HALL AND SQUASH COURT FLOORING**

Members considered a report from the Sports Complex Manager, requesting approval to undertake an essential capital project to undertake the periodic maintenance of the sports hall and squash court floors at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

The Town Clerk outlined the specialist nature of the works, and the need to work with one supplier (subject to a Standing Order Exemption being approved), the quoted prices, and scheduling of the work which would require a period of downtime. He also requested that Standing Orders be waived to allow a purchase order to be placed immediately after the meeting.

He advised that total cost of the recommended options was just under £20,000 which was £5,000 under the approved budget for the two projects, and that this saving could potentially be used to offset the additional cost of the redecoration works outlined in the next report.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Arun M Chandran and:

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) Officers proceed with a full sand, reseal and re-marking of the sports hall and squash court flooring, at a total cost of £19,860.
- iii) The officers' request to waive Standing Orders to allow the issue of a purchase order, enabling the works to be carried out during the provisionally booked quieter summer period, thereby minimising lost income during closure of the two areas, be agreed.
- iv) The Standing Order Exemption request be approved, allowing the Council to use the previously used specialist supplier to undertake the maintenance works to the sports hall and squash court floors.

### 35. SPORTS COMPLEX 2026/27 CAPITAL WORKS – INTERNAL REDECORATION

Members considered a report from the Sports Complex Manager, requesting approval to undertake the internal redecoration of the sports hall at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex.

The Town Clerk highlighted that this project has been agreed by the Council as an essential project and has a Capital Budget set aside of £5,000.

The decoration had last been done 15 years ago, so is now due.

The lowest quote for the work was £9,760 and therefore there is an additional budget requirement of £4,760 and it was recommended that this is funded from the underspend on the sports hall and squash court flooring projects.

The work is scheduled to be done at the end of August following the flooring replacements, ensuring all areas are clean and dust-free. There will be around five days downtime, with a small loss of income.

Councillor Tony Beddard queried the timing of the schedule of works to be done, raising concerns that if the flooring is refurbished first, then scaffolding will need to be placed on a newly varnished floor for the decorating and queried if it may be better to reverse the two jobs.

The Town Clerk said he would relay the comments to the Sports Complex Manager, but was confident that he had already considered this issue.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Arun M Chandran and:

**RESOLVED** – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The redecoration of the sports hall is agreed.
- iii) The contract be awarded to Braddec Ltd at a cost of £9,760.
- iv) The capital budget shortfall, of £4,760, is funded via the £5,140 underspend on the budget for the maintenance works to the sports hall and squash court floors.

**Chairman**