

Draft Winchester District Councillor Report July 2021

The New Leisure Centre

The new Winchester Sports and Leisure Centre officially opened its doors to the public on 29th May. Everyone Active who run the centre on our behalf have been inundated with visitors and enquiries. The operator is working within Covid guidance so there are still some restrictions on usage which will remain in place at the moment. Membership numbers are increasing; Fitness-signed up 1,800 new members since pre-sales went live in March, should be around the 3,000 by beginning of July.

We have had an additional 250 children on swimming lessons and now adding additional classes to cope with the demand. We have had over 1100 children having swimming lessons every week. Target for the centre is 2500 at maturity. Exercise classes-4200 group exercise bookings since June 1st, classes are extremely popular. Fitness and family swimming sessions are running at 75% capacity, school swimming starts in September. Despite the reduced occupancy levels in all activities WSLP is now one of the busiest centres in the of Everyone Active estate across its fitness and swimming attendances and obviously everyone is delighted by this success.

Grants

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/grants>

Small Grants scheme now open for up to £500. Local voluntary organisations or community groups looking to provide a piece of equipment or plan an activity. Grants are available for one-off pieces of expenditure on projects and equipment. Until September 30th our relaxed criteria mean that organisations can apply for Covid 19 related activities such as trialling alternative ways of working on creating a Covid safe environment.

Crowdfunding grants up to £2,000 - The council will consider matching up to 50% of the projects costs up to a maximum of £2000. In both our funding schemes we are encouraging applicants to apply for grants to support Covid related activities. We are also looking to support organisations who have had an increase in service users and incurred additional costs as the result of the pandemic.

Community grants - Work on the development of a Community and Wellbeing Strategy due to Covid 19 diverting all our attention to supporting our residents, businesses and communities. Therefore, the time is right to commence work on the development of a Community and Wellbeing Strategy. An update will be presented at Health and Environment Policy Committee on 6th July.

Vaultex Site

Work has begun at the Vaultex site at Bar End to create a new park and ride facility with EV charging solar PV and a green wall. The Council have been able to progress this project because of a grant of just over £5 million from the M3 LEP. We have been clear that there is a real need to cut the number of cars moving around the one-way system and parking in the centre of town. This fits with the ambitions of the Winchester Movement Strategy and will make it easier to justify losing parking spaces in the centre in future. We were all saddened however, that the Council has been challenged by a Judicial Review on this site. This puts not only our ambitions for cleaner air in the City centre at risk but also a significant amount of grant money too. Although it is a partnership project supported by external funding and is one, we will deliver for our residents, as we will look at other sources if it becomes necessary.

Southampton Airport

WCC wrote to the Secretary of State asking that he intervene and call-in Eastleigh's decision. We did this on the basis that other regional airports were also looking to expand and that the net effect would have a wider impact on the government's climate change objectives. Unfortunately, Eastleigh then issued a Decision Notice meaning that the option to call-in fell.

Grass cutting, Verges and Wildflowers

Meetings have been held with IdVerde about the mowing regimes for verges and wildflower areas. We are getting very good feedback on the areas where we've been trialling reducing the number of cuts. A recent meeting with Alresford and BFOB Cllrs to gauge our opinions and issues with the project was very successful. With this and the public feedback the project will be looked at and decisions made on whether to extend it next year. This is not a cost saving exercise as the reduced mowing regime will be more expensive than the regular regime due to having to collect the clippings. It is to improve bio-diversity across the district.

Cllrs Laming, Warwick and Williams