

Northam Town Council – Minutes of the Parks and Recreation committee meeting held 21st May 2025 at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam.

Present: Cllrs Hames, Newman-McKie, Whittaker, Hodson and Bell.

In attendance: Ian Rawle – Parks & Buildings Manager.

Christine Hutchins – Friends of Westward Ho! Park (FOTWHOP).

2505/057 Election of the Chair

Cllr Whittaker **nominated** Cllr Hames as Chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Hodson. There being no other nominations, the matter was put to a vote. All members were in favour and Cllr Hames was **duly elected Chair of the Parks and Recreation** 2025-26.

2505/058 Election of the Vice Chair and signing of acceptance of Office

Cllr Whittaker **nominated** herself as Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Bell. There being no other nominations, the matter was put to a vote. All members were in favour. Cllr Whittaker was **duly Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee** for 2025-26.

2505/059 To agree the agenda as published

It was **resolved** to agree the agenda as published.

Proposed Cllr Whittaker, Seconded Cllr Hodson (all in favour)

2505/060 To receive and approve apologies for absence, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85 (1)

Cllrs Bach, Tait and Edwards tendered their apologies, the reasons for which were approved.

2505/061 Chair's announcements

The Chair made no announcements.

2505/062 To receive any dispensations and disclosable pecuniary or other interests

Members were reminded that all interests must be declared prior to the item being discussed.

2505/063 To confirm as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting held on 26th March 2025

It was **resolved** that to approve the minutes of that Parks and Recreation committee meeting as a true and correct record, they were signed by the Chair. **Proposed** Cllr Whittaker, Seconded Cllr Newman-McKie (Majority in favour with one abstention - not present at that meeting).

2505/064 Public Participation

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, answer questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. Each member of the public is entitled to speak once only in respect of business itemised on the agenda and shall not speak for more than 4 minutes. The period of time which is designated for public participation in accordance with standing orders shall not exceed 20 minutes.

There were no members of the public present other than Christine Hutchins FOTWHOP, who would be invited to contribute at the relevant time.

2505/065 To receive an update on actions

The Action table is presented overleaf.

Action		January 2025	March 2025	May 2025
1	Replacement of the ball fencing at Lords Meadow, a substantial sum has been included in the budget for work required at Lords Meadow for next year.	The damp weather has caused some issues. The contractor is being reminded the work needs completing. ONGOING	The contractor will undertake the works in April 25. Date TBC ONGOING	The contractor will undertake the works in April 25. Date TBC ONGOING
2	To consult the community on the use of outdoor gym.		INCOMPLETE	The committee has decided to remove the gym equipment due to safety concerns regarding its current condition COMPLETE
3	Churchfields Skate Park – paint and ‘graffiti’.	The Parks & Recreation Manager has been in discussion with a graffiti artist ONGOING		This committee agreed it would remain as painted now until it is next refurbished. COMPLETE
4	Tennis Court gate – quality of work	The matter has been raised with the LTA directly and the Surveying Firm overseeing the work. The gate installer has advised the Surveyor that the replacement parts will be installed. No date for the work has yet been advised. ONGOING		The work has been completed by the installer. The condition will continue to be monitored. COMPLETE
5	Reinstall sign bee friendly planting at Anchor Park	The sign has not yet been reinstated. The Council is advised to wait until the new work is undertaken to establish wildflower swathes at the Park. ONGOING		The work has been completed by the Maintenance Team. COMPLETE
6	Actions arising from Play Inspection Reports			On the agenda ONGOING
7	Schedule Play Inspection Reports for 2025-26			Scheduled for January/February 2026 COMPLETE

Action	May 2025
8 The installation of CCTV at Westward Ho! Park within the Northam Town Councils grounds.	The Parks & Recreation Manager is currently looking into costings and suitable locations for the installation. ONGOING
9 The volunteer gardeners asked the Council to help recruit volunteers through its communication channels. Further discussion with the Town Clerk and Community Engagement Officer is needed.	Not started. INCOMPLETE

2505/066 Westward Ho! Park

- a. To note wear to the surface of the play area and repairs undertaken.

The Committee **noted** the wear to the surface of the play area and the repairs that have been undertaken. The Parks and Recreation Officer briefed members on the recent wetpour repair works at Westward Ho! Playpark.

- b. To note the plans and costings for the proposed installation of a Multi-Use Games-Area (MUGA) at the disused fourth tennis court in Westward Ho!

The Committee **noted** the plans and costings for the proposed installation of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at the disused fourth tennis court in Westward Ho! The Parks and Building Manager provided a description of the proposed MUGA, outlining the intention to utilise the fourth court within the Westward Ho! Tennis Courts as the designated site.

- c. To consider making a formal request for Section 106 funding to Torridge District Council.

The Committee **considered** making a formal request for Section 106 funding to Torridge District Council. The Parks and Building Manager broke down the costings of the proposed project with the Committee, providing an overview of the estimated expenses and potential funding requirements.

Cllr Hodson gave a detailed brief on how the Section 106 funding process works,

including eligibility, allocation procedures, and the importance of aligning with local planning objectives.

A contractor has provided estimates (exVAT) for a MUGA (in a design as previously shared with the committee) as follows:

MUGA with tarmac surface	£83,530, OR
MUGA with padded astro surface	£95,094

Officers are inclined towards the tarmac surface, for ease of maintenance. The S106 fund includes a line for ongoing maintenance costs. Tarmac tennis courts cost approx. £1,400 a year to maintain (per court). The Officers also recommend applying for a maintenance fund of £14,000, to cover the estimated cost of 10 years' maintenance.

There is an identified budget for Park improvements this year of £15,000, plus a sum of £7,500 to build reserves. It would not be prudent to use the entire fund to provide a base for this project, therefore the Officers recommend that £12,500 of the budget is assigned to the MUGA project.

MUGA (tarmac)	£83,530
Less NTC budget	-£12,500
S106 request for MUGA	£71,030
S106 request for Maintenance (10yrs)	£14,000
Total request	£85,030

A project of this cost would need to be put out to tender, is subject to the requirements in s. 135 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("the 2015 Regulations"). These legal requirements are summarised in the table below.

Contract value (inclusive of VAT)	Legal requirements		
	The council's standing orders required by s.135 of the 1972 Act (and financial regulations)	The Contracts Finder/ find a tender website and other light-touch rules in the 2015 Regulations	Complex requirements in the 2015 Regulations
Low-value contracts (in England only, this means up to £30,000).	✓		
All contracts over £30,000, including VAT, but below the threshold (England only).	✓	✓	
Public service or supply contract over £214,904 or public works contract over £5,372,609	✓		✓

The requirement for councils in England and Wales to have standing orders with respect to procuring and entering into contracts is set out in s.135 of the 1972 Act. This advice note provides (A) an explanation of councils' responsibilities under the 1972 Act (England and Wales), (B) an explanation of the bodies and contracts which are subject to the 2015 Regulations (England and Wales), (C) an explanation of the contracts finder/find a tender provisions and other light-touch requirements for procuring and awarding contracts covered by the 2015 Regulations which are valued over £30,000 (England only) and (D) an overview of the complex requirements for procuring contracts covered by the 2015 Regulations which are valued over £214,904 for a public supply or public service contract or £5,372,609 for a public works contract (England and Wales).

Recommendation: The committee resolves to formally approach Torridge District Council for the funding and prepare the tender documentation.

It was **resolved** by the Committee to formally approach Torridge District Council for Section 106 funding and to begin preparation of the necessary tender documentation to support the creation of a MUGA at Westward Ho! Park.

Proposed Cllr Whittaker, Seconded Cllr Hodson (all in favour).

d. To receive an update from FOTWHOP and the volunteer gardeners at Westward Ho! Park.

Christine Hutchins briefed the Committee with the following update:

- Volunteer Brian Russell has secured sponsorship from local businesses.
- The volunteers organised a tombola and raffle to raise funds for their work, with Tesco kindly donating a hamper as a prize for the May Fair
- A raffle was held during the Mayfair under a lottery licence.
- There has been a steady increase in voluntary service hours: 52 in January, 66 in February, and 93 in March. Volunteers have also received donations and connections for children's items.
- The Volunteers have arranged a stall that will be staffed for the tennis open day on the 1st of June.
- Social media and email communication are being actively used to recruit volunteers.
- Christine requested further assistance from the Council in helping to recruit new volunteers via the Council's website and social media platforms.

Action Point: The Council will assist in recruiting new volunteers by promoting opportunities via the Council's website and social media platforms.

e. Proposal from Member of the Public – Padel Court Conversion at Westward Ho! Park

Referred from the Finance committee (14.5.25):

To **consider** a proposal submitted a resident of Westward Ho!, regarding the potential conversion of 1 or 2 refurbished tennis courts at Westward Ho! Park into padel courts.

A resident proposes a partnership whereby the padel courts would be fully funded and managed independently, with no financial cost to Northam Town Council. The proposal outlines community benefits including increased sport participation, year-round usage, and public access via the LTA booking platform. A revenue share or rental arrangement is suggested, with all maintenance and operations handled by the proposer.

The Council is asked to consider:

- Whether it wishes to explore this proposal further
- The potential for a presentation from the proposer at a future meeting
- Any initial comments on feasibility, location suitability, and public access

The officers note that the Council refurbished the tennis courts with a large grant from the LTA, which was accompanied by a 15-year agreement. That agreement would need to be altered to convert a court into a padel court. This has not been investigated further by the officers, awaiting the decision of this committee.

The Committee **resolved** to write to the proposer stating that, under the conditions agreed with the LTA, the Council is prohibited from having a padel facility at the courts. However, opportunities for such a facility may arise in the future at other local sites.

Proposed Cllr Hodson, Seconded Cllr Whittaker (all in favour).

2505/067 Anchor Park

- a. To note that the Maintenance Team planted *Prunus Kanzan* (Cherry Trees) in April and that the trees have established well.

This was **noted**.

- b. To receive an update on the progress of wildflower planting at Anchor Park.

The Parks and Buildings Manager updated the committee that the wildflower area will be topped up with additional seed next week. This is necessary because wildlife has eaten some of the existing seed. While the wildflowers have already established well, the top-up will help ensure a fuller and more vibrant display.

2505/068 Lords Meadow

- a. To note the hire and temporary installation of a 'Bow Tie' pumptrack from 11th to 19th August 2025.

The Parks and Buildings Manager gave a description of the 'Bow Tie' pumptrack, which will be temporarily installed from 11th to 19th August 2025. The committee **noted** the hire and upcoming installation.

- b. To note plans to reinstate the grassed area in front of the old goal position at Lords Meadow.

The Parks and Buildings Manager stated that the penalty spot area on the football ground had become heavily worn. The maintenance team has repaired the area using turf taken from the wildflower area at Anchor Park. It was also noted that the new goalposts are moveable, which will help reduce future wear on the grass.

2505/069 Ridgeway Drive Play Area

a. To note maintenance plans for the roundabout.

The Parks and Buildings Manager briefed the committee on future maintenance plans for the roundabout. It was explained that the majority of the panels will need to be removed in order to grease the bearings. This process could potentially lead to damage or the need for further repairs to the roundabout.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19:13pm.

Signed.....Dated.....