

RECREATION COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 15TH JANUARY 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the **RECREATION COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY, 15TH JANUARY 2025** at 7:00pm

PRESENT

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

OFFICERS

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Four members of the public were in attendance.

64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Armstrong, Peter Bergg, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Carl Robinson and Anne Woodward.

65. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No applications for dispensations had been received.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

67. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

68. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, seconded by Councillor John Clark and:

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 27th November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. 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 seven weeks ended the 5th January.

The report also provided an update on progress with the North-East Community Forest funded tree planting project and information and options relating to the issue of driving range balls existing the range onto the 17th hole of the golf course.

The Head of Leisure and Events highlighted that the Golf Shop Assistant had won the 'PGA trainee of the year' award and advised that a new Golf Club Committee was now in place.

The Grounds Maintenance Services Coordinator provided an update on the tree planting project highlighting that there had been some objections from residents and it had been decided that an area be removed from the project to help address these concerns. It was further advised that there is further funding available from April 2025, but there is a requirement to complete this project first.

Regarding the driving range issue, the Town Clerk advised that a full report will be brought to the Golf Working Group in due course with more detail, but that this initial information had been reported to this meeting to allow members to consider their preferred option, and offering the opportunity to consider making budget provision to increase the height of the fence, in the 2025/26 Capital Budget which is due to be set at the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee next week.

Councillor Arun M Chandran asked members to keep in mind the previous resolution on this issue and reiterated that this report should be taken to the Golf Working Group to decide on the options and whether to set aside budget provision.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed that the report be received and that the issue of the driving range fence be referred to the Golf Working Group for full consideration. Councillor Lindsey Aston seconded this.

Councillor Eddy Adam asked that costings for the options of making changes to the 17th hole be included in the report to the Golf Working Group adding that to change the position of the hole/drive will create some level of disruption and asked that the report also cover this issue.

The Town Clerk advised that any costs associated with the two options will be written into the report and the plan is to do as much of the work as possible, in-house.

Councillor Eddy Adam asked if there were any signs already in place advising golfers to stay away from the driving range fence and advising of the risk of balls exiting the driving range.

The Grounds Services Maintenance Coordinator advised that information was distributed in the annual membership packs within the risk assessment, with a hole-by-hole hazard notification guide.

Councillor Eddy Adam asked whether the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Revenue and Capital Budget had any provision for maintaining or renewing the fence.

The Town Clerk explained that the fence had been identified within the Asset Management Plan which covers a 10-year period, but that there is no amount currently set aside. This is reviewed every year when the Finance Manager updates the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan. Any ongoing maintenance costs are covered by the Works Revenue Budget.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft commented that the Golf Committee had recently held their Annual General Meeting and asked if all Committee roles had been filled.

The Town Clerk advised that he had attended the Annual General Meeting where all previous committee members had stood down. All positions had then been filled at the meeting with the exception of the captain, secretary and junior liaison officer. The Town Clerk, Grounds Services Maintenance Coordinator and the Golf Administrator had subsequently attended the first meeting of the new committee at which it had been advised that the positions of captain and junior liaison officer had been filled. The secretary position remained vacant and the Golf Club had been advised of the importance of filling this position as soon as possible.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft praised the Grounds Services Maintenance Coordinator on the amount of work carried out in the application for tree planting funding and expressed that he was pleased with the outcome.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The options available for addressing the health and safety concerns regarding balls exiting the driving range are considered via a detailed report to the Golf Working Group.

70. OAKLEAF SPORTS COMPLEX USAGE COMPARISONS

A report was received from the Sports Complex Manager, updating members on statistical information in relation to the attendance and income at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex for the months of November and December 2024, compared with the last five years.

RESOLVED - that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

71. 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.

The Sports Complex Manager requested that the refurbishment of the male toilets be pushed back to the new financial year, as time is limited and currently being taken up with the implementation of the new leisure management system.

Councillor Jed Hillary proposed that the toilet refurbishment be delayed.

Councillor Jed Hillary further proposed that, pursuant to the Council's Staff Commendations Protocol, the Sports Complex Manager and Duty Manager receive a commendation from the Council, for their prompt actions in administering first aid to a customer who had suffered a cardiac arrest.

Councillor Arun M Chandran suggested that a standing ovation be given to the staff, which duly followed.

Councillor Eddy Adam commented that by delaying the toilet refurbishment, there would likely be an increase in costs so felt it was important to not delay for too long. The Sports Complex Manager clarified that he hoped to make a start on obtaining prices etc in February and have the works completed within the first quarter of the next financial year.

Councillor Andy Hill thanked the officers for their efforts on Christmas Eve delivering the Santa Tours within the Parish.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The refurbishment of men's toilets in the Oak Leaf Sports Complex be delayed until the 2025/26 financial year.
- iii) A formal commendation from the Council is awarded to the Sports Complex Manager and Duty Manager for their prompt actions in administering first aid to a customer who had suffered a cardiac arrest.

72. PARKS UPDATE

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

The officer gave a verbal update from Northumbrian Water regarding West Park lakes. Northumbrian Water have been working with the Environment Agency over the summer and have gained access to various properties to inspect misconnections from washing machines etc. Two properties were identified as contributing to the pollution in the lake, as detergent has been going into the lakes, which has had a significant effect on wildlife.

Councillor Michael Stead thanked officers for removing the graffiti at West Park so quickly.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.

73. SPORTS COMPLEX OPENING HOURS TRIAL CONCLUSIONS

Members considered a report from the Oak Leaf Sports Complex Manager with the conclusions from the trial change to opening hours, and requesting consideration and agreement of permanent changes to the opening times.

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report be received.
- ii) The officer's recommendations in relation to opening times be agreed.

Chairman