

# Public Document Pack

## Stronger Communities

## Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



**Monday, 26th January, 2026 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 - 13)**

- a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 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.

**Communications**

5. **Communications Report** (Pages 14 - 19)

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

a) **Press Coverage Update** (Pages 20 - 22)

To receive press coverage updates since the last meeting of the Committee.

**Community Engagement**

6. **Community Engagement Report** (Pages 23 - 28)

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

a) **Witney: Past Present & Future Working Party** (Pages 29 - 30)

To receive the notes and recommendations contained therein from the meeting held on 14 January 2026.

b) **Witney Community Insight Profile - 2 Dec 2025** (Pages 31 - 33)

7. **In Bloom** (Pages 34 - 37)

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

8. **Witney Youth Council** (Pages 38 - 43)

To receive an update on the work of the Witney Youth Council and notes from their meeting held on 8 January 2026.

9. **Youth Services** (Pages 44 - 52)

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

10. **Town Centre Forum** (Pages 53 - 55)

To receive the report of the Town Clerk/CEO.

**Street Furniture & Infrastructure**

11. **Request to Install Bollard - Farmers Close** (Pages 56 - 59)

To receive and consider the report of the Head of Estates & Operations.

12. **Market Square Seating** (Pages 60 - 62)

To receive and consider correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council concerning seating for an area at Witney Market Square. Note: This is not part of the Oxfordshire County Council High Street Scheme, but is intended to be funded from the UK Prosperity Fund.

13. **Bike Racks & Bin Stores (Page 63)**

To receive and consider a request from West Oxfordshire District Council to facilitate the placing of a bin store facility in Market Square.

14. **Witney Town Centre Improvements - Discussion on potential projects to utilise S106 Developer Funding**

Initial discussion on potential infrastructure improvement priorities pending confirmation of available S106 funds, currently pledged or held by WODC.



Town Clerk

# Agenda Item 3

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

**Held on Monday, 17 November 2025**

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

### **Present:**

Councillor T Ashby (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith G Meadows D Edwards-Hughes D Enright	J Treloar D Newcombe (In place of A Bailey) D Temple (In place of A Mubin)
Officers:	Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Thomas Davies Polly Inness Nigel Warner	Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Deputy Venue & Events Officer Communications & Community Engagement Officer Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	2 members of the public.	

### **SC643 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bailey & A Mubin, Councillors D Newcombe & D Temple attended respectively as substitutes.

### **SC644 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor R Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 12 owing to her connection with the provider of the detached Youth Services provision through the church she attended.

Councillor J Treloar declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 19 due to his relationship with the individuals that organised the Witney Music Festival.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers.

### **SC645 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 15 September 2025 were received.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held 15 September 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

**SC646 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Two Members of the public with an interest in Agenda item 19 were present however there was no public participation from them at this time.

**SC647 FINANCE REPORT: REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26 AND DRAFT BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2026/27**

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.

Members also received a verbal summary of the main points from the RFO outlining the changes to allocation of staffing costs away from this Committee's spending to other areas of the Council. The 2026/27 budget would continually evolve as the RFO worked on refinements ahead of its formal presentation.

Following a Members' question regarding budget line 408/4154 – Experience Oxfordshire – the Town Clerk confirmed that these funds were to be used for the promotion of events to encourage visitors to the Town. It was hoped that with the re-establishment of the Town Forum and the new Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party, that these funds may be able to be repurposed more effectively.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the repurposing of Experience Oxford budget line be explored at the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance meeting on 24 November 2025 and,
3. That, the revised base revenue budget for 2025/26 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2026/27, as detailed in the draft estimates be noted.

**SC648 REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS, SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS, AND CAPITAL PROJECTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) along with a verbal explanation of its content which indicated the need for a £13,600 increase in support of Community projects.

Members heard that further details on the proposed revenue growth items were featured in the report to the Committee later in the meeting. Members were unanimously in agreement hearing that the existing equipment would be repurposed and that £1,200 be allocated for the replacement of digital signage.

A further question was raised regarding a Leys water refill station which officers advised would be presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, that the Revenue Growth and new Capital items be forwarded to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee for consideration.

*The RFO left the meeting at 6:17pm.*

SC649 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS**

With the permission of the Chair the item was moved up the agenda to allow the members of the public present to hear the discussion.

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided a report back to the Committee on the 2025 Witney Musical Festival (WMF) along with proposals for the organisation of the 2026 event.

A request had been received from WMF to utilise the site on the Thursday evening, Members heard that this would not have any financial impact on the Council as the site set up will have commenced, a question was raised regarding Health & Safety of visitors to the site during the period of construction and a response provided by both the V&EO as well as one of the WMF directors who was in attendance, who assured the Committee that mitigating measures would be taken.

Additionally, a question was raised regarding the potential additional impact to the field particularly any sports pitch area. The V&EO advised that this would not occur as the area of the site to be used was not on any pitch area.

Members were therefore unanimous in agreement to allow the additional use of the site on Thursday evening and welcomed the idea of a comedy event to enhance the already varied and diversified entertainment provided over that weekend.

The V&EO summarised the points in his report regarding the continuance of the partnership Agreements and the report received from WMF regarding the 2025 event.

Members welcomed the detail provided in the WMF report and financial appraisal. The Committee acknowledged that the event should be viewed as an outsourced event akin to those delivered by other local organisations, such as Witney Rotary who provided them with the support of the Council. Additionally, when compared to other grants a contribution of £10,000 to WMF illustrated exceptional value for a two-and-a-half-day event.

It was also noted by the Committee that the positive impact on local businesses by visitors to the event should not be underestimated.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, WMF be granted use of The Leys for an event on the Thursday Evening in 2026 and,
3. That, that the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee authorise a partnership grant payment of £10,000 to support the 2026 WMF event.

*The Venue & Event Officer left the meeting at 6:30pm  
along with both members of the public.*

**SC650 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

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

The C&CEO also provided a verbal summary of the report which provided an update to Members on the progress of the review of the Communications Strategy, which was welcomed however, it was agreed that the pages detailing information on digital analytics be removed.

The Committee considered the information regarding the production of a sponsored Newsletter and acknowledged that rather than creating one themselves it would be better use of Officers time to provide information to existing publications to support those, rather than appearing to compete with them.

On the subject of the production of an events calendar, Members were in agreement that in order to ensure accurate information was provided to residents that information was released on a regular basis via the existing newsletters rather than as an annual calendar that had the potential to be incorrect should dates change.

Members were disappointed to hear that there had only been 39 responses to the budget consultation survey so far, they agreed that the survey should be published earlier and with more direct questions as they may be more appealing to people to complete.

The Committee also received a current press coverage record and approved a new website accessibility statement for the Council.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, details of events be included in each of the newsletters and,
3. That, the updated Communication Strategy be agreed with the amendment as detailed and,
4. That, Officers explore the options and costs for issuing information to other publications and,
5. That, the updated Council website accessibility statement be approved.

**SC651 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

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

Again, the C&CEO gave a verbal summary of the report which provided Members with an update on the current activity and engagement within the community which included details of the Citizen of the Year celebrations, Christmas light switch on engagement, details of the success of the Witney Town Band summer events and the proposals for the 2026 edition of Witney Carnival.

The Committee welcomed the invitation to participate in the Witney Food & Drink Festival and agreed that a stall in the style of Councillors at the Café be confirmed.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Council attend the Witney Food & Drink Festival and host a stall and,
3. That, the Council continue to support Witney Town Band by way of summer program at its venues and,
4. That, the proposed use of Café 1863/Corn Exchange by Witney Day Centre be agreed.

*Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly from 7:05pm to 7:07pm.*

**SC652 WITNEY FORUM MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Witney Forum held on 2 October 2025. The Chair highlighted the Witney Volunteer Recruitment Fair which would be held in January 2026.

Though not included in the Minutes, Members were pleased to hear the news that Volunteer Link Up had been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAWS) earlier in the week for its work connecting volunteers with people in need of support.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 2 October 2025 be noted.

*Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly from 7:08 to 7:10pm.*

**SC653 NATIONAL PRIDE WORKING PARTY**

Members received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk as well as the Chair of the National Pride Working Party following its inaugural meeting on 13 November 2025.

Members heard that the working party group had discussed and agreed a change of name more befitting with its objectives settling on Witney Past, Present & Future.

The Committee also agreed that a budget of £2,000 be set to promote their activities such as St Georges Day.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the name of the Working Party be changed to Witney: Past, Present & Future be noted and,
3. That, a budget of £2,000 be requested for the promotion of activities to celebrate Witney's past, present and future.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party be approved and the recommendations therein be approved.

**SC654 IN BLOOM COMPETITIONS & COMMUNITY GARDENING 2026-27**

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

Members welcomed the proposals to improve the area around Unterhaching Park which it was believed would complement the improvement works and changes being made by West Oxfordshire District Council to the Marriots Close Shopping Area adjacent to the park.

A Member noted that the signage agreed for Unterhaching park was not yet erected and asked that Officers review this and other parks as it would hopefully address issues being reported regarding dogs in the park.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, £1,500 from the In Bloom budget be approved for works at Unterhaching Park and,
3. That, the purchase of four new Schools in Bloom wheelbarrows be approved and,
4. That, budgets of £50 be approved for vouchers and prizes and,
5. That, £40 community gardening vouchers be issued for 2026-27.

*The Communications & Community Engagement Officer left the meeting at 7:12pm*

**SC655 YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Engagement Administration Assistant outlining the activity of the Youth Council.

Members heard that the Youth Council has received new impetus with the recruitment of four new members, it was hoped that this would be a catalyst to further activity.

The Deputy Town Clerk provided some additional details regarding the need for the change in the roles and Terms of Reference to better suit the make-up of the Youth Council. All Members were in agreement with the changes.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the change to the Youth Council roles and terms of reference be approved.

**SC656 YOUTH SERVICES**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which provided an update on Youth Services being funded by the Town Council.

Members welcomed the details in the report that provided confirmation of the budgets proposed for the 2026/27 fiscal year. Members agreed that amounts budgeted provided exceptional value for money for the services provided by the recipients and it was agreed that this amount be ringfenced ahead of budget consideration.

The Committee did however note that information received from APCAM was limited and did not include specific details regarding the numbers of families they had supported in Witney. It

was agreed that the decision on the inclusion of a provision of funding be deferred to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee to allow Officers to request further details from APCAM.

The report also ignited a discussion between Members regarding the lack of Youth Club facilities; the Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the funding for The Station was provided on the basis of it being a detached service and therefore it was not simply a case of finding a home for their offering. It was unanimously agreed that an agenda item be added to a future meeting of the committee to discuss this further.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the amount of £28,500 and £12,000 be ringfenced in the 2026/27 budget for grant funding to The Station and Home-start Oxford respectively and,
3. That, the Youth Development Officer at WODC be invited to a future meeting and,
4. That, an agenda item be added to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss Youth Club provision and,
5. That, the decision to include grant funding provision for APCAM be deferred to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 24 November 2025.

**SC657 FLAG FLYING POLICY REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk in respect of the Council flag flying policy and were unanimously in agreement with its adoption.

Members also agreed to the purchase of an Oxfordshire Flag, it was agreed that even with the proposed changes to Council Governance the border of Oxfordshire would not change, and Witney should be proud of its place within the County.

Additionally, it was agreed that in order for the England Flag to be flown with pride that a replacement should be purchased.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised flag flying policy be agreed and adopted and,
3. That, an Oxfordshire Flag be purchased at a cost of up to £300 and,
4. That, a replacement England flag be purchased at a cost of up to £150.

**SC658 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) - A40 DUAL CARRIAGeway**

The Committee formally received notification of a Public Spaces Protection Order from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to prohibit Pony & Trap racing on a section of the A40 dual carriageway.

Members agreed that the following response be submitted.

*Witney Town Council welcomes and fully supports this proposed Public Space Protection Order, recognising its importance in maintaining the public safety and usability of a key traffic route into and out of the town. Ensuring this main artery remains safe, accessible, and free from behaviours that compromise road safety is essential for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.*

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the above response be submitted to WODC.

**SC659 BUS SHELTER REPLACEMENT 25/26**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the need to replace the bus stop at the junction of Church Lane and Oxford Hill.

Members heard that following a number of acts of vandalism the proposal was to replace the existing shelter with a new vandal proofed version with a sedum roof at a cost of approximately £7,500 which was available from the infrastructure earmarked reserve.

A Vote was taken with the result being six members in favour of the replacement with one abstention.

A Member also raised the need for a shelter to be considered for Woodgreen and asked that it be added to the revenue growth items for the Committee.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the verbal report be noted and,
2. That, a budget of £7,500 be agreed for the replacement shelter and,
3. That, a request for a shelter at Woodgreen be added as a revenue growth item.

*Cllr D Temple left the meeting at 7:52pm.*

**SC660 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.

**SC661 VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGN (VAS) FOR WITNEY**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk following a request for consideration of the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs or Speed Indicator Devices.

Members raised the existing 30mph signs which were not situated in 20 mph zones and asked that the Council write to Oxfordshire County Council with the request for an audit of any redundant signs, such as the two on Curbridge Road to be re-sited.

The Committee felt that the requested audit be completed along with an assessment of the impact of the opening of the Shores Green junction and the rerouting of the A4095 which would follow. And that these steps should be completed prior to the potential purchase of additional VAS or SID signage.

It was agreed that the subject be added to the next agenda of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee on 20 January 2026 to inform them of the Council's position.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers write to OCC to request an audit of all redundant signage in and around the town and,
3. That, any research or result is shared with Witney Traffic Advisory Committee and,
4. That, the Council reconsider the request in December 2026 to allow sufficient time for the changes to the A40 and A4095 to take effect.

**SC662 LITTER PICKING EQUIPMENT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk following a request for community voluntary litter picking stations.

Members considered the units illustrated in the report and agreed that they were better suited to parks or enclosed areas. An additional design option was presented by the Chair, this being a unit that was both a bin and an integrated equipment store. The cost of these units was not known, and Officers were asked to further investigate the potential as this was the preferred option.

The Committee also agreed that one of the units suitable for the park environment be considered for donation to Courtside Hub on The Leys as it offered a suitable collection point.

Members also highlighted that equipment was still available from the Town Hall administration office, this was currently underutilised and therefore should be further promoted.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the idea be further researched and referred to Policy, Governance & Finance on 24 November for consideration for inclusion as a growth item in the 2026-27 budget and,
3. That, the council consider for donation to Courtside Hub on The Leys for it to be considered as a collection point.

**SC663 STREET FURNITURE CORRESPONDENCE.**

The Committee received and considered the proposed street furniture for the High Street redevelopment.

Proposals had been received from both West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council for consideration. Prior to discussion the Chair advised that he had already written to WODC and OCC to request further information and an urgent review as he was concerned that installations would not be appropriate for the town and that they did not offer value for money. The thoughts of the Chair were echoed by members who were also disappointed at the lack of consultation and approach to the proposal details received.

Members asked that the Town Clerk support the Chair's correspondence and also write to both OCC and WODC to convey the Committee's concern that individual requests for street furniture on the High Street were being considered without proper context or cohesive design and that

the Council wanted proposals to reflect a unified approach that fitted the town's Market Town identity and must be agreed with conservation officers. Additionally, a request for full consultation on aesthetic elements should be made along with an urgent meeting between the Council and the High Street Project Team ideally before Christmas to review designs so as to ensure that the project stays on track.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence of WODC and OCC be noted and,
2. That, confirmation be sent to WODC asking that they do not proceed with the proposed seating outside the Shake Shop, however the Council welcome town centre seating and,
3. That, confirmation be sent to OCC to rebut their recommendation for signage
4. That, the Town Clerk write to OCC with a request for an urgent meeting.

---

The meeting closed at: 8.32 pm

---

Chair

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** Communications Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

**Contact Officer:** Communications & Community Engagement Officer

---

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

### Current Situation

#### Residents' Communication Preference Survey

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer has issued a Residents' Communication Preference Survey. The survey has been designed to gather feedback from the community on the effectiveness, accessibility and reach of the Council's communication channels, and the findings will be used to inform future improvements to communication and engagement practices. A copy is attached as **Appendix A**.

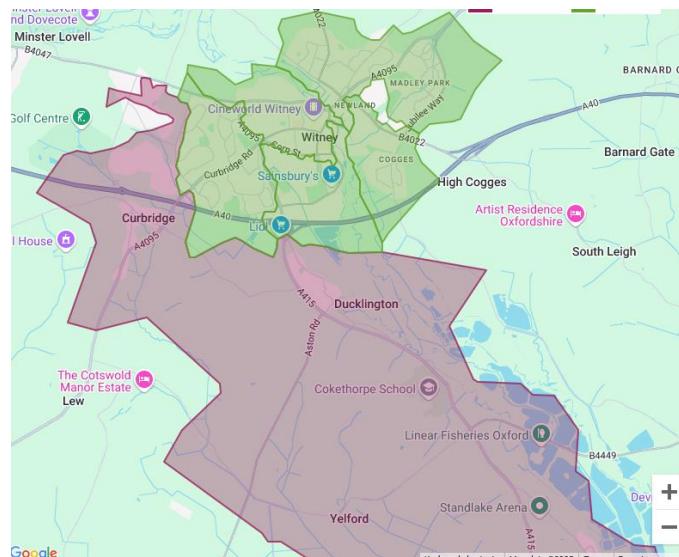
The survey is available in both paper and digital formats. Paper copies can be collected from the Administration Office, while the digital version is hosted on the Council's website and promoted across its online platforms.

To increase reach and encourage participation from groups that are traditionally under-represented, the survey will also be shared with local schools and, where possible, hospitality venues such as pubs. Councillors are asked to consider how best to achieve this. Promotion will be supported through a coordinated campaign using posters and digital signage to maximise awareness and participation. The survey can be accessed online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WTC-comms26>

#### 2026 Spring Newsletter

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer is currently preparing content for the 2026 Spring Newsletter, which will again be produced in A5 format. Quotes for printing and distribution will be sought shortly; however, it is necessary to confirm arrangements as soon as possible if Royal Mail delivery is to be used again this year.

Distribution of the newsletter is a significant expense, and Royal Mail delivery is unreliable due to postcode overlaps. Newer estates in on the outskirts of Witney with an OX29 postcode are problematical as this postcode also includes all of Ducklington and Curbridge and surrounds. The map of where we have to exclude just to allow for Windrush Place looks this.



RM does not differentiate so it will blanket deliver to these areas as it works through the codes, and this might explain the lack of spare copies and the sporadic lack of delivery to some areas in Witney in previous years.

To overcome this last year, we organised hand delivery to Windrush Place and one other OX29 post coded area within Witney.

This is the costing for that

**Title:** Spring Newsletter

**Format:** A5 8pp

**Quantity:** 1,000

**Location:** Windrush Place, Witney

**Distribution from:** early March 2025

**Price:** £145 plus VAT

Compared with the cost for production and delivery of the bulk of the newsletter; which was:

13,500 Spring Newsletter - A5 8pp (Stitched) £ 2,413.00 including delivery -1000 which were hand delivered as above.

#### **Councillors in the Café review**

Last year the Committee reviewed Cllrs in the Café with a view to ascertaining whether members of the public were accessing the opportunity to chat with Councillors and whether members found this useful. At the time it was deemed to be useful and well attended. Members are invited to report back again on whether it is still considered a valuable form of engagement and gathering feedback.

## **Website**

Following a recent audit of the website, the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement has been removing obsolete information and updating. The site is still very large with nine pages of information for the Lake and Country Park alone. Officers will be consulting with the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer to see where this can be streamlined to make it a little more manageable time wise.

In addition, the Facebook widget has been removed from the website's front page, as it generated multiple accessibility errors within third-party software that could not be resolved.

## **Press Coverage**

Latest press coverage information from November 2025 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement and follows this item.

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 Council's communications activity seeks to minimise equality risks by using a mix of digital and non-digital channels to reach residents of different ages, abilities, and circumstances. The availability of the Communications Preference Survey in both paper and online formats helps to reduce digital exclusion, particularly for older residents and those without regular internet access.

### **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**

The risks linked to the matters in this report are low. However, there is a possibility that staff time, tight deadlines, and reliance on external suppliers for printing and delivery could cause some pressure on resources or delays. There is also a risk that some residents may not be reached, particularly where digital access is limited or postal delivery is unreliable. These risks will be reduced through careful planning, using a range of communication methods, checking delivery arrangements, and regularly reviewing how the Council engages with the community.

## **Social Value**

The Council's communications activity delivers clear social value by promoting transparency, improving awareness of Council services and initiatives, and encouraging residents to engage with local decision-making. Activities such as the Town Council newsletter, consultation surveys, press engagement and *Councillors in the Café* provide opportunities for two-way communication and help build trust between councillors, officers, and the community.

## **Financial Implications**

The production and distribution of printed materials, particularly the Spring Newsletter, represent a significant and recurring cost to the Council. Royal Mail delivery issues linked to postcode overlaps can result in inefficiencies, requiring additional expenditure on hand delivery to ensure comprehensive distribution within Witney.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider and provide feedback on the Residents' Communication Preference Survey and advise on additional ways to encourage participation from under-represented groups.
2. Comment on the continued value and effectiveness of *Councillors in the Café* as a method of community engagement.
3. Note the proposed approach to the production and distribution of the 2026 Spring Newsletter, including the challenges associated with Royal Mail delivery and the use of hand delivery where required.

## Witney Town Council Communication Preferences Survey 2026



This short survey will help Witney Town Council understand how residents prefer to receive information and updates. The survey is two -sided and should take no more than 3–5 minutes to complete.

### 1. Where in Witney do you live?

Please share your postcode.

### 2. What is your age?

<input type="checkbox"/> Under 18	<input type="checkbox"/>	18-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	31-44
<input type="checkbox"/> 45-64	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-74	<input type="checkbox"/>	75+

### 3. How do you currently hear about news or updates from Witney Town Council?

(Select all that apply)

- Witney Town Council website
- Witney Town Council's Social Media Accounts (e.g. Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok)
- Our Online/ Digital newsletters and leaflets/surveys
- Our Printed and Delivered Newsletter and leaflets/surveys
- Witney Town Council/Corn Exchange Posters and Advertising Boards/Noticeboard
- Local Papers/Magazines - Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, Letterbox, Round and About
- In person - Council Meetings, Visit to Admin Office, Cllrs in the Cafe
- Other Social Media sites - Spotted Witney etc
- I don't know where to find out about Witney Town Council news and events

### 4. How would you *prefer* to receive information from the Town Council?

(Select up to three)

- Email
- Social Media
- Town Council Website
- Printed Newsletters or leaflets
- Public Meetings or Events
- Local Newspapers

### 5. How often would you like to receive updates from the Town Council?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Every Few Months
- Only When Something Important Happens

#### **6. What types of information are most important to you?**

**(Select all that apply)**

- Witney Town Council all News and Services information
- What's On at our venues
- Planning and development updates
- Roadworks/disruptions
- Council decisions/meetings
- Community services and other local events
- Emergency or urgent notices

#### **4. Please specify which of these local newspapers and magazines you regularly read.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Witney Gazette	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oxford Mail
<input type="checkbox"/> Letterbox	<input type="checkbox"/>	Round and About
<input type="checkbox"/> Other- Please let us know which other publications you regularly read.		

**Thank you for participating in our survey**



## Agenda Item 5a

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	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25436134.oxfordshire-largest-funfair-open-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25436134.oxfordshire-largest-funfair-open-</a>	
10.9.25	Water Play Park Closes for Season	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail		Yes	No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25444010.leys-splash-park-witney-close-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25444010.leys-splash-park-witney-close-</a>	
15.9.25	Union Jack raised in Witney to mark Battle of Britain Day	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467824.union-jack-raised-witney-mark-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467824.union-jack-raised-witney-mark-</a>	
15.9.25	Oxfordshire's biggest funfair opens in 'atrocious' weather	Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467909.oxfordshire-biggest-funfair-opens-atrocious-weather/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467909.oxfordshire-biggest-funfair-opens-atrocious-weather/</a>	
20.9.25	Silt build-up removal brings river to normal level	BBC News	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce84znwxdwgo">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce84znwxdwgo</a>	
23.9.25	Warning as 20 tonnes of gravel comes to Oxfordshire park	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette, BBC News, MSN		Yes	No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25487051.hgv-warning-20-tonnes-gravel-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25487051.hgv-warning-20-tonnes-gravel-</a>	
1.10.25	Witney preparing to host its first Eco Fair next week	Oxford Mail	Yes		Yes	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25504470.witney-preparing-host-first-eco-fair-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25504470.witney-preparing-host-first-eco-fair-</a>	
1.10.25	Witney residents to speak with councillors this weekend	Thisisoxfordshire, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25505380.witney-residents-speak-with-councillors-this-weekend">https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25505380.witney-residents-speak-with-councillors-this-weekend</a>	
6.10.25	Popular Oxfordshire park wins royal horticultural gold award	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, Yahoo!News	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25512207.popular-oxfordshire-park-wins-royal-horticultural-gold-award">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25512207.popular-oxfordshire-park-wins-royal-horticultural-gold-award</a>	
12.10.25	Witney: Emergency bleed control kit installed by town hall	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall</a>	
15.10.25	Emergency Kit Installed	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall</a>	
22.10.25	MP and councillors view progress at development	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail		Yes	No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-at-development">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-at-development</a>	
22.10.25	Witney Lake path work ends	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake-</a>	
24.10.25	Witney: Work carried out to reduce local flood risk	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25565246.witney-work-carried-reduce-local-flood-risk">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25565246.witney-work-carried-reduce-local-flood-risk</a>	
25.10.25	Work to improve paths at Witney Lake and Country Park completed	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes		No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake</a>	
26.10.25	Witney MP and councillors view progress at new development	Oxford Mail		Yes	No	Yes		<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-new-development">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-new-development</a>	
29.10.25	Trees removed from river to reduce flood risk	Witney Gazette	Yes		No	Yes	Physical		

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
8.11.25	Witney Town Council steps in to save community buses	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25595929.witney-town-council-steps-save-buses/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25595929.witney-town-council-steps-save-buses/</a>	
10.11.25	Oxfordshire town marks Remembrance Day with service and tour	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/2560995.oxfordshire-town-marks-remembrance-day-service-and-tour/">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/2560995.oxfordshire-town-marks-remembrance-day-service-and-tour/</a>	
20.11.25	Witney has bird flu outbreak after swan death at lake	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25637965.oxfordshire-town-bird-flu-outbreak-after-swan-death-lake/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25637965.oxfordshire-town-bird-flu-outbreak-after-swan-death-lake/</a>	
30.11.25	Witney Christmas Lights Switch On: young artist's design	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25651372.witney-christmas-lights-switch-on-young-artists-design/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25651372.witney-christmas-lights-switch-on-young-artists-design/</a>	
09.12.25	Corn Exchange Witney serving up festive afternoon tea	Yahoo News, Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, MSN	Yes			No	Yes (Corn Exchange)	<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25681368.corn-exchange-witney-serving-up-festive-afternoon-tea/">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25681368.corn-exchange-witney-serving-up-festive-afternoon-tea/</a>	
12.12.25	Mayor's carols in Witney gets Christmas season going	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25691553.mayors-carols-witney-gets-christmas-season-going/">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25691553.mayors-carols-witney-gets-christmas-season-going/</a>	
12.12.25	Blenheim and Oxford confirm more Oxfordshire bird flu cases	The Herald Series			Yes	No	No (Asked directly)	<a href="https://www.birdfluinfo.co.uk/news/25691435.blenheim-and-oxford-confirm-more-oxfordshire-bird-flu-cases/">https://www.birdfluinfo.co.uk/news/25691435.blenheim-and-oxford-confirm-more-oxfordshire-bird-flu-cases/</a>	
13.12.25	Witney toddlers to enjoy new adventure park equipment	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25693404.witney-toddlers-enjoy-new-adventure-park-equipment/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25693404.witney-toddlers-enjoy-new-adventure-park-equipment/</a>	
14.12.25	'Well-loved' Witney Wishing Tree facing a pull test	Witney Gazette, MSN News			Yes	No	Yes	<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25691531.well-loved-witney-wishing-tree-facing-pull-test/">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25691531.well-loved-witney-wishing-tree-facing-pull-test/</a>	

**Oxford Mail****Witney Gazette**

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.



Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
06 January 2026	Cost of fixing Flag Vandalism on Lamp Posts (Features leader of the Council)	Oxford Clarion			Yes	No	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordclarion.uk/news/year-clarion-6-january-2026/">https://www.oxfordclarion.uk/news/year-clarion-6-january-2026/</a>	
07 January 2026	Witney Lake Gold In Bloom Award	Cotswold Life	Yes			Yes	Yes	<a href="https://www.greatbritainlive.co.uk/magazines/cotswold/25693560.rich-textile-heritage-witney-won">https://www.greatbritainlive.co.uk/magazines/cotswold/25693560.rich-textile-heritage-witney-won</a>	
11 January 2026	Oxfordshire town rejects controversial fire service reforms	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	No	<a href="https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25738722.oxfordshire-council-poised-oppose-fire-service-reforms/">https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25738722.oxfordshire-council-poised-oppose-fire-service-reforms/</a>	
12 January 2026	Major Cotswolds road in Oxfordshire to close next month	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes (On behalf of OCC)	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25757595.major-cotswolds-road-oxfordshire-close-next-month/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25757595.major-cotswolds-road-oxfordshire-close-next-month/</a>	
14 January 2026	Key Cotswolds road will close overnight next month	Cotswold Journal			Yes	No	Yes (On behalf of OCC)	<a href="https://www.cotswoldjournal.co.uk/news/25764016.key-cotswolds-road-will-close-overnight-next-month/">https://www.cotswoldjournal.co.uk/news/25764016.key-cotswolds-road-will-close-overnight-next-month/</a>	
17 January 2026	Witney community Speedwatch volunteers celebrate anniversary	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No	<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25773859.witney-community-speedwatch-volunteers-celebrate">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25773859.witney-community-speedwatch-volunteers-celebrate</a>	

---

**Agenda Item:** Community Engagement Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

**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

### Witney: Past Present and Future Working Party

Arrangements to commemorate St George's day are taking shape. The idea is to produce a small scale, family friendly formulaic plan that can be reused as needed. This year the day falls on Thursday which is market day. As a result, the flag raising and town cry will take place on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April and the main bulk of the other events will take place on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>.

Minutes of the Working Party meeting are viewable as a sub section to this report.

Those organisations and groups that have responded to invitations to participate have, for the most part, agreed to take part. Overall engagement has been positive, indicating a willingness across the community to support the initiative.

However, some reservations have been expressed. One adult group has agreed to participate while describing the subject as a potential "hot potato." In addition, the leader of a youth organisation has provided a tentative response, explaining that while the initiative is seen as a positive expression of national pride, there is some nervousness among the young people due to the area's multicultural and diverse nature. Their concern is that participation could be misinterpreted as endorsing extremist views in the current political climate. The leader has indicated that they will seek to reassure the group and provide a further response in due course.

### Advent Fayre Feedback

During this year's Advent Fayre the Council received requests from several families as to the possibility of reserving a couple of hours as SEND sessions.

This is easy to put into place and would probably work best at either end of the day, providing that sufficient materials were in reserve for the later session. It would also be possible to have some activities that are suitable for all but of a particularly sensory nature or appealing to those with neurodiversity.

### **Gallery Room Christmas Engagement 2025**

This year, the Gallery Room was made available for Witney's Young Carers to watch the switch-on, enjoy refreshments, and take part in crafting activities, which was very well received. The Ice Centre has expressed an interest for 2026.

### **Witney Carnival 2026**

Carnival stalls are now available. Traditionally, Witney Town Council has hosted a stall where members of the public judge the school's planted wheelbarrows as part of the In Bloom competition. The wheelbarrows are delivered by the Works Team, along with a gazebo, tables, and chairs, ready for set-up.

However, the wheelbarrows are very heavy, and there are practical issues with continuing this as part of the WTC stand. While the stall is well-staffed during the day, take-down has often fallen to staff and volunteers, who have limited assistance in returning the wheelbarrows to the old depot. Additionally, if Courtside is operational by July, there may be no suitable storage for the wheelbarrows over the remainder of the weekend ahead of them being distributed to Care Homes for the summer.

The Council will therefore need to consider additional staff resources to assist with wheelbarrow handling at the start and end of Carnival Day, or whether the wheelbarrows should no longer be featured as part of the Council's stall.

### **Heritage Open Day (HOD) 2026 -11- 20 September**

The Council had not planned to hold an event for HOD this year and therefore there is no budget for one, but the theme this year is very appropriate to Witney and makes for a great partnership with the Museum and Blanket Hall. The theme is based around the everyday histories of working lives:

The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker - what did your ancestors do? From factory floors to kitchen counters, school desks to sailors' docks, serving halls to vegetable gardens. Exploring the daily routines of different jobs, the skills required, the people that did them and the places that housed them all.

It is proposed the Council does a day and a half over Friday afternoon 3pm to 8pm and Saturday morning 9am to 1pm to give fair access to schools and people who work. Officers suggest an exhibition in the Gallery Room with Lift the Flap quiz reveals and 'feely bags' to give clues to occupations. Perhaps some oral histories from the Museum of Blanket Hall. Example of a Lift the flap. Outside illustration of sacks and scales, text says:

"I light the fire before most of the town is awake. By breakfast time, my hands are white with dust.

I earn around 18 shillings a week"

Beneath the flap is a baker with loaves of bread.

## **Request to Fly Europe Flag**

A request has been received to fly the European Flag from the Town Hall on 5<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> May annually. The details are included as **Appendix A**. The relevant criteria for flag flying from the Council's policy is included below.

### *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.*

## **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.
- There is a risk that the Council agrees to fly the Europe flag it may be perceived as contrary to the aims of celebrating local and national pride recently debated by this Committee.

## **Social Value**

Council-led events and partnerships create opportunities for community connection, volunteering, and cultural enrichment. Initiatives such as Heritage Open Day Events and the Carnival involvement strengthen community identity and wellbeing.

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

## **Financial**

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets apart from Heritage Open Day. 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. a)** Consider endorsing the proposed small-scale, family-friendly, and reusable format for St George's Day events, with activities split across Market Day (Thursday 23 April) and Sunday 26 April.
- b)** To note the concerns raised by some participating groups regarding perceptions of the St George's Day event and support officers in continuing to position the event as inclusive, civic, and community-focused, rather than political or ideological.
- 2.** Consider approving the introduction of dedicated SEND friendly sessions at future Advent Fayres, to be scheduled at the start and/or end of the day.
- 3.** To note the success of the Gallery Room provision for Witney Young Carers during the Christmas switch-on and consider use by the Ice Centre for 2026, subject to capacity and safeguarding considerations.
- 4.** Consider and determine one of the following options for Witney Carnival 2026:

Consider whether additional staff resources provide assistance with the delivery, set-up, and removal of the planted wheelbarrows on Carnival Day, subject to staffing availability and health and safety considerations; or

That the planted wheelbarrows no longer form part of the Town Council's Carnival stall, in recognition of manual handling risks, storage constraints (particularly if Courtside is operational), and staff welfare considerations.

**5.** Support officers in developing a low-cost partnership event for Heritage Open Day 2026, working with Witney Museum and the Blanket Hall, despite no budget being pre-allocated.

**6.** Consider the request to fly the Europe Flag from the Town Hall.

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 2:41 PM  
**Subject:** Request to fly the European flag

Good afternoon.

I am writing to you as a resident of Witney and a member of Oxford for Europe to request that the Town Council flies the European flag to celebrate Europe Day on 5th May and the foundation of the Council of Europe on 9th May.

Oxford for Europe campaigns across Oxfordshire for closer links with the rest of Europe and it would be fantastic if we could see more councils demonstrate their support for closer links with Europe by flying the European flag. Oxford City Council already flies the flag above Oxford Town Hall on 9 May every year and it would be great to see Witney doing the same in 2026.

I do hope this idea will appeal to a majority of your councillors. I am sure it will be supported by many of the people in West Oxfordshire.

If there's anything I or my colleagues in Oxford for Europe can do to help, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks.

Kind regards.



# Agenda Item 6a

## WITNEY PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday, 14 January 2026

At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

**Present:**

Councillor J Treloar (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch	R Smith
	J Robertshaw	

Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community
		Engagement Officer

Others:	Tom Hilton	
	Beverly Sherwood (Witney & District Museum)	

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Witney Town FC who were unable to send a representative.

### **2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 13 November 2025 were received.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 13 November 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

### **3 ST GEORGE'S DAY EVENTS 2026**

The Working Party received a report from the Communications and Community Engagement Officer outlining initial proposals for how the Town Council could mark St George's Day 2026 following the last meeting.

Members were advised that the Corn Exchange had been booked by a third party for the period 23–26 April and therefore would not be unavailable for events; however, Burwell Hall was available. Additionally, Thursday 23 April would be a Market Day so activity on the Market Square would not be possible. It was agreed that the Corn Exchange should be booked in advance for 2027.

Members discussed the location, scope, and timing of potential events. It was agreed that activities should include a flag raising and official town cry at the Town Hall on St George's Day itself, with additional events taking place in Market Square on Sunday 26 April as they provided a central focus point. As noted at the previous meeting, the

programme should include a celebration of English institutions, such as the NHS and emergency front line services.

Further discussion considered which organisations and businesses could be involved, with several already having expressed interest. A representative from the Museum attended the meeting and confirmed that a colleague would be arranging a guided walk, potentially on 24 April. Witney Town FC also indicated enthusiasm to participate.

Members were presented with a range of potential activities, including themed items at the 1863 Café Bar, a dragon hunt, a community window display, a community football tournament over the weekend, involvement from twinned towns (including information about their patron saints), and possible re-enactments or Morris Dancers. There was agreement that resourcing the events would need to be considered, including both Councillors and volunteers.

The Working Party also discussed engagement with local schools, noting that St George's Day forms part of the curriculum. It was agreed that a creative approach should be taken and that this work could be delegated to the Chair, Cllr Crouch, and officers.

The Working Party was satisfied that plans were progressing well and that the proposals would deliver a meaningful programme to mark St George's Day for all sections of the community.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, events on Thursday 23 April 2026 should consist of a St George flag-raising and official cry at the Town Hall and,
3. That, events on Sunday 26 April 2026 should be focused on Market Square during the afternoon and include entertainment from local groups and organisations and,
4. That, a football tournament, hosted by Witney Town FC still be supported and,
5. That, integration from schools should be delegated to Cllrs J Treloar, Crouch alongside officers.

---

The meeting closed at: 4.54 pm

---

Chair

# Agenda Item 6b

By virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1

Document is Restricted

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** In Bloom Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

**Contact Officer:** Communications & Community Engagement Officer

---

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors about proposed activities for In Bloom 2026.

### Current Situation

#### Witney's In Bloom Entry

This year Witney Town Council is not entering any sites for Thames in Chiltern 'In Bloom' Judging. Work and funds will focus on improving Unterhaching Park using Council own teams and volunteers to bring it to a basic state of preparedness for future planting.

#### Schools In Bloom Wheelbarrows

Several of the wheelbarrows now require replacement, as they have become worn and damaged through long-term use.

As in previous years, it will be stipulated that no plastic materials are used in any of the displays. The Council also typically offers a guest wheelbarrow to an organisation working with young people, and suggestions for a suitable group are invited. Recent guest contributors have included the Ice Centre and Synolos.

The theme for the wheelbarrows is to be selected from the following options:

- Wellbeing Wheelbarrows planted with fragrant and soothing plants traditionally associated with teas and aromatic enjoyment.
- Sensory Wheelbarrows planted with a variety of plants chosen to delight the senses.

#### Community Gardening and Schools Vouchers

This year, schools will be asked to retain receipts for any items purchased using a Witney Town Council (WTC) voucher, for record-keeping purposes.

It is not proposed to automatically issue vouchers to community gardeners. A recent review of the winter maintenance at Burwell, the Horticultural Society, and the Edible Gardens shows that these gardens are well maintained, sustainably planted, and feature year-round planting.



Community gardeners will be asked if they require any items, and a voucher will be issued for the appropriate amount only if the items cannot be sourced efficiently through WTC's own suppliers.

The garden at Queen Emma's, currently in its first year, will be allocated a £50 voucher, as in previous years. Receipts will be required for all voucher use to maintain accurate records.

## **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**

The risks associated with Witney's In Bloom activities, including wheelbarrow displays and community gardening, are considered low. Potential risks relate primarily to manual handling of wheelbarrows, safe use of tools and plants, and outdoor working conditions. These are manageable through established procedures, officer oversight, and volunteer guidance. Environmental risks are minimal, as existing green spaces will continue to be used responsibly.

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

## **Social Value**

These initiatives deliver strong social value by encouraging community participation, volunteering, and civic pride. Wheelbarrow displays and community gardening support cross generational engagement, provide educational opportunities for schools, and enhance the local environment for residents. Supporting sustainable planting and sensory/wellbeing projects contributes to inclusive and accessible experiences for all.

## Financial

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets. Officer time will be managed to ensure cost-effective delivery, and any purchases for community gardens will be prioritised for efficiency, either sourced through WTC suppliers or reimbursed via vouchers with receipts. Overall, the financial impact is minimal and manageable.

## Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Suggest a group for **guest wheelbarrow** from organisations with young people.
2. Choose a theme for Schools In Bloom from the two below:  
Wellbeing Wheelbarrows (fragrant, soothing plants)  
Sensory Wheelbarrows (plants to stimulate the senses)
3. **Approve** the voucher arrangements for community gardens and schools, including:
  - Schools retaining receipts for purchased items
  - Issuing vouchers to community gardeners only where items cannot be sourced efficiently via WTC suppliers
  - Allocating a £50 voucher to Queen Emma's garden

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** Youth Council Update

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

**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

#### Youth Council Meeting Frequency - 13<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Holding the last three Youth Council meetings monthly rather than every other month helped maintain motivation and move planning forward, although attendance remained about the same. The next few meetings will return to a bi-monthly schedule to allow Officers time to plan upcoming Witney Town Council events, with the option to increase the frequency again if requested by youth councillors.

#### End-of-Meeting Discussions

At the last meeting on 8 January 2025, officers introduced an informal post-meeting discussion, where youth councillors sat around a smaller table and talked more casually after going through the agenda. This proved very effective in encouraging them to reflect on what had been discussed and to plan their next steps. When time allows, Officers will continue to encourage this approach at future Youth Council meetings.

#### A Taste of Witney – Witney Youth Council Event

Witney Youth Councillors decided to host an event for young people after noting a lack of activities in Witney, and they were keen to celebrate different cultures through food. Rather than cooking themselves, they plan to invite local restaurants to provide food samples, with the restaurants managing food safety while the Youth Council provides the venue, support,

and oversees attendance. The ticketed event will take place at the Corn Exchange, with funds raised contributing to the planned water re-filling station at The Leys. Restaurants will be contacted by youth councillors by the end of January.

## **House of Commons Visit**

Witney Youth Council has shown a strong interest in both local and national politics and has frequently requested a visit to the House of Commons. MP Charlie Maynard has offered to provide a guided tour; however, a specific date is still in the process of being arranged with his team.

## **Youth Council Elected Roles**

Witney Youth Council re-elected roles for:

- Chair/Vice Chair
- Media Officer
- Treasurer

Three of the four roles were re-elected to different youth councillors, allowing them to develop new skills through taking on new responsibilities.

## **Daily Slides and End of Term Newsletters**

Updates from Witney Youth Council and Witney Town Council concerning young residents are continuing to be shared with local secondary schools for inclusion in their newsletters.

## **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, officers 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.

## **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 Youth Council update.



Minutes of the meeting of the Witney Youth Council held At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

**Youth Councillors Present:**

Seven Youth Councillors

**Witney Town Council Mentors Present:**

Cllr G Meadows

Cllr S Simpson

**Witney Town Council Officers Present:**

A Hathaway – Admin Assistant for Communications and Engagement

A Clapton – Deputy Town Clerk

---

The Councillors in attendance were Youth Council mentors and were there to guide and answer questions. Officers advised Members this was their opportunity to provide a voice for young people in Witney and the Town Council would try and bring about their ideas and suggestions.

**1. Apologies**

No apologies for absence were received.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Youth Councillors were advised that if they knew anyone or had any involvement in any of the items being discussed at the meeting, they should say it at this point.

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Updates on the House of Commons Visit**

The Youth Council Admin Assistant provided a verbal update that we were still waiting on MP Charlie Maynard's response for a specific date that works for him.

**4. Cultural Foods in Witney Event (A Taste of Witney (?))**

Youth Councillors assigned event roles to plan this event for the Spring. A recap was read of what was agreed in the last meeting:

- Each participating restaurant will have its own individual table.
- The event will preferably be held outdoors at the Corn Exchange, with the main hall booked as a backup in case of bad weather.
- Entry will be completely free to ensure accessibility, especially for young people.
- A dedicated table will be available for voluntary donations and fundraising for the water refilling station at The Leys, which will be monitored.

- There will be no seating to encourage movement and prevent overcrowding.
- The event will be open to all local food businesses to maximise reach and include a wide range of cultures.
- If a restaurant cancels at short notice, pre-bought cakes will be sold to fill any empty tables.
- Crowd safety will be managed by using a large open space and limiting visitors to 15-minute rotations around the tables.
- The event will take place on a Sunday to accommodate working people and young attendees.
- The event will run for approximately two hours.
- Setup and takedown will be split into two shifts and managed by different groups of youth councillors.

A list of all restaurants in Witney was noted:

**Gurkha**

*The Old Court Hotel*

*The Plough*

**OXON BBQ Witney**

*The Edge Eatery*

*San Marzano Witney*

**Curry Paradise**

**Huffkins Witney**

*Pokhara Delicious*

**Bella Italia**

*No. 14 Wesley Walk*

*Part & Parcel*

**Pizza Express**

*Moon Coffee*

**Sandwich De Witney**

*Ye Olde Cross Keys*

**The Blue Boar**

**Shaan Indian Restaurant**

**Como Lounge**

**USA Chicken and Pizza Witney**

**Café Marada 39**

*The Fleece*

**Suwanna Thai Restaurant**

*The Three Horseshoes*

Restaurants highlighted were chosen by the Youth Councillors to visit. Groups were decided to go out and ask the restaurants on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026 at 1:30PM. The admin for the Youth Council will be present in the centre of town at 1863 during this time for youth councillors to find if there is an issue.

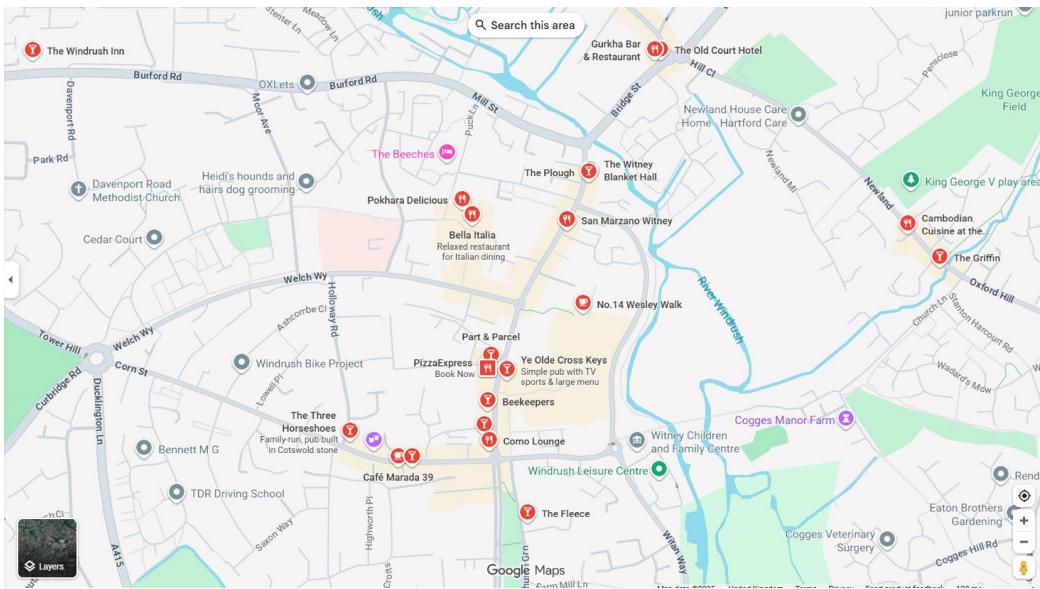


Figure 1 Map of the restaurants in Witney

## 5. Items for Future Agenda

A youth councillor suggested further planning for this event and a recap of the results from 31<sup>st</sup> Jan be discussed at the next meeting.

## 6. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the upcoming Youth Council meetings were received.

- Wed 11 March 2025 – 4PM to 5PM

**Agenda Item:** Youth Services

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

---

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on youth services funded by the Town Council in 2026/27, together with services delivered by other authorities and/or stakeholders.

## Background

As part of the budget-setting process, the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee recommended that the Youth Services Grant scheme be launched earlier in the year to align with the start of the fiscal year in April 2026 (Minute F694, 24 November).

At the meeting held on 15 September 2025, it was recommended that authority be delegated for the creation of a new Service Level Agreement for The Station Detached Youth, delivered by the Bright Futures charity (Minute SC531 refers).

At this Committee's previous meeting, it was agreed the matter of Youth Club provision would be included as an item for discussion at this meeting (Minute SC656 refers).

## Current Situation

### Youth Services Grant 2026–27

In deciding whether to bring forward the scheme the Council must take account of the pre-election period which, while primarily affecting District Council elections, begins around 25 March (dependent on when the notice of election is published). To meet the above recommendation, it is proposed that the scheme opens in mid-March and remains open until after the elections on 7 May 2026. Assessment and decision-making can then take place ahead of ratification at a Council meeting scheduled before the end of June.

Members are also invited to indicate whether they wish to propose any changes to the grant criteria or to the process by which the grant is awarded (criteria attached at **Appendix A**).

Please note that the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee retains final authority over grant awards.

## **The Station Detached Youth**

The Chair, Leader, Chair of Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments, and the Deputy Town Clerk met with a representative from Bright Futures on 4 December 2025.

During the meeting, discussion focused on performance metrics, indoor youth provision, and the services currently being delivered. A multi-year funding request and annual inflationary increases were also acknowledged. An updated draft Service Level Agreement has since been issued to Bright Futures for review and comment, ahead of being presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting on 2 February for initial consideration.

February half-term BREAK sessions are scheduled to take place at the 1863 Café Bar from 17–20 February 2026.

## **Witney Youth Club Provision**

At the previous meeting, Members discussed the closure of Base 33 in 2017, following 15 years of operation, and noted that the gap in youth club provision created by its closure had yet to be fully addressed.

The Committee should note the existing February and October half-term arrangements with The Station for youth café provision, alongside the redevelopment of the Courtside Hub and other forthcoming initiatives, which may help to address this gap. The issue has also been raised with stakeholders through Thames Valley Police Operation Just discussions; however, at present, Town Council officers are not aware of any confirmed Youth Clubs in Witney.

## **West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership**

The inaugural meeting of this initiative, currently administered by West Oxfordshire District Council, was held on Friday 16 January.

The meeting included presentations outlining the group's priorities, feedback from Oxfordshire Youth on their Youth Voice Project, and an overview of the Local Youth Transformation Project. The latter was led by the National Youth Agency and related to a Department for Culture, Media & Sport Local Youth Transformation Pilot, with Oxfordshire selected as one of twelve pathfinder authorities testing approaches to delivering a local youth offer that meets young people's needs while supporting government priorities.

Presentation slides from the meeting have been circulated to Committee members separately for information.

The Youth Development Officer at West Oxfordshire District Council has indicated a willingness to attend a future meeting but is unable to attend on this occasion.

## **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 budget for the Youth Services Grant in 2026-27 is £20,000 (4169/408)\*

*\*Proposed.* The Council's 2026-27 budget has not yet been agreed at the time of writing.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider,

1. The timing of opening the Youth Services Grant for applications
2. The criteria for the Youth Services Grant
3. Any further action in relation to Youth Club provision
4. To note the updates concerning The Station & West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership.



## Youth Services Grant 2025-26

The Town Council supports the desires of young people for enhancing and increasing places to go and things to do, supports young people's access to activities they are interested in, maintains play provision and encourages the voice of youth in the decisions that affect them through the work of the Witney Youth Council.

To realise these objectives further, Witney Town Council has established a Youth Funding Grant with a total of £20,000 available in the year 2025-26.

### Purpose of the Fund

The Youth Fund is open to applications from community and voluntary sector organisations, including existing organisations and those in the process of setting up to establish easily signposted and accessible youth opportunities, supporting open access to preventative services, particularly for those who may be hard to reach and to extend activities to support the young people of Witney.

Activities may include, for example, providing guidance and support about their lives and issues relating to school, family life and peers through way of drop-in sessions.

Applications may, for example, facilitate the provision of a safe space for young people who would otherwise have nowhere to go, including a safe space to talk, and the ability to enjoy some self-directed or group/organised discretionary activities. In this instance funds could be requested towards facility hire costs and towards a permanent youth structure in the town.

Once the available resource is used the Youth Funding Grant will be closed.

### Types of Assistance

- Financial assistance towards specific projects/activities or purchases of equipment
- Financial assistance towards ongoing revenue costs if the organisation can demonstrate their lack of funds and the adverse effect on the Town and its residents if the organisation is unable to continue/start or are hampered by lack of funds
- Financial assistance to groups providing specialist services
- Financial assistance towards discretionary services such as subsidised meals
- Financial assistance towards the costs to hire a facility
- Financial assistance pledged towards a permanent youth structure

- Subsidised use of the Council Buildings, such as regular use of the Corn Exchange for or Burwell Hall for activities within the terms of the fund.

The Council will look favourably on those who create opportunities to be accessible to all young people, therefore applications demonstrating how they will extend their reach to young people who have not previously engaged with these opportunities are encouraged.

Bids will need to demonstrate that they are offering new youth opportunities or extending existing ones for young people between the ages of 0 - 18 and how these opportunities will support them to live a full and varied life.

## **Grant Criteria**

We will assess applications according to:

- Whether the proposal is providing new opportunities or extending the existing ones for young people to additional sessions, areas or groups of young people.
- How the proposed provision will meet the needs identified
- How it will support young people to live a full and varied life
- How it will add value to the local community
- How it will work with other groups and stakeholders
- How the funding will be used. We believe supporting young people should become an indispensable part of their community and young people who have benefitted from support should continue to do so after the funding period. Applications therefore are encouraged to present their plans as to how they are going to make the provision sustainable and attract hard to reach children
- to identify the local need of young people and can use local evidence from within their community. This might include using existing data and/or anecdotal evidence. The applicants will need to demonstrate how the bid will meet the identified needs.

**Applicants must ensure they always have procedures in place to safeguard young people.**

## **Who Can Apply?**

Applications will only be accepted from the following:

- Local Charitable and/or non-profit-taking organisations (existing or start-up groups) \*
- Community Groups
- Religious Groups (providing the funding is for non-religious activities for young people)
- Volunteer Groups

\*Organisations applying to Witney Town Council should be local to Witney or, if just outside the boundary, its work should be of significant benefit to the town and its residents.

**Groups and organisations should be affiliated to Oxfordshire Youth or similar recognised umbrella organisation.**

Applications are unlikely to be awarded to the following:

- Commercial Organisations
- Individuals
- Charities operating overseas
- Funds established to help persons outside the UK
- Churches & Ecclesiastical charities (towards the upkeep of a building)
- National appeals are, with limited exceptions, also outside the legal scope of the Council's grant-aid scheme

Grants cannot be made to cover money already spent and the giving of a grant one year does not set a precedent for another.

Preference will be given to organisations who have not already received funding from any other body. The Council will look favourably on organisations who can demonstrate they have been unsuccessful in obtaining funding from their national bodies or West Oxfordshire District Council.

## **The Application Process**

To ensure that fair and proper consideration can be given to all requests, the Council requires the following to be submitted before the application deadline:

- A completed application form
- The most recent full set of accounts available or a financial projection or budget for the period following the accounts\*
- Any additional information the organisation considers will support their application for grant funding.

\*If the organisation is a new entity with no accounts available, please provide a Business Plan, stating aims and objectives, along with a financial projection for at least the current financial year.

Please complete and submit the application form electronically or by email, along with your most recently available, year-end accounts by 12 noon on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Please address postal applications to: Deputy Town Clerk, Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, OX28 6AG.

Please send email applications to: [communities@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:communities@witney-tc.gov.uk)

## How will applications be assessed?

The Town Council will check all applications for the Youth Services Grant against the criteria set out above. All applications meeting the criteria will be considered by the Town Council's Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Applications for larger grants may be offered the opportunity to present their proposal to this committee.

The panel will make recommendations for award and the final decision will be made by the Full Council on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

## Awarding the grant

Applicants will be advised as soon as possible after the dates below whether their application has been successful or not. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified without delay

Successful applicants will be asked to sign a grant agreement with the Council. Once the agreement is signed, the funds will be transferred to the organisation's designated bank account.

## Key Dates

6 <sup>th</sup>	May	2025	The Youth Services Grant opens for applications
27 <sup>th</sup>	June	2025	The Youth Services Grant closes for applications
30 <sup>th</sup>	June	2025	The scoring process takes place
14 <sup>th</sup>	July	2025	Evaluation Meeting (Stronger Communities Committee)
21 <sup>st</sup>	July	2025	Agreement on awards (Policy, Government & Finance Committee)
22 <sup>nd</sup>	July	2025	Applicants notified of recommendations
28 <sup>th</sup>	July	2025	Full meeting of Witney Town Council makes final decision
31 <sup>st</sup>	July	2025	Applicants notified of final decisions

## Monitoring

Successful applicants are expected to comply fully with any monitoring requests from the Council and must agree to this when signing the grant agreement. This may include a review of their project during the period of funding, checking how the money was spent, reports on the activity funded, feedback from young people and any other record of the activity funded (e.g. promotional flyers and posters).

- Grants should be spent within the year, for the purpose for which they were given
- The Council reserves the right to request a copy of invoices and/or other documentation as evidence that the expenditure has been incurred
- Organisations receiving grant-aid in excess of £500, as a condition, are required to provide the Council with a written report within 12 months of the award date to demonstrate how the funds were expended
- If an organisation dissolves the Council expects the organisation to reimburse the grant-aid awarded
- Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the town council.
- Recipients of a grant from the town council should acknowledge the fact on all relevant literature.

Successful applicants will be required to complete a monitoring report for the town council towards the end of the funding agreement.

## **Contacting Us**

We encourage applicants to contact us with any questions they might have as early as possible. If you have any queries about the Youth Fund or the application process, please contact us on: [communities@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:communities@witney-tc.gov.uk)

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** Update on Reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum

**Meeting Date:** Monday 26 January 2026

**Contact Officer:** Town Clerk/CEO

---

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update for awareness and information on progress made towards the reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum.

### Background

The Stronger Communities Committee has unanimously agreed that the Witney Town Centre Forum should be re-established and administered by Witney Town Council, as a successor to earlier partnership arrangements. This decision followed consideration of the Witney Chamber of Commerce survey and the Committee's desire to strengthen collaborative working in support of a vibrant town centre.

The Council subsequently approved the establishment of the Forum and appointed three Councillors to represent the Town Council, these being Cllrs Andy Bailey, Georgia Meadows and David Edward-Hughes.

The Forum is intended to bring together key stakeholders, including local businesses, partner authorities, and community representatives, to share information, discuss town centre issues, and support coordinated initiatives

### Current Situation

The Town Clerk / CEO is the lead officer on the Witney Town Centre Forum, supported by the Council's Administration Team.

Initial preparatory work has been undertaken, including the identification of relevant stakeholders and the issue of invitations to participate in the Forum. This work demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to progressing the Forum in line with previous resolutions of the Committee and Council.

However, Members are asked to note that, since the end of November 2025, the Administration Team has been operating with over 50% reduced staffing capacity due to vacancy and ongoing sickness. As a result, while invitations have been issued, it has not yet been possible to arrange and service the inaugural meeting of the Forum. This reflects current resourcing constraints rather than a change in priority or intent.

The reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum remains an agreed objective, and progress will continue as officer and administrative capacity allows. Once adequate administrative

support is in place, the inaugural meeting will be convened and Members updated accordingly.

## **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.

### **Equality**

The Forum is intended to promote inclusive engagement with a wide range of town centre stakeholders. No adverse equality impacts are anticipated.

### **Biodiversity**

No direct biodiversity impacts arise from this update. Future Forum discussions may positively influence environmentally sensitive initiatives.

### **Crime & Disorder**

No direct impact at this stage. The Forum may, in due course, provide a useful platform for discussion of town centre safety and related issues.

### **Environment & Climate Emergency**

No direct impact arising from this report. The Forum may support longer-term initiatives aligned with the Council's climate objectives.

### **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.

There are no immediate risks arising from this update. Clear communication with Members and stakeholders helps manage expectations regarding timescales while administrative capacity is constrained.

### **Social Value**

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

The reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum has the potential to deliver positive social value by strengthening collaboration, supporting the local economy, and enhancing community wellbeing.

### **Financial implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this update. Officer time will continue to be required to support the Forum within existing resources.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and the current position regarding progress on the reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum, including the impact of temporary administrative capacity constraints.

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** Request for bollard to prevent vehicular access to pathways and green space

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026

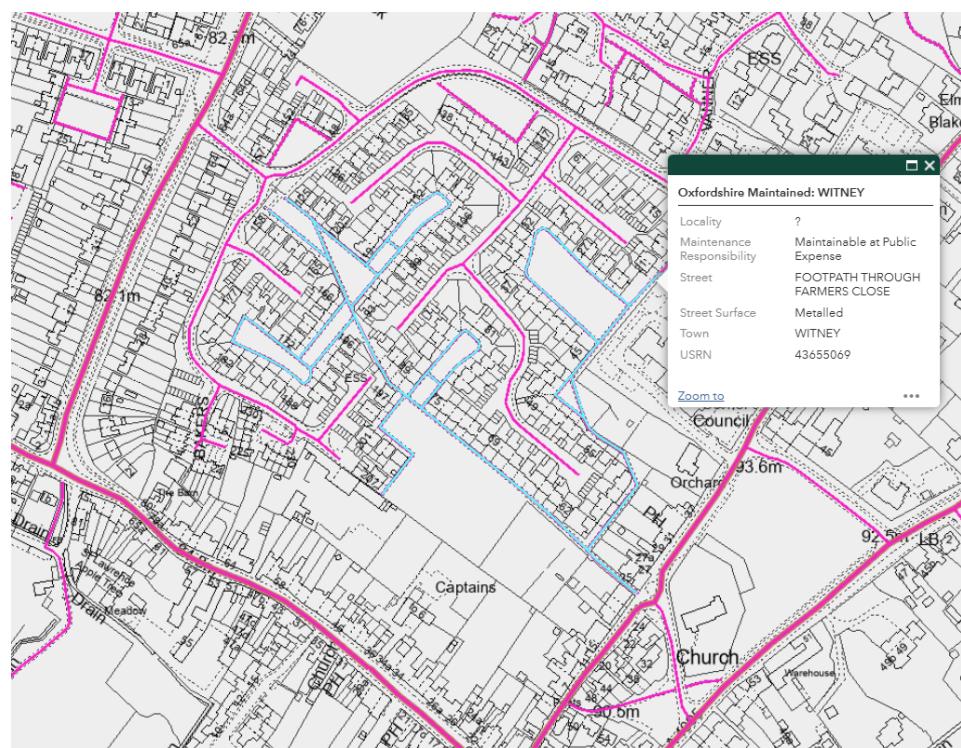
**Contact Officer:** Head of Estates and Operations

The purpose of this report is to detail a request made by a resident of Farmers Close who is also acting on behalf of other neighbouring residents. They have asked for the Town Council to take measures to prevent vehicular access to pathways and green spaces at Farmers Close, Witney. Vehicles have been damaging the grassed areas, driving along pathways and getting very close to homes and gardens.

### Background

A resident has contacted the Town Council to ask for a bollard to be reinstated to the path to prevent vehicles from entering the pathways and green spaces. They have reported the issue is related to trades persons driving vehicles to access to construction works in the vicinity. A bollard used to be present in the path, and it is unknown why this was removed and by whom.

The footpath is under Oxfordshire County Council Publicly Maintained Highway responsibility.



Ariel view of Farmers Close and Green Spaces



The following photos were provided to support the request for a bollard to be reinstated to prevent access.



## Current Situation

Officers have inspected the area and found where the previous bollard was installed and identified where a new bollard would be positioned.



Should the council approve the proposal officers will approach OCC for permission to install.

## 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 - supports equality by protecting safe, accessible areas for everyone, especially children and disabled people, so public spaces can be enjoyed fairly without being dominated or damaged by vehicles.
- b) Biodiversity - helps protect UK biodiversity by preventing habitat damage, soil compaction, and disturbance to wildlife, allowing plants and animals to thrive in a healthier, more resilient environment.
- c) Crime & Disorder - helps reduce crime and disorder by deterring antisocial behaviour such as illegal vehicle use, fly-tipping, and vandalism, while making the area safer and more welcoming for the local community.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - supports the council's Environment and Climate Emergency objectives by protecting natural habitats, reducing vehicle-related damage and emissions, and helping green spaces continue to absorb carbon and support climate resilience.

## **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.

Access for emergency services has been considered, and officers have made enquiries and are waiting for responses.

## **Social Value**

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

## **Financial implications**

The anticipated cost to supply and install the bollard will be between £250 and £600.

## **Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report and,

1. To delegate to officers to seek permission from Oxfordshire County Council to install a bollard in the location identified.
2. If permission is granted, to supply and install the bollard subject to approval from the emergency services.

# Agenda Item 12

Hello Sharon,

..... which benches would be preferred for that space outside the Shake Shop? There are the circular benches, or we could have two Eastgate benches positioned to face each other?

Circular options from Broxap:

- <https://www.broxap.com/weyburn-circular-seat.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/weybridge.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/easthorpe.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/wythenshawe.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/thames-steel-timber-curved-bench.html>

---



---

- <https://www.broxap.com/hexagonal-tree-seat.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/lanchester-tree-bench.html>



If you could let me know what the Town Council would prefer, and is happy to take on as assets, I'll start looking into the installation costs.

Thank you.

Kindest regards,

[REDACTED]  
Market Towns Officer  
Economic Development

West Oxfordshire District Council

# Agenda Item 13

**Sent:** 19 January 2026 14:21  
**To:** Info <[info@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@witney-tc.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Bike racks and bin stores

We, the District Council, have some funding set aside to provide our local businesses with bin stores to improve the look and feel of the town.

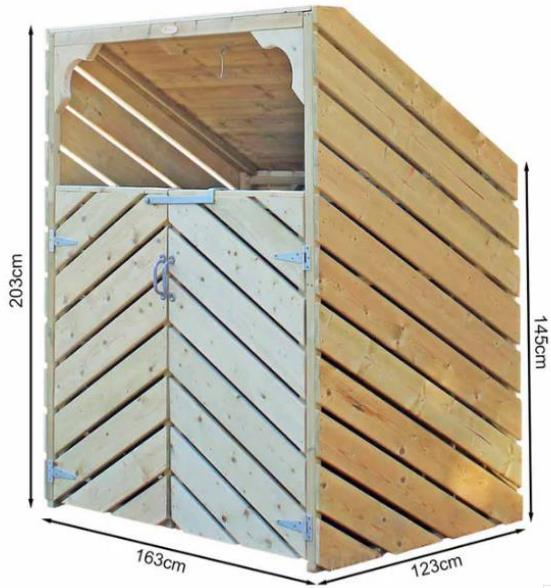
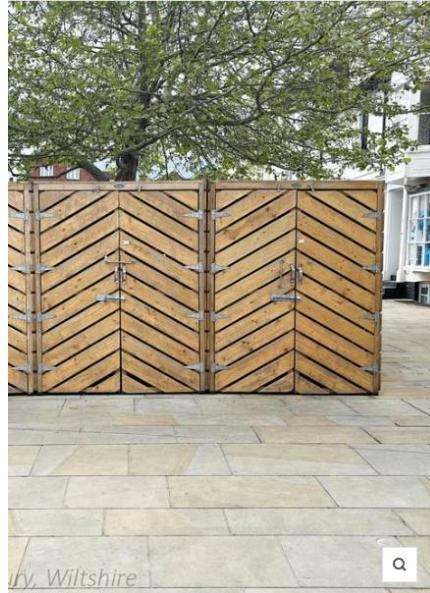
Sandwich De Witney would like to have a couple of bin stores to house their 1100L bins that are located behind the shop, on Market Square. There is currently a bike rack behind this building and we were wondering if there is any chance we could move this to accommodate the bin stores?

Kindest regards,

Market Towns Officer

Economic Development

West Oxfordshire District Council



Commercial 1100L Bin Store with Full Height Doors

£795.00

SKU: WHB-1100L-FD