

Stronger Communities

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 17th November, 2025 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Stronger Communities Committee - T Ashby, R Smith, G Meadows, A Bailey, D Edwards-Hughes, D Enright, A Mubin and J Treloar (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk in advance.

Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings, please let the Deputy Town Clerk or Committee Clerk know before the start of the meeting.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

Standing Order 8(e)(v) permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's Code of Conduct.

3. Minutes (Pages 4 - 12)

- a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 15 September 2025.
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda. (Questions on the progress of any item).

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

5. **Finance Report: Revised Revenue Budget 2025/26 and Draft Base Revenue Budget for 2026/27**
(Pages 13 - 23)

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and the Draft Revised Revenue Budget for 2025/26 and Draft Budget for 2026/27.

6. **Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects** (Pages 24 - 25)

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) with an update on the current year's work programme relating to Capital and Special Revenue Projects; as well as projects identified during the course of the year for inclusion as Revenue Growth Items or Special Revenue Projects in the Council's Revenue Budget or Capital Projects for 2026/27 and beyond.

Communications

7. **Communications Report** (Pages 26 - 48)

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

Community Engagement

8. **Community Engagement Report** (Pages 49 - 52)

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

a) **National Pride Working Party**

To receive a verbal update from officers following the inaugural meeting of the National Pride Working Party held on 13 November 2025 and consider its recommendations.

b) **Witney Forum Minutes** (Pages 53 - 56)

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Witney Forum held on 2 October 2025.

10. **In Bloom Competitions & Community Gardening 2026-27** (Pages 57 - 59)

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

11. **Youth Council** (Pages 60 - 65)

To receive the report of the Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement.

12. **Youth Services** (Pages 66 - 69)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

13. **Flag Flying Policy Review** (Pages 70 - 76)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk with an accompanying updated Flag Flying Policy.

14. **Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) - A40 Dual Carriageway** (Pages 77 - 79)

To Formally endorse support for an application for a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) which would prohibit the use of the A40 for Pony & Trap racing - (Minute 353 Full Council 23.06.25 Refers)

Street Furniture & Infrastructure

15. **Bus Shelter Replacement 25/26**

To receive and consider the report of the Operations Manager.

16. **Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) for Witney** (Pages 80 - 82)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

17. **Litter Picking Equipment** (Pages 83 - 96)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk

18. **Street Furniture Correspondence.** (Pages 97 - 104)

To receive and consider a communication from West Oxfordshire District Council concerning a street furniture request in Witney High Street.

To receive and consider a further communication from Oxfordshire County Council's High Street project scheme concerning the installation of street furniture.

Officers are mindful of the Oxfordshire County Council High Street project and are working with both Authorities.

Events

19. **Third Party Events** (Pages 105 - 124)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue & Events Officer.



Town Clerk

**STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 15 September 2025

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor T Ashby (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	J Treloar
	G Meadows	D Temple (In place of D Edwards- Hughes)
	D Enright	R Crouch (In place of A Bailey)
	A Mubin	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Annie Hathaway	Business Administration Apprentice
Others:	Six members of the public.	

SC515 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Edwards Hughes and A Bailey, Councillors D Temple and R Crouch attended respectively as substitutes.

SC516 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T Ashby declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda item 7 due to his connection with Witney Buttercross Scouts.

Councillor R Smith declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 owing to the connection with the provider of the detached Youth Services provision through the church she attended.

Councillor J Treloar declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 14 due to his relationship with the individuals that organised the Witney Music Festival.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

SC517 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 14 July 2025 were received.

SC415 – A correction was requested to clarify that the market had not been sold but rather a new operator had been appointed to run the market.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 14 July 2025 approved as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the above amendment, and be signed by the Chair.

During the following item Cllr A Mubin arrived at 6:05pm.

SC518 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from a Director of West Oxfordshire Community Transport concerning Agenda Item 12 along with further representation from the Chair of Witney Chamber of Commerce concerning Agenda Item 11, The Station regarding Agenda Item 8 and Witney Music Festival on Agenda Item 14.

Members welcomed the varied participation and looked forward to discussing each item as they arose later in the meeting.

The Committee reconvened.

SC519 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the Committee.

The Town Clerk noted that the Council would be considering its budget during the next cycle of meetings, and that the RFO's report had requested Members to suggest any inclusions for the 2026/27 budget. She further advised that items later on the agenda might give rise to budgetary implications.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Stronger Communities Committee for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025 be approved.

SC520 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

Members agreed that the Communication Survey should be rerun in order to establish which means of communication were most appropriate for residents. It was further agreed that this be included as part of the next resident's annual survey as this was delivered to all Witney properties.

Regarding the production of an additional resident newsletter Members had varied opinions on whether this should be financed by the inclusion of paid advertising from businesses. There were concerns that the news content of the newsletter would not reach its intended audience as it would potentially be seen as a piece of additional junk mail, there were also concerns regarding staff time in organising the advertisements.

It was proposed by Cllr D Enright that instead of a newsletter, a calendar of town events be considered. The Chair asked that Officers report back on the feasibility of this to the next meeting of the Committee, along with the consideration of an external company carrying out the design and advertisement procurement work.

A Member asked that inclusion of paid advertising be considered for the existing printed spring newsletter so as to reduce the overall cost to the Council of its production and distribution.

The Committee considered the erection of an information sign for the COVID Memorial following persistent Anti-Social Behaviour over the summer. Members were in agreement of a budget of £100 being set.

Recommended:

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That, the Communication Survey be rerun in the next resident satisfaction survey and,
3. That Officers report back to the Committee on the publication of an events calendar utilising an external company for its production and,
4. That consideration be given to the inclusion of paid advertising in its existing printed newsletter in order to reduce costs,
5. That, a sign be installed at the COVID memorial utilising a budget of £100.

SC521 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

Members were pleased to hear updates on the variety of subjects included in the Officers report and were in agreement with the proposals to support and promote the Orange the World, International Men's Day, World Mental Health Day, International Car Free Day, SSE Priority Service Register, Christmas competitions, Citizen of the Year awards and walks by the Witney Museum for Remembrance Sunday.

The Committee also discussed ideas for the celebration of British values and national pride, including ideas to mark St George's Day, with events such as a Tea Party, Civic Service at St Marys Church and a Last Night at the Proms styled event at the Corn Exchange; additionally, Members were keen that local businesses should be involved. It was agreed that a Working Party would be created with a membership of four or five Councillors along with the inclusion of non-councillor members being agreed at the next meeting of the Council. The Working Party could then explore ideas further.

Members discussed the proposed flag flying arrangements which would see the Town flag flown daily and additional flags on specific special occasions, such as the marking of anniversaries of the Battle of Britain and the United Nations which were discussed and agreed upon. Officers were requested to draft a Policy document for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members were supportive of the request from Thames Valley Police to hold a "Have a go" event on The Leys, they hoped this would go towards addressing the increase in Anti-Social Behaviour witnessed around the town, particularly over the summer months. It was agreed that the subject

be discussed further at the meeting of the Council on 6 October where a representative of TVP would hopefully be in attendance.

The Town Clerk asked the Committee to consider the extension of an invitation to RAF Brize Norton to exercise their Freedom of the Town on what would be the 50th anniversary on its granting on 24 September 2027. Although there were concerns raised as to the presence of weapons in the town at such an event, all Members were in agreement.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a Working Party be created to explore ideas celebrating Britishness and national pride and,
3. That, Nominations of up to five councillors to join the Working Party be taken at the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025 and,
4. That, the anniversary of the Battle of Britain be added to the Council flag flying calendar and,
5. That, Officers draft an updated flag flying policy for consideration at the meeting of the Committee on 17 November and for it to be widely advertised upon adoption and,
6. That, the Council support the request for a guided walk at Tower Hill Cemetery on Remembrance Day and,
7. That, the Council provide support to the “Orange the World” campaign with social media posts and lighting of the Corn Exchange on 25 November and,
8. That, the SSE priority service be promoted both via social media outlets and the users of café 1863 and,
9. That, the 80th Anniversary of the United Nations on 24th October be marked by a flag flying and coffee morning with all costs being met by the Mayor’s civic allowance and,
10. That, the Council support Thames Valley Police’s “have a go” event with free use of The Leys and,
11. That, the updated Community Window Policy be recommended for approval and,
12. That, RAF Brize Norton be invited to mark its 50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney in 2027.

SC522 WITNEY FORUM MEETING NOTES

The Committee Clerk apologised for the inclusion of the Witney Forum notes as these had been presented and noted at the meeting of this Committee on 21 July 2025.

During the following Agenda Item.

Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly between 7:25 and 7:28pm

A Member of the public joined the meeting at 7:30pm

SC523 YOUTH SERVICES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk along with the earlier participation from the representative of The Station.

Members acknowledged the updates provided on the Youth Services grant allocations and welcomed the way in which the grant allocations had been dealt with.

The Committee welcomed the update provided in the report as well as the participation of The Station’s representative outlining their proposals for future funding. Members were in

agreement that the use of the 1863 café be granted for evening half-term youth cafés in October and February with The Station covering the cost of a bar staff member and purchasing drinks at cost price. Regarding the future funding of The Station the Chair suggested that this item be considered at the end of the agenda in closed session.

Members were disappointed not to receive a report from APCAM providing feedback on the Mental Health Drop in & We Game sessions however, they hoped that this would be forthcoming ahead of their consideration of the 2026-27 budget.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, the updates regarding the youth services grant awards be noted and,
3. That, The Station be granted use of Café 1863 to run evening youth café on the terms agreed previously.

SC524 YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Engagement Administrative Assistant regarding the recent activity of the Youth Council.

Members were informed of two new additions to the Youth Council, along with two further potential members. It was hoped that, with the continued support and guidance of Officers, Youth Councillor mentors, and possible collaboration with existing local school Councils, progress could be made towards achieving some of the Youth Council's objectives.

Members were in agreement with the use of WhatsApp to aid communication within the Youth Council and for the creation of a newsletter to be issued to local schools, it was suggested that the Kings School and Cokethorpe School were included in the distribution.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, WhatsApp be approved as a form of communication and,
3. That, a monthly slide newsletter be created and issued to local schools.

CLlr A Mubin left the meeting at 7:34pm

SC525 CHRISTMAS TREE AND EVENT SPONSORSHIP

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer which covered the upcoming Christmas activity for 2025.

Members discussed the options for the distribution of the Social Value Fund, provided via the Christmas Lights contract and agreed the charities supported in 2024 should once again be the recipients as they offered support to a broad scope across the town. These were; Witney Foodbank, Witney Food Revolution, Witney Community Church and High Street Methodist Church and they should each be awarded £250 from the fund.

The Committee also welcomed the proposal to raise sponsorship for both the Christmas Trees and the Advent Fayre Event. It was felt this would enhance local business relations as well as provide budget relief for the Council.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and
2. That, Officers advise LITE of the beneficiaries of the Christmas lights social value fund and
3. That, the Christmas lights sponsorship scheme be approved.

Cllr A Mubin rejoined the meeting at 7:40pm

SC526 WITNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk along with the earlier participation from the Chair of the Witney Chamber of Commerce.

Members discussed the reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum as they felt it important to work with West Oxfordshire District Council, Cotswold Markets, and local businesses. It was also felt that the Town Partnership organisation which had been led by WODC Officers should be involved so that any information and ideas gathered by them could be incorporated.

The Committee were pleased to support this initiative and lead as an organisation so as to take a strong role in progressing the formation of the Forum which they hoped would be supported by the Witney Chamber of Commerce.

Members agreed that the Town Council should have three positions on the Forum and that nominations of these should take place at the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, establishment of a Town Centre Forum be approved with Witney Town Council carrying out administration of the Forum.
3. That, nominations of the three Councillors to join the Forum be taken at the meeting of the Council on 6 October 2025.

Cllr D Enright left the meeting at 7:45pm

SC527 WEST OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

The Committee received the request from West Oxfordshire Community Transport along with representation from a Director of WOCT earlier in the meeting. The request was for an increase to the annual grant awarded by the Council.

Members were advised of a correction to the amount being requested. The letter had stated an increase from £21,000 to £26,000, however the current level of grant was £23,500 and therefore an increase of only £2,500 was requested.

Several members spoke passionately about the essential service that WOCT provided and their concerns if the additional funding was not provided, it was highlighted that many residents, particularly the elderly relied on the services of WOCT to complete their daily activities.

The Town Clerk advised that funds could be found to support the request from other unspent budget lines with an example of the Water safety budget being given. She also suggested that the timing of the grant was an important factor, specifically whether it applied for the Council's full financial year or was pro-rated over a shorter period, in which case the actual amount awarded this financial year would be less than £2,500.

The Chair spoke of his concerns at the awarding of the grant and proposed that no award be made and that he writes to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) asking that they fund the gap that existed. The proposal was seconded by Cllr J Treloar.

An alternative proposal to award the additional grant of £2,500 was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr R Crouch.

A vote was taken for Members to agree to one of the two proposals, a request from Cllr G Meadows asked that the names of those voting be taken. The result of the vote was:

- No additional grant award – For: Cllrs A Mubin, J Treloar, D Temple and T Ashby.
- An award of £2,500 – For: Cllrs R Smith, G Meadows and R Crouch.

It was therefore agreed that no award be made and that the Chair write to OCC to request their intervention to consider funding the gap in WOCT's needs.

Recommended:

1. That, the request from WOCT be noted and,
2. That, the additional grant award be not agreed and the annual grant remain at £23,500 and,
3. That, the Chair writes to OCC requesting their consideration of additional financial support to WOCT.

SC528 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO 5(W)

Resolved

That, Standing Order 5(w) be suspended in order to allow the meeting to continue as it had now lasted for two hours.

SC529 WINTER PREPARATIONS

The Committee received and considered the proposed sites for additional grit bins.

The proposed sites for three bins to be installed along Centenary Way on the new Windrush Place Estate had been provisionally discussed with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Winter Services team, however as the roads were yet to be formally adopted Officers had been informed these could not be considered further.

Members agreed that Officers should reapproach OCC to establish if procurement of the same style bins was made by the Town Council, with the approval of the Windrush Place consortium landowner, would the grit bins be adopted along with the road infrastructure at a later date.

Members heard that the proposed site at Springfield Oval that had been approved at the meeting of the Committee on 14 July 2025 would shortly be installed.

Resolved:

That, Officers liaise with OCC regarding the installation of the proposed Grit Bins at Windrush Place Estate.

SC530 THIRD PARTY EVENTS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided details of the past and upcoming events held on the Council's land.

Members heard that the subsidised lettings budget had been oversubscribed in 2025/26, and that requests for 2026/27 were expected to rise further, partly due to the additional use granted to users of The Leys. The Committee were broadly supportive of increasing the subsidised lettings budget, noting that costs would rise in any case in line with the annual hire rate percentage increase.

With regard to the Council's contribution to Witney Carnival, the Town Clerk advised that the Carnival Committee should submit funding applications in good time to align with the Council's budget cycle. This would ensure anticipated requests could be included in the budget, rather than received mid-year and risking an overspend.

The Committee Clerk advised that Officers had met with the organisers of Witney Music Festival earlier in the day and that they had given an understanding of the level of feedback required from Witney Music Festival in order to provide the Council with the confidence required to support the ongoing partnership. It was agreed that on receipt of the information from WMF that Officers prepare a report on the grant award for consideration by the Committee on 17 November 2025.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, the subsidised lettings budget be increased in 2026-27 to reflect the additional expenditure plus the annual percentage inflationary increase and,
3. That, an increase in the Town Council's contribution to Witney Carnival for 2026/27 be not agreed at this stage, but the Carnival Committee be encouraged to submit its funding request in good time for consideration as part of the Council's budget-setting cycle. and,
4. That, Witney Music Festival be asked to provide comprehensive feedback on the 2025 event and Officers prepare a full report for consideration of the grant award for the 2026 Witney Music Festival.

Three Members of the Public left at 8:08pm

SC531 THE STATION - SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT AND FUNDING FOR 2026/27

At the discretion of the Chair the consideration of the budget request did not take place under Agenda Item 8 and was discussed independently.

The Committee heard that the request was to increase the current funding by £10,400 from £18,000 to £28,400 which was broadly similar to the original award of £27,000 made to them for the 2024/25 financial year. The Station had evolved over the previous 18 months and now looked to develop a programme of changes to support the young people of Witney.

Members were conscious that the Service Level Agreement between The Station and the Council should reflect a detached youth service and allow for the Council to provide direction and guidance when highlighting problem areas.

The Committee unanimously agreed that the requested grant of £28,400 be included in the budget setting calculations however, this would be subject to a newly established Service Level Agreement being drawn up, the drafting of which was delegated to the Chair, Leader, Cllr R Crouch and Deputy Town Clerk.

Recommended:

1. That, the request for funding be noted and,
2. That, £28,400 be considered for budget purposes for the provision of a detached youth service in 2026-27 and,
3. That, it be delegated to the Chair, Leader, Cllr R Crouch and Deputy Town Clerk to draw up an updated Service Level Agreement.

The meeting closed at: 8.22 pm

Chair

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Finance Report: Revised Revenue Budget 2025/26 and Draft Base Revenue Budget for 2026/27

Meeting Date: Monday 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 12 noon on Monday 17 November to allow for a full response at the meeting.

Background

Each year the committees review their estimates of income and expenditure so that proposals can be submitted to the Council in relation to revised revenue estimates for the current year and proposals for the next year.

Consequently, this report presents Members with the revised budget for 2025/26 and the first draft of the revenue budget for 2026/27 for the cost centres which are the responsibility of this Committee. Please see attached document.

The budget process is ongoing and there is further work to be done. Therefore, this report will be subject to updates when this Committee's estimates are presented at the meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on 24 November.

Current Situation

For the Stronger Communities Committee the following cost centres are in place and these are shown in the report.

Cost centre	Service
402	Community Infrastructure
408	Community Activities

Cost centres, comprising three digits, typically represent a discrete service entity, to which income and expenditure is allocated against previously agreed revenue budgets.

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further define the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with “1” are income codes; codes commencing with “4” are expenditure codes.

The format of this report is straightforward; the first two columns relate to the original budget from 2024/25 against the actual figures for that year. The middle columns relate to the current year’s original budget, actual expenditure year to date, the projected budget to 31 March 2026, based on the latest estimates. The right-hand columns relate to the draft budget for 2026/24.

The Committee’s revenue budget growth items for 2026/27, and its capital/special revenue projects programme for 2026/27 and beyond are dealt with as a separate budget item.

Members have requested an analysis of estimates by nominal code ledger so there are figures for overall staffing costs, utilities, property and equipment etc. The accounting software enables these reports to be produced but only on a full council basis and not by committee. The estimates, analysed by nominal ledger code, will be produced alongside the cost centre estimates for the PGF Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2025.

BUDGET PARAMETERS – DRAFT ESTIMATES 2026-27

Draft budgets are prepared based on current activities and patterns of income and expenditure. At this stage most of the budget lines have been kept as previously agreed unless there are known variations.

When considering the estimates the RFO examines each individual budget line, looking at the historic trends and known future developments so a flat percentage is not applied uniformly across the estimates. There has been significant inflationary pressure over recent years, peaking at 14.2% (RPI) and 11.1% (CPI) in the year to October 2022. Whilst inflation has since fallen it is higher than the Bank of England’s target, running at 3.8% (CPI) and 4.5% (RPI) in September 2025.

In preparing these estimates the following budget parameters, agreed by the Council, in the last cycle, have been applied:

INCOME

1. Fees and Charges – although there are income sources and some recharges, this Committee does not have any fixed fees and charges for services.

For information on other committees 4% has been used as the baseline for fees and charges increases.

EXPENDITURE

2. Staffing Costs

The national pay award for 2025-26 was agreed at 3.2%.

Previously an increase of 4% in line with inflation forecasts for 2025 was proposed; the RFO has reduced this to 3.8%, in line with the latest CPI rate.

The Council's policy is to pay at least the "Real Living Wage" and for those staff affected this means an increase in the hourly wage of 6.8% from 1 April 2025.

Regarding pensions the Council has received the initial findings in relation to the 2026 Oxfordshire Pensions Fund valuation. This indicates a reduction in employers' contributions from 21.7% to 19.9% from April 2026, the first reduction in many years. The direct salary and overhead allocations/recharges to this Committee will be altered ahead of the meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee and will mean a reduction in these estimates.

3. Utilities

There remains uncertainty regarding **gas and electricity prices** and these could change depending on the increasingly unstable international circumstances.

The contract placed for 2025-26 and energy efficiency improvements made by the Council mean that the budgets for gas and electricity were reduced from £87,598 to £53,396.

In relation to 2026-27 we are awaiting advice from our current suppliers although the anticipation is that any increase will be less than the current rate of inflation. However to be prudent an increase of 3.8% has been applied. Note that line 4014/402, which includes electricity in relation to the Buttercross Clock and St Mary's Church floodlighting shows a reduction on both 2025/26 revised and 2026/27 estimates due to a change of electricity supplier.

Regarding **water charges** the latest information is that business charges will increase in this area by an average of 4.5% and this has been applied.

The Committee is not responsible for any properties which attract National Non-Domestic Rates.

4. Insurance

The Council's Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with Zurich Municipal ends as of 31 March 2026. The LTA has guaranteed the same rate (insurance charge per £1K insured) for five years although premiums have risen with sums insured. The end of the LTA will result in significant increases and your officers should have more information in this regard following a meeting next month, although rates for any potential future LTA will not have been settled by then.

The Council will seek tenders early in 2026 but for now, following advice from the Council's current insurers an increase of 40% has been applied. This reflects inflationary pressures since the current LTA was agreed and increased pressure and claims in the local government sector.

5. Other expenditure lines

When considering the estimates the RFO examines each individual budget line, looking at the historic trends and known future developments so a flat percentage is not applied uniformly across the estimates. However where a cost-of-living increase is applied, 3.8% has been used for 2026-27.

REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY

Members may wish to note the following general comments:

1. The actual year to date figures are for the first half year, the period April to September 2024 and include the recharges from central budgets.
2. As previously reported the Council is now accounting for earmarked reserve movements differently. The previous system, used by this and other councils, was to represent in-year funding from earmarked reserves as negative expenditure (4995 – transfer from earmarked reserves) and transfers to earmarked reserves as expenditure (code 4991). These fund movements are now shown in these reports as a “below the line” adjustment “Transfer from/to EMR” so they do not impact on expenditure but are correctly shown as funding. Appropriate adjustments were made in the 2023-24 accounts. The intention is also that such transfers are undertaken at or shortly after expenditure has been incurred.

However, for sums in relation to earmarked reserve 326 – committed sums – these have been input directly in to committed sums against individual budget lines and has the impact of increasing the budget line by that amount. A budget report can be run to show these sums but when that report is run it does not then show the 2025-26 revised budget so on this occasion, I am listing these sums which have been included in the 2025-26 budget lines, listed as cost centre/nominal ledger code:

Community infrastructure – cc402

4200 – Street Furniture - £1,000

4215 – In Bloom including Schools Challenge - £5,000

Community Activities – cc408

4111- Water Safety/ Education - £2,000

4141 – Events - £5,500

4160 – Town Twinning - £1,000

4161 – Town Twinning Room Hire – £1,000

4169 – Children & Youth Provision (inc. grants) - £29,800

3. As reported previously there has been a change to Committee responsibilities which affects the Stronger Communities Committee and its estimates.

Within the terms of reference for the new Climate and Biodiversity Committee there are a number of responsibilities budgetary provision for which were previously under the remit of this Committee. These are, referenced directly from the Committee terms of reference for 2025-26:

(b) To manage the Council's Environmental Spaces, including Amenity Areas...

c) To oversee the management of the Council's tree stock across the town.

h) To oversee the maintenance of the Council's infrastructure concerning planting displays (including hanging baskets).

Your officers have now made the necessary changes to the budget/cost centre structures which will relate to cost centre 402 – Community Infrastructure and specifically nominal ledger codes – 4017, 4036, 4037, 4039, 4040, 4066, 4067, 4888, 4890, 4892, 4893 and 4899. These will be transferred in whole or in part a new cost centre attached to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee. The virement for 2025/26 original budget amounts to £238,491.

Note that in relation to works team allocations, of which a total of £162,990 has been transferred in relation to the 2025/26 budget, the amounts will be subject to review over the next twelve months.

4. The revenue budget allows for the proposed expenditure on Youth Services in accordance with the Report of the Deputy Town Clerk (agenda item 12)., noting that at line 4169/408 the current year budget of £29,800 is funded entirely from EMRs.
5. At line 4141/408 (Events) the current year budget includes of £12,477 includes EMR funding of £5,500. This will not all be spent this year and so your officers propose rolling forward any underspend so that the budget funded through precept can be held at £7,500.

Overall, the budget estimates show, following the virements at 3 (above) show:

Original 2025-26 revenue budget: £353,588 (note – funding includes £45,300 EMRs);

Revised 2025-26 revenue budget: £326,285;

Proposed 2026-27 revenue budget: £330,244.

Overall, the Council is under significant inflationary pressure, and your officers are looking at ways to mitigate these pressures. The above estimates will change when the works/ central budgets and earmarked reserve movements are considered by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee. There are also several areas where additional work is taking place to refine the estimates.

The Council has major ongoing capital projects and is also taking on new facilities and this will be an important consideration in setting a balanced budget.

However, for this Committee the inflationary pressures are not as acute. There are a number of factors involved here:

- Open spaces moving to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee.
- Direct salary allocations revised down (see 4001-4003/408).
- No increase on a number of expenditure budgets.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action they can take to limit or negate its liability. The RFO has approached the budget with prudence so as accurate budget as possible can be set at this early stage, although there may be some opportunities to make savings if required to balance the budget.

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council's risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council's objectives.

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and in the attached appendices.

This report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control, as it enables income and expenditure incurred to be reviewed and to be compared with the Council's budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited:

Members are invited to note the report and consider the revised base revenue budget for 2025/26 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2026/27, as detailed in the draft estimates.

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL Current Year
Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 6)
Note: ESTIMATES 2026-27, FIRST DRAFT.

		<u>Last Year 2024-25</u>		<u>Current Year 2025-26</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
<u>Stronger Communities</u>										
<u>402</u>	<u>COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE</u>									
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	1,336	500	1,350	0	500	0	1,000	0	0
1099	MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	0	1,000	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
1170	GRANTS RECEIVED	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1171	DONATIONS RECEIVED	1,334	2,665	10,350	0	4,800	0	7,500	0	0
Total Income		2,670	9,165	11,700	0	6,300	0	9,500	0	0
4014	ELECTRICITY	3,411	3,323	3,400	718	2,300	0	2,100	0	0
4017	CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	3,000	169	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	112	112	115	112	112	0	150	0	0
4028	I.T.	0	117	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4035	BUS SHELTER MAINTENANCE	3,000	484	3,000	303	1,800	0	3,000	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	2,630	1,490	2,600	41	2,600	44	2,600	0	0
4037	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	3,000	646	1,500	401	1,200	0	1,557	0	0
4039	HORTICULTURE	19,500	16,277	0	0	0	27	0	0	0
4040	ARBORICULTURE	20,000	11,735	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4066	TREE REPLACEMENT	8,000	6,159	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4067	Tree Survey	8,000	6,845	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4105	XMAS LIGHTS, TREE & INFRASTRUC	55,000	55,337	48,500	17,796	48,500	450	50,300	0	0
4113	XMAS SOCIAL CONTRN - SEE 1099	0	750	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4148	VE/ VJ 80th Anniversary comm'n	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
4166	DEFIBRILLATOR EXPENDITURE	4,000	1,685	4,000	315	2,300	0	4,000	0	0
4200	STREET FURNITURE	5,000	7,047	6,000	2,273	6,000	3,616	5,000	0	0

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WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL Current Year
Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 6)
Note: ESTIMATES 2026-27, FIRST DRAFT.

		<u>Last Year 2024-25</u>		<u>Current Year 2025-26</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4210	CHURCH CLOCK	1,500	0	1,500	0	1,500	0	1,500	0	0
4215	IN BLOOM - INC SCHOOLS CHALLENGE	7,250	2,346	8,500	3,974	4,750	0	3,500	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	161,845	91,284	15,000	2,693	9,741	0	16,715	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	43,819	8,565	977	185	401	0	988	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	18,431	17,824	10,681	4,985	10,418	0	10,160	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	5,214	6,201	2,820	1,317	2,609	0	2,909	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	15,763	19,619	2,133	435	1,470	0	2,478	0	0
4990	CONTRN TO CCTV SCH.	10,000	10,000	11,267	0	11,267	0	11,591	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		398,475	268,013	121,993	35,550	107,968	4,137	119,548	0	0
402 Net Income over Expenditure		-395,805	-258,847	-110,293	-35,550	-101,668	-4,137	-110,048	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	-2,047	0	1,040	0	0	0	0	0
6001	less Transfer to EMR	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		<u>(395,805)</u>	<u>(265,894)</u>	<u>(110,293)</u>	<u>(34,510)</u>	<u>(101,668)</u>		<u>(110,048)</u>		
408	<u>COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES</u>									
1099	MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1170	GRANTS RECEIVED	0	1,500	1,500	0	0	0	1,557	0	0
1171	DONATIONS RECEIVED	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Total Income		0	1,526	1,500	2	2	0	1,557	0	0
4001	SALARIES	4,888	5,022	15,118	2,937	6,324	0	7,197	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	498	482	1,949	378	811	0	929	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	1,061	1,004	3,281	637	1,372	0	1,432	0	0
4103	GRANT YOUTH COUNCIL	1,350	81	1,350	0	1,350	0	500	0	0

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WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL Current Year
Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 6)
Note: ESTIMATES 2026-27, FIRST DRAFT.

		<u>Last Year 2024-25</u>		<u>Current Year 2025-26</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4104	GRANT CARNIVAL/XMAS ROTARY CLB	4,500	4,900	4,900	2,575	5,075	0	6,300	0	0
4105	XMAS LIGHTS, TREE & INFRASTRUC	0	0	0	0	0	520	0	0	0
4106	GRANT - PLAY DAY	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4109	BLUE PLAQUES	0	525	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4111	WATER SAFETY/EDUCATION	2,000	0	4,000	0	2,000	0	2,000	0	0
4112	GRANT - WITNEY TOWN BAND	660	660	660	660	660	0	660	0	0
4141	EVENTS	10,000	4,961	12,477	4,130	12,477	90	7,500	0	0
4147	50th Anniversary Grants	0	1,100	0	50	50	0	0	0	0
4148	VE/ VJ 80th Anniversary comm'n	1,500	862	2,023	2,269	2,199	0	0	0	0
4149	WTC 50th ANNIVERSARY	5,000	3,332	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4154	EXPERIENCE OXFORDSHIRE M'SHIP	1,200	0	1,200	0	300	0	1,200	0	0
4160	TOWN TWINNING	500	0	1,500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4161	TOWN TWINNING ROOM HIRE	500	0	1,500	58	500	0	500	0	0
4167	BUS SERVICE	21,000	23,500	23,500	10,500	26,000	0	26,000	0	0
4169	CHILDREN & YOUTH PROVISION	40,000	30,200	29,800	18,600	29,800	0	20,000	0	0
4170	ADVENT FAYRE	2,000	2,064	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4172	GRANT - DETACHED YOUTH WORK	0	0	18,000	8,200	18,000	0	28,500	0	0
4173	GRANT - HOME START	0	0	11,000	3,700	11,000	0	12,000	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	73,721	71,310	85,443	39,876	83,333	0	81,268	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	20,857	24,799	25,094	10,534	20,868	0	23,267	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		192,235	175,801	244,795	106,105	224,619	610	221,753	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		(192,235)	(174,275)	(243,295)	(106,103)	(224,617)		(220,196)		

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WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL Current Year
Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 6)
Note: ESTIMATES 2026-27, FIRST DRAFT.

	<u>Last Year 2024-25</u>		<u>Current Year 2025-26</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
Stronger Communities - Income	2,670	10,691	13,200	2	6,302	0	11,057	0	0
Expenditure	590,710	443,813	366,788	141,655	332,587	4,747	341,301	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>-588,040</u>	<u>-433,122</u>	<u>-353,588</u>	<u>-141,653</u>	<u>-326,285</u>	<u>-4,747</u>	<u>-330,244</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
plus Transfer from EMR	0	(2,047)	0	1,040	0	0	0	0	0
less Transfer to EMR	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(588,040)</u>	<u>(440,169)</u>	<u>(353,588)</u>	<u>(140,613)</u>	<u>(326,285)</u>		<u>(330,244)</u>		
Total Budget Income	2,670	10,691	13,200	2	6,302	0	11,057	0	0
Expenditure	590,710	443,813	366,788	141,655	332,587	4,747	341,301	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>-588,040</u>	<u>-433,122</u>	<u>-353,588</u>	<u>-141,653</u>	<u>-326,285</u>	<u>-4,747</u>	<u>-330,244</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
plus Transfer from EMR	0	(2,047)	0	1,040	0	0	0	0	0
less Transfer to EMR	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(588,040)</u>	<u>(440,169)</u>	<u>(353,588)</u>	<u>(140,613)</u>	<u>(326,285)</u>		<u>(330,244)</u>		

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Finance Report: Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 12 noon on Monday 17 November to allow for a full response at the meeting.

Background

In line with the Council's Financial Regulations the purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider proposed works and projects discussed over the course of the year for potential inclusion in the budgets for 2026-27 and/or subsequent financial years.

Note that these matters are brought to this Committee for consideration but that revenue growth and capital projects are matters for recommendation by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 25 November 2024. It will be for the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee to prioritise projects and recommend funding to the full Council.

Current Situation

1. **Revenue Growth Items during current year – None.**

2. **Capital and special revenue projects during current year.**

There are two items in the capital programme in relation to £3,144 for Community Engagement Equipment/ Storage and £500 for the Community Window Display. This will be included in the review of the capital programme undertaken by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee. However, neither of these items will require further budget next year.

3. **Revenue growth items 2026/27.**

In accordance with minute SC531 of the previous meeting the revenue budget at 4172/408 provides for an increase in the budget to the Station of £10,400, from £18,000 to £28,400. It was noted that this was broadly similar to the original award made to them of £27,000 for 2024/25.

At the meeting of the National Pride Working Party, it was requested that a budget of £2,000 be included events such as St George's Day celebrations and associated expenditure.

4. Capital projects 2026/27

Members are requested to consider capital items for 2026-27 and their priority order, whether they are aiming for 2026-27 or to place them in a “preparation pool” for 2027-28 and beyond. Your officers will be undertaking costing work ahead of the PGF committee, depending on this Committee’s prioritisation and further direction.

Your officers have proposed a sum of £1,200 to be included in the capital budget for replacement of the admin. office digital signage.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. The RFO has approached the budget with prudence so as accurate budget as possible can be set at this early stage, although there may be some opportunities to make savings if required to balance the budget.

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council’s risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council’s objectives.

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council’s due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above.

This report forms part of the Council’s mechanisms for budgetary control, as it enables income and expenditure incurred to be reviewed and to be compared with the Council’s budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the capital/ special revenue growth items for 2026/27 and beyond and make a recommendation to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee, the latter committee being responsible for budget bids and capital projects.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Communications Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 17 November 2025
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on various communication matters.

Current Situation

Communications Strategy Review

Following analytics information provided at the last meeting, Members are invited to review the revised Communications Strategy attached as **Appendix A**.

This is the fully reviewed version of the Communications Strategy. It has new suggestions for improving what the Council does and ways in which it can expand its reach. It has suggested actions that will take the Council forward and some interesting analytics regarding its own platforms and information from Online Nation the Ofcom report that collects data about habits and ways of receiving news and information across the country, regions and age wise.

Follow-up/Publication of Events Calendar

At the meeting of 15 September, the Committee recommended the following (minute no. SC520 refers).

1. That Officers report back to the Committee on the publication of an events calendar utilising an external company for its production and,
2. That consideration be given to the inclusion of paid advertising in its existing printed newsletter to reduce costs

1. Officers have progressed work on a printed Events Calendar, testing a double-sided flyer featuring major community events and Town Council/Corn Exchange activities, with the reverse promoting Christmas Lights sponsorship.

Production could be undertaken by an external company, offering professional presentation but sharing similar challenges to the newsletter, particularly timing, as event details are often confirmed close to deadlines.

Members are asked to advise on the inclusion of advertising, as well as size, distribution, and frequency; officers propose a bi-monthly schedule, noting this may overlap with newsletter production and be time-intensive.

2. The Communications and Community Engagement Officer has explored introducing paid advertising in the printed newsletter to help offset production and distribution costs. While this could provide a modest revenue stream and support the sustainability of the publication, it is unlikely to fully cover total expenses. However, it would help reduce Council's costs while maintaining and enhancing a key channel for community engagement.

Key points for consideration based on a 16-page A4 newsletter:

- The first consideration must be that the Council does not undercut local newsletters companies as it will be in direct competition with them.
- Producing the newsletter is time-intensive and must meet strict deadlines, as advertisers depend on timely publication. The spring edition will require all contributors to meet tighter copy deadlines, removing the small flexibility currently available.
- Other councils report that each edition takes six days of combined officer time for editing and production (excluding outsourced design). As officers design in-house, this could add around 4 extra officer days unless design is outsourced at additional cost.
- Officers currently handle editing, design, and production in-house before sending the final copy for professional printing and delivery.
- Distribution remains a significant expense, and Royal Mail delivery is unreliable due to postcode overlaps (e.g., OX29 includes Ducklington, Curbridge, North Leigh, and parts of Witney such as Windrush Place), requiring some hand delivery.
- To manage advertising, the council would use an advertising booking form and rate card with clear deadlines.
- Premium pages (inside front cover and back page (we cannot offer back page in the spring edition as that holds the freepost address for return of surveys)) would attract a higher charge. New advertisers would be offered a free additional advert with the purchase of their first advert and discounts applied for repeat bookings: 10% discount for block bookings of 3–5 adverts, and 20% discount for six or more (discounts exclude premium pages).
- Non-profit organisations and registered charities may qualify for free advertising, subject to submission of their constitution or rules and accounts and assessed based on the nature of the activity — for example, income-generating events v free community events.
- Non-profits and registered charities may qualify for free advertising on submission of their constitution and accounts, depending on the activity; income-generating events are charged, while free community events may be exempt.
- Advertisers based within the town/parish given priority for publication space.

2026-27 Budget Consultation Survey

The survey has been issued online with a link and in a second post with a QR code. Paper versions are available in 1863 and were passed to councillors for the Councillors in the café session at the start of November. It is also on posters and the digital signage.

The survey launched on 31 October via social media has received 39 responses, mostly from residents aged 40–49. Thirty-eight respondents provided their first line of address, and all stated their age. However, few surveys were fully completed, suggesting the questionnaire may be too long, particularly the Stronger Communities and PGF sections which also appear at the end of the survey which may indicate survey fatigue.

Response rates by section:

- **Q3 Climate and Biodiversity:** 34 answered / 5 skipped
- **Q4 Parks and Recreation:** 33 answered / 6 skipped
- **Q5 Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments:** 31 answered / 8 skipped
- **Q6 Stronger Communities:** 29 answered / 10 skipped
- **Q7 Policy, Governance and Finance:** 29 answered / 10 skipped

Final analysis will be presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 24 November 2025.

Website

Officers are currently conducting a substantial review of the Website in order for the Council to be fully digital compliant with Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2025-26 in March. This will comply with the requirements of WCAG3 2.2 with a view to being well prepared for the next WCAG release of 2.3, the date for which has not yet been announced.

In addition, the C&CEO has reviewed and updated the Website Accessibility Statement for approval. This can be seen here [Accessibility Statement – Witney Town Council](#)

Press Coverage

Latest press coverage information from September 2025 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement and is attached as **Appendix B**.

Officers are issuing a weekly round-up of social media news and events directly to press contacts. This will go out on Thursday where possible and include news posts and stories and full press releases where applicable. Officers will include any photographs and comments from Chair, Mayor or Leader where possible.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

a) Equality – The Communications Strategy and associated publications aim to reach all residents inclusively, ensuring accessibility and representation across age groups and communities.

b) Biodiversity – No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from the communications work or production of printed materials.

c) Crime & Disorder – Improved communication and community engagement may contribute to greater awareness of community activities and indirectly support community cohesion, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency – While print production has some environmental impact, efforts will be made to minimise waste, use sustainable materials where possible, and promote digital communication channels in line with the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration.

Risk

There are minimal risks associated with the Communications Strategy; however, newsletter and other publication time pressures, potential advertising conflicts, and publication deadlines could strain officer resources. Using external support or adjusting publication schedules could help mitigate these risks.

Managing workloads and maintaining quality standards will be key to avoiding reputational or financial risks. Clear deadlines and advertising procedures will support, this but it might be that officers are less able to manage on large events if more printed publications are required of them.

Social Value

The Council’s communications work enhances transparency, supports local organisations, and fosters community participation. Including local advertisers and promoting community events generates local economic and social benefit.

Initiatives such as the newsletter, events calendar, and consultation surveys strengthen community engagement and encourage civic involvement.

Financial Implications

Introducing paid advertising may help offset publication costs, though not fully cover them. External printing and delivery remain ongoing expenses, and officer time for in-house design must be considered in budgeting. Additional printed items will add to the budget required even if recouped slightly it will be an overall increase.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Review and comment on the revised Communications Strategy (Appendix A).
2. Consider the proposals for producing and distributing an Events Calendar, including advertising options.

3. Support continued exploration of advertising in the Town Council newsletter to reduce costs and enhance community engagement.
4. Approve the updated Council website Accessibility statement.



WITNEY

TOWN COUNCIL

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
3.9.25	Oxfordshire's largest funfair to open for an extra day	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25436134.oxfordshire-largest-funfair-open-extra-day/	
10.9.25	Water Play Park Closes for Season	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25444010.leys-splash-park-witney-closes-for-season/	
15.9.25	Union Jack raised in Witney to mark Battle of Britain Day	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467824.union-jack-raised-witney-mark-battle-britain-day/	
15.9.25	Oxfordshire's biggest funfair opens in 'atrocious' weather	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467909.oxfordshire-biggest-funfair-opens-atrocious-weather/	
20.9.25	Silt build-up removal brings river to normal level	BBC News	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce84znwxdwqo	
23.9.25	Warning as 20 tonnes of gravel comes to Oxfordshire park	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette, BBC News, MSN			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25487051.hgv-warning-20-tonnes-gravel-comes-witney-park/	
1.10.25	Witney preparing to host its first Eco Fair next week	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25504470.witney-preparing-host-first-eco-fair-next-week/	
1.10.25	Witney residents to speak with councillors this weekend	Thisisoxfordshire, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25505380.witney-residents-speak-councillors-witney-gazette/	
6.10.25	Popular Oxfordshire park wins royal horticultural gold award	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, Yahoo!News	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25512207.popular-oxfordshire-park-wins-royal-horticultural-gold-award/	
12.10.25	Witney: Emergency bleed control kit installed by town hall	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall/	
15.10.25	Emergency Kit Installed	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall/	
22.10.25	MP and councillors view progress at development	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-new/	

Date	Story	Reported In	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
22.10.25	Witney Lake path work ends	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake-country-park-completed/	
24.10.25	Witney: Work carried out to reduce local flood risk	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25565246.witney-work-carried-reduce-local-flood-risk/	
25.10.25	Work to improve paths at Witney Lake and Country Park completed	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake-country-park-completed/	
26.10.25	Witney MP and councillors view progress at new development	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-new-development/	
29.10.25	Trees removed from river to reduce flood risk	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	Physical	

A weekly roundup of social media activity is sent to the Council's press contacts. Individual Press Releases will still be issued for key Council news.

Witney Town Council

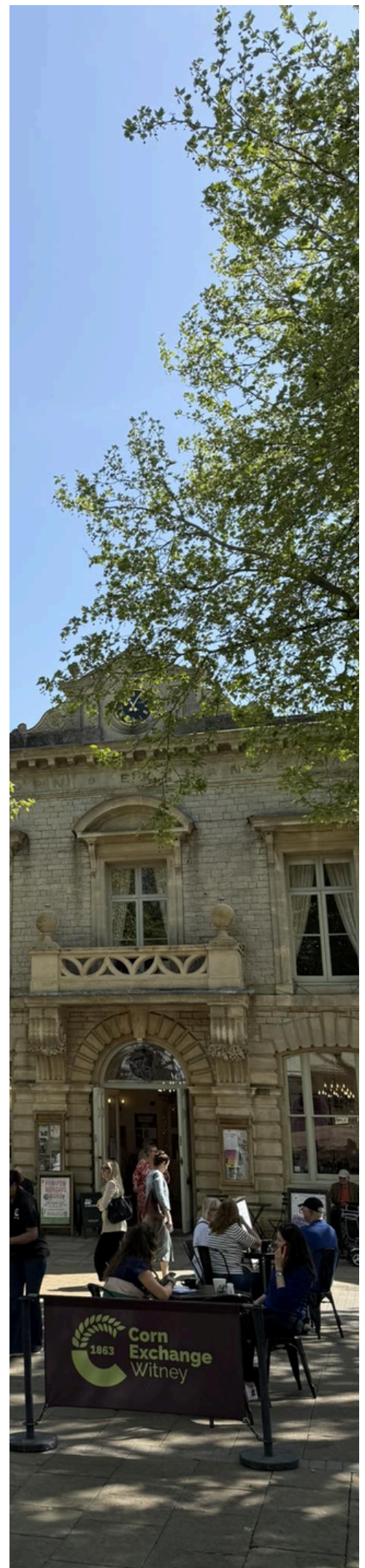


WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

Communications Strategy 2025

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Introduction

Effective communication is a two-way exchange and therefore it is important that the Council demonstrates that it regularly listens, assesses, and confirms that its messaging is useful, well-received and trusted. This document outlines a strategy for improving and delivering effective communications. It sets out how Witney Town Council will monitor and develop its external and internal communications to meet the needs and demands of our diverse audience of customers and interested parties.

A practical action plan drawn from this will ensure that the Council is always using the most appropriate communication tools, platforms and approaches to engage effectively with our residents, young people, community and business partners, visitors, education establishments, our staff, councillors and other levels of local government.

The Town Council will continue to report back to residents on how it takes action based on feedback received, for example by issuing 'You Said, We Did' social media posts, one of the ways in which we demonstrate that we are listening and responding.

Background and Context

Communication consistently scores low in the Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey, indicating potential dissatisfaction among respondents. Issues include self-selection bias, primarily from an older demographic that prefers paper surveys, and apathy, as satisfied individuals generally respond less. There is no blanket method that will reach everyone, but we must continue try to address the dissatisfaction expressed by survey respondents.

Over the time we have been regularly surveying residents we have seen the satisfaction score for communication rise from its previous lowest at 76% of people expressing satisfaction in 2016, to 87% or above for the next five years.

This year (2025) the score has apparently dropped dramatically- a satisfaction level of only 62%.

While this is a cause for concern it is not likely to be a reflection of our output or the quality of our communications.

It is much more likely that much of the apparent drop is due to the impact of distorted data caused by two things, the inclusion of an additional response choice to the survey; and a more determined targeting of young people.

We added a 'don't know/don't use' tick box in 2023 and more recently we have directly surveyed school age residents using the same survey. Both of these have significantly skewed the data we collect.





None of this negates the fact that people who scored communication as poor do not feel that they are communicated with adequately. They have had a poor experience or hold a poor perception of Witney Town Council and we must continue to address that.

The distribution of newsletters to schools has yielded some welcome, useful feedback, but there is no doubt they are less familiar with certain services. They tend to tick 'don't know/don't use' and sometimes 'poor' if they do not have any experience of a particular service.

These additions have distorted satisfaction scoring data, to the extent that it is no longer particularly useful to refer to data that predates 2023.

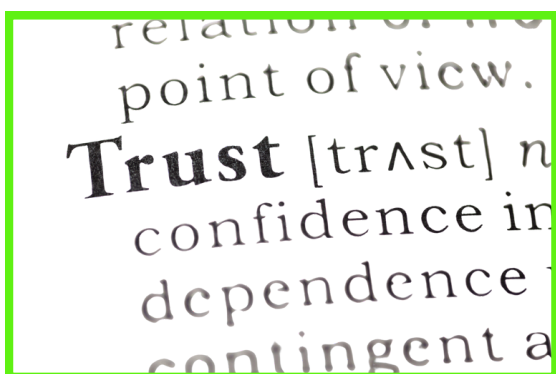
Creating a separate youth-focused newsletter and survey may help gather more relevant feedback about their needs and aspirations and could be considered as a future action.

It is, though, still useful to look closely at data extracted from the annual residents' satisfaction survey on which this document was originally formulated and it is critical to return to the latest feedback at each review.

Witney Town Council has a strong portfolio of communication platforms, and a robust communication strategy to share positive news about ongoing projects and successes. The focus is on celebrating these achievements including drawing attention to the hard work that goes on behind the scenes.

We make conscious efforts to approach less favourable news stories with the same openness, integrity and sensitivity with which we impart the good news. We recognise how important this is given the amount of biased and false information to be found across all media, but in particular across digital and social media channels.

By maintaining consistent, responsible, and truthful communication, we aim to ensure that residents are accurately informed, can trust the information they receive, and feel confident in the Council's commitment to reliable information.



Honesty and impartiality must continue to be at the heart of our communications strategy.



Online Nation (Ofcom 2024 report)

Misinformation was the most prevalent potential harm with 39% of internet users aged 13+ saying they had encountered it. The types of misinformation that internet users saw fluctuated according to the topical news and current affairs when the survey was run.

Following the announcement of the UK General Election, on 22 May 2024, there was a small but significant increase in June 2024 of internet users aged 13+ saying they had encountered political or electoral misinformation (25%), up from 22% in January 2024.

In January 2024, reports of misinformation about conflicts rose significantly (to 21% from 6% in June 2023), probably linked to the war in Gaza which began in October 2023.



Purpose

The purpose of this communications strategy is to provide a clear direction for the development of external and internal communications across the organisation.

This strategy should be viewed as a living document that is reviewed regularly in order to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing communications landscape, and the expectations that come with that.

- It aims to support the council's other policies, strategies and plans including those that are emerging.
- It is intended to ensure that the place and purpose of Witney Town Council, its Vision and Strategy is understood in the community, and to demonstrate that in turn the community voice is heard, listened to and acted upon.
- To promote Witney Town Council as an easily recognised, trusted and news source with consistent branding and reliable, accessible digital and print formats.

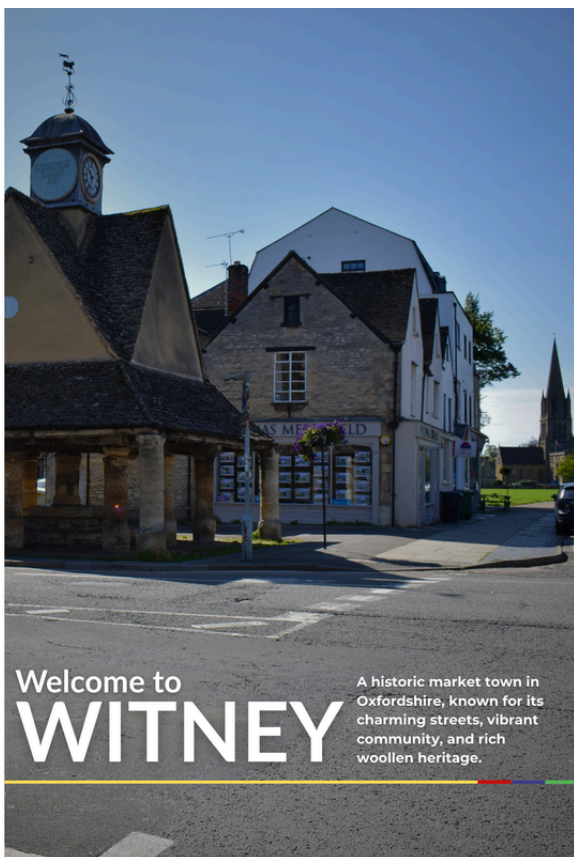
Objectives

- To set and maintain a consistently high standard of communication across all the Council's communications channels and departments even when the tone of voice is tailored according to the channel.
- Communications from Witney Town Council should be instantly recognisable as such. Standardisation of everything from email signatures to forms and templates, will ensure this. And this, in conjunction with re-branding, will have a positive impact on perceptions of the role and functions of Witney Town Council and will help earn trust.
- To deliver, with confidence and appropriate pride, a high standard of engaging, interesting, clear, useful, and factual communications, across a range of audiences and media.
- To communicate, clearly, the council's role and responsibilities in the community, maintaining and building upon a good reputation and signposting to where help may be found if it is not within our remit.
- To organise and modernise our approach, and use innovative ways to deliver news, report information and feedback to our residents.
- To engage and consult with our residents and enable them to communicate easily with the council, and for them to be able to expect a timely and appropriate response.
- To ensure that all internal and external communications use language that treats people with the respect they deserve, is non-discriminatory and accessible to a wide audience. Plain English should be used at all times with any obscure terms and abbreviations explained.



objectives contd

- To ensure that everyone has equal access to information and is not discriminated against or disadvantaged by our actions in any way. This includes reducing barriers wherever possible, for example through the use of the Voices of Witney panel.
- To ensure that all residents feel welcomed and included.
- To establish new and build on existing partnerships with other organisations and community groups.
- To establish measures to monitor and assess impact of communications.
- To continue to grow the Town Council's reach and expand the demographic spread on its digital channels.



Who Are We Trying To Reach ?



Continue to use, produce and develop, key print publications, maximising the reach and impact of these to help reach a wider audience, particularly those without internet access.

objectives contd

- To make better use of graphics and video across the council's digital platforms and explore other emerging technologies with an open mind.
- To develop internal communications channels which are tailored to a mobile workforce to meet the needs of the organisation and encourage staff engagement.
- To ensure web content is relevant and accessible.
- To continue to foster good relationships with the media, being both proactive in output and responsive to incoming enquiries and requests for comment/content.
- To aim for digital by default wherever possible to reduce wastage of inks and paper, in line with the Council's ambition to be Carbon Neutral.

Color Contrast Checker - Pivotal Accessibility

Foreground: #1D0370 Background: #183D68

Color Contrast Ratio: 1.47:1

1.4.3 Contrast (Minimum) (AA)
Fail (Large) Fail (Regular)

1.4.6 Contrast (Enhanced) (AAA)
Fail (Large) Fail (Regular)

1.4.11 Non-text Contrast (AA)
Fail (UI components and graphical objects)

Select a Success Criterion
1.4.3 Contrast (Minimum) (AA) ▼

Select Text Type
Regular ▼

Get Color Recommendations ▼



The Comms team now use accessibility checkers for all web, social media, and print content to ensure sufficient text-image contrast and to provide text alternatives for any information shown in images. We are also already working to meet the requirements of the upcoming WCAG 3.0 (2.3). newly uploaded videos have captions (not live stream)

Ageing Towns

Most of the data from our Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey, attendance at the Annual Town Meeting, the 1863 café clientele, and our event audiences shows a strong bias toward older people. While we appear to reach this group well, they are also the ones who most often say they don't know what we do or what's happening unless it's in the Witney Gazette or sent to them by letter.



Below are some extracts from a recent report by **Centre For Towns**, an independent non-partisan organisation dedicated to providing research and analysis of our towns highlights that many young people are moving in to cities and larger towns leaving smaller towns and villages as 'ageing towns'. This should be taken into account when considering what we do and how we want to improve.

- **The Office for National Statistics currently projects that by 2046 there will be seven million more people aged 65 and over in the United Kingdom.**
- **Around three-quarters of the increase in 45 to 64-year olds and over 65s between 1981 and 2011 took place in villages, communities, small and medium sized towns.**

Digital - Website

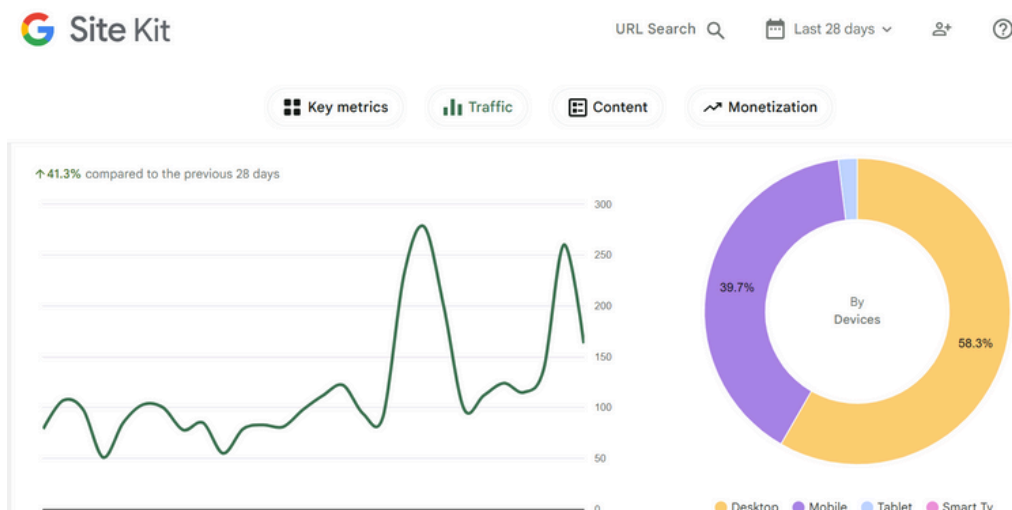
Witney Town Council's website was built in house by the Communications and Engagement Officer, using WordPress, and is hosted by Fasthosts. Fasthosts has been a very satisfactory supplier with an excellent level of service and support. The site has recently been updated to be more accessible.

The Corn Exchange website was built by Rumblr. The website content is managed by Venue & Events Officer and the Venue & Events Co-ordinator.

Content on the WTC Council website is currently managed by the Communications and Engagement Officer, Administrative Support Assistant - Communities and Planning and Administration Assistant - Communications & Engagement.

Content often reflects what is shared on social media but sometimes these differ according to audience and relevance. Pages are usually added as an action arising from a Council decision. Mod Gov is embedded in the website, and the content for this is managed by the Democratic and Legal Services Officer. The software appears to function well within our site.

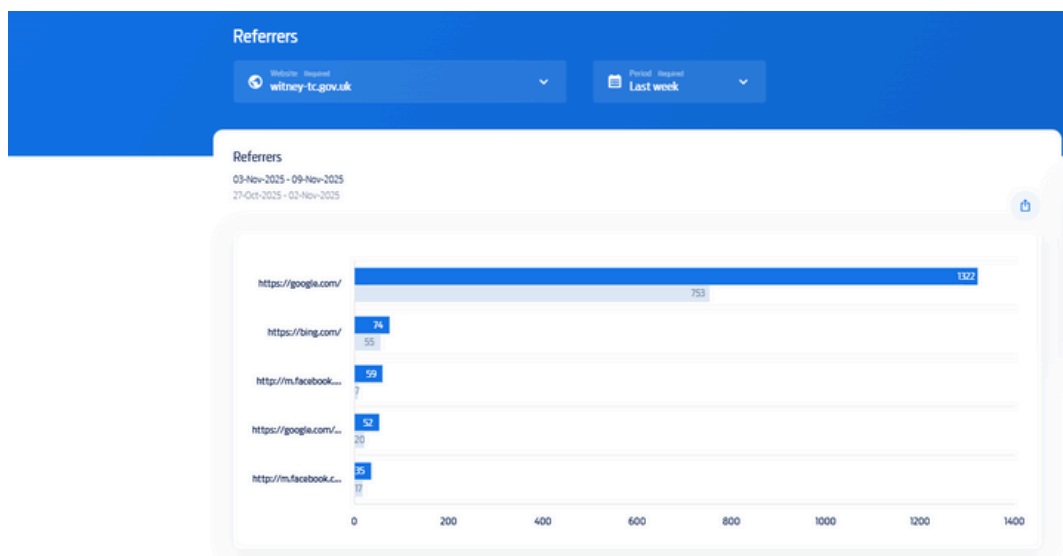
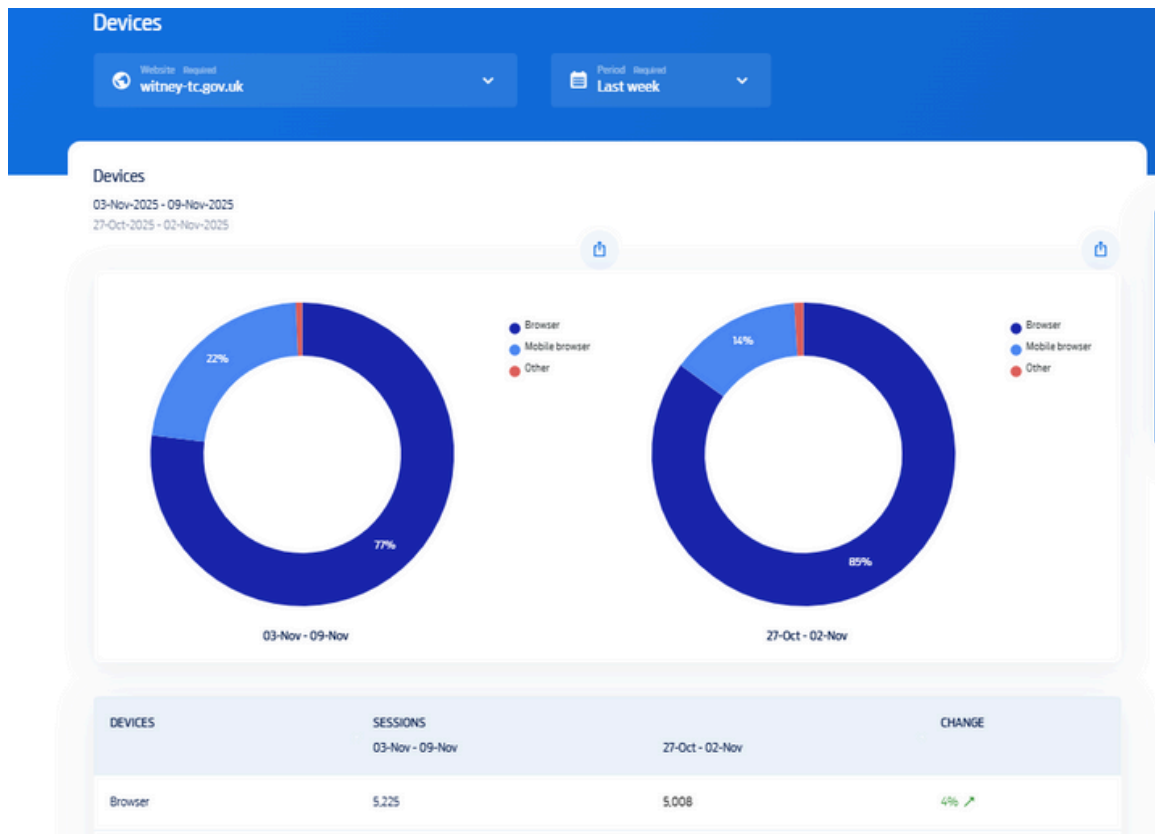
The Google Site kit generates plenty of anonymous website visitor data and we also get regular insights from our hosting company. We regularly review these and it is easy to see how visitors fluctuate from month to month.



We can see how people are accessing the site and how long they spend there, which pages they visit and the most popular pages.

1. Witney Town Council – Official Site of Witney Town Council	1,026	799	57.07%	1m 36s
2. What's On at Our Venues – Witney Town Council	279	261	63.98%	59s
3. Christmas Lights Sponsorship 2025 – Witney Town Council	214	206	58.25%	39s
4. Remembrance Sunday – Witney Town Council	203	199	36.68%	1m 5s
5. Temporary Road Closure – Downs Road, Witney – Witney Town Council	132	112	71.43%	1m 16s
6. Contact Us – Witney Town Council	87	84	67.86%	3m 6s

Digital - Analytics -Website



Our hosting company also provide useful analytics such as Referrers which lets us know how people were directed to our site for example, as the result of a google search or from a link through Facebook etc. We can also view the terms visitor used to search for us, and this is linked to an increase in site traffic at certain times of the year when people are searching for information on Witney Feast or Remembrance

Social Media

The Council has the following corporate social media profiles and followers:

Facebook: @WitneyTownCouncil - 3607(June 2021) currently **6200 (Nov 2025)**

Instagram @witneytc -115 (July 2021) **currently 836 (Nov 2025)**

X: @WitneyTownCounc – 3409 followers (June 2021) **currently 3459 (Nov 2025)**

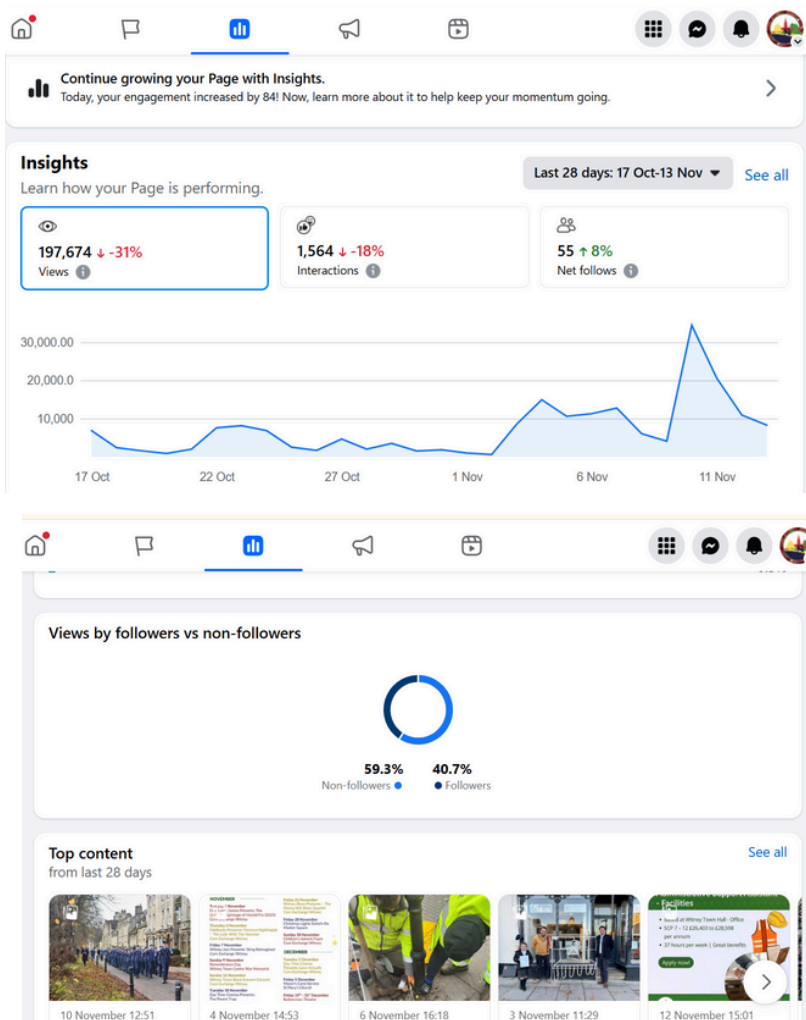
We also have a You Tube Channel, LinkedIn and Tik Tok which are still slowly growing – These are all administered, and content uploaded, in the main by the Communications and Community Engagement Officer , Administrative Support Assistant -Communities and Planning and Administration Assistant - Communications & Engagement.

The Corn Exchange has its own social media accounts..

The Youth Council also has an Instagram account.

The various analytics dashboards do throw up some useful insights into the type of content that performs well. Videos and images generally reach larger audiences than text-only posts and we are using more of these although they can be more time consuming to create. Content that really matters locally and is important to residents can provoke a response and is shared rapidly, reaching a significant number of people.

Officers are making efforts to include more video but captioning is quite time consuming.

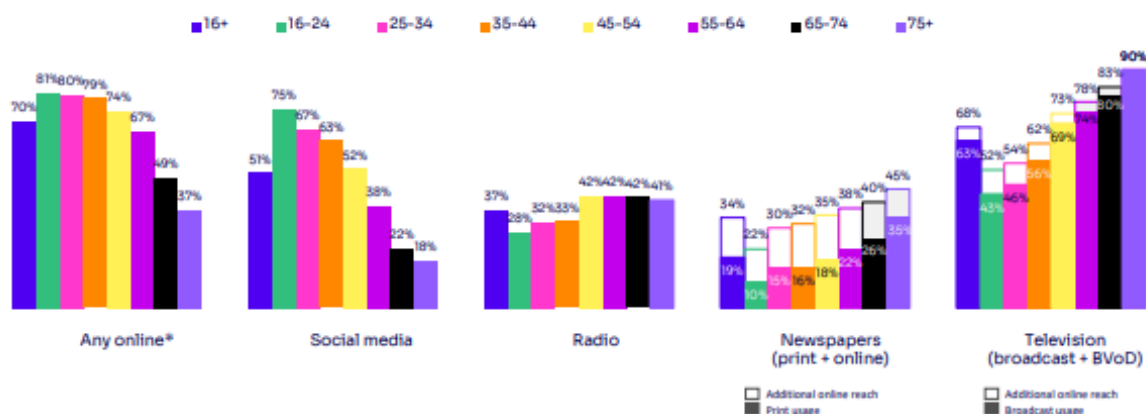


Social Media National Statistics

More people consume online than through any other platform for news

While online news consumption (70%) is on a par with watching news on TV, including on-demand (68%), it is significantly higher than linear broadcast TV channels (63%). Social media is a significant element of online news consumption and half of UK adults (51%) now use it as a source of news. Television (including on-demand) as a source of news skews towards an older demographic, with 90% of those aged 75 and over using it, compared to 52% of young people aged 16-24. The reverse is seen in the use of online for news – 81% of 16-24s are using online services, compared to only 37% of adults aged 75 and over. Just under four in ten people use the radio for news, and about one in five adults say they get news from a printed newspaper. In both cases, this is highest among older age groups.

Figure 5: Platforms used for news 'nowadays', by age: 2025



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2025 Question: C1. Which of the following platforms do you use for news nowadays? Base: All Adults 16+ 2025 – All adults 16+=4573, 16-24=585, 25-34=770, 35-44=787, 45-54=741, 55-64=587, 65-74=628, 75+=472 *'Online' includes social media, podcasts, other websites/apps.

When asked about trustworthiness, 68% of those who use TV for news, and 67% of those who use radio for news, rated these highly for trustworthiness. In contrast 44% of those who use social media for news rated social media highly for trustworthiness.⁴ For further detail on how people in the UK access and consume news, please see our recently-published News Consumption in the UK report.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Community Engagement Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 17 November 2025
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors about proposed projects, events and activities that will provide opportunities for engaging with the community.

Current Situation

Annual Resident's Survey 2026

The Council has already committed to re-running the 2018 communications survey as part of this initiative (minute no. SC530 refers).

This will be updated to include new platforms and media types.

If Members would like to suggest any further themes of questions for the Annual survey they are invited to raise them at the meeting.

Christmas Engagement 2025

Members resolved that officers 'contact care facilities to gauge interest in the use of the Gallery Room for the Christmas Lights Switch-on event before a decision on who to provide use to is considered' as the group who had been offered use in 2024 hadn't been able to fully utilise the offer.

The Communications & Community Engagement Officer has confirmed that the Group would be pleased to use the Gallery Room on Christmas Lights Switch-On night, as previously reported. Final numbers are being confirmed, and a risk assessment will be prepared. Youth Councillors may be invited, subject to sufficient available staff to supervise them. The Civic Party will be invited to join for refreshments.

Witney Day Centre has also requested use of the room; however, as it has been allocated elsewhere, officers propose offering the 1863 Café Bar on Tue 9th Dec for their festive celebration, subject to Committee approval and relevant staffing.

Citizen of the Year & Civic Reception

Nominations are open for this year's winners who will be chosen by the mayor and awarded at the Council's Civic Reception on Friday 6th March.

Witney Town Band Summer Concert Program

For the last two summers, the Council has paid for and facilitated this event. Feedback from the Band is provided below.

Feedback on our summer programme of 3 "Brass on the Grass" concerts, kindly sponsored by the Witney Town Council.

We performed at Wood Green Park on Sunday 29th June, Oxlease Park on Sunday 27th July, and the final concert was at The Leys on Sunday 24th August.

Each concert consisted of two sets of 45 min (i.e. 90 min of concert playing), with a 30 min break. It was superb for the band to have a specific concert series for which to rehearse, and this resulted in the performance of some quite difficult pieces that we would not usually undertake; for example, an arrangement of Sibelius's "Finlandia" for brass band, together with some more popular & entertaining pieces by artists such as Snow Patrol, Taylor Swift, and Tom Jones. The concerts provided good stimulus for us to expand our repertoire and develop together as a band.

We were lucky with the weather. Each concert was warm & dry, with light winds. We were grateful to use the Town Council's 3x6m gazebo, and together with a second 3x3m gazebo that belonged to a band member we had adequate shade. You kindly provided the fold-up chairs. Collection was a little challenging owing to the building works at The Leys which complicated access to your lock-up store, but we managed to coordinate successfully each time! Special thanks to you & Annie for being so helpful with this, Polly.

Concerning the venues, probably the concert that worked less well was at Wood Green in June. The weather was extremely hot, there is little shade available (apart from the trees around the periphery), there are no toilet facilities nearby, and the Three Pigeons pub was also long-term closed. I understand that this pub re-opened in July? If so, then perhaps with their consent to use their facilities we could play at Wood Green Park again, but this will need careful thought. Our concerts at Oxlease (opposite Cogges), and The Leys (next to The Shed cafe) worked much better for us. There are drink, food & ice-cream options - vital in the hot summer! - and toilet facilities.

Audience numbers grew as our Brass on the Grass concerts progressed - with only perhaps 40-50 people at our first concert in Wood Green, this swelled perhaps three-fold by the time we came to The Leys. This was undoubtedly the best venue - plenty of car parking, open space, shade for those who need it, and the staff at The Shed were exceptionally friendly and welcoming.

In summary, can we please feedback our grateful thanks to the Town Council for your support in enabling the Witney Town Band to play these free events in your parks. We probably reached an audience of over 250 people - but we are convinced that we can do better and attract a greater audience - and we would relish the opportunity to do a similar concert series next year. There is lots of potential here, and as word spreads, and perhaps with a review of how we advertise, we believe that Witney "Brass on the Grass" can become a summer institution! May I respectfully suggest that the Band submits a proposal to you, for summer 2026, early in the new year?

With very best wishes

Yours sincerely



Chair, Witney Town Band

Witney Carnival 2026

The Council has noted that Witney Carnival Committee is currently asking people to vote for the following four potential themes for the 2026 event: Climate Change, Under the Sea, Music Icons and Nursery Rhymes. Members may like to feed back to the group directly with their ideas via their Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/WitneyCarnival>

Witney Food and Drink Festival

Officers were asked to suggest additional stalls of community interest that could be added to the WFOFAD.

For the last few years, there have been stalls on Church Green during WFOFAD that aren't food and drink related, but could be useful to the residents of Witney, for example, a domestic abuse charity, guide dogs' charity, etc. Officers have suggested some of the groups who attend the Witney Forum. This could also be a great opportunity for Community Engagement for the Town Council. A stall there in Councillors in the Café style where the Council can answer questions and promote news and events.

Witney Forum

The confidential notes from the meeting held on 2 October 2025 are attached.

National Pride Working Party

The first meeting of this group was held on Thursday 13 November.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – All proposed projects and events aim to be inclusive and accessible to all residents, supporting equal participation across the community.
- b) Biodiversity – No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from these activities. Outdoor events will continue to use existing green spaces responsibly.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Community events and engagement activities promote civic pride and positive social interaction, contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Events and communications will consider environmental impact, minimising waste and promoting sustainable practices in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

Risk

Councillors should note potential risks relating to event management, staffing capacity, and weather conditions for outdoor activities. Appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken for each project to minimise liability.

Risks are considered low and manageable through established procedures and officer oversight.

Social Value

Council-led events and partnerships create opportunities for community connection, volunteering, and cultural enrichment. Initiatives such as the Witney Town Band concerts and local festival involvement strengthen community identity and wellbeing.

These projects deliver strong social value by supporting local groups, encouraging participation, and enhancing civic engagement.

Financial Implications

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets. Event costs and officer time will be managed to ensure best value for the community.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider the updates provided on community engagement projects and events.
2. Endorse the proposed use of the 1863 Café Bar by Witney Day Centre for their festive celebration.
3. Support continued collaboration with community groups such as Witney Town Band and Witney Food and Drink Festival to enhance engagement opportunities.

Document is Restricted

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: In Bloom Competitions & Community Gardening 2026-27

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on In Bloom and Community Gardening initiatives in the New Year.

Current Situation

Thames & Chiltern in Bloom (Britain in Bloom)

Following the successful gold award for Witney Lake & Country Park, the Council must decide whether to enter any other areas for 2026 so that budgets may be correctly allocated.

Most of the focus this year, could be on bringing some colour and biodiversity back to Unterhaching Park. This project involves clearing of non-native species to allow native plants to thrive, root and undergrowth reduction and a refresh of the soil to increase the chances of bulbs and other new planting being able to flourish. There will also be a program of canopy lifting of the trees to allow more light and better sight lines to increase safety and reduce the likelihood of ASB.

Teams of volunteers have helped make a start on some of the areas most in need of tidying and clearing. Other work could involve brightening up the play area with some floor art or interactive listening posts etc.

Currently it would not merit entry into the national competition, but the Council would be creating the basis for improvement and an entry in the future. Officers are collating pictures and information about its current state which will contribute a to a future portfolio or project log of the work undertaken.

An initial investment of £1,500 of the In Bloom budget would make a considerable difference. Other funding may be available to help transform the park in other ways.

Members should also be minded that there will be a significant addition to planters in the High Street once this project has been completed. Planting and planting schemes are now under the remit of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee.

Schools in Bloom

This remains a popular and engaging competition which highlights biodiversity in line with the Council's obligations and provides a centre piece for the Carnival in July for public judging.

New wheelbarrows are needed as some are starting to show signs of wear and tear. Officers will aim to replace the four worst ones from this year's budget (£800) and the rest on a rolling program starting next year (2027) budget.

Officers recommend the budget for Schools in Bloom gardening vouchers in 2026-27 is £50 each with a potential of 13 barrows being distributed to schools – total £650. A further budget for schools would provide a small gift for all entries and prizes for the Mayor's Choice, The People's Choice and if we are not having In Bloom judges, we usually select The Most Unusual Garden or something similar. Total budget for prizes is £280 for 13 small prizes and three larger value ones for the winners.

Themes being considered for next year, gardens of the future, depict another country just using planting - gardens around the world.

Community Gardening

The town hosts four community gardening groups, one of which has been created via the new community garden at Queen Emma's Dyke in 2025. The plan is to continue to offer a voucher of £40 to each to cover compost and new plants. This works well for the established gardens, but the new garden may require some additional early support until it becomes more sustainable.

There is no leeway or extra budget requested this year for the purchase of bins or water butts etc. Officers will request receipts for all purchases and will check to ensure that gardens are maintained over the winter before vouchers are issued.

Officers recommend the budget for community gardening vouchers in 2026-27 is £40 each – a total of £120.

Impact Assessments

a) Equality – Projects such as In Bloom, Schools in Bloom, and Community Gardening promote inclusive participation, engaging residents, schools, and volunteers of all ages and abilities.

b) Biodiversity – All initiatives support biodiversity through the planting of native species, habitat improvement, and pollinator-friendly schemes in parks and community gardens.

c) Crime & Disorder – Environmental improvements, such as clearing overgrowth and improving sight lines, contribute to safer public spaces and help reduce anti-social behaviour.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The projects directly support the Council's Climate Emergency objectives by enhancing green spaces, improving soil health, and promoting sustainable planting practices.

Risk

Risks are minimal but may include volunteer safety, adverse weather, and maintenance requirements. All activities will be supported by appropriate risk assessments and supervision.

Projects are low-risk and offer high community benefit. Officer oversight and volunteer coordination will help mitigate operational risks.

Social Value

The initiatives foster community pride, learning, and wellbeing by encouraging residents to care for and improve their local environment.

By supporting schools and volunteer groups, the Council strengthens community networks and enhances the town's appearance and environmental awareness.

Financial Implications

- £1,500 proposed from the In Bloom budget for improvements at Unterhaching Park.
- £800 for replacement of four Schools in Bloom wheelbarrows.
- £650 for gardening vouchers and £280 for prizes.
- £120 for community gardening vouchers.
- All costs are within existing or proposed 2026–27 budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Approve allocation of £1,500 from the In Bloom budget for works at Unterhaching Park.
2. Approve replacement of four Schools in Bloom wheelbarrows and confirm the proposed budgets for £50 vouchers and prizes.
3. Approve continuation of the £40 community gardening vouchers for 2026–27.
4. Consider whether to enter additional sites into the Thames & Chiltern in Bloom 2026 competition.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Youth Council Update
Meeting Date:	Monday, 17 November 2025
Contact Officer:	Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Witney Youth Council.

Background

The Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the council has actively participated in town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Witney Carnival.

The primary purpose of the Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that is heard by decision makers. By giving young people a voice, the Witney Youth Council plays a vital role in shaping a more inclusive and responsive local government, encouraging active participation, and developing key skills among Witney's young people.

Current Situation

New Members

Since September 2025, the Witney Youth Council has welcomed four new members. They are very driven and have already contributed a lot of ideas.

Youth Council Meeting Notes – 21st October 2025

For the new members, officers held an informal introductory meeting. This involved answering three questions to find common issues they would like to tackle and give them an aim to work towards. Here is a summary of their responses:

- **What do you like best about Witney?**

Response: Youth Councillors frequently brought up the scenery (buildings), the wildlife, and the peaceful atmosphere of Witney. They enjoyed the sense of community, the diversity, and how accepting residents are. Some mentioned they appreciated the winter events such as the Christmas Light Switch-On.

- **What is the biggest issue facing young people in Witney?**

Response: Youth Councillors emphasised the lack of activities and clubs to do after school time for young people. They agreed that vaping was a large issue and very prevalent amongst

young people their age. Mental health and bullying were also mentioned, both physical and mental, as well as anti-social behaviour.

- **What can the Witney Youth Council do to tackle these issues?**

Response: Almost all Youth Councillors mentioned the need for a Youth Club, specifically for secondary school aged young people. Some things the Youth Council discussed to hold were charity fundraising work, car boot sales, cake sales, cultural days, raffles, hot chocolate stands, as well as group visits to the Fire Station, Police Station, Hospital, Foodbanks, and local Charities. They expressed they would like more frequent meetings and chances to ask other young people in person what they would be interested in, as surveys can be dependent on whether they are filled out or not.



Figure 1 Post It Notes from 21/10/25 - Youth Council Meeting

Officers explored these questions using coloured pens and post it notes and offered cakes and sweets as an incentive to boost attendance. This led to ten members attending this meeting - a significant improvement from the one member attending previously. The session overall proved very successful in encouraging members to interact, share ideas, and express their thoughts in writing.

Next Youth Council Meeting - 19th November 2025

The next three Youth Council Meetings will take place more frequently than others as requested to keep motivation and attendance up (once a month), as well as increasing the likelihood of identifying a clear project to take forward.

The following will be discussed in the next meeting:

- Youth Council Roles Refresh
- WhatsApp Youth Council Notifications
- First Project Plans

Officers suggest the current official format of the Youth Council may not be conducive to getting the best out of members and that the roles and terms of reference be reviewed. The agreed TORs can be viewed here: [Witney-Youth-Council-Terms-of-Reference.docx](#)

Officers suggest the following amendments:

2. Membership

2.2 The term of Youth Council membership will be for 2 years (if a member wishes to serve longer than this time the Town Council will review the request)

~~2.8 The core membership of the Youth Council shall consist of 10 members made up from the following schools:~~

~~2.9 The remaining 10 Members will be elected from groups or organisations in Witney, subject to applications being received from their members.~~

~~2.11 Any places left by departing members during the course of the year may be co-opted from the waiting list by Witney Town Council.~~

3. Youth Council Elected Roles

Officers suggest the roles are revised to:

- Chair/Vice Chair
- Media Officer
- Treasurer

This simplification will help clarification of roles and responsibilities.

4. Meetings

With a regular attendance of 5 to 10 members, meetings often are unable to meet the current quorum number of 7. To keep meetings productive and allow the youth councillors to achieve their ideas, it is suggested that quorum is lowered to 4 (one third of members). Subsequently, the terms of reference will need to be adjusted to represent this.

It is also proposed that meeting frequency requirements be made more flexible. Youth councillors often face challenges attending meetings during exam periods and summer holidays, while at other times, particularly when planning events, they express a desire for more frequent sessions. Adjusting the schedule to reflect these seasonal needs would help maintain engagement and support effective project planning.

Communicating through WhatsApp

Officers will be sending out a parental consent form to youth members to be contacted via their mobile phones through **WhatsApp** as agreed in the last Stronger Communities meeting.

As emails are frequently not responded to, WhatsApp provides a more familiar and accessible means of contact for the youth councillors. It is important to note:

- This communication method is managed by the Communications and Engagement Administrative Assistant as well as the Communications and Community Engagement Officer using a work mobile. *Best practice is to have two DBS checked adults in every WhatsApp chat as you would at any gathering.*
- This is not a group chat but a direct messaging system, ensuring privacy and protecting confidential information. To not use WhatsApp to reply to individual young people – but to switch to SMS instead – and then to only communicate information.
- Youth Councillors under the age of 13 cannot legally use WhatsApp as per their Terms of Service (which can be found here: www.whatsapp.com/legal/terms-of-service).
- Parents and Guardians of youth councillors under 18 are informed of the above information in line with the WhatsApp terms of engagement.

Youth Council Projects

Plans for the **High Sheriff's Big Breakfast Conversations** will not proceed due to focus on other areas of interest, and the Youth Council is unable to meet the November deadline.

The Youth-led Culture Day is a significant project from previous meetings that was also brought up again as an option. It is recommended that first they plan a small and simple project such as a raffle stall or cake sale for their first project. The next meeting will be to decide on this.

Remembrance Day

The Witney Youth Council were also in attendance at the Remembrance Day service. It was wonderful to see the Chair and Vice-Chair laying a wreath and representing the young people of Witney.

Christmas Lights Switch-on Events

The Communications & Community Engagement Officer intends to ask the Youth Council to assist in welcoming Be Free Young Carers on the evening in the Gallery Room at the Corn Exchange.

Daily Slides and End of Term Newsletters

News of the Witney Youth Council and Witney Town Council relating to young residents of Witney has begun to be sent to local secondary schools.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Witney Youth Council inherently tackles inequality by giving a voice and a platform to young people, often apart of diverse communities. Many issues youth councillors want to tackle involve discrimination.
- b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to help Witney's green spaces have not yet been discussed.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Helping young people feel listened to through avenues such as a Youth Council can help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime by Young People through promoting mental health awareness, peer-led activities/initiatives, and improving the reputation of young people in Witney.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency –When Witney Youth Council buy items for their projects, we have prioritised sustainability and the use of eco-friendly materials.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Officers recognise the potential risks associated with using WhatsApp and have developed a consent form that details the data collection and usage when employing third-party applications.

Youth Councillors and their guardians retain the right to refuse the use of WhatsApp and can remain to communicate exclusively through email.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- Organisations and local groups able to gather valuable insights on the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.
- Young residents of Witney feel heard and that their voice can make an impact.

Financial implications

- Officers' working time
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for the Youth Council meetings.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Consider the changes to the Youth Council roles and terms of reference.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Youth Services

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Youth Services being funded by the Town Council in 2025/26 and to consider any amendments for the 2026/27 budget.

Background

Youth Services Grant

In 2025, the Council re-introduced a youth services grant scheme with a budget of £20,000 under the oversight of this Committee, with all grant awards decided on by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Members will recall that the scheme funded eight organisations from this budget, with a further three supported from the discretionary grants fund, demonstrating both a clear need and a willingness from local groups to expand their provision. Awarded amounts differed from those requested and were allocated based on how well applications met the established criteria.

Officers understand that it is the Committee's intention for this scheme to continue in the forthcoming fiscal year.

Other Youth Services

In addition, the Council continued to fund The Station Detached Youth Service (£18,000), which presented its plans for the new year to the previous meeting. These plans were approved, subject to a revised Service Level Agreement (Minute No. SC 531 refers).

Home-Start Oxford requested £12,000 in 2025 from a budget of £11,000, with the full £11,000 awarded. A letter of thanks from September is included as **Appendix A**.

The Council also supported APCAM mental health drop-in sessions and We Game activities at the Corn Exchange throughout the year, at a total cost of £3,600. Feedback on these sessions is still awaited.

Members are invited to consider the continuation of these services and make recommendations accordingly.

Current Situation

Based on the above, the following budgets are proposed for the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Witney Youth Services Grant Fund	£20,000
The Station Detached Youth Service	£28,500
Home Start Oxford	£12,000
APCAM (School Holiday Drop-in Sessions)	£ 2,800*
APCAM We Game Sessions	£ 1,200*
 Total of Direct Youth Services funding	 <u>£64,500</u>

*Based on an increase from the 2025/26 figures

Members should note that additional services for young people are provided by the Town Council through other initiatives, including the annual Advent Fayre and OPA Play Day.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Access to well-funded, quality services can help mitigate the effects of social inequality. Ensuring that resources are directed toward the communities and individuals who need them most is a crucial step toward improving outcomes for young people, fostering social mobility, and promoting a more just and equal society.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct impact from the contents of this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder –By offering young people the tools, opportunities, and support they need to thrive, youth services reduce the likelihood that they will engage in criminal behaviour, contribute to social disorder, or face long-term negative outcomes. These services not only benefit individuals but also promote the well-being and safety of entire communities.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact from the contents of this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- Town and Parish Councils have no statutory duty to provide youth services. There is a reputational risk residents will see further funding as additional taxation. This needs to be balanced against the social value to the community.
- These are large sums of money, so it is critical that funding is allocated strategically, managed with transparency, and coupled with ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure the services provided are effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Investment in youth services can reduce the risk of negative outcomes, such as involvement in crime, substance abuse, or mental health crises. By offering structured activities and support systems, these programs help prevent young people from falling into harmful behaviours and provide alternatives to risky or destructive paths.

Funding youth services is a critical investment in the future of individuals and communities. It creates long-term social value by addressing the needs of young people, promoting positive development, reducing social inequalities, and fostering a more resilient and cohesive society. The benefits are far-reaching, influencing everything from personal well-being and mental health to economic stability and societal growth.

Financial implications

- The full implications can be seen in the contents of the report.
- The Council retains separate budget lines for the Youth Services Grant (4169/408), Detached Youth Service (4172/408), and Home-Start Oxford (4173/408).
- If the Committee were to recommend further APCAM sessions in the new year this would need to be requested to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee as to where this may be funded from.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and recommend to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee,

1. The level of Town Council spending on Youth Services in 2026/27, including:
 - Retaining a budget Ring-fencing £28,500 and £12,000 for The Station Detached Youth Project and Home Start Oxford respectively.
 - Whether the Council should budget for further APCAM mental health drop-in sessions throughout the year, or during school holidays, or at all.
2. To note the Council has the General Power of Competence which allows it to fund for the above.



Witney Town Council
By email

10th September 2025

Dear Councillors,

Thank you for giving young children the foundations they need to thrive.

The earliest years of a child's life set the trajectories for their future happiness, health and educational attainment. By helping struggling families with under-5s you are changing life outcomes.

On behalf of all the children and families we support, our volunteers, staff, and trustees we would like to thank you for making a difference through your support of our group work in Witney.

One mum's recent feedback about attending our Puddle Jumpers group in Witney will give you a sense of how much she and her daughter have enjoyed attending this group.

"My daughter absolutely loves Puddle Jumpers. As soon as we get into the room, she just leaves me! It feels like such a safe place, I know that she can go off and play and I can keep an eye on her but also chat with the other mums in the group. And I've made friends from the group too, which is really nice. We've got a little group going now, and all the kids are within four months of each other in terms of age, so it's really nice. It's a really friendly group."

We are able to continue to run these important groups because of supporters like Witney Town Council. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K Barber". To the right of the signature is a simple line drawing of a paper airplane with a dashed line indicating its path.

Katharine Barber
CEO, Home-Start Oxford

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Flag Flying Policy Review

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to invite Members to consider and recommend approval of a revised Flag Flying Policy for the Town Council.

Background

At the meeting of the Committee on 15 September 2025 under minute no. SC521, it was resolved:

1. That, the anniversary of the Battle of Britain be added to the Council flag flying calendar and,
2. That, Officers draft an updated flag flying policy for consideration at the meeting of the Committee on 17 November and for it to be widely advertised upon adoption.

Current Situation

Officers have reviewed the Town Council's Flag Flying Policy, and the revised version is attached as **Appendix A**. A calendar of flag flying occasions is attached as **Appendix B**.

The updated policy expands on the purpose of flag flying and sets out all currently agreed dates and flags flown by the Town Council. It is designed to reflect current practice while allowing for future flexibility.

There is potential to extend the occasions on which the Union Flag is flown to include events such as Oxfordshire Day, Trafalgar Day, and Europe Day, in line with approaches taken by other councils. Additional recommendations may arise from the National Pride Working Party following its meeting on 13 November 2025.

At the time of writing, the Council's England flag has become significantly discoloured. The Committee may wish to allocate a small budget for its replacement while also considering the purchase of an Oxfordshire flag for local occasions.

Finally, the policy will require review once advertising flags are installed on the side of the Corn Exchange building, in accordance with Resolution H628 (11 November 2024).

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality –By including flags for different cultural and civic occasions, the Council helps all groups feel valued, while clear guidance ensures flags are displayed consistently and respectfully, promoting inclusivity and fairness.
- b) Crime & Disorder – The council flag-flying policy is likely to have a neutral to positive impact on crime and disorder. By clearly defining which flags are flown, when, and how, within a robust policy helps prevent misuse of flags that could provoke tension or conflict.
- c) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- Flags may only be flown in line with planning legislation.
- Potential public criticism depending on the nature of the policy.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The council flag-flying policy promotes civic pride, community identity, and a sense of belonging by marking national, royal, and local events. It supports inclusivity and social cohesion by recognising diverse cultural and commemorative occasions, while clear guidance ensures flags are displayed consistently and respectfully.

Financial implications

- Cost of an Oxfordshire Flag – approximately £150-300
- Replacement England Flag - £100-150

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider the revised flag flying policy and recommend to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee accordingly.
2. Consider the purchase of Oxfordshire and England flags from this year or the next.



Flag-Flying Policy

1. Introduction

This Policy sets out Witney Town Council's approach to the flying of flags.

The Town Council flies flags to demonstrate allegiance, respect, celebration, and support for causes or occasions that reflect the values and identity of Witney in the local, national, and international communities.

2. General Information

- Witney Town Council owns one designated flagpole, located on top of the Town Hall, Market Square opposite the Buttercross.
- Flags may only be flown from the above flagpole. No other Town Council-owned buildings or facilities are authorised for flag flying.
- The Witney Coat of Arms will be flown year-round at the Town Hall unless another flag is raised in its place.
- Flags may be displayed in the Council's reception window and on the balcony at the Corn Exchange to highlight national events and occasions.
- A designated Town Council officer will raise the appropriate flag before 10:00 a.m. on recognised flag-flying days. Flags will normally remain in place until the following morning unless otherwise specified.
- When a recognised flag-flying day falls on a weekend, the flag will be raised before 5:00 p.m. on the preceding Friday and lowered before 10:00 a.m. on the following Monday, unless otherwise directed.
- The Town Council may arrange flag-flying ceremonies for any flag raising where appropriate and will publicise these in advance.
- Flags will not be flown during periods of high winds or adverse weather, particularly when wind speeds are expected to exceed forty mph.
- Flag may only be flown at the Town Hall by resolution of the Town Council and any relevant planning legislation – please see *section 6. Requests to fly other flags*.

3. Union Flag Flying Days

The Union Flag will be flown at Witney Town Hall in accordance with national flag-flying days published on www.gov.uk to preserve the significance of these occasions.

In addition, the Union Flag will be flown on the following commemorative days:

- **Armistice Day** 11 November
- **Battle of Britain Day** 15 September

The St George's Flag will be flown on:

- **St George's Day** 23 April

The Town Clerk (or their representative), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, has discretion to fly the Union Flag or St George's Flag on other occasions, including:

- To celebrate or support significant national (England) or local sporting events.
- In recognition of a Royal Visit (in consultation with the Lord-Lieutenant).
- To mark an event of success or importance to the town including an RAF Brize Norton Freedom Parade.
- On formal civic occasions, where appropriate.

4. Flying the Union Flag at Half-Mast

In line with guidance from the College of Arms, the Union Flag will be flown at half-mast in the following circumstances:

- From the announcement of the death of the Sovereign (H.M The King) until the funeral.
- On the death or funeral of a member or near relative of the Royal Family (see below):
 - H.M The Queen
 - H.R.H The Prince of Wales
 - H.R.H The Princess of Wales
 - H.R.H The Princess Royal
 - H.R.H The Duke of Edinburgh
 - H.R.H The Duchess of Edinburgh
- On the death or funeral of a current or former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.
- On any other occasion commanded by the Sovereign or the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS).

Witney Town Council may fly the Town flag at half-mast to mark local losses or commemorations as follows:

- On the death or funeral of a serving Town Councillor or Member of Parliament.

Half-mast means the flag is positioned two-thirds up the flagpole, leaving at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the pole.

When raising or lowering a flag to half-mast, it should first be hoisted to the top of the flagpole before being lowered. When removed, it should again be raised to the top before being fully lowered.

If a flag-flying day coincides with a period of mourning, flags will normally be flown at full-mast unless a special command dictates otherwise.

5. Other Flags

Following Council resolutions, Witney Town Council also fly's the following flags from the Town Hall throughout the year:

• Commonwealth Flag	Second Monday in March (Commonwealth Day)
• United Nations Flag	United Nations Day, 24 October
• Red Ensign	Merchant Navy Day, 3 September
• Armed Forces Flag	Armed Forces Day, last Saturday in June
• NHS Flag	NHS Anniversary Day, 5 July
• Rainbow Flag	Witney Pride Day (usually last Saturday in May)
• Refugee Nation Flag	World Refugee Day, 20 June
• Twinned Town Flags	When required (as appropriate)

6. Requests to Fly Other Flags

Witney Town Council welcomes engagement from the community and will consider requests to fly or display other flags in line with the following:

1. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Council and approved by the relevant Committee and/or Full Council through a formal resolution. Please note, many flags require planning consent from the local Planning Authority to fly.
2. The Council reserves the right to refuse any request associated with political parties, groups, or organisations, or any request that may bring the Council into disrepute. The Council must remain politically neutral, and its decision is final.
3. The Council will not purchase flags on behalf of third parties. Successful applicants may provide their own flag to the specified size, and donations will be acknowledged in Council minutes.
4. The Council will store donated flags safely but cannot accept responsibility for wear, damage, or replacement.
5. Flags will normally be displayed for a single day corresponding with the relevant campaign or commemoration, subject to staffing availability.

7. Reference

The complete Witney Town Council Flag Flying Policy, including the official list of recognised flags and flag-flying dates, is attached as **Appendix A**.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required by legislative or strategic changes.

Adopted: xxxxx (xxxx)
xxxx

Review Date:

Witney Town Council

Flag Flying Calendar for Events, Campaigns & Commemorations

Date	Occasion	Flag/Lighting	Agreed	Donated/Dictated by
1 st Mon in March	Commonwealth Day	Commonwealth Flag Union Flag	n/a	Council UK Gov Buildings
9 April	His Majesty's Wedding Anniversary	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
23 April	St George's Day	St George's Flag Union Flag	n/a	Council UK Gov Buildings
6 May	Coronation Day	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
1 st Sat in June	Oxford Pride (Taken as Witney Pride weekend since 2021)	Rainbow Flag	C157 – Full Council - 08.04.19	P. Hicks
2nd Sat in June	Official celebration of His Majesty's birthday	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
20 June	World Refugee Day	World Refugee Flag	C126 – Full Council - 08.06.20	L. Ashbourne
21 June	Birthday, Prince of Wales	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
End of June	Armed Forces Day	Armed Forces Flag	n/a	
17 July	Birthday, Her Majesty The Queen	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
3 September	Merchant Navy Day	Red Ensign	C357 – Community Services - 17.07.18	B. Churchill
8 September	His Majesty, The kings Accession	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
15 September	Battle of Britain Day	Union Flag	SC521 Stronger Communities – 15.11.25	n/a
Remembrance Day	Second Sunday in November	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
11 November	Armistice Day	Union Flag	n/a	n/a
14 November	Birthday, His Majesty The King	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings

The Union Flag will also be flown:

The day of the opening of a Session of the Houses of Parliament by His Majesty (see note 3)

Reply to: Environmental Protection
Tel: 01993 861000
Email: ers@publicagroup.uk

Council Offices

Woodgreen,
WITNEY,
Oxfordshire,
OX28 1NB
Tel: 01993 861000
www.westoxon.gov.uk



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Witney Town Council
Town Hall
Market Square
Witney
Oxon
OX28 6AG

Ref: W/25/01366/ASB

Date: 03/10/2025

Dear Sirs,

Statutory Consultation – Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) – Proposed Prohibition of Pony and Trap use within the “restricted area” (A40 dual Carriageway East/Westbound from Downs Road Bridge Witney to Asthall Roundabout Burford)

West Oxfordshire District Council received a request from Thames Valley Police to initiate a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) under Section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. This request is being made in response to reports of unauthorised pony and trap racing on the A40 within the “restricted area” delineated in pink within Schedule of Land below. The Act specifies that a local authority wishing to introduce a PSPO must consult with the OPCC and any other relevant stakeholders.

Since 2020, Thames Valley Police have received 19 reports of pony and trap racing along this section of the A40, primarily occurring on weekends. These races are typically unannounced, unregulated, and pose serious public safety risks. This activity causes major disruption to the road network and endangers both road users and the animals involved.

West Oxfordshire District Council is of the view that the introduction of a PSPO to the “Restricted Area” to prohibit this specific activity within the highlighted location of the A40 meets the test. The test outlined within the Act which is designed to be broad and focus on the impact anti-social behaviour is having on victims and communities. A PSPO can be made by the Council if they are satisfied on reasonable grounds that the activities carried out, or likely to be carried out, in a public space:

- have had, or are likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality;
- is, or is likely to be, persistent or continuing in nature;
- is, or is likely to be, unreasonable; and
- justifies the restrictions imposed.”

The Act specifies that a local authority wishing to introduce a PSPO must consult with the Police and Crime Commissioner and other interested parties. The Council has considered the rights and freedoms enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular Article 10 (freedom of expression) and Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association). Having done so, the Council is

satisfied that the restrictions to be implemented by this Order on those rights and freedoms are lawful, reasonable, and proportionate.

The duration of a Public Space Protection Order can last up to 3 years but does have the ability to be extended or varied before the original Order is due to expire.

Please see below a summary of pony and trap related police reports which have occurred between 2020 and 2025. These reports relate to 18 separate incidences of racing, selling of horses and gambling on horses prior and in between races

	Count of Case File Number
ASB - Community	2
ASB - Personal	1
Road Related Incident	16
Grand Total	19

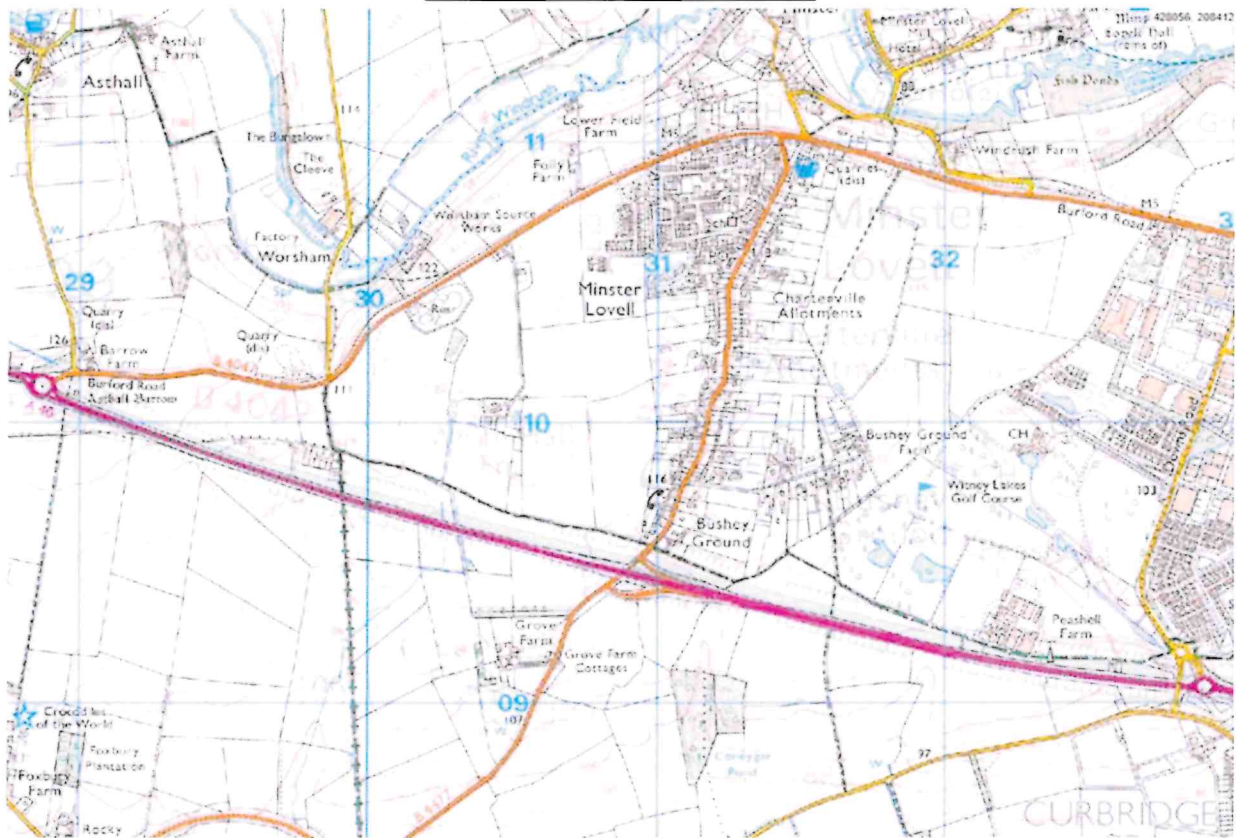
The consultation period for the proposed PSPO will run from 10th October 2025 until 21st November 2025. Should you require any further information regarding this consultation or to put your views forward, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours Faithfully,



Jennifer Bain
Environmental Protection Officer

PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF LAND



*Restricted area delineated in pink - A40 dual Carriageway East/Westbound at Downs Road Bridge Witney to Asthall Roundabout Burford

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS)

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' consideration of a potential investment in speed awareness signs for Witney.

Background

At the meeting of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee held on 23 September 2025, a resident of Woodstock Road raised concerns regarding vehicle speeds along the road. The possibility of installing speed awareness signs and possible re-routing measures were discussed.

The Committee was advised that the Community Speedwatch team had undertaken two surveys in the area and that wider transport plans were in place, including the proposed reclassification of the A4095 and anticipated improvement measures associated with the Witney Transport Assessment and the opening of the Shores Green Slip Road. It was also agreed that a request should be made to Thames Valley Police for roadside speed monitoring. (Minute No. T103 refers.)

Current Situation

Correspondence has been received from Oxfordshire County Council officers outlining the installation and role of Parish/Town Council's for this community infrastructure below.

VAS & SID

"Regarding your request for information on vehicle activated signs there are 2 types. A VAS is a fixed sign which will typically display the speed limit and a message saying, "slow down". A speed indicator device – SID will display vehicle speeds.

We work with PC's in advising on and approving SID & VAS sign locations. SID's are supposed to be mobile signs, moved to varying locations to increase their effectiveness. Solar power or battery options are pretty good with battery ones being easiest to relocate.

They are funded and maintained by the PC – being PC assets but OCC approve locations. They can be mounted on lamp columns or other suitable traffic signposts subject to OCC approval. Bespoke posts at agreed locations can be provided if no suitable alternative is available subject to funding.

If the PC wish to commission an external contractor to provide suitable posts at OCC agreed locations, please see the following,

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/licences-and-permits/road-opening-licence>

If the PC contractor has the appropriate licenses and permissions etc then shouldn't be a problem. However, depending on our signing budget, we have in the past provided and erected posts on behalf of the PC."



Examples of SID/VAS signs

The installation of fixed and mobile speed awareness signs has been discussed several times by the Traffic Advisory Committee and Council Members in recent years. The Committee is invited to decide whether this infrastructure should be earmarked for purchase by the Town Council now or in the future and, if so, to explore potential funding options.

The County Council have provided details of recommended suppliers who they regularly work with.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Improved road safety benefits all residents, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with disabilities who may be more at risk from speeding traffic. To maximise inclusivity, sign placement should consider areas with schools, care homes, and pedestrian routes to ensure all groups benefit equally.
- b) Crime & Disorder – The purchase of fixed and mobile speed awareness signs is likely to have a positive impact on crime and disorder by deterring speeding and promoting safer driving behaviour.
- c) Environment & Climate Emergency – Fixed and mobile speed awareness signs may encourage slower, smoother driving which could reduce emissions and noise pollution.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- The purchase of fixed and mobile speed awareness signs carries risks relating to cost, maintenance, and public expectations.
- Financial and operational risks include installation, upkeep, compliance with highways regulations, and potential vandalism or equipment failure.
- Reputational risk may occur if the signs are perceived as ineffective or if the Town Council is seen as responsible for speed enforcement, potentially leading to liability concerns in the event of accidents.
- These risks could be managed through coordination with Oxfordshire County Council & Thames Valley Police, clear communication with residents, and budgeting for ongoing maintenance to ensure the equipment remains effective.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Purchasing fixed and mobile speed awareness signs delivers social value by improving road safety, reducing speeding, and increasing residents' sense of security. The signs encourage responsible driving, support walking and cycling, and show the Council's commitment to community wellbeing and responsiveness to local concerns.

Financial implications

- The town council has no current budget for this infrastructure.
- Basic fixed SIDs are priced from approximately £2,250 (net) and increase in price depending on the type of sign and electric connection (solar panels etc.) with optional extras.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider whether the Town Council should invest in the equipment and recommend allocating a budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year, if appropriate [Further detailed quotes can be provided to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 24 November].

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Community Litter Picking Equipment

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

This report seeks Members' consideration for the future purchase of community litter-picking station(s) to support environmental initiatives in Witney.

Background

Officers have been advised that some town councils have introduced lockable town centre cabinets stocked with litter-picking equipment, allowing residents to access and use the equipment for community clean-up activities during weekends.

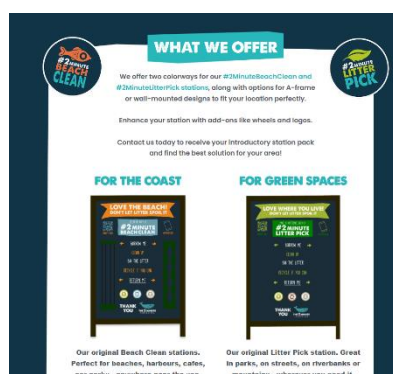
Current Situation

The following information has been researched by the Administrative Support Assistant – Communities & Planning, relating to one area where community litter-picking initiatives are in place:

- There are several active volunteer litter-picking groups operating in Swanage. For example, the “Beach Buddies” meet on Sundays at 9 a.m. and Tuesdays at 6 p.m.
- The Town Council’s minutes refer to a “2-Minute Beach Clean Board” located on the beach and note that volunteers utilise a beach hut for the storage of equipment.

No clear references were found to the use of lockable cabinets in the town centre containing litter-picking kits for community teams. The available reports primarily focus on beach and coastal clean-up activities rather than a town-centre cabinet hire or loan scheme.

The concept remains plausible, however, and a similar model could be considered for use in local streets or parks rather than a beach environment. Information on a potential supplier is provided below.



A brochure from the above company is attached as confidential **Appendix A** - one of the products listed has yet to be publicly advertised.

It should be noted that the Council has a supply of litter picking equipment which is advertised periodically throughout the year and available to collect from the Town Hall during the working week. This equipment has been made use of, but the Council is not aware of any organised litter picking groups – however, the provision of the stations may enable more.

If the Committee is agreeable, the stations should be at Council facilities open during the weekends.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – The purchase of a community litter-picking board provides an inclusive and accessible opportunity for all residents to take part in improving their local environment. By ensuring the board's location, design, and equipment are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, and by using inclusive language and imagery, the Council could promote equal participation.
- b) Crime & Disorder – A community litter-picking board can positively impact crime and disorder by encouraging ownership, and respect for public spaces. Cleaner, well-used environments deter antisocial behaviour and encourage community presence.
- c) Environment & Climate Emergency – Providing a litter-picking board and equipment encourages residents to remove litter, reducing pollution, protecting wildlife, and improving local biodiversity. While the board and equipment have a minor environmental footprint, the initiative promotes sustainable behaviour and contributes to cleaner, healthier, and more environmentally responsible public spaces.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- Providing a litter-picking board and equipment carries some risk, including potential injuries from use or slips, as well as loss, damage, or misuse of equipment. These risks can be managed through safety instructions, age-appropriate and well-maintained tools, regular monitoring, and appropriate insurance, ensuring the scheme remains safe while supporting community engagement and environmental improvement.
- The installation and promotion of the signs could be perceived negatively, suggesting the Council is shifting responsibility onto the public to perform tasks typically managed by Council staff, who already maintain services such as bin emptying and litter picking seven days a week.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

A community litter-picking boards deliver social value by encouraging residents to take pride in their surroundings and actively care for shared spaces. Making equipment easily accessible promotes volunteering, civic responsibility, and inclusion while improving the appearance and perception of the town. The initiative also supports health and wellbeing through outdoor activity and social interaction, creating cleaner, safer, and more connected communities.

Financial implications

- Options range from £150 – 500 each (please see brochure for details).
- Litter picking boards could be funded in the current year from the Infrastructure EMR or could be submitted as a growth item in the 2026-27 budget.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

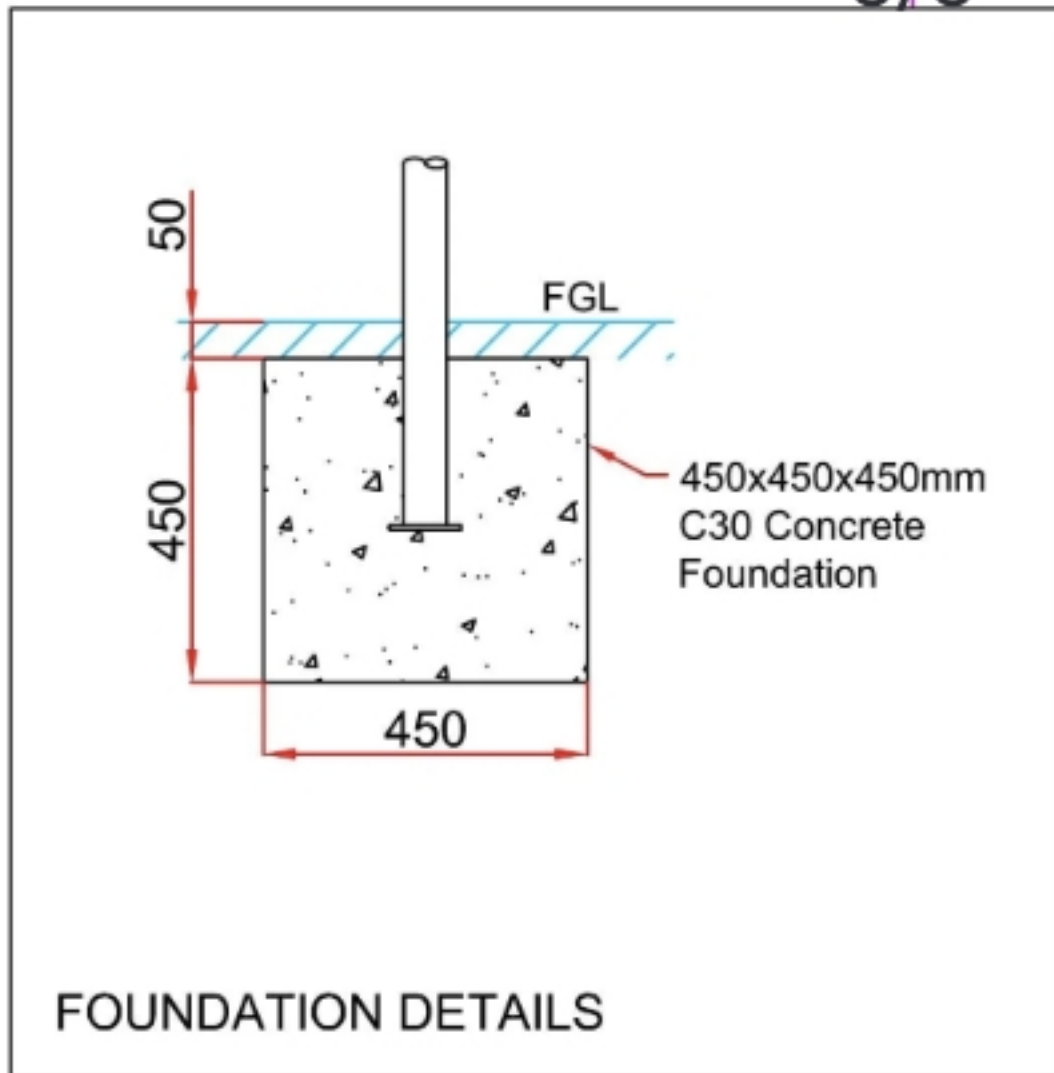
1. Consider whether the Council should purchase this equipment (or similar), how many, and where for and,
2. If yes, whether this is considered as a growth item in the 2026-27 budget or funded in the current financial year.

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Appendix





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From: Oxfordshire County Council

Sent: 04 November 2025 16:40

Subject: Witney welcome sign

Hi

There are some outline proposals for a welcome sign from the furniture suppliers attached. Is this something of interest to the town?

Thanks

Infrastructure Delivery Project Manager

Environment & Place | Oxfordshire County Council

County Hall | New Road | Oxford | OX1 1ND

Witney Welcome Sign Proposals

The below sign proposals are designed and quoted by Meristem:

Option 1.

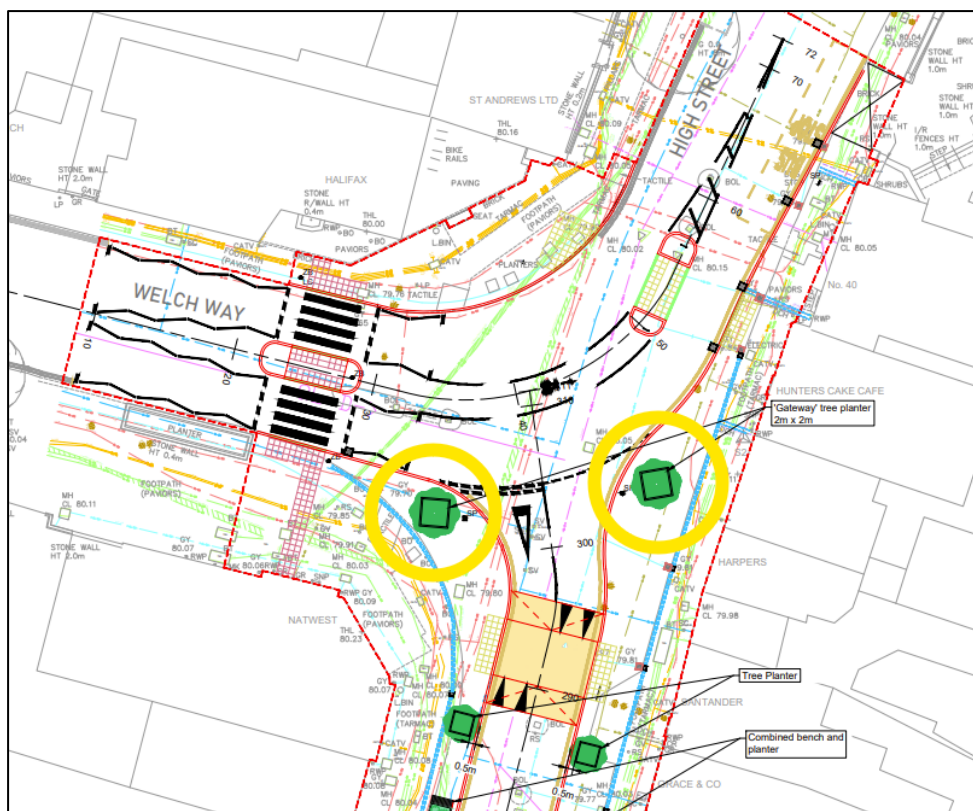
The 'Ivy Prism' circa £4000 - This can be customised as desired (allowed for 'Witney' in the price)."



Option 2.

‘Vinyl’ wrapping depending on complexity, circa £1750 *per* planter (all 4 sides).

If this option is preferred, perhaps this could be applied on two planters on both sides of the road in their current position (see below)?



STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Third-Party Events Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to update members on the Third-Party Events that have taken place on WTC land over the summer of 2025. This report comments on the comprehensive feedback report provided by Witney Music Festival.

Background

Witney Town Council facilitates a number of events throughout the year on council managed land such as The Leys, Burwell Recreation Ground and West Witney Playing Fields. Officers work with the organisers of these events to review their event plans to ensure; health and safety, licensing and legal compliance, protection from damage to our ground (through measures to limit damage and holding damage deposits) and to obtain their specific requirements for the grounds team to facilitate such as removing bollards for vehicle access etc.

Witney Town Council is also a partner of some of these events, including Witney Music Festival. Officers work in collaboration with the partner organisations by providing promotional support to help maximise the attendance of the event and to showcase the partnership between the council and the organisation.

Current Situation

Witney Music Festival (WMF)

Following a request from members at the previous meeting; Witney Music Festival have provided a comprehensive report providing feedback on this year's festival and looking ahead at plans for improvement going forward. The report includes key statistics from 2025, outlines how the festival met the partnership agreement obligations and planned improvements (including organisational structure, marketing and community engagement, potential grant sources etc.).

Thursday Night Partial Opening

The report also outlines the potential to explore opening the dance tent on the Thursday night to host a comedy evening. This proposal will help the festival increase footfall and income on

an evening they already occupy the field. Officers view this as potentially a strong move for the festival, with minimal impact to the Town Council – with a few considerations below.

- **Financial Potential** – Opening partially a day early is common practice across the festival industry to capitalise on the infrastructure already in place. Increased ticket sales, food and drink sales will have a positive impact on the festival's income. There is a risk that the extra day will operate at a loss due to increased staffing costs, however, that is to be considered by the festival before deciding to go ahead.
- **Cultural variety** – By adding a comedy evening to the program, it makes the festival a multi-arts event, not just music focused. This will appeal to a different audience demographic as the music festival, increasing the overall community reach of the festival.
- **Infrastructure** – Whilst operating a day early would make the most of the infrastructure in place, Officers would need to be satisfied that the Health and Safety plan of the festival considers the risk of a partially opened site. For example, out of bounds areas must be secured and the area opened to the public must be signed off as safe before opening.
- **Noise / Resident Disruption** – Noise levels should remain low due to the nature of the opening being just for comedy.

Officers are confident that this move will have a positive impact on the festival, without impacting the council financially. If the period occupying The Leys remains the same, there will be no additional subsidised let required to operate on the Thursday.

Partnership Agreement & Grant Funding

In the report provided, WMF outlined how they have met the obligations outlined in the partnership agreement which WTC and WMF entered into in February 2023.

Officers have maintained a good professional relationship with WMF over the last few years, working together to ensure a successful and safe event. Based on the 2025 event and the report provided, officers have no operational reason to suggest amendments to the partnership agreement and the grant amount that has been provided annually since 2023.

The annual grant outlined in the partnership agreement represents an investment in the local economy and community wellbeing. The event attracts significant visitor numbers (locally and nationally), generates income for local businesses, and enhances the town's cultural offering. It provides the local community with accessible top-quality entertainment, volunteering / working opportunities, and a platform for local artists to perform alongside nationally recognised names.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality - All events should be equal and inclusive.
- b) Biodiversity - see below – environment and climate.
- c) Crime & Disorder - third party hirers should be including mitigation in their event plans.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - The Compliance & Environment Officer will be looking at third party hire, and the initiatives hirers should take in relation to these areas.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The council already mitigates risk associated with working in partnership with WMF by outlining conditions and obligations within the partnership agreement. These include, requiring a mutually agreed safe event management plan ahead of the event each year and WMF providing the council with a damage deposit at the point of booking.

- **Event Viability:** Should WMF not be able to operate due to a lack of grant funding, WTC are not able to replace the event internally due to the high costs and organisational structure required, meaning the town would lose its only annual music festival.
- **Misuse or mismanagement of funds:** The festival organisers may not use the grant as intended, leading to poor accountability or non-delivery of outcomes. However, the likelihood of this risk is minimal and is mitigated by the partnership agreement itself, the in-depth report provided by WMF as well as regular contact with Officers in the planning phase of the event.
- **Economic Impact:** The report outlines the positive impact the festival has on the local economy. Withdrawing funding from the festival resulting in cancellation or scaling back will remove this positive impact on local businesses.
- **Reputation:** WTC and WMF are both publicly vocal about the partnership agreement and the event is largely popular with residents. The council could face negative publicity should the annual grant funding outlined be reduced or removed. Supporting the festival also poses its own reputational risk such as noise complaints, antisocial behaviour, litter etc. This risk is currently managed through thorough planning, monitoring of noise levels, security in place to deal with anti-social behaviour and a thorough clean up post-festival. Officers have not experienced litter being left on the leys post-event over the last few years and ground maintenance issues have been minimal with the risk managed by taking a damage deposit.

Social Value

Witney Music Festival delivers strong social value to the town by celebrating local culture, creativity, and community spirit. The event brings together residents of all ages to enjoy live music, arts, and family-friendly entertainment in a safe and welcoming environment. It provides a valuable platform for local musicians, performers, and traders to showcase their talents and businesses, supporting the area's creative economy.

Financial implications

- Witney Music Festival has received an annual grant of £10,000 since the partnership agreement in 2023.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider allowing the festival to partially open on the Thursday for a Comedy Night.
2. Consider recommending to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on the allocation of the partnership grant for the sum of £10,000 for the 2026 event.

Appendices

A – Witney Music Festival Report for 2025

B – Income & Expenditure

C – WMF & WTC Partnership Agreement



Witney Music Festival 2025

Every Groove One Festival

Annual Report to Witney Town Council

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Witney Music Festival Ltd

Directors: S Foster, E Marshall, M Keeble, J Ashby, S Edney
. Registered in England and Wales 8449499.

Registered Office: Pebble Cottage, New Yatt Road, North Leigh, Witney, OX29 6TH.



Executive Summary

Witney Music Festival 2025 delivered a safe, professional event with zero medical incidents and no community complaints, whilst attracting around 1000 visitors from outside Witney and selling out all local accommodation. The festival recorded an £8k loss due to lower-than-targeted attendance (3,312 vs. 4,500+ goal), reflecting industry-wide challenges that saw 72 UK festivals cancel in 2024 and 204 closures since 2019.

Our Response: We have implemented comprehensive organisational improvements including professional management systems, clear director accountability, weekly governance meetings, and a Community Advisory Board launching November 2025. A bespoke festival management platform (built in-house) now handles contracts, budgets, and scheduling—eliminating previous communication gaps and cost control issues.

20th Anniversary Plans: Enhanced marketing through various channels, and potential Cotswolds Tourism membership, earlier ticket sales (November vs. Spring), and active grant applications including the Sustainable Tourism grant. Infrastructure improvements planned include covered bar areas, modernised food court, and enhanced family facilities—subject to budget and sponsorship confirmation.

Partnership Obligations Fulfilled: We continue exceeding our four core commitments—building cohesive communities (Tough To Talk mental health partnership), furthering youth talent pathways (67% local artists), showcasing Witney for tourism (36% out-of-town visitors, Muddy Stilettos feature), and supporting local businesses (sold-out accommodation, increased town centre footfall).

The 2025 challenges have catalysed systematic improvements positioning us to return to profitability whilst maintaining community accessibility. Combined with 20th anniversary momentum and our strengthened Council relationship, WMF is well-placed to serve Witney for the next 20 years.



Overview 2025 Event

Witney Music Festival held on the Leys on the 6th & 7th June 2025 was successful in many respects, however financially the Festival we made a small loss of £8k on the event due to the attendance figures and consequential lack of bar sales.

We feel that this year was the smoothest run festival to date. This is a reflection on the continued support of the Witney Town Council and their willingness to help wherever possible, and the tight knit team we have at the Festival that continues to learn and evolve as we focus on delivering the best possible event for the community. We were pleased to see many staff and Councillors from the Town Council in attendance, and we hope they had an enjoyable festival.

Leading up to the event the Festival registered for VAT as suggested by the Council and has been trading as such in the leadup to the Festival and will continue to do so.

Key Statistics

Attendance over the weekend:	3,312
Medical Incidents:	0
Security Incidents Summary:	
- <i>Ejections</i>	4
- <i>Responses</i>	10 (3 for breaching the site parameter)
- <i>Basic toxication issues</i>	10 (security called, left of their own accord)
Bar Issues:	VIP Area, football firm in VIP bar area - racial slur used against a performer. Victim did not want to escalate to the police.
Traffic Management/Highways incidents/issues:	0
- Noise complaints received:	0
- Resident complaints received:	0
- General complaints from non-ticket holders:	0

Key learnings

- We need to improve attendance through better promotion
- Review strategy for the Festival for the long term with next year being the 20th anniversary of the Festival
- Review areas of cost saving in bar area
- Consider layout of the Festival to accommodate higher numbers
- Continue to look at more inclusivity in terms of acts, access & facilities



Partnership Agreement Obligations

Witney music Festival and Witney Town Council have entered into a partnership agreement on the 14th February 2023 detailing the following obligations of both parties to work together in order to:

- Build a cohesive and inclusive community through music
- Further a talent pathway for the youth of Witney
- Showcase Witney for tourism
- Support Local businesses

This year has demonstrated how the festival continues to meet and exceed these obligations in pursuit of building better communities through music.

Building a cohesive and inclusive community through music

This year we have seen a greater diversity in attendees both young and old, and with our disability access platform we are continuing to ensure access is for all. We pride ourselves in a varied mix of music which attracts a wide spectrum of attendees, something that will be our brand as we move into the 20th year of the festival “Every groove one festival”. The introduction of the dance stage has expanded our appeal which ensures the maximum draw to the broadest scope of attendees. The safe environment we have created has encouraged a real family environment which we continue to build on, and we are looking to work with The Station and The Music & Arts Trust to invest in local talent and continue to provide opportunities. But nothing speaks volumes more than comments from local residents, an extract of these can be found in **appendix 4**

This year the festival partnered with **Tough To Talk**, a UK charity whose mission is to reduce male suicide and break the stigma surrounding men’s issues and poor mental health. They were present onsite to help highlight this big issue and reported some amazing conversations with attendees of the festival. This is an example of the many ways the festival is trying to deliver a cohesive and inclusive community and work with organisations that complement our objective. The festival has incorporated a link to the Tough to Talk website on the festival site – see **appendix 5**.

Further a talent pathway for the youth of witney

67% of artists at this year’s festival were from Witney with young artists such as “Violet Band” that was formed after being inspired by attending the festival in previous years. Local artists who have played at the festival and gone on to bigger things either as a band or individually are:

- Dolly Mavis (also famous for snubbing the vice president of the US this year)
- Danny Mellin (Touring the UK)
- South Arcade (just signed to Atlantic Records in the US)
- Genevieve Miles (Touring the UK)
- Twisted State of Mind (individuals touring Europe as session musicians playing the likes of the Albert Hall)
- The Mezz (Touring the UK)



As you can see the festival has and continue to promote young artists, many of whom have gone on to greater things. An extract of comments from some of the bands that played this year can be found in **appendix 3**

Showcase Witney for tourism

Of the 3,312 people that attended the festival this year 36% 1,192 came from outside of witney, from as far north as York and as far south as Southampton, so the festival really attracts people from far and wide to the festival. This is supported by the fact you cannot get a hotel room, guest house or B&B in witney during the festival as they get sold out to people travelling to Witney to attend the festival. Indeed, the word about the festival is spreading including a citation in a Muddy Stilettos article about reasons to come to Witney (see attached article and **appendix 1**) which specifically mentions the Witney Music Festival in its opening paragraph.

Support Local Businesses.

Many local businesses benefit greatly from the festival. With so many people travelling from outside witney to attend the festival, hotel rooms, guest houses and B&B's are all sold out, and bars and restaurants benefit from the increased activity in town before, during and after the festival. The festival is in the unique position that it is in such close proximity to the town centre, and the town is inextricably linked with the festival so many view the visit to the festival an opportunity to explore the town and all it has to offer. See comments below in the appendix from a selection of the businesses approached for comment. This year saw in an influx of over 1,000 people for the festival from outside Witney, it is difficult to see how this has not benefitted the town when viewed with such positive comments the festival has received, a sample of which can be found in **appendix 2**



Planning For The Future - Organisational Improvements

Professional Management Systems

We have developed a comprehensive festival management platform (built in-house drawing on film/TV production and event management experience) that manages contracts, budgets, timelines, and rider approvals. This eliminates previous communication gaps and ensures professional supplier relationships. All artists will now work under documented agreements before appearing on promotional materials.

Governance Strengthening

Community Advisory Board: Launching November 2025, a board of 10-12 people will work alongside our five directors, distributing workload sustainably whilst bringing specialised expertise in accessibility, marketing, and community engagement.

School Partnerships: We are in discussions with Henry Box School and Wood Green School about establishing WMF boards, actively engaging local secondary students in festival planning and youth talent development.

Director Structure: Each director has clearly defined responsibilities:

- Eric: Bars (Hook Norton partnership), press relations, council liaison, chair/spokesperson
- Jim: Operations (power, lighting, security, staging)
- Matt: VIP area, toilets, fencing, insurance
- Sam: Dance stage production, accessibility and sensory areas
- Stuart: Creative direction (booking acts, scheduling, fundraising, marketing)

Weekly Meetings: We have instituted weekly director meetings through to the festival with clear agendas, documented decisions, and accountability tracking.

Recruitment Event

We are hosting a major recruitment and networking event on 18th November 2025 at Shaan Restaurant to build our volunteer, supporter, and sponsor teams whilst identifying potential Community Advisory Board members.



20th Anniversary Plans (2026)

Marketing & Community Engagement

Cotswolds Tourism: We are exploring membership with Cotswolds Tourism for regional promotion and integration with broader destination marketing.

Visit Witney Event: We recently attended a Visit Witney event organised by Witney Chamber of Commerce where the festival was regularly discussed positively. We came away with fresh ideas and valuable local business contacts.

Grant Applications: Actively pursuing multiple funding opportunities including the Sustainable Tourism grant for infrastructure improvements.

Enhanced Strategy: Earlier ticket sales (November 2025 launch), advance sponsorship commitments, and 20th anniversary narrative as marketing momentum.

Infrastructure Enhancements (Budget Dependent), subject to final budget approval and sponsorship commitments:

- Covered bar areas with seating
- Modernised food court with curated vendors
- Enhanced family facilities and wet weather provision
- Premium gin bar partnership
- Improved site aesthetics and lighting

Format Considerations

With 2026 being the 20th anniversary of the festival we are looking at how we might be able to enhance our commitment for inclusivity and building community by considering how we might spread the scope of artists we might be able to showcase. One idea being considered is extending the festival to a Thursday just for comedy in the dance tent plus Friday/Saturday as usual. Financial modelling will determine optimal structure, with the anniversary year providing opportunity for thoughtful evolution.

Summary

The festival will be celebrating its 20th year in 2026 and hope to build on the success to date and re-launch ourselves to underpin the objectives we have committed to as part of the partnership agreement with Witney Town Council. We are conscious of our responsibility as a partner of Witney Town Council and the obligations we have signed up for. We believe we have exceed expectations of this agreement to date, however, we are not content with past wins, we aim for better results for the Witney Music Festival that benefit the town, the community and justify the Town Councils continued partnership with an event that helps showcase the best Witney has to offer to people all over the UK.



APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Extract from Muddy Stilletos talking about the best places to visit and covers Witney.

WHY?

This buzzy town is pretty self-contained when it comes to shopping, eating out and things to do, so it's great if you want to take baby steps into country living and feel rural, but not cut off. You have Oxford or Cheltenham a reassuring 30 – 45 mins away, and there's always loads on, from the weekly farmers market to the **music festival**, so meeting people and getting stuck in isn't too daunting. The commute to Oxford can be plagued by traffic issues but the train to London is easy enough and there's pretty parts to the town like Church Green, above, with its perfect village green and church spire.

Appendix 2

Comments from local business owners

We had a great weekend for our first year at WMF. Being a local supplier, we got to showcase to our most local audience across two days. We'll be back again next year!

Alex

Sausage Bros (Food Stall Vendor)

We love the Witney music festival and value it greatly. It is always busy with a wonderful atmosphere in our venues after the festival kicks out!

Paul Spink

Eagle Tavern Landlord & Fat Lils Owner

We're big supporters of Witney Music Festival!! It brings people from out of town into Witney, which is always a good thing. We love attending ourselves, and it's brilliant to see events that contribute to the local community.

Michael Dove

Three Horseshoes Landlord

Second year of attending the festival and the best yet! The festival has given me so much confidence in myself and my food that I am now doing my food stall full time. Thank you for that, WMF team. The festival team are amazing and very professional to deal with, as well as a great laugh. Thank you again and hope to be part of this amazing festival for many years to come. Up the chicken!

Earl

Earl's Jerk Chicken (Food Stall Vendor)



Appendix 3

Comments from local artists about the festival

For the past three years, I've had the pleasure of working with Stuart and the Witney Music Festival team, both as a solo artist and with my band. Each time has been a fantastic experience. Stuart is always easy to reach and quick to answer any questions in the lead-up to a performance. On the day of the festival, the entire stage crew is amazing - they make everything easy and stress-free, and I can't recommend them enough. The organisation at all of their events is outstanding. Beyond performing, I've attended many of the gigs and events put on by WMF, and every single one has been brilliant. The acts are always great, the amenities are well-organised, and the atmosphere is wonderful. Whether you're looking to perform or just enjoy some great music, the Witney Music Festival is a must-attend event.

Georgia

Violet band

Witney Music Festival is an absolutely vital event for both established creatives and up-and-coming artists in the local area. The festival provides a thoroughly professional environment for musicians, DJs and performers to ply their trade and for the next generation to find both development and inspiration within, as well as putting on an incredible event for the enjoyment of the entire community across all ages and backgrounds.

Shaun

The Scribes (Live Act, Dance Stage)

Appendix 4

Comments from local residents

The Witney Music Festival is certainly one of the highlights of my year. The team involved have taken it from strength to strength year on year, and it's something we can really take pride in. Catering for all music tastes, the event brings everyone together for a perfect value festival where we continue to make fond memories. This, along with the Cogges Beer festival, are my two particular favourite local events, and I can't wait for 2026!

David Hambridge

Witney Resident

I'm writing to express my support for the Witney Music Festival and to highlight the many benefits it brings to our community. The festival not only showcases fantastic local talent and a wide range of musical genres, but also fosters a sense of pride and togetherness among residents. It's an inclusive, family-friendly event that brings people of all ages together in celebration of music - something that's increasingly needed in today's world. Beyond the social and cultural value, the festival has a positive economic impact on the town. Local businesses, from pubs and cafés to shops and vendors, benefit from increased footfall and trade during the event. It puts Witney on the map as a vibrant and welcoming place to visit, supporting tourism and community spirit alike. I believe continued support for the festival is an investment in the town's identity, wellbeing, and future.

Mick Morris

Witney Resident

Cracking little festival! As a new parent taking a baby to a festival for the first time, it was perfect. Really well laid out and organised, very welcoming, with great facilities. Loads of variety of acts too. Long may it continue!

Dr Jonathan Reeves

Ex-Witney Resident

Appendix 5



Find Out More About Tough To Talk

Tough To Talk is a UK charity whose mission is to reduce male suicide and break the stigma surrounding men's issues and poor mental health. We collaborate with organisations to confront this crisis directly, offering impactful initiatives such as our powerful Tough Talks, suicide prevention and intervention training, and bespoke, targeted campaigns designed to support men and foster cultural change. We aim to create spaces where men feel empowered to speak openly, seek help, and rediscover hope. Together, we can save lives. Join us in breaking the silence and building a future where no man feels alone."

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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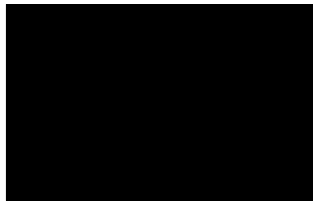
Memorandum of Understanding Partnership Agreement

This Memorandum of Understanding Partnership Agreement ("the agreement") is made and entered into as of 14th February 2023.

BETWEEN: **Witney Town Council** (Partner A) located at:

Town Hall
Market Square
Witney
OX28 6AG

AND: **Witney Music Festival Ltd** (Partner B) located at:



Whereas Partner A and Partner B are desirous to enter this memorandum of understanding between them, setting out the terms and conditions of the Partnership.

Now therefore, in consideration of the mutual agreements contained in this Agreement, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. Partnership Purpose & Scope

The purpose of the Agreement is to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each Partner as they relate to the facilitation of the Witney Music Festival, held annually on the Leys Recreation Ground. In particular, this MOU is intended to outline the way in which they can work together to ensure the continued success of this valued community event administratively, operationally, financially and to:

"Build better communities by connecting people through music, and use this success to inspire and assist the next generation of musicians and performers to choose a life of music as their career"

Witney Music Festival Vision Statement 2022

"Help inspire, motivate, and provide opportunity for local people who wish to be involved with music and the performing arts, and through public performances, to strengthen the sense of community."

Witney Music Festival Mission, 2022

2. Background

Witney Music Festival has held an event on the Leys Recreation Ground since 2015, the culmination of several weeks of live music held in and around Witney, the only exception being, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Witney Town Council, as custodian of the Leys Recreation Ground has permitted the festival to take place following submission of an Event Management Plan (signed off by the Council's Health & Safety Consultants), and relevant method statements and insurance documents.

In recent years, the use of the Leys has been subsidised by the Town Council on behalf of Witney residents to the annual sum of £3,800 (2021 figure).

In 2021, the Town Council gave Witney Music Festival a grant of £2,500 in addition to help ensure the event went ahead.

3. Obligations of the Parties

The partners acknowledge that no contractual relationship is created between them by this Memorandum Agreement. The Partners agree to work together to ensure the success of the Partnership and to assign appropriate financial, administrative, and managerial resources to the Partnership to achieve that aim. The scope of the partnership shall be defined by mutual consent and will include:

- a) Working together to build a cohesive and inclusive community through music
- b) Furthering a talent pathway for the youth of Witney
- c) Showcasing Witney for tourism
- d) Supporting local businesses

4. (Partner A) Responsibilities under this MOU

Partner A shall undertake the following responsibilities:

- a) Allowing annual use of the Leys Recreation Ground (designated events side) on a date between 1st – 30th June (to be confirmed in writing)
- b) 9 months' notice can be provided by the council for the need of a fallow year.
- c) Allowing 'free use' of the Leys site only on the designated date above which will be subsidised by the Town Council at the approximate cost of £3,800 per annum
- d) Providing a financial contribution to the facilitation of the Leys event annually. The amount to be confirmed once the following year's budget has been set in December/January, subject to the Council's financial standing (See Transfer of Funds).
- e) Providing professional guidance of the Council's Health & Safety Consultants to reach a mutually acceptable, safe Event Management Plan

- f) Promotion of the event and other WMF events during the year through Town Council media channels

5. (Partner B) Responsibilities under this MOU

Partner B shall undertake the following responsibilities

- a) Provide a damage deposit at the agreed level at the time of booking.
- b) If any damages are incurred during the event exceeding the level of the damage deposit, these costs will be reimbursed to Witney Town Council
- c) Provide a completed Event Management Plan and accompanying documents to Partner A no later than 90 days before the Festival
- d) Promote Partner A and its involvement in the Leys event on social media in the run up/during the event and through the use of banners on The Leys Recreation Ground
- e) Recognise the Council's Carbon neutrality and Climate commitments throughout the preparation and running of the event.

6. Understandings

It is mutually understood and agreed by and between the parties that:

- a) The parties agree to work together in partnership and co-operate in good faith and to fully participate to develop the project conclude formal agreement
- b) Witney Town Council is not underwriting the Witney Music Festival Event and shall not be liable for any charges and will not be liable for any outstanding debts following the event.
- c) This MOU Agreement in no way restricts the ability of either party to enter into any agreement with any other third party in relation to the proposed event.
- d) Witney Music Festival should accommodate Oxfordshire Music & Arts Trust in showcasing Witney's young musical talent during the course of the event held on The Leys Recreation Ground
- e) None of the services, financing or resources set out in clauses 4-5 shall be deemed to be a commitment until such time as budget setting is completed annually by January

7. Entire Agreement

The provisions herein contained constitute the entire agreement between the parties hereto and supersede all previous communication, representations, expectations, understandings, and agreements whether verbal or written between parties or their respective representatives with respect to the subject matter of this MOU. They shall not be modified or amended except by written agreement signed by the Partners and as agreed by the Full Council* (*Partner A only)

8. Transfer of funds

As part of the partnership agreement the council commits to help funding the WMF. The council agreed in 2023 to support the WMF with a grant of £10,000 and it is recommended this continue in the future to be confirmed by the council each year. The council reserve the right to vary the amount if financial pressures in that year dictate it is prudent to do so.

9. Termination

The parties of this MOU have the right to terminate their participation individually or jointly in this Agreement at any time, provided that advanced written notice is delivered to the other party at an appropriate time of the year.

In the event of termination, all responsibilities and understanding will be re-negotiated under regular Town Council hiring terms and conditions.

10. Confidentiality

Each party shall treat as strictly confidential all information received or obtained as a result of entering into this agreement

Each party may disclose information which would otherwise be confidential if and to the extent:

- Required by law
- The information has come into the public domain through no fault of that party
- The other party has given prior written approval to the disclosure

11. Authorisation & Execution

The signing of this MOU does not constitute a formal undertaking, and as such it simply intends that the signatories shall strive to reach, to the best of their abilities, the goals and objectives stated in this MOU.

This agreement shall be signed by Witney Town Council and Witney Music Festival and shall be effective as of the date written above.

Upon the signing of this MOU by both parties, this agreement shall be in full force and effect.

First Party Signature

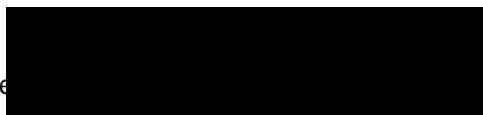


Date 14/2/23

Printed Name

SHARON GROTH

Second Party Signature



Date 15/3/23

Printed Name

ERIC MARSHALL.