

Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

Portfolio Holder Report for Sports, Parks, Leisure and Phosphates.

Parks and Open Spaces

Britain in Bloom Awards

The Taunton, Minehead and Wellington achieved Silver Gilt across each area improving the award for both Minehead and Wellington from the previous year.

This is a really great achievement and reflect hard work both from our teams and Community groups.

Play Areas

The installation of new Play Equipment for Walkers Gate, Wellington and Heavitree, Taunton were started by contractors on 7/11/22 and due to be completed in a four-week period. The following locations are due to have equipment updates in the early new year

- Crofters Green, Taunton
- Humphreys Road, Wellington
- Cleeve Road, Taunton
- Courtlands, Courtlands Close, Watchet

Leisure

Leisure Centres (Everyone Active)

SLM continue to operate well in testing circumstances. Rising utility costs have had a significant impact on their finances and ability to deliver the business plan but membership and usage numbers have held up well. Mitigation measures have been agreed and implemented to mitigate the rise in energy costs.

The recruitment of qualified staff remains an issue.

The new Pure Gym at the Hankridge Retail Park which opened on 26th October 2022 may have an impact on membership but at the time of writing it is too early to tell.

The golf course has enjoyed a good year in terms of usage. The Council has worked in partnership to erect additional safety netting to prevent balls being struck into nearby properties/roads and is exploring some ongoing flooding issues on holes 5 & 6.

Staff from Blackbrook Leisure recently helped to save the life of a customer who suffered a heart attack whilst taking part in 'Walking Cricket'. After performing CPR and using the on site defib the gentleman made a complete recovery in hospital. The Council has formally thanked the staff for their prompt actions.

Extensive gulley repair work at Taunton Pool has been completed whilst a new Building Management System (BMS) has been installed at Wellington Sports Centre to help to manage energy performance before the decarbonisation project is delivered.

Leisure Projects

Tennis Court Refurbishment

Discussions continue to be held with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to finalise the project to upgrade the tennis courts at Vivary Park and Cheddon Road. The LTA are providing up to 90% of the project costs but due to procurement issues on the part of the LTA it is now more likely that this project will take place in spring 2023.

Taunton Green Pavilion

Refurbishment and compliance works at the Taunton Green Pavilion on Cheddon Road have started on site. Once complete the Baseball Club will move from Victoria Park to Taunton Green and make the latter their 'home ground'.

Norton Fitzwarren Playing Field

The work to create a new playing field with a football pitch, tennis court, car parking area and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Norton Fitzwarren has taken major steps forward. Planning permission has been obtained and works began on site in early November 2022. The first phase will involve the creation of a tennis court, multi use games area and car parking area whilst the work to the pitch will take place in spring 2023.

Phosphates

Strategic Solution for Phosphates

As Members are aware, on 5 October 2021, Full Council approved an Interim Strategy of mitigation measures. A Planning Phosphates Sub-Committee has been set up to oversee this programme. This Sub Committee has considered a number of officer reports on various matters and updates on the interim programme.

A countywide workshop on phosphates took place 1 November 2022. The workshop involved portfolio holders, members and senior officers from each of the Somerset Authorities. Officers were asked to develop interim governance arrangements for a "phosphate board" to operate prior to the formal arrangements within the new Somerset Council.

On 10 November 2022 members of the Phosphate Planning Sub Committee were updated on the Council's programme of interim measures which create phosphate (P) Credits.

In summary: officers advised that the Council:

- Has established a Phosphate Credit Scheme.
- Is moving towards determining applications held in abeyance.
- That there are additional resources in place to support this process.
- Is at the forefront of this process, one of only a handful of LPAs to reach this milestone.

In total the interim phosphate strategy which has been agreed with Natural England is now expected to generate a phosphate offset of 75.5 kg/year and will unlock between 174 and 871 homes within the River Tone sub catchment.

The Council circulated a survey to all affected applicants in October 2022, to gauge the level of demand for the P credits generated by the Council's phosphate mitigation projects and to understand the extent to which impacted applicants were pursuing their own phosphate mitigation measures.

Officers are currently in the process of assessing the survey responses and prioritising the Council's P credits and are aiming to issue P credits and determine impacted planning

applications shortly. In due course, a summary of the survey results will be upload onto the SWT phosphate web page.

For those applicants affected by the phosphate issue, an agents/developer forum meeting has been arranged for the 29 November 2022.

With regard to national advice, we are still awaiting promised details on the Defra Nutrient Mitigation Scheme, which was announced on 20 July 2022.

Further work continues with the other Somerset authorities to update the phosphate calculator in line with the Natural England calculator which was recently published and to develop a nutrient management plan for the Ramsar site.

Cllr. Perry