

Stronger Communities

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 21st September, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Stronger Communities Committee - T Ashby, G Meadows, A Bailey, D Enright, A Mubin, S Simpson, J Doughty and R Smith (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.

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

Commitment to Civility and Respect

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with Witney Town Council's commitment to the Civility and Respect Pledge. Councillors, officers and members of the public are expected to treat one another with courtesy, dignity, and respect, ensuring that debate remains professional, objective and focused on the business being discussed. Personal criticism, intimidation, or behaviour that could undermine the wellbeing of those present is inconsistent with the standards expected of the Council.

Recording of Meetings

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, public meetings may be filmed, audio-recorded, or photographed. Anyone intending to record the proceedings is asked, as a courtesy, to inform the Committee Clerk before the meeting begins.

This meeting will be broadcast live via Microsoft Teams and recorded; by attending or participating, you consent to the recording and public sharing of audio and video, which may be made available for later viewing. For details on how personal data is handled, please see the Privacy Notice

To view the meeting please follow this link [Stronger Communities Committee Meeting 21.09.2026](#)

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

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

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

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 10)

- a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 15 June 2026.
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda. (Questions on the progress of any item).

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

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

5. **Finance Report** (Pages 11 - 16)

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee.

Communications

6. **Communications Report** (Pages 17 - 51)

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

a) **Press Coverage** (Pages 52 - 55)

To receive details of Press coverage prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communities & Engagement.

Community Engagement

7. **Community Engagement Report** (Pages 56 - 73)

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

a) **Witney Forum Minutes** (Pages 74 - 76)

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Witney Forum held on 30 June 2026.

As the document contains a significant amount of personal information, named individuals, and content not directly relevant to the Committee's decision-making, public access to the document has been restricted to protect privacy and comply with data protection obligations.

8. **Witney: Past, Present & Future Notes** (Pages 77 - 82)

To receive the notes of the Working Party meetings held 26 May and 17 July 2026.

9. **Youth Council** (Pages 83 - 91)

To receive and consider the report of the Administrative Assistant – Communities & Engagement and to note the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2026.

10. **Youth Services Update** (Pages 92 - 102)

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

11. **In Bloom** (Pages 103 - 106)

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

12. **WODC Consultation - Proposed Controls relating to Dog Fouling**

To receive verbal update from the Committee Clerk on the WODC PSPO Dog Fouling Consultation.

Events

13. **Community & Civic Events** (Pages 107 - 121)

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

Street Furniture & Infrastructure

14. **Winter Preparations** (Pages 122 - 125)

To receive and consider the report of the Committee Clerk.

15. **Burford Road - Replacement Bus Shelter Request** (Page 126)

To consider the request for replacement bus shelter at Burford Road.

16. **New Public Bins Policy & Requests** (Pages 127 - 129)

To review and formalise a policy for Litter and Dog Waste Bin requests. The attached policy being agreed in 2022 and reviewed in 2023 and to consider current requests for bins not on Town Council land.

17. **Witney Town Centre Wayfinding** (Pages 130 - 133)

To receive correspondence from WODC regarding the wayfinding project.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 15 June 2026

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

Present:

Councillor G Meadows (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	R Smith
	A Mubin	J Treloar (In place of J Doughty)
	S Simpson	J Aitman (In place of A Bailey)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community
		Engagement Officer
Others:	Councillor Rachel Crouch	

SC296 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Ashby and J Doughty, Councillor J Treloar attended as a substitute for the latter. Councillor J Aitman also attended the meeting and substituted Councillor A Bailey.

SC297 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

SC298 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

In the absence of both the Chair of the Committee and the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor S Simpson presided and called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor G Meadows be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Georgia Meadows be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

Cllr G Meadows assumed Chairship for the remainder of the meeting.

SC299 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Stronger Communities committee meeting held on 23 March 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee meeting held on 23 March 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

SC300 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

SC301 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and considered whether any changes were needed to the current Terms of Reference.

No amendments were required therefore it was:

Recommended:

1. That, no amendments be made to the Terms of Reference and;
2. That, the Terms of Reference be recommended for re-adoption at the Full Council at the meeting of 13 July 2026.

Councillor A Mubin joined the meeting at 6.07pm during the following item.

SC302 **FINANCE REPORT**

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

Members were advised that the year-end accounting adjustments were currently being completed. It was noted that services had been delivered within budget and that the final outturn was approximately £6,000 below the revised budget projection, with much of the variance relating to movements in Earmarked Reserves (EMRs).

Members raised a query regarding the presentation of figures within the report and requested clarification from officers.

The Committee also reviewed the budget provision for Experience Oxfordshire and, having noted that the allocation was no longer required, resolved to remove the budget line and return the funds to the general budget provision.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the provision for Experience Oxfordshire be removed;
3. That, the management accounts of the Stronger Communities Committee for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 be approved.

SC303 ANNUAL RESIDENTS SURVEY RESULTS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the resident's annual satisfaction survey which was held at the beginning of the year.

Members received the report setting out the results of the recent resident satisfaction survey for services within the remit of the Committee. The report presented the combined percentages of respondents rating services as satisfactory or above, compared with those rating them as poor. Comparative data from previous years was also included to provide benchmarking. Members noted that the report contained all unedited comments received in relation to the services.

Members welcomed the significant improvement in satisfaction with communications, noting that this had been a recurring area of concern in previous surveys. It was further observed that, while satisfaction levels for services delivered by some other Committees had declined, the improvement in communications reflected positively on the work of the Community Engagement and Events teams.

Whilst acknowledging the positive progress made, Members agreed that there remained scope for further improvement. They welcomed the inclusion of proposed measures to enhance community engagement within the next report.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

Councillor R Crouch joined the meeting at 6.19pm during the following item as a non-Committee Member.

Cllr J Treloar declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in the following item in relation to a Town Guide for Witney as a competitor was known to him.

SC304 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

Members welcomed the report, which provided an update on the delivery of the annual newsletter and outlined communications initiatives, including the proposed launch of a Town Council WhatsApp Channel and the potential introduction of an externally produced Town Guide.

The Committee discussed the low level of engagement with the annual survey amongst residents under 40 years of age. It was noted that many younger people did not regularly access Council services or engage with the Council's newsletter. Members considered alternative methods of engagement, including working with Rotaract, repeating the survey at the Town Carnival using display boards, involving the Youth Council, and promoting surveys through advertising before film screenings at the Corn Exchange. The Committee also reviewed comments received through the recent youth survey.

The Committee endorsed the creation of a Council WhatsApp Channel as a one-way communication tool for sharing information with residents. Members noted that the channel would require minimal additional officer resources and could provide an effective means of disseminating Council news and updates. It was agreed that appropriate protocols would be required regarding content and use.

Members also discussed opportunities to collaborate on a Town Guide. Suggestions included the inclusion of a town map, visitor information, Council services, details of Council responsibilities and precept expenditure, local events, and community information. The Committee noted that the publication was advertising-led and produced at no cost to the Council. Members considered that the guide could provide a valuable resource for residents, tourists, and visitors, and that contributions could be sought from the Town Centre Forum and the Chamber of Commerce as part of the Visit Witney project. Officers were requested to explore the scope for developing the guide further and report back to a future meeting.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, further engagement suggestions as outlined, including the provision of the Council's survey at Witney Carnival be explored and;
3. That, the town council's WhatsApp channel be officially launched and;
4. That, in consultation with the Chair & Vice Chair of the Committee, officers investigate the biannual town guide proposal further and sign-up, if appropriate.

SC305 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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

The Committee received updates on the successful Brass on the Grass concert held in June, preparations for Witney Carnival, Love Parks Week activities, including a Volunteer Picnic, and the procurement of Town Council bunting.

Members also received a verbal update on Heritage Open Days (11–12 September). Planned activities included opening the Chapel, heritage displays, children's activities in partnership with the Museum, and a heritage walk. The Committee agreed to allocate the remaining £200 from the St George's Day budget towards delivery costs.

The Committee considered proposals for a community "Big Lunch" event and agreed that this should not form part of future St George's Day celebrations. Members noted that alternative delivery options by third-party organisations could be explored and that interested groups could apply for Council grant funding.

With regard to Armed Forces Day, the Committee received an update on arrangements for the event at The Leys on 27 June. Organised by the Joint Cadet Forces, the event would include demonstrations, military vehicles and information stands.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the format and times for the Heritage Open Day events be approved and;
3. That, the underspend of £200 from the St George's Day Event be vired for this purpose and;
4. That, the event for St George's Day event runs along the similar lines in 2027 and;
5. That, community groups be offered the opportunity and funding to host a 'Big Lunch' in June 2027 and;
6. That, a Volunteer 'thank you' picnic be held at the Leys on 2 August 2026 and;
7. That, Car Free Day 2026 be promoted digitally as in 2025 and;
8. That, the purchase of bespoke bunting with town Council branding be approved and delegated to the C&CEO to procure from existing budgets.

SC306 **WITNEY FORUM MINUTES**

The Committee received the notes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 24 March 2026.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 24 March 2026 be noted.

SC307 **SPECIAL EFFECT CHARITY**

The Committee received thanks from the Special Effect Charity for allowing them to communicate their work via the Council's community window.

Resolved:

That, the thanks from the Special Effect Charity be noted.

Cllr R Crouch left the meeting briefly at 7.11pm during the following item.

SC308 **YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Administrative Assistant-Communities & Engagement.

The Committee received an update on Youth Council membership, recruitment and retention, together with a summary of current and forthcoming activities. Members were advised that a number of engagement initiatives were being explored, including a "Pizza and Politics" style event. The Youth Council had also secured membership of the National Youth Council, with plans for a local heritage tour, daily information slides and end-of-term newsletters.

Members noted that member retention and achieving a quorum for meetings continued to present challenges despite a range of engagement methods having been trialled. It was acknowledged that an easily accessible, well-supported event could provide a positive opportunity to increase participation, with the Council taking responsibility for organising the event and allocating roles. In terms of recruitment, it was suggested that existing Youth Council members be encouraged to invite friends to attend meetings to learn more about the Youth Council and its work.

A proposal, duly seconded, was put forward that prospective Youth Council members should attend a minimum of three meetings before becoming official members. Following discussion, the proposal was put to the vote and was not carried. Members considered that young people often had significant commitments outside school, including exams and extracurricular activities, and that introducing such a requirement could discourage participation and create a barrier to recruitment.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, no new term of references for official membership after attendance at three meetings be progressed.

SC309 **YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 14 May 2026.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 14 May 2026 be noted.

SC310 **LITTER PICKING CABINETS**

With the permission of the Chair this item was moved up the agenda.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Administrative Assistant - Facilities concerning the possibility of the Council procuring litter-picking cabinets.

Members welcomed the report, which followed a matter raised during budget setting regarding the provision of litter-picking equipment for community use.

The Committee noted the growing interest in volunteer litter-picking and the potential benefits in supporting community involvement and civic pride. Members considered the options presented and agreed to purchase three litter-picking cabinets under Option 2.

It was further agreed that the cabinets should be located on Town Council-owned land, with specific locations and procedures to be determined operationally by officers. Councillors would be provided with access codes where required.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the Council should purchase three litter picking cabinets to the value of £1,800 from the Infrastructure earmarked reserve and;
3. That, the most appropriate location of the bins on town council land be delegated to officers per above and;
4. That, sponsorship may be considered in the future.

Cllr R Crouch left the meeting at 7.32pm

Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly at 7.34pm during the following item.

SC311 **YOUTH SERVICES & GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Cllr G Meadows declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item due to being a member of the Town Hall Charity which let a facility to one of the applicants.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the applications for the 2026/27 youth services grant.

Officers advised that all applications were presented in the pack and that as agreed at the previous meeting, evaluation would be delegated to a panel consisting of the Chair, Leader & Deputy Leader who would meet later in the week with any accompanying documentation.

The Committee were pleased to see the applications and asked that consideration be given to those offering the best value to Witney residents and that would not normally be covered by other educational, or stakeholder funding.

Finally, Members were also advised that a Service level Agreement (SLA) had been signed between the Council and Bright Futures Oxford to provide a detached youth service in Witney.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the signing of the SLA between the Town Council and Bright Futures Oxford be noted and;
3. That, the direction as noted above be passed to the Youth Services Grants Evaluation Panel ahead of their decision on awards.

The meeting closed at: 7.42 pm

Chair

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Finance Report

Meeting Date: 21 September 2026

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 10am on the day of the meeting to allow for a full response at the meeting. E-mail nigel.warner@witney-tc.gov.uk and copy in townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk

Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are enclosed; these are the management accounts for this committee. The period to which this report relates is 1 April to 31 July 2026.

For the Stronger Communities Committee the following cost centres are in place:

Cost centre	Service
402	Community Infrastructure
408	Community Activities

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

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

A report is regularly submitted to each of the standing committees and previous reports are available on the relevant committee section of the website.

At this meeting the Committee is requested to undertake initial consideration of the revenue budget for 2027-28 and the capital/special revenue budgets for 2027-28 and beyond. This is covered by a separate section within this report.

Current Situation

The summary of income and expenditure for the committee for the first third of the financial year is as follows:

The summary for the period is:

	Months 1 to 4 actual	Budget for 2026-27	Percentage of budget spent/received in Months 1 to 4 (33% of the year)
Expenditure	£92,685	£338,901	27.4%
Income	(£0)	(£11,057)	0.0
Net expenditure	£92,685	£327,844	28.3%

Members may wish to note the following matters in relation to the management accounts:

1. Income during the year to date is zero. The major driver of income in relation to this committee is line 1171/402 – community infrastructure/donations – this relates to Christmas lights sponsorship and grants to the Buttercross clock – no income received to date but expected later in the year.
2. In relation expenditure, there are some lines which are fully spent for the year and where no further expenditure is anticipated- 4025/402-408 Insurance, 4104/408 – grants to Rotary Club re carnival and Christmas lights switch-on and 4106/408 Oxfordshire Play Association Play Day. Whilst gross expenditure during the first four months was 27.4% of budget it should be remembered that the accounts are dynamic and during August 2026 non-salaried expenditure for this Committee was £41,092 which included youth services grants of £16,500 and the grant to Home Start of £12,000.
3. Overall the income and expenditure is within the range which is to be expected at this time of the year, at 28.3% of full year budget. During the budget process all budget lines will be examined and will be reported to this Committee at that time.

Note also the following comments relating to the management accounts across the Council:

1. Members should note that the management accounts and the Council's accounting system more generally are driven by the requirements in place for town and parish councils, including the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Practitioners' Guide issued by the Smaller Authorities' Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) to support the preparation by smaller authorities in England of statutory annual accounting and governance statements found in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. This means that the accounts can only include actual income and expenditure in terms

of money (income and expenditure and sums held with financial institutions) and cannot include anything else.

2. There will always be an inevitable “lag” between expenditure being incurred and being shown in the accounts. In addition expenditure is not necessarily incurred evenly over the course of the year. For example most expenditure in relation to nominal ledger code 4025 (insurance) is incurred when the annual premium is paid in April. There are also be similar patterns on the income in particular seasonal items such as Christmas lights sponsorship.

REVENUE BUDGET 2027-28 AND CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS 2027-28 AND BEYOND

In line with normal Council procedures, the RFO will shortly be commencing the annual review of all the Committees to prepare the revenue budget for 2027-28 and the review of the medium-term financial plan.

Draft budgets are prepared based upon current activities and patterns of income and expenditure. Any additional revenue expenditure is considered separately as Revenue Growth Items.

It is also normal practice that during the budget cycle the Council considers the Capital and Special Revenue budget to identify which projects or schemes are to be implemented and undertaken during the next financial year.

In drafting budgets your officers will have due regard to the Council’s Strategic Plan and other relevant policies.

This will again be a challenging budget round.

Members will be aware that the Council have a number of major projects in motion as well as facilities due to be transferred to the Council so there is an existing demand on financial and staffing resources. There are potential costs relating to local government reorganisation although there are many uncertainties regarding this matter. With continuing inflationary pressures and mindful of pressures on household budgets the Council is advised to be modest in relation to any additional proposals.

It should also be remembered that additional capital projects may have staffing implications – a sum in a budget to provide a new service or facility or organise an event will also mean that officer time needs to be dedicated to deliver the project.

Members are requested to consider items to be included in next year’s budget and any other adjustments in the context of the Council’s existing and upcoming service commitments. This will enable Officers to obtain costings and the RFO to draft as accurate budget estimates as 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 – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from 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.

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

Social Value

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

Financial implications

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

Recommendations

Members are invited:

1. To note and approve the report and the management accounts of the Stronger Communities Committee for the period 1 April to 31 July 2026.
2. Consider items to be included in next year's revenue and capital/special revenue item budgets, noting that approval of such items will be for the Council to consider in the budget cycle of meetings.

15/09/2026

Witney Town Council Current Year

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Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Draft management accounts for 1 April to 31 July 2026 - Stronger Communities Committee

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
<u>Stronger Communities</u>								
<u>402 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE</u>								
1052 EXPENSES RECOVERED	0	0	1,000	1,000			0.0%	
1099 MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	1,500	0	1,000	1,000			0.0%	
1171 DONATIONS RECEIVED	4,800	0	7,500	7,500			0.0%	
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE :- Income	6,300	0	9,500	9,500			0.0%	0
4014 ELECTRICITY	2,663	505	2,100	1,595		1,595	24.1%	
4025 INSURANCE	112	122	150	28		28	81.6%	
4035 BUS SHELTER MAINTENANCE	303	0	3,000	3,000		3,000	0.0%	
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	137	180	2,600	2,420	7	2,413	7.2%	
4037 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	401	0	1,557	1,557		1,557	0.0%	
4105 XMAS LIGHTS, TREE & INFRASTRUC	50,510	17,796	50,300	32,504		32,504	35.4%	
4113 XMAS SOCIAL CONTRN - SEE 1099	1,500	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0%	
4166 DEFIBRILLATOR EXPENDITURE	377	0	4,000	4,000		4,000	0.0%	
4200 STREET FURNITURE	6,953	0	5,000	5,000	19	4,981	0.4%	
4210 CHURCH CLOCK	154	0	1,500	1,500		1,500	0.0%	
4215 IN BLOOM - INC SCHOOLS CHALLENGE	3,974	1,011	3,500	2,489		2,489	28.9%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	8,087	2,915	16,715	13,800		13,800	17.4%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	641	308	988	680		680	31.1%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	12,567	3,373	10,160	6,787		6,787	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	3,710	1,057	2,909	1,852		1,852	36.3%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	1,447	462	2,478	2,016		2,016	18.6%	
4990 CONTRN TO CCTV SCH.	10,000	0	11,591	11,591		11,591	0.0%	
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE :- Indirect Expenditure	103,536	27,729	119,548	91,819	26	91,793	23.2%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(97,236)	(27,729)	(110,048)	(82,319)				
6000 plus Transfer from EMR	1,040	0	0	0				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(96,196)	(27,729)	(110,048)	(82,319)				
<u>408 COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES</u>								
1170 GRANTS RECEIVED	150	0	1,557	1,557			0.0%	
1171 DONATIONS RECEIVED	2	0	0	0			0.0%	
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES :- Income	152	0	1,557	1,557			0.0%	0
4001 SALARIES	6,393	2,358	7,197	4,839		4,839	32.8%	
4002 ER'S NIC	821	304	929	625		625	32.7%	
4003 ER'S SUPERANN	1,385	469	1,432	963		963	32.8%	
4103 GRANT YOUTH COUNCIL	0	163	500	337		337	32.5%	

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Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Draft management accounts for 1 April to 31 July 2026 - Stronger Communities Committee

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
4104 GRANT CARNIVAL/XMAS ROTARY	5,075	5,100	5,100	0		0	100.0%	
4106 GRANT - PLAY DAY	1,000	1,000	1,000	0		0	100.0%	
4111 WATER SAFETY/EDUCATION	0	0	2,000	2,000		2,000	0.0%	
4112 GRANT - WITNEY TOWN BAND	660	0	660	660		660	0.0%	
4141 EVENTS	6,344	2,069	7,500	5,431		5,431	27.6%	
4147 50th Anniversary Grants	50	0	0	0		0	0.0%	
4148 VE/ VJ 80th Anniversary comm'n	2,271	0	0	0		0	0.0%	
4160 TOWN TWINNING	0	0	500	500		500	0.0%	
4161 TOWN TWINNING ROOM HIRE	58	0	500	500		500	0.0%	
4167 BUS SERVICE	26,000	7,000	26,000	19,000		19,000	26.9%	
4169 CHILDREN & YOUTH PROVISION	18,600	3,648	20,000	16,352		16,352	18.2%	
4170 ADVENT FAYRE	1,650	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0%	
4172 GRANT - DETACHED YOUTH WORK	18,000	7,400	28,500	21,100		21,100	26.0%	
4173 GRANT - HOME START	11,000	0	12,000	12,000		12,000	0.0%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	80,021	26,987	81,268	54,281		54,281	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	23,073	8,458	23,267	14,809		14,809	36.4%	
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES :- Indirect Expenditure	202,401	64,956	219,353	154,397	0	154,397	29.6%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(202,249)	(64,956)	(217,796)	(152,840)				
Stronger Communities :- Income	6,452	0	11,057	11,057			0.0%	
Expenditure	305,937	92,685	338,901	246,216	26	246,190	27.4%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(299,485)	(92,685)	(327,844)	(235,159)				
plus Transfer from EMR	1,040	0	0	0				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(298,445)	(92,685)	(327,844)	(235,159)				
Grand Totals:- Income	6,452	0	11,057	11,057			0.0%	
Expenditure	305,937	92,685	338,901	246,216	26	246,190	27.4%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(299,485)	(92,685)	(327,844)	(235,159)				
plus Transfer from EMR	1,040	0	0	0				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(298,445)	(92,685)	(327,844)	(235,159)				

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Communications Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 21 st September 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications and Community Engagement Officer

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

Current Situation

Podcasting

Officers have been asked to consider the potential for the Town Council to produce a podcast as an additional way of communicating with residents and promoting local organisations, businesses, events, and community activity. Podcasting could provide a more informal and accessible means of communication, helping to put a human face to the Council and reach residents who may not engage with traditional Council communications.

Officers have reviewed podcasts produced by other town councils. The majority were established during the Covid-19 pandemic, and available listening and viewing figures are generally very low, with most attracting single-figure audiences. This is also broadly consistent with the Council's experience of live streaming its meetings, which currently receive very few views.

There would be financial and staff resource implications, as the Council does not currently have the necessary equipment and would either need to purchase this or outsource production. Podcasting is also labour intensive, requiring time to develop content, arrange guests, record, edit, publish and promote episodes. The resource and cost would therefore need to be considered against the likely audience and the reach that can be achieved through existing communication channels.

If pursued, the content would need to be creative and focused on subjects residents would genuinely find interesting, rather than simply recording Council meetings or routine Council business. A small pilot could therefore be considered, with audience figures, resident feedback and actual production costs reviewed to establish whether the benefits provide sufficient value for money to justify continuing the service.

Budget Survey 2027-28

Last year's budget survey was developed at short notice, with limited time available before the budget meeting. The Communication and Community Engagement Officer felt that the survey was too long and onerous and could discourage residents from completing it.

However, there was insufficient time to make significant changes before it was issued. The survey received 45 responses.

This year, the survey is being launched earlier in the budget-setting process, with a closing date one month earlier than last year. This provides additional time to review the approach and make improvements where appropriate.

The previous survey included a substantial amount of explanatory information and asked residents to rank each service within each committee area. Asking respondents to rank 8–11 individual services requires them to make relatively fine distinctions between priorities. This can make the survey more demanding to complete and is particularly cumbersome when completed on a mobile device.

To make the survey more concise and accessible, residents could instead be asked to identify their top three priorities overall. This provides a clearer indication of what matters most to residents, while significantly reducing the time and effort required to complete the survey.

Copies of the original survey and the revised, more concise version are attached as **Appendices A and B** respectively.

Witney Town Guide (minute no SC304(4) refers)

A follow-up meeting was held with the Town Guide team and Councillor Thomas Ashby (Chair of the Stronger Communities Committee, to explore whether the Town Guide could provide a supplementary channel for Council communications, perhaps serving as part of The Welcome to Witney project. There are four printed copies available at this meeting for members to explore.

A number of questions were raised in response to costs, commerciality, and business models – responses are provided in confidential **Appendix C**.

Website –Translate page, Accessibility Compliance contract proposal

The Council was approached to consider an Accessibility Monitoring Programme and reporting system (**Confidential Appendices D and E**). The programme would provide quarterly independent reviews of a selection of randomly chosen pages, highlighting accessibility issues, suggesting remedial action, and providing guidance as an evidence trail. The cost would be £2,400 + VAT per annum for three years. Councillors may wish to consider whether this additional independent assurance would be beneficial.

In the meantime, the Council's Communications team continues to make regular progress on website accessibility, addressing new requirements as they arise while also working through legacy issues. Officers use the free WAVE accessibility checker alongside manual reviews to identify and address issues. An internal spreadsheet (**Appendix F**) is maintained as an audit trail, recording pages reviewed or amended, issues identified and the fixes made. This provides a clear record of the Council's ongoing accessibility work and progress should the

website be subject to an accessibility review or audit. *It is included for internal information only for Members.*

Work includes removing outdated content and images, improving screen-reader compatibility, adding alt text where required, ensuring appropriate use of headings and paragraphs, and improving navigation. The website has also recently been enhanced to allow users to translate content into multiple languages, where possible. Accessibility work is undertaken alongside other priorities, with resources focused on this area as operational demands allow.

The Monitoring programme would provide an additional level of independent monitoring, but the Council's existing combination of free checking tools, manual reviews and its ongoing audit trail provides a structured approach to identifying and addressing accessibility issues. The Council will continue to review its approach as accessibility requirements develop.

Spring Newsletter

Councillors are asked to consider and make a decision on how the Spring Newsletter should be distributed, with the associated cost to be considered as part of the budget-setting process.

Both Royal Mail and hand-delivery systems have experienced distribution issues in previous years, while a hybrid approach has also resulted in some areas being missed. The hand-delivery company used last year was particularly open to providing evidence in the form of delivery maps, which gave the Council greater visibility of the areas covered. Encouragingly, two or three survey respondents specifically commented that this was the first time they had received a Council newsletter, though some councillors had not received a copy.

No distribution method has proved to be completely infallible. As Witney continues to grow, finding a system that can provide comprehensive coverage at a reasonable cost, while also being able to cope with the increasing scale of the town, is becoming more challenging.

Targeted Survey Boards

Investing in printed boards displaying the annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey has proved an effective way of reaching age groups from whom the Council traditionally receives fewer responses, particularly residents aged 18–30 and those in their 40s.

The boards were taken to community events, including the Carnival and Burwell Play Day, where there was a strong presence of young families and parents.

This helped to increase engagement and provided additional survey responses and valuable data from groups that can otherwise be harder to reach through more traditional consultation methods.

Professional Signage Boards for Play Areas

Following a number of changes this year to signage at the Council's splash park and skate park areas, including temporary closures, seasonal information and opening times, the Communications and Community Engagement Officer recommends that Councillors consider investing in lockable noticeboards for each of these.

Currently, temporary notices are often displayed using laminated paper, plastic wallets, and cable ties. These can look untidy and can become damaged, weathered, removed, or blow away, resulting in important information not being displayed reliably. Purpose-built, lockable noticeboards would provide a consistent and professional way of displaying temporary and seasonal information, while also reducing the need for single-use plastic and printed materials.

A range of suitable noticeboards is available, including child-friendly designs that complement play areas as well as more generic options. Examples and indicative prices are provided (**Appendix G**) for Councillors' consideration for budget setting should they agree to the purchase of these.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

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 report supports more inclusive communication and engagement by providing residents with a range of ways to access information and participate in consultations. The shorter budget survey and targeted survey boards are intended to improve engagement with groups from whom the Council traditionally receives fewer responses. Website accessibility improvements, including screen-reader compatibility and translation functionality, further support access to Council information.
- b) Biodiversity – No significant direct biodiversity impact is identified. The proposed play area noticeboards would reduce reliance on laminated paper, plastic wallets, and other temporary materials.
- c) Crime & Disorder – No significant impact identified.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Council's ongoing website accessibility work reduces the need for printed information where digital communication is appropriate. The proposed lockable noticeboards would provide a more durable means of displaying information and reduce the use of temporary plastic-based signage.

Risk

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

The principal risks relate to the effectiveness and value for money of communication methods. Podcasting would require staff time and potentially additional expenditure despite evidence of relatively low audiences for similar Council podcasts. The Town Guide is dependent on sufficient advertising revenue and is only published biannually, so would not replace regular Council communications. Newsletter distribution also remains subject to the risk of missed areas regardless of the delivery method selected. The Council will need to consider these risks alongside cost, reach and available staff resources when making decisions.

Social Value

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

The proposals support the Council's objective of maintaining an engaged and supported community by improving access to information and increasing opportunities for residents to participate. The targeted survey boards have demonstrated particular value in reaching younger residents and young families.

The Town Guide could provide an additional route for promoting local organisations, businesses, and community activity, while improved website accessibility helps ensure that Council information is available to a wider range of residents.

Financial implications

- The report contains a number of potential financial implications for budget consideration.
- The accessibility monitoring programme would cost £2,400 + VAT per annum for a three-year term; although this would simplify and speed things up a little it does not make the fixes itself, and officers are managing with existing free tools. Internal monitoring provides a good level of assurance.
- The Town Guide would be provided at no cost to the Council, subject to the publication securing sufficient advertising revenue.
- Councillors are asked to consider the cost of Spring Newsletter distribution as part of the budget.
- Indicative costs for professional play area noticeboards are provided at **Appendix G** for consideration as part of budget setting.
- Any podcasting provision would also have equipment, production, and staff resource implications. Approximately £100-150 for equipment, not including hosting fee and office resource.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider;

1. The revised 2027/28 Budget Survey.
2. Whether the Town Guide should be pursued as an additional communication channel.
3. Whether a podcast pilot should be explored, taking into account the likely audience, staff resource, and cost.
4. The preferred method and associated budget for distribution of the Spring Newsletter.
5. The indicative costs for professional lockable noticeboards at the Council's play areas and whether provision should be included in the 2027-28 budget.
6. To note the continued progress being made on website accessibility and consider whether members would like to purchase the monitoring programme at this time.

Introduction

Each year, the Council is required to set a balanced budget that outlines its spending, investment plans, and how services will be funded. This budget must consider new financial pressures while ensuring that all services operate as efficiently as possible.

The Council is currently in the process of setting its budget, and residents' feedback is essential before key decisions are made.

A draft version of the budget will be presented at the Town Council meeting on Monday, 24th November 2025, with the final budget to be approved at a meeting in early 2026.

This survey will close on Friday 21st November 2025

The Council works for your community — make sure your voice is heard. We have listed the council's services beneath the committee in which it is considered.

Important Note

PLEASE NOTE, YOU MUST BE A RESIDENT OF WITNEY TO TAKE PART IN THIS SURVEY.

* 1. We'd like to check that we are reaching a good cross section of our residents across our town. Our survey is anonymous but it will help us if you let us know your street name

* 2. And your age group please

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70-79
- ☐ 80+

Section 1 - Witney Town Council Services

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Witney Town Council operates through six committees, each with its own budget and responsibility for delivering specific services within the town.

Climate & Biodiversity -Energy Efficiencies & Carbon Neutrality, Biodiversity, Waterways, Lake & Country Park Management, Planting/Floral Displays, Tree-stock

Parks & Recreation- Sports Pitches, Recreation Grounds, Play Areas, Skate Park, Splash Park

Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments - Public Halls, Cemeteries, Closed Churchyards, Allotments

Stronger Communities - Communication, Community Engagement and Community Events, Youth Services, Street Furniture & Infrastructure, Third Party Events, In Bloom Entries and Community Gardening

Policy Governance and Finance - Financial, human and property resources, Civic Items, Grants, Policy Matters, Audit & Legislation, Recommends Budget & Precept

Planning and Development - Witney Town Council is a consultee only on the following: Planning & Licencing Applications, Street Naming Applications, Flooding, Highway Issues via Witney Traffic Advisory Committee. (there is only a very small budget allocated to this committee and therefore it is not included in this survey as it will not need to change)

These are the ONLY services provided by the Town Council

Services not listed here—such as parking and refuse collection, pothole repairs and road maintenance—are managed by the District or County Councils, and we are not able to allocate funds for them.

We would like your feedback on the services we provide and how important you think each of them are.

Use the arrows or drag the boxes to set their order (Top = highest priority).

*** 3. Please rank Climate & Biodiversity committee services by importance to you:**

Use the arrows or drag the boxes to set their order (Top = highest priority).

-  ☐ **Biodiversity Enhancement**
-  ☐ **Carbon Neutrality**
-  ☐ **Climate Change**
-  ☐ **Town Planting and Floral Displays**
-  ☐ **Waterways**
-  ☐ **Wildflower Areas**
-  ☐ **Witney Lake & Country Park (Local Nature Reserve)**

*** 4. Please rank Parks & Recreation committee services by importance to you:**

Use the arrows or drag the boxes to set their order (Top = highest priority).



Play Areas



Recreation Grounds and Sports Pitches



Skate Park



Splash Park

*** 5. Please rank Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments committee services by importance to you:**

Use the arrows or drag the boxes to set their order (Top= highest priority).

-  **1863 Café**
-  **Allotments (daily management by Witney Allotment Association)**
-  **Burwell Hall**
-  **Cinema screenings**
-  **Community Events (WTC funded) e.g. Warm & Safe Spaces, Youth Café, Tea Dance, Young People Mental Health drop-ins**
-  **Corn Exchange**
-  **Live Music and Theatre Events**
-  **Tower Hill Cemetery**
-  **Windrush Cemetery**

*** 6. Please rank Stronger Communities committee services by importance to you:**

Use the arrows or drag the boxes to set their order (Top = highest priority).

-  **Christmas Lights and Trees for the Town Centre**
-  **Civic Events - Remembrance, Mayor's Carols, Flag Raising, Citizen of the Year and Civic Reception, National, Royal and Military Commemorations**
-  **Communications - Website, Social Media, Newsletters, Noticeboards, Surveys and Consultations, Cllrs in the Café**
-  **Community Bus (West Oxfordshire Community Transport) (partial funding)**
-  **Community Groups operating in Witney (Grants)**
-  **In Bloom - Schools In Bloom Challenge, Community Gardening, In Bloom Town Entry**
-  **Third Party Events (those run and managed by community groups) -e.g. Play days, Witney Carnival (Local volunteer groups), Witney Music Festival (WMF), Witney Pride, Christmas Light Switch On (Witney Rotary Club) (Grants and Subsidised Letting)**
-  **Town Council - Community (Free to Residents) Events - Advent Fayre, Heritage Open Day, Town Band Summer Concert program, Volunteer Thank You Picnics**
-  **Youth Organisations offering new or expanded services e.g. Homestart, APCAM (Grants)**
-  **Youth Services (Financial Support) Witney Town Council funds outreach work via The Station Detached Youth and Young People's events (e.g Gaming and Mental Health Drop ins during school holidays)**

*** 7. Please rank Policy Governance & Finance committee services by importance to you:**

Use the arrows or drag the boxes to set their order (Top = highest priority).

-  ☐ **Budget and Spending**
-  ☐ **Community Grants**
-  ☐ **Grounds Maintenance - Managing and maintaining areas under the responsibility of the Town Council, Grass & Hedge Cutting and Tree Maintenance**
-  ☐ **Vehicle and Other Asset Maintenance**

8. Tell us if there are other areas you think Witney Town Council should focus on. Please note, we don't deal with potholes, road repairs, or other County or District Council services.

Take a look at the services we provide on the wheel diagram below if you are unsure.



Council Service Responsibilities

Help shape Witney Town Council's budget

What matters most to you?

Witney Town Council is deciding its spending priorities for 2026/27, and we want to hear from Witney residents.

Tell us which Council services matter most to you. Your responses will help councillors understand where residents believe money should be prioritised.

The survey takes around 3 minutes.

Please complete it by Friday 30 November 2026.

You must live in Witney to take part.

Please note: This survey is about services provided by **Witney Town Council**. Services such as refuse collection, potholes, road repairs and parking are the responsibility of West Oxfordshire District Council or Oxfordshire County Council.

1. Are you a resident of Witney?

- Yes
- No

If No → end survey.

2. Which age group are you in?

- Under 18
- 18–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60–69
- 70–79
- 80+
- Prefer not to say

3. Which of these Town Council services are most important to you?

Please select your top 5.

Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces

- Play areas
- Recreation grounds and sports pitches
- Skate park
- Splash park
- Witney Lake & Country Park
- Trees, planting and floral displays
- Biodiversity and wildflower areas
- Waterways

Community, Events & Youth

- Youth services
- Community events and activities
- Support for community groups
- Community grants
- Christmas lights and town centre decorations
- Civic and commemorative events
- Community transport
- Third-party community events

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

- Corn Exchange and other public halls
 - Cinema, live music and theatre
 - Allotments
 - Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries
 - 1863 Café
 - Community activities and funded events
- Council Management & Maintenance**
- Grounds maintenance
 - Tree maintenance

Appendix B

- Maintaining Council buildings and other assets
- Communications and community engagement

Climate & Environment

- Carbon reduction and energy efficiency
- Biodiversity
- Waterways
- Wildflower areas
- Trees, planting and floral displays
- Lake & Country Park management

4. Of the services you selected, which three should be the highest priority for Council spending?

Please select up to 3.

[Display the services selected in Question 3]

5. Thinking about the Council's budget, which approach do you think should be taken?

- Protect spending on the services residents value most, even if this means reducing spending elsewhere.
- Maintain existing services as far as possible, while looking for savings and efficiencies.
- Reduce some services to keep the Council Tax increase as low as possible.
- I don't know / need more information.

6. Is there anything else you think Witney Town Council should prioritise?

[Open text box]

Please remember that some services, including refuse collection, parking, potholes and road maintenance, are the responsibility of West Oxfordshire District Council or Oxfordshire County Council rather than Witney Town Council.

Thank you for taking the time to have your say.

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Appendix F Noticeboards and Prices - prices are typically for an A3 portrait size



Butterfly Notice Board for Parks & Outdoor Spaces

Product Code P-V405026

A decorative butterfly notice board ideal for parks and outdoor spaces. Waterproof, secure and built for long-term use. Holds 2 x A4 sheets (posts extra)

Total Dimensions - 674 x 730mm

Window Size - 303 x 453mm

£345.00

£287.50 (ex. VAT)



Breeze Rail Mounted External Notice Board

- Painted aluminium frame
- Magnetic surface for use with magnets
- Fully powder coated inside & out
- Single door glazed with 3mm PETG
- Allen key lock

- Traffic rail fitted to reverse

A 3 Portrait £369.00 ex. VAT



External fence or rail mounted notice board.

A stylish lockable noticeboard display case with a dry-wipe magnetic back panel and set of magnetic pins. Available in four stock sizes – to display 4 up to 12 A4 sized posters. Please see the diagram visual for the configuration for each board size.

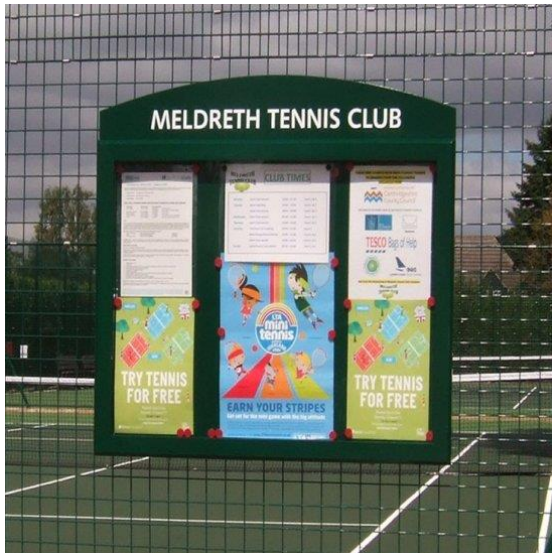
Stylish poster display case with lockable doors and magnetic / dry wipe back panel.

Purchase with or without printed aluminium header sign with your wording and logo.

Come complete with very strong aluminium back channel with stainless steel fixings and bolts.

- 52 x 30 mm durable silver anodised aluminium frame.
- Vandal resistant 1.5 mm polycarbonate glazing panel.
- Magnetic pins included.
- Suitable for internal or external use, landscape or portrait.
- Door stays fitted as standard on all models.
- Each noticeboard supplied with set of keys.
- Back panel suitable for dry wipe messaging and vinyl application.

£292.56



Breeze Rail Mounted External Notice Board

- Painted aluminium frame
- Magnetic surface for use with magnets
- Fully powder coated inside & out
- Single door glazed with 3mm thick PETG
- Complete with header with vinyl text and logo
- Traffic rail fitted to reverse

Select Size A3 Portrait A3 Landscape (holds 2 x A4 Portrait) A2 Portrait A2 Landscape 6 x A4 (2 rows of 3 portrait) A1 Portrait A1 Landscape 9 x A4 (3 rows of 3 portrait) 12 x A4 (3 rows of 4 portrait) A0 Landscape (Top Hinged)

Select Colour Black (RAL 9005) White (RAL 9003) Dark Blue (RAL 5002) Maroon (RAL 3004) Grey (RAL 9006) Dark Grey (RAL 7024) Signal Blue (RAL 5005) Sky Blue (RAL 5015) Carmine Red (RAL 3002) Ruby Red (RAL 3003) Moss Green (RAL 6005) Green (RAL 6029) Brown (RAL 8016) Brown (RAL 8017)

Select Header Shape Arc Header Straight Header Dome Header

Select Locks Allen Key Lock (No additional charge) Front Facing Key Lock Public Access Lock

Select Accessories Not required 10 extra strong magnets 20 extra strong magnets 30 extra strong magnets 40 extra strong magnets

Please choose from the options above.

£429.00 ex. VAT



Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	From WTC 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	https://oxfordclarion.uk/new-year-clarion-6-january-2026/	
07 January 2026	Witney Lake Gold In Bloom Award	Cotswold Life	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/magazines/cotswold/25693560-rich-textile-heritage-witney-wool-blanket-trail/	
11 January 2026	Oxfordshire town rejects controversial fire service reforms	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, This is Oxfordshire			Yes	No	No	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25738722-oxfordshire-council-poised-oppose-fire-service-reforms/	
12 January 2026	Major Cotswolds road in Oxfordshire to close next month	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes (On behalf of OCC)	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25757595-major-cotswolds-road-oxfordshire-close-next-month/	
14 January 2026	Key Cotswolds road will close overnight next month	Cotswold Journal			Yes	No	Yes (On behalf of OCC)	https://www.cotswoldjournal.co.uk/news/25764016-key-cotswolds-road-will-close-overnight-next-month/	
17 January 2026	Witney community speedwatch volunteers celebrate anniversary	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25773859-witney-community-speedwatch-volunteers-celebrate-second-anniversary/	
24 January 2026	Witney Volunteer Fair gives locals opportunities to connect	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Shared from WODC	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25791942-witney-volunteer-fair-gives-locals-opportunities-connect/	
02 February 2026	Oxfordshire mayor weighs in on football pavilion controversy	ThisisOxfordshire			Yes	Yes	No	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25797140-oxfordshire-mayor-weighs-football-pavilion-controversy/	
03 February 2026	Oxfordshire football club responds to pavilion 'stitch up'	Witney Gazette		Yes		Yes	No	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25812769-oxfordshire-football-club-responds-pavilion-stitch-up?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_m	
12 February 2026	Oxfordshire council defends tax increase amid Tory criticism	Oxford Mail, Yahoo News, msn News			Yes	No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25847720-oxfordshire-council-defends-tax-increase-amid-tory-criticism/	
22 February 2026	Public purse to end Oxfordshire estate's flooding nightmare	Oxford Mail, Infrastructure Now			Yes	No	No	https://www.infrastructure-now.co.uk/article/422315/public-purse-to-end-oxfordshire-estates-flooding-nightmare	

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	From WTC Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
25 February 2026	Popular play area to close temporarily	Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25870360.witney-mini-golf-kiosk-skatepark-close-temporarily/	
28 February 2026	New benches made from recycled plastics installed in Witney	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25883785.new-benches-made-recycled-plastics-installed-witney/	
02 March 2026	New parking restrictions on road in Witney introduced	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25899349.new-parking-restrictions-road-witney-introduced/	
04 March 2026	Annual Town Meeting	Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Yes		
07 March 2026	Celebrating Witney's Community Champions	High Sheriff of Oxfordshire Blog	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://highsheroxfordshire.co.uk/celebrating-witneys-community-champions	
11 March 2026	Awards given to outstanding individuals in community	Witney Gazette	Yes			Yes	Yes		
23 March 2026	New curry restaurant opens on Oxfordshire town's high street	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25957996.new-curry-restaurant-opens-oxfordshire-towns-high-street/?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=F	
27 March 2026	Witney skate park to reopen after temporary closure	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette			Yes	No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25975752.witney-skate-park-reopen-temporary-closure/	
04 April 2026	Witney skatepark damaged with 'significant costs' needed	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25995522.witney-skatepark-damaged-significant-costs-needed/	
12 April 2026	Witney Splash Park at The Leys officially reopening	Oxford Mail, Yahoo News	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26008781.witney-splash-park-leys-officially-reopening/	
23 April 2026	Witney crowds join mayor in raising of Saint George's flag	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26047948.witney-crowds-join-mayor-raising-saint-georges-flag/	
28 April 2026	Oxfordshire town toasts 'beautiful' St George's Day party	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26056876.oxfordshire-town-toasts-beautiful-st-georges-day-party/	
02 May 2026	£1.2m sports and social club development delayed	Yahoo!News		Yes		No	No	https://uk.news.yahoo.com/1-2m-sports-social-club-040000259.html	
03 May 2026	Oxfordshire town on edge of Cotswolds named among UK's best	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26074885.oxfordshire-town-edge-cotswolds-named-among-uks-best/	
04 May 2026	Witney Town Council inviting residents to the town meeting	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26069999.witney-town-council-inviting-residents-town-meeting/	
04 May 2026	Witney council publishes guide to three-tier governance	ThisisOxfordshire, Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/26067061.witney-council-publishes-guide-three-tier-governance/	
06 May 2026	Town council backs No Mow May campaign again	Yahoo!News, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://uk.news.yahoo.com/town-council-backs-no-mow-may-040000096.html	
06 May 2026	Witney Town Council raises the Council of Europe flag	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26079657.witney-town-council-raises-council-europe-flag/	

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	From WTC Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
08 May 2026	Witney announces Jane Doughty as new mayor following vote	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette			Yes	Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26087737_witney-announces-jane-doughty-new-mayor-following-vote/	
10 May 2026	Witney council funding £20k for Youth Services Grant	Oxford Mail, witney Gazette	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26089610_witney-council-funding-20k-youth-services-grant/	
18 May 2026	Oxfordshire parents warned as popular play park closes	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26115917_oxfordshire-parents-warned-popular-play-park-closes/	
27 May 2026	Call for popular Oxfordshire splash park to be opened longer	Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Town Councillor page post	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/26143407_call-popular-oxfordshire-splash-park-opened-longer/	
27 May 2026	Drag Queens bring smiles to 'fantastic' Pride fest	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No		
10 June 2026	National Award for Standards	Witney Gazette	Yes			Yes	Yes		
13 June 2026	Breeding tern pair return to Witney Lake and Country Park	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26183509_breeding-tern-pair-return-witney-lake-country-park/	
16 June 2026	Oxfordshire council 24/7 heating because no one can turn off	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail		Yes		Yes, statement in response	Town Councillor page post	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26199800_oxfordshire-council-24-7-heating-no-one-can-turn-off/	
19 June 2026	Young people urged to join Witney Youth Council and shape town life	Yahoo!News, Oxford Mail, MSN			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/other/young-people-urged-to-join-witney-youth-council-and-shape-town-life/ar-s/26211946_major-new-community-hub-opens-oxfordshire-town-park/	
19 June 2026	Major new community hub opens in Oxfordshire town's park	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	No - courtside post	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26212192_witney-marks-world-refugee-day-flying-refugee-flag/	
19 June 2026	Witney marks World Refugee Day by flying the Refugee Flag	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26200535_witney-lake-tern-raft-upgraded-support-birdlife/	
20 June 2026	Witney Lake tern raft upgraded to support birdlife	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26221862_oxfordshire-armed-forces-event-cancelled-amid-37-c-weather/	
23 June 2026	Town's armed forces event CANCELLED amid 'exceptionally hot' 37 °C weather	Oxford Mail, Yahoo!News,			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26221888_good-news-popular-oxfordshire-park-wildlife-fans/	
27 June 2026	Witney Lake and Country Park announces new benches	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26217907_witneys-new-mayor-celebrating-community/	
28 June 2026	Witney's new mayor out and about celebrating community	Oxford Mail, Yahoo!News, MSN	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/26218206_leaders-oxfordshire-town-thrilled-new-sports-park/	
28 June 2026	Leaders of Oxfordshire town 'thrilled' at new sports park	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No - courtside post	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26290159_witney-town-council-display-marks-disability-pride-month/26f-ree	
19 July 2026	Witney Town Council display marks Disability Pride Month	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/26290745_witney-town-centre-set-new-signs-digital-maps/	
15 July 2026	Crowds brave 30 degree heat to enjoy 'special' carnival	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No		
19 July 2026	Witney town centre set for new signs and digital maps	ThisIsOxfordshire			Yes	Yes (WODC)	No	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/26290745_witney-town-centre-set-new-signs-digital-maps/	

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	From WTC Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
22 July 2026	700 attend 'open day' at new sports hub	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes		
23 July 2026	Splash park to remain open using exemption despite hosepipe ban	Oxford Mail, Yahoo!News			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26404492.splash-park-remain-open-using-exemption-despite-hosepipe-ban/	
01 August 2026	Police to join Witney Play Day at Burwell Recreation Ground	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26416040.police-join-witney-play-day-burwell-recreation-ground/	
06 August 2026	Council warns Oxfordshire road set to close amid flooding	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26441716.council-warns-oxfordshire-road-set-close-amid-flooding/	
15 August 2026	Council's plea as lifesaving water aids thrown into trees	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26467553.councils-plea-lifesaving-water-aids-thrown-trees/	
21 August 2026	Witney charity bingo night supports Oasis and day centre	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26476954.witney-charity-bingo-night-supports-oasis-day-centre/	
22 August 2026	Witney - biodiversity-boosting bus shelters installed	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26486688.witney-biodiversity-boosting-bus-shelters-installed/	
23 August 2026	Witney bus shelter gets green roof to support wildlife	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26486083.witney-bus-shelter-gets-green-roof-support-wildlife/	
24 August 2026	Lowell Place in Witney to close for five days in September	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes (Road Closure)	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26473473.lowell-place-witney-close-five-days-september/	
26 August 2026	Witney West End Parking: Permits Now £70 a Year	Witney News (New - started beginning of August)			Yes	No	No	https://witneynews.co.uk/witney-west-end-parking-permits-2026/	
30 August 2026	The Leys Splash Park to remain open until September 7	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26504830.leys-splash-park-remain-open-september-7/	
31 August 2026	Witney residents invited to shape future of sports club	Oxford Mail, Oxford Chronicle			Yes	No	Yes		
05 September 2026	Witney council backs youth clubs and outdoor activities	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26512744.witney-council-backs-youth-clubs-outdoor-activities/	
05 September 2026	Witney football pitches turning green ahead of new season	Thisisoxfordshire	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/26523907.witney-football-pitches-turning-green-ahead-new-season/	
06 September 2026	Witney EV Charger Plan Deferred, Carterton's Refused	Witney News			Yes	No	No	https://witneynews.co.uk/west-oxfordshire-ev-charging-bays-september-2026/	
14 September 2026	Jeremy Clarkson backs law on sanitary bins in men's toilets (WTC mention)	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	No	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26548535.jeremy-clarkson-backs-law-sanitary-bins-mens-toilets/	
14 September 2026	New e-bike helping Witney police catch criminals	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26548170.new-e-bike-helping-witney-police-catch-criminals/	

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Community Engagement Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 21 st September 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications and Community Engagement Officer

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

Current Situation

This is the second report of the new financial year.

Heritage Open Day wash up- LIVES IN STONE

Staffing levels were appropriate, ensuring that there was no lone working and that individual staff were not left responsible for historic items without support. The Works Team were also able to assist with the transportation of larger and more difficult items, which was particularly helpful during the set-up and clear-down.

One area identified for improvement is the labelling of displays. While staff were available to provide additional information, not all items were individually labelled. Going forward, non-self-explanatory items will be labelled to enhance the visitor experience.

The event required a significant amount of preparation, but the positive response from visitors indicated that this was worthwhile. Staff also enjoyed being involved in the event. The Friday evening and Saturday timings appeared to help reach people who would normally be at work, with several visitors commenting on this, while another described it as a lovely opportunity to find the event during an evening walk. A number of local residents also attended who had never previously seen inside the chapel and particularly appreciated the opportunity to do so.

Christmas Competitions, Sponsorship & Engagement

The Council's Christmas activities are progressing. The Christmas light competition winner has been selected, and the winning design is currently under construction. The Christmas card competition is being issued this week to the same groups as the light and an invitation has been sent to local care homes inviting them to provide illustrations to feature on the cover of the Mayor's Christmas carol sheet.

The Witney Ice Centre has also been invited to view the Christmas Light Switch-On from the Gallery Room. The Town Council will provide an activity, decorations, and refreshments. The evening will be supervised by the Ice Centre's own staff.

Christmas tree sponsorship has now been taken on by the team reporting to the Stronger Communities Committee. Information has been provided in response to an enquiry from a local organisation interested in sponsoring one of the trees, and a wider sponsorship campaign will begin from 28 September.

Eco Fair

Witney's Eco Fair will take place on Thursday 24 September, from 2pm to 6pm at the Corn Exchange. The event will bring together local businesses, charities, and community groups to share practical ideas and solutions for living more sustainably.

Visitors will be able to find advice on recycling and waste reduction, saving energy at home, active travel, and greener transport, caring for the countryside, supporting local wildlife and community environmental campaigns. The event organised, by the Administrative Support Assistant Communities and Planning officer will also highlight practical ways residents can live more sustainably while potentially saving money in their everyday lives.

World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day takes place on 10 October. This year, it is proposed that the council promotes the World Mental Health Day organisations resources focusing on managing the impact of social media and negative news, including advice on reducing social media use, avoiding doomscrolling, and coping with feelings of overwhelm in an increasingly unstable world and in the face of relentless negative news. **(Appendix A i and ii)**

These resources will be shared through the Council's noticeboards and social media channels, as well as on table cards at the café in 1863.

Internally, activities will also be arranged for staff and Councillors to support awareness and wellbeing.

Citizen of the Year 2026

It is now time to launch this year's Citizen Awards, with nominations opening shortly. This year, a new Best Allotment category will be introduced, recognising the contribution of allotment holders and aligning with the Council's green initiatives and Climate Action Plan, including the benefits of growing and producing food locally.

Officers would also like to encourage nominations for the Young Citizen category, which received no nominations last year. To help identify suitable candidates, it is proposed that the Council contacts local organisations, including The Station, Yellow Submarine and Aspire, inviting them to nominate a young person who has achieved something notable, demonstrated leadership, or made a positive contribution through a project, activity, or creative achievement.

Big Lunch -Sat 5/Sun 6 June 2027

Planning and budgeting would now need to begin for a Big Lunch event, should Councillors wish to support one. As noted in a previous report, holding the event in June falls during a particularly busy period for the Council, and officers do not have capacity to deliver this as a Council-led event.

An alternative would be to support a local organisation to deliver the event using grant funding, while coordinating some existing Council activities to take place on the same day. This could create a larger, well-resourced community event without requiring the Council to take on responsibility for delivering the whole programme.

A potential venue would be The Leys, providing space for families to picnic and for a range of activities to take place. It falls outside of the football season.

Possible elements could include a performance by the Town Band, with the Council's usual Play Day either moved to coincide with the event or an additional Play Day funded through the Community Grant (£1000). The Station could also be invited to attend with its hot chocolate milk float.

There may also be opportunities to work in partnership with Courtside, for example they might offer free mini golf, picnic hampers, or a special menu such as pizzas, and potentially performances from their buskers.

Further discussions would be needed with potential partners to establish what could be offered and the associated costs. Officers recommend this takes place on one of the days over that weekend but not both.

Bunting

Officers have explored costing and design for lengths of town council bunting, and these are included in **Appendix B**.

Separately, earlier this year the Town Council was able to support students at the Blake C of E Primary school who were exploring the meaning and history of the Town Crest and then used their learning to produce a modern version that reflects a modern take on the heritage and identifiable parts of the town and businesses and sports teams that are special to them and Witney such as The Shake Shop! These are available at the meeting for members to see.

Officers feel it would be a nice gesture to create a small length of bunting with each of their crests on. There are twenty of them, and this would cost just under £50

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

The activities outlined in this report support community engagement, participation and access to Council activities and information, while also providing opportunities to work with local organisations, schools, and community groups.

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 activities outlined in this report seek to provide inclusive opportunities for residents to participate in Council activities and access information in different ways. The Christmas competitions, Citizen Awards, Heritage Open Day and proposed Big Lunch provide opportunities for engagement across different age groups and communities. World Mental Health Day resources will also provide accessible information on wellbeing.

b) Biodiversity – No significant direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from the activities proposed. The introduction of a Best Allotment category also supports awareness of local food growing and the benefits of allotment gardening.

c) Crime & Disorder – No significant direct impact is anticipated. Community events and engagement activities provide opportunities for positive social interaction and community participation.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Environmental considerations will be incorporated into relevant activities. The Eco Fair promotes practical ways for residents to reduce waste, save energy and adopt more sustainable forms of transport. The Best Allotment category also supports the Council's green initiatives and Climate Action Plan.

Risk

The principal risks relate to the availability of officer resources, event delivery, weather conditions for outdoor activities and the ability to secure appropriate partners or funding. These will be considered as individual activities progress, with appropriate risk assessments undertaken where required. For the proposed Big Lunch, working in partnership with another organisation would reduce the requirement for the Council to lead and resource the whole event.

Social Value

The activities outlined in this report provide opportunities to strengthen community connections, encourage participation, and support local organisations and community groups. Events such as the Heritage Open Day and proposed Big Lunch can bring residents together, while initiatives such as the Citizen Awards and Christmas competitions recognise and celebrate contributions made by individuals and community organisations. Partnership working also provides opportunities for local businesses, charities, schools, and community groups to contribute to Council-led activities.

Financial implications

The activities outlined in this report have varying financial implications.

- The proposed Big Lunch would require consideration of grant funding of up to £1,000 if an additional Play Day were supported through the Community Grant scheme, alongside any other costs associated with the event.
- The cost of 80 metres of town bunting varies between £252 and £720
- The cost of producing the proposed bunting featuring the 20 Blake School students' designs would be just under £50.

Other activities will be delivered within existing budgets where possible. Any expenditure associated with future events, activities or partnerships will be considered through the appropriate budget-setting or approval process.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Note the update on current and forthcoming community engagement activities.
2. Consider whether to support planning for a Big Lunch event in June 2027, including the proposed partnership approach and potential use of Community Grant funding.
3. Choose a preferred style of bunting and decide which supplier to use.
4. Consider the proposal to purchase a length of bunting featuring the 20 Blake School students' designs, at a cost of just under £50.

Practical ways to manage DOOMSCROLLING



It's normal to feel down from time to time when we come across bad news, but constant exposure to negative online content could negatively affect our mental health.

'Doomscrolling' is a relatively new term used to describe the impact of consuming large amounts of upsetting news online.

If you're looking for ways to spend less time doomscrolling, here are some suggestions that might help.

Turn off 'push' notifications

Turning off instant alerts for social media or news apps can give you a break from anxiety-provoking information.



Set a time limit

Setting a time limit on your scrolling can help, as long as you stick to it. Find something that gives you a gentle signal that it's time to put the phone down.



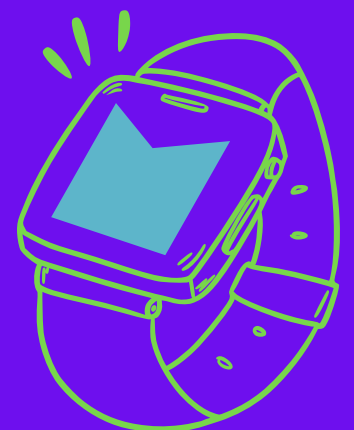
Consider phone-free zones

You're allowed to have quality time that isn't interrupted by notifications every few minutes.



Use a watch or an alarm clock

If you often doomscroll in bed, it may be because your phone doubles as your alarm clock. Switching to using a watch or a physical alarm clock may help.



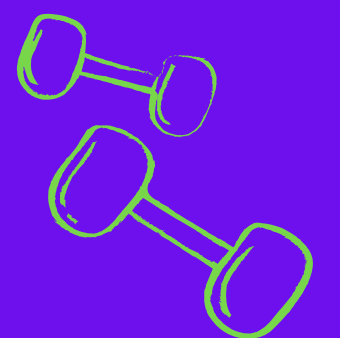
Manage your social media feeds

You could make changes to what appears on your feed by blocking or hiding certain profiles, allowing you to limit the negative content you are exposed to.



Balance the negative with a positive

Mindfulness, reading, spending time with others, and exercising are all great self-care activities that can benefit your wellbeing.

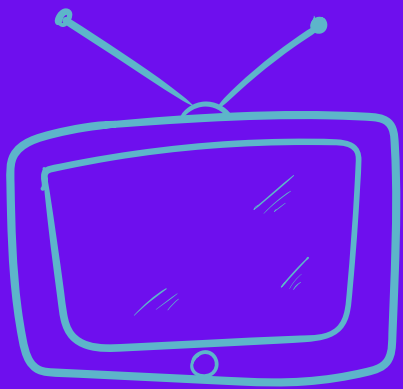


Tips to manage **overwhelm** during global events and relentless bad news



Constantly hearing about negative news from around the world can feel like a lot to take in – **and that's because it is.**

Feeling overwhelmed by current events, no matter how big or small, can take a toll on our mental health. Here are some tips to help you cope with global news overwhelm and find your way back to balance.



Set boundaries with the news

Ask yourself how much news content you're happy to take in, and how often.



Use grounding exercises

Grounding yourself in the here and now can ease your stress response.

Have phone-free times

If you often find yourself doomscrolling, having set phone-free times or zones could help break this habit.



Talk with others

When you feel overwhelmed, it can help to connect with other people. You could spend some quality time with loved ones, family or friends.



Give yourself permission to rest

Taking time to look after yourself doesn't mean you've stopped caring about anything else; it means that you are looking after yourself so that you can keep on caring.



Focus on what you can control

Small actions still matter. Taking positive action can help shift feelings out of helplessness and into purposefulness.















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

Held on Tuesday, 26 May 2026

At 6.15 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Treloar (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch G Meadows	J Robertshaw
Officers:	Adam Clapton Polly Inness Thomas Davies Annie Hathaway	Deputy Town Clerk Communications & Community Engagement Officer Deputy Venue & Events Officer Admin Assistant - Communications & Engagement
Others:	4 members of the public.	

At the start of the meeting, the Chair invited everyone present to introduce themselves.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R Smith.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 18 February 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 18 February 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

3 EVENTS UPDATE

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (CCEO).

St George's Day Event

Members received feedback on the St George's Day events, which officers described as a simple, positive, and family-friendly occasion. Council teams and Working Party members were thanked for their support in delivering a successful, well-attended and inclusive event, with no incidents reported and positive feedback received from attendees, including a personal thank you card sent to the Council.

Suggestions for future years included expanding the performance area, improving signage and event communication, simplifying the quiz, recognising front line service crews on stage, reviewing catering arrangements, and repositioning seating away from speakers.

The Working Party welcomed the strong attendance and community involvement. The museum representative reported good participation in the dragon-making workshop and St George's Day tours, while members also praised local businesses for supporting the window decoration initiative. Some disappointment was expressed at the low uptake from schools for the dragon competition, which members agreed should be reviewed for future events. Members also noted the successful Witney Vikings football activity despite limited space.

The CCEO confirmed the event had been delivered under the £1,000 budget and members agreed that the underspend should be used towards future Working Party events during the year.

Overall, members thanked Council staff for organising the event so successfully and agreed that a strong foundation had now been established for future annual St George's Day celebrations. The Chair noted that the event showed an array of what Witney had to offer and felt immense pride on the day.

Armed Forces Day

The Working Party received an update on an event being organised by Witney's joint Cadet Forces on The Leys on Saturday 27 June 2026. Members noted that the Council had agreed to subsidised use of the facility following a recommendation from this Working Party.

The event would include charity stalls and military vehicles and would be located near the Courtyard Hubs building, with only a limited amount of space required. Officers had requested that the Leys WW1 Memorial be cleaned in preparation for the event. The CCEO also advised that the customary raising of the Armed Forces flag at the Town Hall would take place on the preceding Friday evening.

Members asked that once full details were confirmed that they be communicated to the wider public and Councillors.

Heritage Open Day

The Working Party received an update on Heritage Open Days 2026, with officers exploring a collaborative event with Witney Museum between 11–20 September around the theme "Everyday Histories". Members noted the potential to highlight Witney's blanket-making heritage and other local industries, possibly involving The Blanket Hall and Cogges Manor Farm. A craft event already planned at the Museum on 12 September may also form part of the programme, with further discussions to follow.

Members also heard about early proposals for Bishop's Palace Community Heritage Events aimed at promoting the site through activities such as tours, exhibitions, and family events. No funding was being requested at this stage, although support and suggestions from the Council would be welcomed.

The Chair advised that an organisation had expressed interest in supporting future civic events, such as St George's Day celebrations. Members agreed further details would be needed regarding the nature of any sponsorship arrangement and whether it aligned with the Working Party's remit and capacity.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the feedback, and outcomes from the St George's Day event debrief be noted and,
3. That, St George's Day Events be held in a similar vein in future years and budgeted for accordingly and,
4. That, the proposed arrangements for Armed Forces Day activities on The Leys for 2026 be supported and,
5. That, the planned discussions regarding Heritage Open Day be noted and that further plans be brought to the next meeting and,
6. That, the Council supports continued partnership working with local organisations, community groups, and volunteers to enhance future events and engagement opportunities, including,
 - a. Support for Bishop's Palace Community Heritage Events by the Museum,
 - b. Sponsorship opportunities where appropriate and,
7. That, this Working Party requests that the underspend for this year's St George's Day event budget be allocated on other events during the year under the auspices of this Committee and,
8. That, a further meeting, or meetings are held in June and/or July 2026.

4 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Due to the time of the year, it was suggested that a meeting or meetings be held in June and or July 2026.

The meeting closed at: 6.50 pm

Chair

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

Held on Wednesday, 15 July 2026

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

Present:

Councillor J Treloar (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch G Meadows	J Robertshaw R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	None	

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Mubin.

6 MINUTES

The minutes of the Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 26 May 2026 were received.

The Chair advised that the organisation which had approached him regarding support or sponsorship for future events had relocated and therefore, this was no longer an option.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

7 EVENTS UPDATE

The Working Party received the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer along with a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding arrangements for upcoming events, principally for Heritage Open Days.

Members were pleased to note that the Town Council's inaugural St George's Day celebrations had recently received a Local Council Award for Community Event of the Year an award that recognised the event's success in bringing together people of all ages through a programme of community activities, local heritage, music and family entertainment. The Working Party congratulated all officers, volunteers, community groups and partners involved in delivering the event and acknowledged the achievement as a significant endorsement of the Council's approach to community engagement and the objectives of the Working Party.

Members expressed their support for the proposed Heritage Open Days programme and welcomed the partnership with Witney & District Museum and were pleased to see a range of activities being planned to celebrate and promote Witney's heritage and history.

Members thanked officers for the consideration of the extended hours of accessibility for the activities at Tower Hill cemetery, recognising that this would hopefully enable as many residents as possible to participate in the events especially working residents and families.

Members also acknowledged the support of Witney & District Museum in developing complementary events that would enhance public engagement including those activities aim at children.

A member who also served on Oxfordshire County Council advised that they would seek opportunities to facilitate and promote the Bishop's Palace activities and guided tours to help maximise attendance and public awareness and ensure the greatest benefit was derived from the Museum's planned programme.

Recommended:

1. That, the update be noted.
2. That, the Working Party's thanked be passed to all those involved in the organisation and delivery of the award-winning St George's Day celebrations.
3. That, the proposed Heritage Open Days programme be supported.
4. That, officers continue to work with local heritage organisations to maximise participation and promotion of the events.

8 RAF BRIZE NORTON - FREEDOM OF WITNEY

The Working Party received a verbal update from the Committee Clerk on behalf of the Venue & Events Officer regarding discussions with RAF Brize Norton concerning arrangements for 2027 to mark the 50th Anniversary of the granting to them of the Freedom of Witney.

Members were advised that correspondence had been exchanged with RAF Brize Norton and that the Station Executive Officer had responded to confirm that there would be a change in command and that the proposals regarding a Freedom March would be reviewed once the new Station Commander had taken up post at the end of July.

Members further noted that 2027 would also mark the 90th Anniversary of operations at RAF Brize Norton, which could have implications for the timing and arrangements of any Freedom March or other associated commemorative events.

The Working Party recognised the significance of both anniversaries and agreed that further discussions should take place with RAF Brize Norton once the new Station Commander had assumed their post.

Recommended:

1. That, the update be noted.
2. That, officers continue liaison with RAF Brize Norton regarding arrangements for 2027.
3. That, a further update be provided to the Stronger Communities Committee meeting on 21 September 2026.

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members agreed that the next meeting of the Working Party should be held in mid-October 2026, with the exact date to be confirmed by officers.

The Working Party further agreed that invitations should be extended to any local residents who had expressed an interest in the work of the group, enabling them to attend and participate. Members should forward any details to the Committee Clerk.

Recommended:

1. That, the next meeting of the Working Party be held in mid-October 2026.
2. That, officers invite interested residents to attend and participate in future meetings of the Working Party.

The meeting closed at: 4.31 pm

Chair

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Youth Council Update

Meeting Date: Monday, 21 September 2026

Contact Officer: Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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

Background

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

The primary purpose of Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that can be heard by decision makers. In doing so, Witney Youth Council supports more inclusive and responsive local government, encourages active participation, and helps develop key skills among young people in Witney.

Current Situation

Youth Council Meeting Attendance and Recruitment

The Youth Council continues to benefit from a core group of five to six Youth Councillors who regularly attend meetings and contribute to discussions and projects. To ensure all places remain active and engaged, members who have not attended or responded for three consecutive meetings are being contacted to confirm whether they wish to continue their involvement. This approach is helping to maintain engagement and remind members of their responsibilities.

Recruitment will remain a key focus over the coming months, with efforts continuing to welcome new young people to the Youth Council. It has been agreed that Youth Council meetings may be opened by invitation to peers of current Youth Councillors, allowing them to attend and see what a meeting is like. This will not be publicised to the wider public and will be limited to invitations from current Youth Councillors.

Two new Youth Councillors have joined since the last Stronger Communities Committee meeting, bringing confirmed membership to 11 members.

Annual Youth Council Meeting

The October Youth Council meeting will be the second Annual Youth Council meeting since the relaunch. As with last year, this will include voting and the possible reallocation of the following roles:

- **Chair**
- **Vice Chair**
- **Media Officer**
- **Treasurer**

Youth Council members wishing to retain or take on a role will be encouraged to attend.

Involvement with WTC Events

Due to limited expressed interest, and with many Youth Councillors preparing for exams, the previously planned event, A Taste of Witney, could not proceed. In the meantime, Youth Councillors focused on supporting Witney Town Council events over the summer:

Witney Carnival

In July, Youth Councillors supported the Witney Town Council Carnival stall by running a cornhole game, offering free drinks, and encouraging visitors to complete a survey on the proposed social media ban for under-16s. The results have since been included in a statement from the youth council, alongside members' views, and sent to MP Charlie Maynard to help inform his decisions regarding the topic.



Pictured above: A chalkboard drawn by the Youth Council Treasurer for their Carnival stall (left), and the results of their survey at the end of the day (right).

The Youth Council Media Officer subsequently posted photos and a summary of the day on the Witney Youth Council Instagram Account (@youthwitney).

Brass on the Grass Litter Pick

In early August, Youth Council Members held a Youth Council litter pick around The Leys while the town band gave its final summer performance of the year. They also attended the volunteers' picnic and collected a significant amount of litter from around the park.



Pictured above: Youth Councillors litter picking at the Volunteers' Picnic.

Witney Youth Council's "Politics and Pizza", also known as "A Slice of Politics"

Members of the Youth Council have expressed a strong interest in creating more opportunities to discuss politics and current issues with other young people in the community. Following the success of Oxfordshire County Council's recent Pizza and Politics event at the Corn Exchange, there is evidence that young residents would value a dedicated space to share their views, ask questions, and engage in political discussion.

Planning has progressed well, and the event is scheduled to take place on Thursday 29 October, from 11am to 2pm. Town Councillors and local PCSOs will be invited to discuss a series of questions and topics selected by Youth Councillors and young people in Witney. Pizza will be purchased from the Youth Council budget to encourage young people to attend.

The options for purchasing pizza are as follows:

- Business 1, the Youth Council's preferred option – 10 large pizzas for £75
- Business 2 – 10 medium pizzas for £120
- Business 3 – 10 medium pizzas for £142

Councillors are invited to consider the options and agree which supplier should be used. Members may also wish to provide any additional comments or suggestions to support planning for the event. There was previously discussion around a young person's Annual Town Meeting (as only the electorate (over 18's) can officially take part in the one held annually by the Town Council in March.

Increase of the Youth Council Age Limit to 19/20/21

The Youth Council asks the Committee to consider amending the current membership age range of 11 to 18. Some members wish to remain part of the Youth Council but are approaching the upper age limit. The options discussed in the August Youth Council meeting:

Option 1 – Preferred by the Youth Council

Raise the membership age limit to 19. Members older than 19 may remain involved as mentors, or in a mentorship role for younger members, until the age of 21; however, they would not be able to vote on Youth Council decisions.

Option 2

Retain the current membership age limit of 18. Members older than 18 may remain involved as mentors or in a mentorship role for younger members until the age of 21; however, they would not be able to vote on Youth Council decisions.

Option 3

Raise the membership age limit to 21, reflecting the wider definition of young people as those aged 10 to 21. Members older than 18 may need to provide additional documentation, but would be able to vote on Youth Council decisions.

Councillors are invited to discuss and decide on an appropriate option moving forward.

Youth Council Webpage Improvements

Youth Council members are being asked for their views on changes and improvements to the Youth Council webpage. They have requested simpler wording, less text, and a sleeker overall design. More visible buttons have been introduced, and additional improvements will be made as further requests are received.

A Microsoft Form has also been created alongside the PDF application form, reducing barriers for interested young people who wish to apply. Paper copies are also available for collection from the administration office.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Youth Council Chair requested more consistent meeting dates to better fit members' schedules. Following discussion and a vote at the August Youth Council meeting, meetings will now take place on either the first or second Thursday of each month. The upcoming Youth Council meeting dates are as follows:

- Thursday 1 October 2026 - 4pm to 5pm
- Thursday 5 November 2026 - 4pm to 5pm
- Thursday 3 December 2026 - 4pm to 5pm

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

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 supports equality by giving a voice and platform to young people, including those from diverse communities. Many of the issues Youth Councillors wish to address involve discrimination.
- b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to support 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 among young people by promoting mental health awareness, supporting peer-led activities and initiatives, and improving perceptions of young people in Witney.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – When Witney Youth Council purchases items for its projects, officers prioritise 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 mitigate 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 are able to gather valuable insights into the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.
- Young residents of Witney feel heard and understand that their voices can have an impact.

Financial implications

- Officer working time.
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for Youth Council meetings and events, including the proposed "Politics and Pizza"/"A Slice of Politics" event. This is intended to be funded from the Youth Council budget line 4

Recommendations

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

1. That, the report be considered and noted.

2. That, Members agree which pizza supplier option should be used for the Witney Youth Council “Politics and Pizza”/“A Slice of Politics” event, noting the options set out in the report.
3. That, Members agree which Youth Council membership age limit option should be adopted based on the three options set out in the report.



Minutes of the meeting of the Witney Youth Council held at 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney on Thursday 3rd September 2026.

Youth Councillors Present:

Four 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

P Inness – Communications and Community Engagement Officer

The Councillors in attendance were Youth Council mentors and attended to provide guidance and answer questions. Officers advised Members that this was an opportunity to provide a voice for young people in Witney, and that the Town Council would seek to support their ideas and suggestions where possible.

1. Apologies

Apologies from two Youth Councillors and one Mentor were received.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2026 were adopted and signed as correct.

4. Guest Participation

There were no participants at the meeting waiting to speak with the Youth Council.

5. Further Recruitment Opportunities – Open meetings

Youth Councillors all voted in favour of opening Youth Council meetings to other young people who may wish to attend. Any visitors who would like to speak or ask questions could do so under the Public Participation section of the agenda.

Opening meetings by invitation was considered a useful way to introduce the Youth Council to prospective members, including friends of existing Youth Councillors who may be interested in joining but would like to understand how the Council operates before committing. Youth Councillors were asked to decide whether this should be implemented for future meetings.

Resolved: That, future Youth Council meetings be open to other young people by invitation from Youth Councillors.

That, participants at future meetings may speak or ask questions of the Youth Council under

the Public Participation section of the agenda.

6. Pizza and Politics – Youth Council’s Local Politics Chat

Youth Councillors discussed further details of the event, which would invite young people in Witney to take part in discussions on local politics with town councillors and local decision makers.

Members agreed that the event should take place towards the end of October half term, between 26 and 30 October, at around midday to avoid darker evening travel for young people attending. The Gallery Room was identified as the preferred location because it is central and appropriately sized. Members agreed that around 30 participants would be suitable, as the room has capacity for 60.

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Town Councillors and a local PCSO were identified as invitees. The Youth Council admin would create a poster for the event, clearly promoting the free pizza available. The poster would be shared in schools, on noticeboards and online by the admin, Youth Council mentors and Youth Councillors. The event would also be promoted on Eventbrite under the agreed name, A Slice of Politics.

A Youth Councillor requested that the sign-up form include a section for young people to note topics of interest, helping to inform the event discussion.

Resolved: That, the event take place towards the end of October half term, between 26 and 30 October, at around midday to avoid darker evening travel for young people attending, and that the admin enquire with the Bookings Administrator about available dates.

That, the event be held in the Gallery Room, with an aim of around 30 attendees.

That, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Town Councillors and a local PCSO be invited by the admin on behalf of the Youth Council.

That, the Youth Council admin create a poster and Eventbrite link for Youth Councillors to promote the event among their peers.

That, A Slice of Politics be the name of the event.

7. Increase of the Youth Council Age Limit to 19/20/21

The Youth Council was informed that Town Council Officers would present its request to increase the Youth Council membership age limit to the Stronger Communities Committee for consideration and decision in mid-September.

8. Results from Witney Youth Council at Witney Carnival – Statement to MP Charlie Maynard

Members were informed that the agreed statement had been sent and that the Youth Council admin was awaiting a response.

9. Youth Council Webpage Improvements

It was agreed that Youth Councillors would bring ideas for improving the Youth Council webpage to the next meeting.

10. Items for Future Agenda

The Chair requested further focused discussion on the Pizza and Politics event.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

Where possible, future meetings will take place on the second Thursday of each month. This may need to be a different Thursday in the month depending on hall availability. Please see the next meeting dates below:

- Thursday 1 October 2026
- Thursday 5 November 2026

- Thursday 3 December 2026

The Meeting closed at 4.40pm.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Youth Services

Meeting Date: Monday, 21 September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Youth Services being funded by or with the involvement of the Town Council.

Current Situation

Youth Services Grant

The Council has received signed agreements from all 2026-27 grant awardees, and payments have been issued in accordance with the Council's agreed financial processes.

As a reminder, at the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 22 June, the Council agreed to retain £3,500, ringfenced for further youth-related grant applications during the current municipal year (Minute No. F327(5)).

In relation to last year's grant awards (2025-26), officers have requested reports from recipients detailing the projects undertaken. These reports will, where received in time, be presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee in September as part of the Council's grant monitoring process.

The Council holds a separate special grant for Home-Start Oxford and a report on what the Council's grant for 2025-26 was spent on is included as **Appendix A**.

The Committee may wish to consider whether the Council should continue to operate a Youth Services Grant Scheme and provide a special grant to Home-Start Oxford in 2027/28 and, if so, recommend budget allocations for consideration as part of the Council's budget-setting process.

The Station - Detached Youth

In accordance with Section 11 (Quality & Review) of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Bright Futures Oxon and the Town Council, a six-monthly review report has been requested but is not available at the time of writing.

The Station recently delivered its summer KICK sessions at The Leys, working in partnership with Courtside Hubs CIC, Thames Valley Police, and other local partners. In accordance with Section 4(b) of the SLA, The Station will also deliver a BREAK session at the Corn Exchange during the October half-term.

In accordance with Section 4(a) of the SLA, the grant allocation for 2027/28 should be increased in line with inflation from the current year's value of £28,400.

Mental Health Drop-in Sessions

Officers have requested an update from APCAM concerning these sessions which ran in the Corn Exchange throughout the previous year school holidays and hope to be able to report back at the next meeting, ahead of budget setting for 2027-28.

TVP Operation Just & Have A Go Day (April 2026)

Members will recall that Operation Just is the name given to a Thames Valley Police (TVP) operation aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Witney and Carterton. The Leys in Witney was identified as a particular area of concern following a number of incidents of ASB during 2025, predominantly involving young people.

A multi-agency task group was established to identify measures to prevent a recurrence during summer 2026, including targeted engagement with young people. As part of this work, TVP funding was provided for a 'Have a Go' event at The Leys in April 2026. Feedback indicated that the event had not been as successful as anticipated due to limited publicity and engagement, together with poor weather. It is therefore considered that a further standalone event is not currently required.

However, a significant reduction in ASB at The Leys was reported during summer 2026, supported by fewer reports received by both the Town Council and Courtside Hubs. TVP attribute this improvement to stronger links with Stakeholders, targeted policing and improved information sharing between included agencies.

The reduction in young person ASB indicates that Operation Just has been successful, and no further TVP funding is proposed at this time. Any incidents of ASB should continue to be reported to Thames Valley Police via 101, or 999 in an emergency. The situation will remain under review, with police resources targeted appropriately and Operation Just reactivated if required.

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 provision of free to access to services.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – the provision of youth services, particularly during the summer is aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour, along with the work provided by Thames Valley Police and others.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

Risk

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

The Council must ensure it is receiving value for money in the services it commissions or any group it enters into a partnership with to mitigate against both financial and reputational risk.

Social Value

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

The social value of services and support (via The Station's detached youth work and Young Person Mental Health drop-in sessions) should be considered. Support contributes to young people being able to live fulfilling lives.

Financial Implications

- Funding for The Station in 2027-28 is likely to be approximately £29,250 (est. 3% increase)
- The charge for APCAM mental health drop-in sessions for the current year was £2,250.
- The budget for the Youth Services Grant in 2026-27 was £20,000 (4169/408)
- The budget for Home Start Oxford in 2026-27 was £12,000 (4173/408)

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Note the updates concerning the Youth Services Grant awards and consider recommending a budget for it in 2027-28.
2. Note the report from Home Start Oxford and consider whether to retain this budget for 2027-28 budget-setting.
3. Note the update from The Station Detached Youth and recommend the increased inflationary amount for 2027-28 budget-setting.
4. Note the update from APCAM and consider whether to commission the mental health drop-in sessions for 2027-28 and recommend accordingly.
5. Note the updates from TVP in relation to Operation Just during the summer of 2026.



Thank you for changing lives

Report to Witney Town Council July 2026

Home-Start Oxford have been supporting struggling families with children under 5 across Central and West Oxfordshire for over 37 years. We are experienced in supporting families through challenges that include mental health issues, poverty, disability, refugeehood, isolation and domestic abuse. We support families through both one-to-one home-visiting, and a raft of inclusive, nurturing groups.

We have had another busy and successful year, thanks to the support of Witney Town Council, one of our most valued funders. We have seen some exciting developments in our group and outreach work, enabling us to meet the needs of the many families with children under 5 living in Witney.

We are pleased to report on the impact of our work over the past year, and look forward to continuing our partnership to support many more families in the year ahead.

With your help, we have helped children 0-5 in Witney to thrive through our group support and outreach work



“We know that the 1,001 days from pregnancy to age 2 set the foundations for an individual’s cognitive, emotional and physical development.”

(Department of Health and Social Care, April 2026)

This is why Home-Start Oxford’s work in Witney is so important: by providing inclusive, nurturing groups and early support for families facing isolation, low confidence and other challenges, we help strengthen parent-child relationships, improve wellbeing and give children the best possible start in life.



This year, we delivered:

Little Splashers Baby Group: weekly for under 1s at Witney Methodist Church

For babies, this group provides sensory and interactive play, sing and sign sessions with instruments and story time. It encourages interaction with parents and their babies, helping parents to understand the importance of attachment at an early age. There is a different activity within the session every week to encourage parents to try at home. Forming new friendships and support networks is a large part of the group's success.

Puddle Jumpers: weekly for 0-5s at Witney Methodist Church

Providing sensory play, messy play, craft, free play, home corner, role play, puzzles, baby sensory play, singing and story time. We encourage school readiness through learning and interacting. Once a month our group session is an outdoor buggy walk – as well as encouraging families out into the fresh air we promote free places to visit and give opportunities to families to visit local places such as Cogges farm and the Witney fire station.

Puddle Jumpers: weekly for 0-5s at Ceewood Hall, Smiths Estate

This group fills a gap in provision for families living in the most-deprived area of the town. Many families are isolated, and experience of peri-natal mental health problems, loneliness and depression are evident. A large number of single mums attend the group, and many have debt and other financial difficulties. We have supported families with a range of needs, for example, one Mum who recently moved to the UK has limited English and was worried about the impact on her child's progress. Mum practices her English at group and all the parents talk to her to help her practice. Our staff and volunteers have reassured and supported her each week.

At all these groups we provide healthy snacks for children and a welcome cup of tea for parents/carers. Our increased investment in staff has allowed us more planning and creative time, meaning that this year we have been able to offer more craft, messy-play, sensory and themed activities for children.

"You know when you did the tuff tray with rice the other week? I did a tray like that for N at home, and he loved it! He added cars to it, and played for a long time with it! Thanks for the idea!"

Mum from Puddle Jumpers Ceewood Hall



A range of activities helping children learn, explore and create



Beyond our regular group sessions, we help the most vulnerable families by providing a range of opportunities and tailored support. This includes outreach support, and our new specialist group 'Daisies' for families of children with special educational needs (SEN). We are particularly proud of how this work has developed this year, supporting those children and families who most need support.

- **Outreach support**

We are always listening to families; we grow and adapt our provision year-on-year in response to need. This year our Group Coordinator Jan has provided more one-to-one outreach support, and we have referred families in to our volunteer home-visiting support.

- **Supporting children and families with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Last year, in response to ever-increasing need and lack of provision for children with SEN, we established 'Daisies', a referral only group providing specialist support and play for families of children 0-5 with SEN (diagnosed and undiagnosed). This takes place on Wednesday afternoons at Witney Methodist Church. The response has been incredible, and we have seen really exciting developments for children who attend over the past year.

"He never plays like this with anyone else. Usually, he's quite shy because other children his age speak better than he does, so he tends to stay with me. But here, because they've been attending the group together for so long, he feels safe enough to talk and play."

Mum of two boys with SEN

"The room is perfect - welcoming and calm, and you are spot on with the resources you have provided. It's so lovely seeing the children's smiles, we wish you could do this everywhere! It will be so good to be able to signpost to this group and collaborate with training and other resources available."

Bethan Boddy, Lead for SEND in Oxford on her visit to Daisies

- **Year-round provision and exciting new experiences**

We continued to run our groups through half-terms and Easter holidays, and, over the Summer, we provided a series of fun days in outdoor spaces in Witney, each with a different theme. We also attended OPA play days to provide activities for the youngest children. We provided lunches and healthy snacks to ensure that young children and their families (including older siblings) have access to activities, healthy food and support over these crucial weeks.

This year, with additional funding secured through the Lottery and Cash for Kids, we were able to run a day trip for the first time. We took families to Beale Park completely free of charge, including coach travel, lunch, refreshments, and even sun cream! This opened up opportunities to young children who might otherwise not have such opportunities, and a wonderful day was had by all.

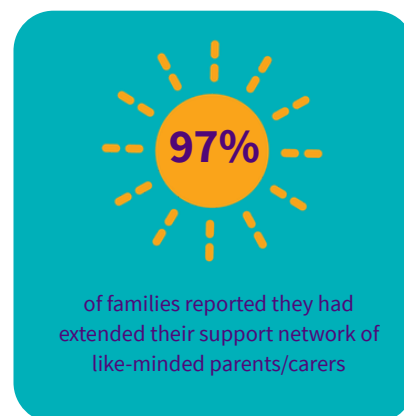
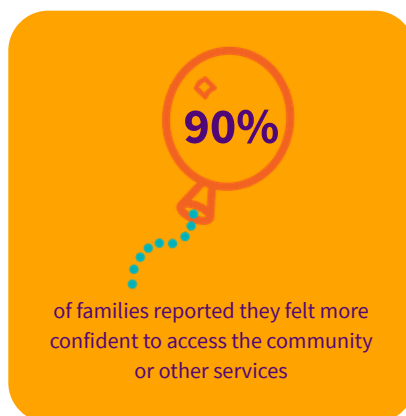
"This is the first time I've come here and I just wanted to say thank you so much for organising the trip. I've loved seeing the kids running around, they're just so happy, it's so nice."

Mum



Impact

Last year (1st April 2025-31st March 2026) we supported approximately **300 families in Witney** through our group work and summer activity programme. We carried out several termly 'snapshot' surveys at our Witney groups. Of those who responded:



Toddlers have increased school readiness and have improved communication skills

Children have opportunities to socialise, learn skills and experience play, reading and a range of exciting activities. As parents gain confidence to play with and respond to their children, we see children's confidence and enjoyment grow too. At group, children are visibly joyful, enjoying singing, story time and activities they may not be able to access elsewhere. For example, Chloe* aged 1 spends most of her day at home on the sofa with mum and dad; when a neighbour brings her to group, she laughs and smiles with other babies and adults, loves signing and shows clear enjoyment in the social environment.

We regularly work with young children with complex needs affected by issues including attachment difficulties, delayed speech and language, and, in some cases, significant risk of harm. We see children make important progress in communication, confidence and engagement. For example, one 18-month-old child first came to group with no words and no interest in joining activities; a few months later, they were speaking in sentences and participating happily.

"I found out about Home-Start from my social worker when I asked her about baby groups in my area that would help my son, who we suspect has autism. It's given him a chance to see people talk, to watch them interact and things like that. I've seen so many changes since we started to come here. My son now talks a lot more, and his words are clearer. He also now plays with other children which is great to see."

Mum



Families have reduced loneliness and isolation and have increased their support networks

Families attending groups meet new friends, connect with other parents and gain confidence to share their experiences. As a result, they build support networks that often continue beyond the group itself, improving community connection, reducing isolation and strengthening mental health. This is especially important for families without relatives nearby, and our outreach work helps more vulnerable families know about Home-Start Oxford and feel confident to attend.

"I've got so much out of coming to this group. Home-Start is my village. It's helped me enormously. It's made me a better person and a better parent and I'm so appreciative of that. I'm more confident and my kids have blossomed. It's just so nice to see. And because of this group I've also made friends. This is not just a little play group, it's made a big difference to me and my family."

Mum



Families access vital help and support

Home-Start Oxford provides a non-judgmental, confidential approach, with volunteers and staff trained in safeguarding, confidentiality and advice. Families are able to seek help with a wide variety of issues during sessions and between groups through contact with our Group Co-ordinator. Because of this trusted support, families are more aware of and more confident in accessing other services such as Early Help, the Food Bank, schools, family events, libraries and other toddler groups.

Improved outcomes for families with complex needs

Our groups create a vital point of connection for vulnerable families. As well as offering support within group, they help us identify when families need more intensive support and enable referral into our one-to-one home-visiting service. They also provide continued support for families coming to the end of one-to-one help, creating a more joined-up pathway of care with long-term benefits for parents and for children at a crucial stage of development.

"I look forward to going to group each week. It's the only place that feels so comfortable. Home-Start groups are much more than 'just' a group, they're like a home to me."

Mum

Reducing inequalities

Our expertise in early years is recognised and highly valued in Oxfordshire and beyond. We continue to inform policy developments as an expert leader in the early years forum, working with The Royal Foundation for Early Childhood Development, and as a leading partner for both the Oxfordshire Marmot Place initiative to reduce health inequalities (with one of the three priorities to 'give every child the best start in life'), and the Oxfordshire Early Years Network.



Celebrating success

This year, we were honoured to welcome **HRH The Princess of Wales** for a special visit to see first-hand how we are supporting families in Oxfordshire. Families who attend our Puddle Jumpers group in Witney joined our session in Rose Hill and loved meeting the Princess.



We are incredibly proud to share that Home-Start Oxford was recently named a finalist in the **Oxfordshire Business Awards (OXBA)** for the *Charity & Community Award* – a recognition that means so much to our whole team, our volunteers and the families we support.



Attending the awards evening was a truly memorable experience. The room was filled with inspiring charities, organisations and businesses from across the county, all working tirelessly to make Oxfordshire a better place. The atmosphere was full of energy and celebration, and it was a privilege to stand alongside so many remarkable groups who share our commitment to community support.



Although we didn't take home the award this time, being shortlisted and named a finalist is an achievement we are deeply proud of. It reflects the dedication, passion and hard work of our staff, volunteers and trustees, and it acknowledges the impact we strive to make every day. For a small charity, this recognition is a powerful reminder that our work matters, and that the support we provide to families is valued across the county.



Sam's story.....Home-Start groups are like a home to me



My health visitor recommended that I try out the Home-Start groups after I had my son EJ. At the time I'd only just moved into the area and I didn't know anyone there. My anxiety took over. I went three times and could see the group through the window but just couldn't pluck up the courage to go in, so I'd turn round and go home again. Then on the fourth time, Jan, Home-Start's Group Coordinator saw me outside and encouraged me to go in, which I did. Everyone was just so welcoming.

From then on I went every week until EJ started preschool. Then I had my youngest son Enzo. I remember I had him on the Friday and I attended group again on the Monday! I now go to two Home-Start groups a week and they're amazing.

I don't have a lot of people around me that are my own age or have children and it's the same for my kids. I think it's so crucial for their development to be around other children, which they get at groups. I've seen the difference between EJ and his siblings who didn't come to groups. My older daughter was a lockdown baby and she's very withdrawn. She finds it hard to get into school and is shy, whereas EJ is very outgoing. I remember within just a few weeks at groups, EJ had got to know who the staff were, who the children were, and he was really happy to go off and play and to be there. He's really confident and when he sees anyone he knows, like when he sees Jan in the street, he'll run over and give her a big cuddle and I 100% think that's because of groups.

I also love how the groups involve the children in everything regardless of age. So even Enzo, as a newborn, he could be awake but not totally alert but they'd still involve him in the singing and all that sort of stuff and I find that's a key point. Some people might say well the baby's not old enough so they're just left with the mum, when actually it's quite nice for somebody to involve your baby or give you a break and do singing time with them. They're still getting experiences from that. They're still seeing new things and hearing new things. I think it's great for them.

The groups have also been somewhere I can ask for help if we need it. When me and my partner were struggling financially – I was on maternity leave and we weren't entitled to social funds because of my partner's visa restrictions – Jan pointed me in the right direction and helped me sort it all out. There's been times when we've had to use the food bank and Jan's done the referral forms for us. And when two years ago I was having chemo after they found I had a brain tumour, Jan did things like get us shopping vouchers so we could get fresh food for the children, and yeah, just helped us a lot. That was obviously a tough time and if I hadn't have had the group, which was just brilliant, I think mentally I would have really suffered. The group was a place I could go where I was treated normally, not like I had something wrong. I didn't want to be asked every day if I was ok, if I was this or that, when I'm living with it. It was just really important to me that I could be treated normally to be honest, and I got that from the group.

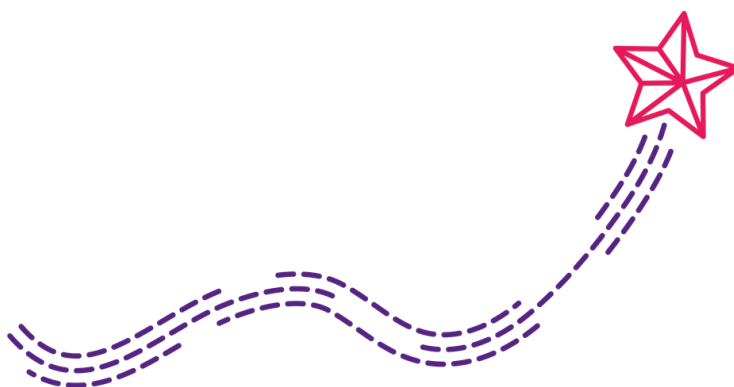


Home-Start groups are much more than 'just' a group, they're like a home to me to be honest. I feel comfortable there. Everyone is relaxed and friendly, everyone watches out for each other. You don't feel awkward going to the group or asking for advice. Sometimes when you think you're failing at something, actually you're not, you just need a bit of reassurance and the other mums and the Home-Start team are really good at doing that, giving you that reassurance that you are doing a good job.

Even though I'm back at work, I make sure I don't take a shift on a Monday or Wednesday morning which is when the groups run, because I feel that strongly that the groups are so important for the kids. And it's important for me too. They're something I look forward to going to each week. It's the place I go to socialise with other parents and it's the only place that feels so comfortable. The groups really do mean so much to me.



**THANK YOU
SO MUCH**



STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	In Bloom 2027
Meeting Date:	Monday, 21 st September 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications and Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on In Bloom initiatives for 2027.

Current Situation

Schools In Bloom Challenge

2027 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Wheelbarrows Schools Challenge competition. Members are encouraged to consider a suitable theme to mark this milestone year. The £40 vouchers, together with compost, have produced good results and officers therefore do not consider an increase in the voucher amount necessary at this time. It is recommended that the £40 voucher, together with compost, continues for the forthcoming year.

As part of the tenth anniversary, officers would like to offer a special prize to the three award winners, including the Mayor's Choice and People's Choice. The Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer has agreed to provide a session for the winning schools at the Lake and Country Park, using the child-safe area.

This would provide a special tenth anniversary prize while also supporting the promotion of the children's area at the Lake and Country Park, as requested as a Committee action.

All entries would receive a bag of wildflower seed to help promote green initiatives within the schools themselves; this will encourage re-wilding as part of the Council's Climate & Environment initiatives.

Community Gardening

The Council's community gardeners have had a mixed year, with difficult weather conditions affecting progress. The Horticultural Society has been unable to undertake much work on its bed following the discovery of what appears to be a cable close to the surface. The Council's Works Team have not been able to investigate while the bed has been in full flower, but this will be addressed over the winter months. The group has been issued with a £40 voucher to allow them to lift and preserve as many plants as possible before the bed is refreshed next year.

There was also some confusion regarding the requirement to retain receipts for purchases. One group made purchases before this had been fully understood and was subsequently reimbursed through a voucher.

Officers recommend that the community gardening groups return to meeting in person once or twice a year with officers. This would provide an opportunity to ensure everyone is clear about the arrangements, discuss plans and address any issues collectively.

One group has not yet received a voucher or made any purchases, as work is currently focused on removing the oak trees before they can progress their garden further.

Queen Emma's Garden was provided with a voucher, and a water butt this year.

Given the increase in the cost of plants and gardening equipment, officers suggest that the community gardening groups are offered £75 vouchers for the forthcoming year to help them maintain and develop their beds.

Voucher amounts for 2027-28

- Schools In Bloom £40 each
- Community Gardeners £75 each
- In Bloom wheelbarrows £40 each plus compost

Thames and Chiltern In Bloom Awards

Officers do not consider that any of the Council's sites are ready for entry in 2027. The Lake and Country Park previously achieved Gold status, while the other sites are not currently considered to be at a sufficiently high standard for entry. In addition, current Works Team staffing levels would limit the capacity to undertake the additional work required to prepare another site.

Officers and the Works Team will continue to focus on improvements to Unterhaching Park, with the aim of bringing the site to an appropriate standard for entry in 2028. A reasonable amount of dedicated budget to support these improvements would be useful in helping to progress the site towards the required standard.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

The Schools In Bloom Challenge and community gardening programme provide opportunities for residents, community groups and schools to participate in local environmental and horticultural activities, helping to build community involvement and pride in Witney's public spaces.

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 Schools In Bloom Challenge and community gardening programme provide opportunities for schools, community groups and residents to participate in activities that improve and enhance local spaces. The initiatives are open to participating schools and community groups and encourage involvement from different age groups and sections of the community.

b) Biodiversity – The initiatives have a positive potential impact on biodiversity through planting, wildflower areas and the creation and maintenance of green spaces. The provision of wildflower seed to participating schools supports opportunities to introduce additional planting and biodiversity within school grounds. Improvements to Unterhaching Park may also provide opportunities to enhance planting and biodiversity as the site is developed towards a potential 2028 In Bloom entry.

c) Crime & Disorder – There is no significant direct impact on crime and disorder arising from this report. The maintenance and improvement of public and community spaces can support positive use of these areas and contribute to community pride.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The activities support the Council's environmental objectives through community gardening, planting and improvements to green spaces. The Schools In Bloom Challenge also encourages schools to engage with green initiatives, while community gardening provides opportunities to promote sustainable gardening and local environmental awareness.

Risk

The principal risks relate to staffing capacity, weather conditions and the practical condition of individual gardening sites. Current Works Team staffing levels limit the capacity to undertake additional work required to prepare sites for In Bloom entry. Officers will continue to progress improvements to Unterhaching Park at a manageable pace, with a view to potential entry in 2028.

Community gardening activity may also be affected by weather, site conditions or unforeseen issues such as the cable identified at the Horticultural Society's bed. Officers will continue to work with the groups to address issues as they arise and improve communication through periodic in-person meetings.

Social Value

The Schools In Bloom Challenge and community gardening programme provide opportunities for schools, community groups and residents to take an active role in improving their local environment. These activities can encourage volunteering, community participation, pride in local spaces and opportunities for people to develop horticultural knowledge and skills.

The tenth anniversary Schools In Bloom prize would also provide an opportunity for participating schools to engage directly with the Council's Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer and learn more about the natural environment at the Lake and Country Park.

Financial implications

- The proposed voucher amounts for 2027–28 are £75 per community gardening group and £40 per school participating in the In Bloom Wheelbarrows Challenge, with compost continuing to be provided for the latter.

The proposed increase in community gardening vouchers reflects the increased cost of plants and gardening equipment. Officers do not consider an increase to the £40 Schools In Bloom voucher necessary at this time, as the existing voucher, together with compost, has produced good results.

- A dedicated budget allocation to support improvements at Unterhaching Park would assist with progressing the site towards the standard required for a potential 2028 In Bloom entry. The level of any such budget would need to be considered as part of the budget-setting process.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider and agree the proposed voucher amounts for 2027–28 of £75 per community gardening group and £40 per Schools In Bloom Wheelbarrow, together with compost.
2. Suggest a suitable theme for the tenth anniversary of the Schools In Bloom Wheelbarrows Challenge.
3. Consider the proposed special tenth anniversary prize for the three Schools In Bloom award winners comprising a session with the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer at the Lake and Country Park.
4. Note the current position regarding Thames and Chiltern In Bloom entries and the intention to continue improvements at Unterhaching Park towards a potential 2028 entry.
5. Consider whether a dedicated budget allocation should be made to support improvements at Unterhaching Park.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Community & Civic Events Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 21st September 2026

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to update members on the Third-Party Events that have taken place on WTC land over the summer of 2026.

Background

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

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

Current Situation

Past Events

Hatwell's Funfair – 13th – 17th May: A yearly fairground event, aimed at younger children and families. This event is on a smaller scale than the Witney Feast, but still a substantial event for the town.

Witney Pride – 23rd May: Witney pride hosted their fourth annual event at The Leys on 23rd May. As usual, the event began with a procession through the Town centre to the Leys, where the main event had been set up. The main event on the leys included live music and entertainment, community groups, and food and drink vendors.

Witney Music Festival – 11th – 13th June: Witney Music Festival took place on The Leys on the second weekend in June. This year saw the addition of a comedy night on Thursday 11th June, making use of the dance tent already in position for the weekend. Whilst the attendance could've been higher, the night still ran smoothly with a very positive reception from the crowd who attended. The addition of the comedy night positioned the festival as a broader arts festival and the organisers are keen to carry this on in 2027.

Officers met with the directors of Witney Music Festival to discuss the success of this year's event, how the event met the partnership obligations, and planning for future years of the festival. The organisers provided some key feedback on this year and recognise areas for improvement to sustain the festival for future years.

A comprehensive report from the organisers will be presented for 2027-28 budget-setting, for consideration of the annual grant amount as part of the partnership agreement.

Circus Cortex 25th – 28th June: An additional Circus to our usual calendar of events at The Leys, forming part of the Circus Cortex national tour.

Witney Carnival – Saturday 11th July: This carnival is organised by Witney Round Table, Witney Lions Club, Witney Rotary Club and the Witney Air Cadets. The Carnival is the largest annual event at The Leys in terms of site footprint, covering both sides of the recreation ground. Officers worked closely with the organisers to ensure we can facilitate the event and that their plans for the event were safe and compliant.

This year's event ran successfully, despite very hot conditions. The organisers adapted the event well to the conditions, ensuring enough shelter and water provisions were available.

OPA Play Day – Thursday 6th August. The OPA Play Day held at Burwell Recreation Ground was a successful event, well attended by families of Witney. The event was free of charge with free activities, providing children with the opportunity to get creative, play, and make memories over the summer without the worry of cost for the families. A report on the event is attached as **Appendix A**.

Circus Ginnett 2nd – 6th September. Due to the decision to re-introduce football on the events field this season, Circus Ginnett were unable to attend on their usual dates in October. They managed to move things around and attend at the start of September, though those dates caused some operational challenges. Officers are now looking ahead at next year to arrange suitable dates with Circus Ginnett, to fit in with the Council's calendar of events.

Witney Feast – 13th – 15th September: As per last year, Witney Feast operated an additional day on Sunday 13th September, on top of their historic Monday and Tuesday openings. The Golden Gallopers service occurred at 1pm, followed by a "family funday" opening of the fair. At the time of writing this report, Witney Feast are still operating onsite.

Upcoming Events

Remembrance Service Sunday 8th November

Officers are into the planning phase of this year's Remembrance Service. This event is run by Officers of WTC, with involvement from local organisations. Following the success of previous years events, there will be minimal changes to this year's event plan, with some minor adjustments to ensure things run smoothly on the day.

OCC have recently confirmed the high street works are planned to finish on Tuesday 3rd November. Given the proximity of the event, officers are drafting - contingency plans to the congregation on Market Square and walk up to the memorial, in case works are delayed and our usual plan is affected. This is a precautionary measure; WTC officers have no reason to suspect that delays will occur.

Advent Fayre Sunday 29th November

The Advent Fayre is one of the most popular family events in town during the Christmas period. This event is free for families to attend, with free activities for children. At a time when many households face increased financial pressure, this event serves as an accessible day out for all local families.

As per previous years, this event is only possible to run as a free event due to councillors volunteering their time. Officers will be in touch with all councillors to gauge availability for this year's date, to ensure the event can still run.

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 - Community events provide opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in inclusive activities and social engagement.
- b) Biodiversity - Event organisers are required to minimise environmental impacts and restore sites following events where necessary.
- c) Crime & Disorder - Event management plans include appropriate stewarding, security and safety arrangements to minimise risks to attendees and the wider community.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Officers encourage sustainable event practices where appropriate, including waste reduction, recycling and minimising vehicle movements.

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.

Community events such as music festivals, fairs, pride celebrations, and carnivals play a vital role in strengthening the social fabric of a town. These gatherings create inclusive spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can come together to celebrate, connect, and share experiences.

These events also encourage volunteerism and community involvement, empowering residents to actively shape their town's character.

Financial implications

- There are no direct financial implications arising from noting this report. Event-related income and expenditure are managed within approved budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

- 1) Consider whether to recommend continued subsidised use of the Leys for Witney Pride and Witney Carnival events in 2027 for the 2027-28 budget.
- 2) Consider recommending a grant of £1,000 towards a Play Day in the summer of 2027 for the 2027-28 budget.



REPORT ON WITNEY PLAY & ACTIVITY
DAY 2026
THURSDAY 6TH AUGUST 2026



BUILDING COMMUNITIES THROUGH PLAY'

Funding Secured and Event Organised and Delivered by;







Witney Play & Activity Day 2026

Thursday 6th August 2026

11am – 3pm

Burwell Meadow Recreation Ground,
Thorney Leys, Witney. OX28 5NP

FREE ENTRANCE AND FREE ACTIVITIES



**Ride on Time Toddler Vehicles * Junk Modelling - Art Avalanche *
Go Kart Party * Body Zorbing * Smoothie Bike * Community Albums *
DIY Face Painting * Giant Bubbles * Muddy Feet * Homestart *
Fabric Upcycling - Groovy Su * Active Communities Team and more!!**

This is an open access event / NO childcare is provided / This event will be photographed /

Food and drinks will need to be purchased or please feel free to bring a picnic /

**For further information please contact martin.gillett@oxonplay.org.uk / www.oxonplay.org.uk /
07436 270267**

THIS EVENT IS FUNDED AND SUPPORTED BY



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

WITNEY TOWN HALL CHARITY



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL





Playday is the national day for play, celebrated each year across the UK.

The theme for this year's Playday is.....Play - here, there, everywhere

This year's theme highlights the importance of creating opportunities for children to play wherever they are. Play happens here, there and everywhere, from living rooms to school gates, to streets, parks, and neighbourhoods. It's a part of children's everyday life, and has a monumental impact on their happiness, health, and wellbeing. When children are supported to play in these everyday spaces, we help nurture positive outcomes and create communities where children can thrive.

This Playday, we are calling for all children to have access to:

- playful moments. Small moments of play, at home and out and about, throughout the day can make a big difference to children's everyday lives.
- everyday adventures. Play doesn't need to involve expensive activities, costly toys, or trips to far-off destinations, the simplest and free ideas are often the most fun.
- play their way around their neighbourhood. Making everyday journeys, to school, nursery, shops or the park, more playful and child-friendly can be enjoyable for all.
- inclusive and welcoming environments. Spaces and places where children of all ages and abilities feel they belong, will make a real difference to their enjoyment of play.



OPA would like to thank the following for
their financial and practical support, without
whom this event would not have happened



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

WITNEY TOWN HALL CHARITY



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

Cottsway 



play 4 life

PLAY
Maker





OPA PLAY AND ACTIVITY DAYS 2026



KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

For Children & Young People

- 1) Promote Positive Behaviours & Activities (reduce anti-social behaviour)
- 2) Promote Increased Levels of Physical Activity
- 3) Promote a Healthy Lifestyle (healthy choices)
- 4) Promote Healthy Weight Management (obesity reduction)
- 5) Provide information on services and activities to promote a sense of Wellbeing and Inclusion

For Parents / Carers

- 1) Provide an Event offering both **FREE** Entrance & **FREE** Activities to Ensure an Inclusion for **ALL**
- 2) Demonstrate how Play & Quality Family Time can be achieved on a Zero / Minimal Budget using Natural & Recycled materials
- 3) Provide information on services and activities available in the local and wider area

For Communities

- 1) Encourage a greater sense of belonging to promote Active & Engaged Communities - 'Love Where You Live'
- 2) Promote local clubs, groups and societies
- 3) Involve local groups, communities and Children & Young People in the planning and delivery of each event





OXFORDSHIRE PLAY ASSOCIATION

OPA's Vision is to 'Improve Lives Through Play'

OPA's Mission is to 'Champion and to support the rights of all Children & Young People to have access to, high quality, inclusive Play opportunities to improve their Physical, Mental and Spiritual wellbeing'

T = 07436 270267

E = enquiries@oxonplay.org.uk

W = www.oxonplay.org.uk

Facebook = Oxfordshire Play Association - OPA

Instagram = oxfordshireplayassociation

X / Twitter = @oxonplay

Blue Sky = @oxon-play-assoc

Linkedin = Oxfordshire Play Association

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Winter Preparations
Meeting Date:	Monday 21 September 2026
Contact Officer:	Committee Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on winter preparations and to invite Members to identify locations where additional grit bins may be required.

Background

The Town Council works in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) regarding the provision of grit bins. Requests for new bins are submitted to OCC, who assess the suitability of proposed locations.

Where approved, the Town Council funds the purchase of the grit bin, whilst OCC arranges installation and subsequent refilling as required. OCC is also responsible for replacing damaged bins where appropriate.

Current Situation

Grit bins are already located at many key locations throughout Witney, including the majority of Town Council-owned sites. In addition, the Town Council maintains a supply of salt to enable its team to undertake limited gritting activities during periods of icy weather.

A map showing the current locations of grit bins in the town is attached as **Appendix A**. Members are encouraged to review the existing provision and as part of preparations for the forthcoming winter season, Members are invited to consider whether there are locations within their wards where the provision of an additional grit bin would improve safety for residents.

Members may wish to consider locations such as:

- Steep inclines, steps or footpaths prone to icy conditions.
- Routes frequently used vulnerable residents.
- Areas providing access to community facilities, schools, shops or public transport.
- Locations where concerns or requests have been raised by residents during previous winters.

Any suggested locations will be reviewed by officers, taking account of existing grit bin provision shown in Appendix A, before being referred to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for assessment and approval prior to their submission deadline of 31 October.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

Supporting measures that help residents to safely access services, facilities and public spaces during adverse winter weather.

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** - Additional grit bins can help improve accessibility and safety for all users, particularly older residents and those with mobility difficulties.
- b) **Biodiversity** - No significant impact identified.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** - No significant impact identified.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** - No significant impact identified.

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.

Failure to identify locations where additional grit bins may be beneficial could result in missed opportunities to improve public safety during periods of severe winter weather.

Any new installations will be subject to budget availability and approval by OCC

Social Value

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

The provision of grit bins supports community safety and resilience by helping residents manage icy conditions and maintain access to local amenities and public spaces

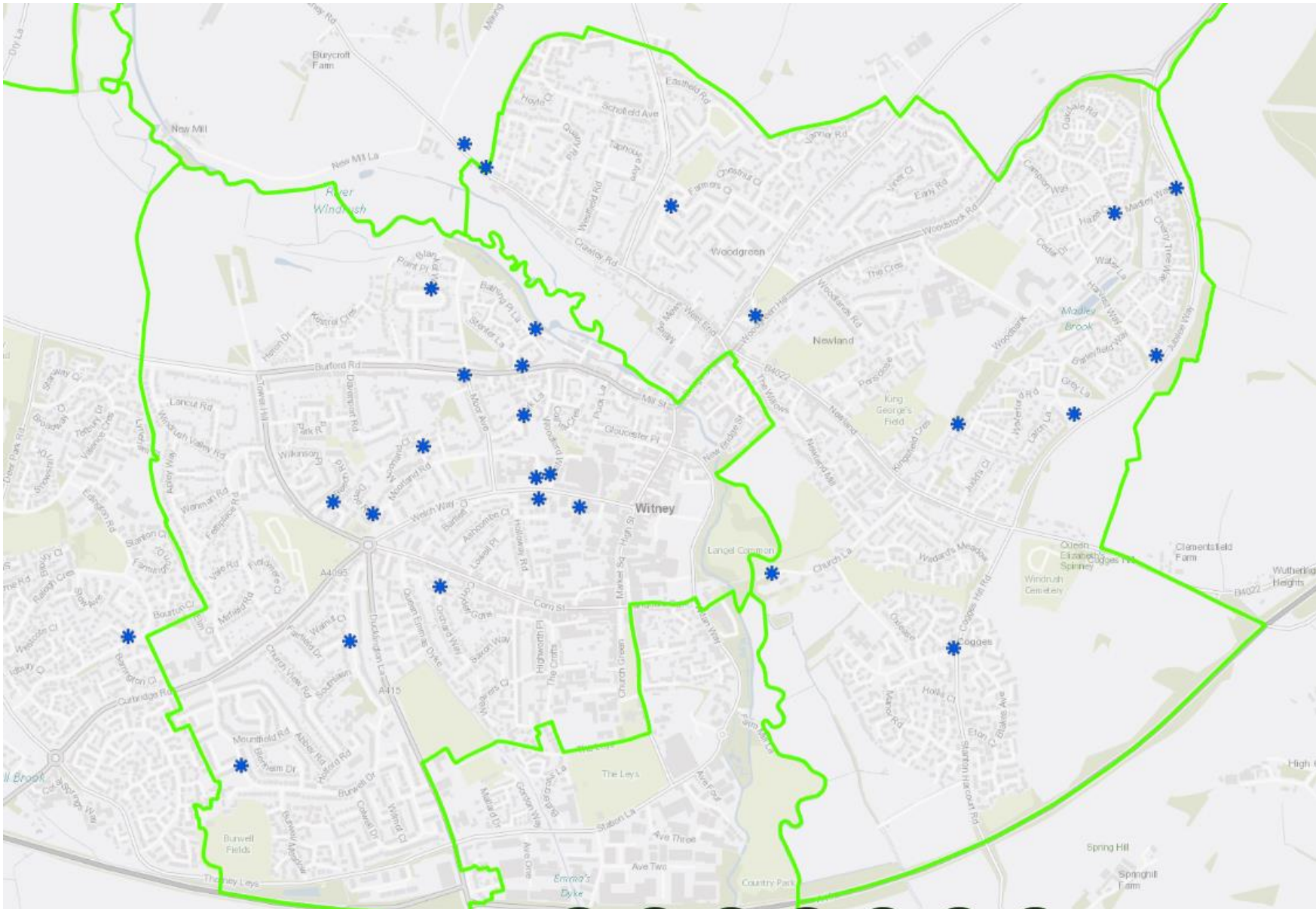
Financial implications

The current cost of a grit bin is approximately £300 excluding VAT, subject to confirmation by OCC.

Any approved installations would be funded from the appropriate budget provision. The street furniture budget (4200/402) current spend is £411, with a £5,000 budget. *It should be noted that the Council usually only considers a maximum of two bins per year.*

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and identify potential locations where additional grit bins may be beneficial.



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 August 2026 20:25
To: Adam Clapton <adam.clapton@witney-tc.gov.uk>
Subject: Stronger Communities meeting 21 Sept

Hi Adam,

I note the agenda has been published for this committee meeting at 6pm.

I wondered if I can speak for 5 mins about upgrading the two bus shelters that sit now within the new Burford Road RVNR.

Curbridge and Lew PC have backed the replacement of an existing shelter to one with a 'living roof' and proposed a new installation of a 3-bay shelter at an existing stop opposite the Windrush Business Park with the same type, so that any proposed developments on the land behind them can cater for increased numbers taking public transport.

As the boundary runs along that verge and OCC I believe would be tasked with such replacements, it would be good to have Witney TC's view on the matter.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

WITNEY

TOWN COUNCIL



Policy Document

Litter & Dog Waste Bins

Adopted: Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. Minute no: xxx

Review Date: September 2028

Introduction

Witney Town Council is responsible for the provision, maintenance and emptying of litter and dog waste bins located on land owned or managed by the Council. These bins provide a valuable public amenity, helping to keep the Council's parks, recreation grounds, cemeteries and open spaces clean, safe and welcoming. Appropriate bin provision also supports responsible waste disposal, protects the local environment and contributes to the Council's commitments to sustainability, biodiversity, and the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

Council responsibilities

West Oxfordshire District Council is the principal authority responsible for street cleansing and public waste collection in Witney.

Witney Town Council is only responsible for the emptying and maintenance of litter and dog waste bins located on land owned or managed by the Town Council.

The Town Council will:

- Consider requests for new, additional, replacement or relocated bins only on land owned or managed by Witney Town Council.
- Assess each request individually, with no fixed distance or numerical threshold applied.
- Consider the likely use of the bin, evidence of littering or dog fouling, existing bins nearby, accessibility, operational requirements and ongoing costs.
- Decide whether a litter bin, dog waste bin or combined litter and dog waste bin is most appropriate for the location.
- Review existing provision and relocate, replace or remove bins where this would improve the service or make better use of Council resources.
- Ensure that any new provision can be safely and practically emptied and maintained.

The absence or removal of a bin by another authority will not automatically result in the Town Council providing a replacement.

Requests outside Town Council land

Requests concerning bins on land not owned or managed by Witney Town Council fall outside the Council's responsibility and should be directed to the appropriate authority, organisation or landowner (where known)

Decision-making

Requests for bins on Town Council land will be assessed by officers in accordance with this policy and the Council's approved delegation and financial arrangements.

Requests for bins on land not owned or managed by the Town Council will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Such requests will be assessed individually as part of an annual review, taking account of community need, landowner consent, available resources and the ongoing costs of provision, emptying and maintenance.

Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

<u>Road Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>What 3 Word Location</u>	<u>Date Requested</u>	<u>Format</u> <u>(email/visit/post)</u>	<u>Details of Requestor</u>
Cogges Hill Road	Bus Stop (Stop ID: oxfatjaj)	///else.civic.topic	19/06/22	Email	[REDACTED]
46 Burford Road	Along main road	///searcher.hobbyists.irritated	04/11/22	In person	
Burwell Shops	Burwell Drive used to be 3 now only 1	///oils.trendy.places	14/11/22	Telephone	
Springfield Oval	On the green area	///removals.display.civic	22/11/22	In person	
Cogges Hill Road	Bus Stop (Stop ID: oxfatjaj)	///else.civic.topic	08/12/22	Email	
Sainsbury's Witan Way	Bus shelter	///farmer.sunk.blend	09/01/23	Telephone	
Oxlease Recreation Field	Bin under Oak Tree on Concrete Slab	///neon.amber.remove	15/02/23	Telephone	
Smarts Market Square	Additional in Market Square	///flips.parade.patch	01/03/23	In person	
Oxford Hill/Cogges Hill Road	Bus Stop (Stop ID: oxfatjaj)	///duty.test.regard	06/05/23	Email	
Farmers Close	To service walkers (From Hailey road etc) using Woodgreen and Farmers Close	///evaporate.nobody.showcase	28/06/23	Telephone	
Welch Way	Please can bins be provided to the top and bottom pathway running past the hospital and opposite the petrol station on the other side.	///also.glaze.margin	07/02/24	Email	[REDACTED]
Valence Crescent	Outside OX28 5FT	///scales.dupe.kicks	03/04/24	Email	
Tower Hill	Area of - not a specific location	///tell.poet.scare	30/05/25	Email	
Funishing Centre	104 High Street	///shapes.fields.stay	19/12/25	Email	
Deer Park Road	Traffic light Junction with shared use path eastern side	///gift.wishing.reforming	10/08/26	Email	
Oxlease Recreation Field	Bin under Oak Tree on Concrete Slab	///neon.amber.remove	14/08/26	Admin Office	[REDACTED]

Emma.Phillips@westoxon.gov.uk

From: Emma Phillips

Sent: 04 September 2026 13:51

Subject: Re: WTC Response regarding your wayfinding request

Hello Derek,

Thank you for taking this to the Stronger Communities Committee and for providing such a clear response.

I am pleased to hear that the Committee has no objection in principle to the proposed locations, subject to the points outlined below.

I can confirm:

- The examples provided were intended to be illustrative only and do not form part of any approval process at this stage. Once detailed designs have been developed, these will be shared with the Town Council for review and consideration before any installations proceed on Town Council land.
- The wider wayfinding project includes signage in a number of locations across the town, including sites on land owned by WODC, Oxfordshire County Council and other private landlords, subject to the necessary permissions being secured.
- That responsibility for ownership, maintenance, repair, replacement and removal of the wayfinding signs will remain with WODC.

...

Thank you again to the Committee for its consideration and support. I will continue to keep Town Council officers updated as the project progresses and look forward to working with you as the designs develop.

Kindest regards,

Emma Phillips

Market Towns Officer

West Oxfordshire District Council

From: Derek Mackenzie

Sent: 02 September 2026 09:57

To: Emma Phillips

Subject: WTC Response regarding your wayfinding request

Hi Emma.

Apologies for the delay in responding. With a number of Councillors away over the summer period, I needed to allow additional time to seek a consensus view from members of the Stronger Communities Committee.

The Committee has no objection, in principle, to the three proposed locations, provided that:

- this does not constitute approval of any sign or design.
- the examples in the attached appendix are treated as illustrative only.
- final landowner consent is withheld until detailed proposals are approved by the Town Council.
- the Town Council may request amendments or refuse an unsuitable detailed proposal; and
- ownership, maintenance, repair, replacement, and removal responsibilities remain with WODC.

In reaching this position, members noted that the proposed locations form part of a wider wayfinding scheme and would welcome confirmation that similar wayfinding signage will also be provided on other land within the overall project area, including WODC and OCC owned land where appropriate.

Members were generally supportive of the concept of wayfinding signage and considered that, subject to the above points, the installations could provide a positive addition to these locations.

Kind Regards

Derek Mackenzie CiLCA

Committee Clerk & Senior Admin Officer

My working hours are Mon- Fri 8:30 am - 5pm (Fri to 4:30pm)

From: Emma Phillips

Sent: 11 September 2026 14:18

Subject: Re: Proposed Archway at Langdale Court Entrance

Hi Sharon,

Following your helpful comments below, we've been considering how best to progress the feasibility work whilst ensuring the Town Council remains fully engaged throughout the process.

Given the Archway would ultimately be located on Town Council land and any future proposal would require the Town Council's support, we wondered whether the Council would be open to entering into a short, non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with West Oxfordshire District Council.

Our thinking is that the MOU would simply set out a collaborative approach to the feasibility and design stages, including:

- Early and ongoing engagement with the Town Council throughout the design process.
- The opportunity for a Town Council representative to be involved in reviewing emerging design options.
- Consideration of the operational, access, maintenance and heritage matters you've highlighted in your email.
- An understanding that any preferred design option would be shared with the Town Council before any further progression is considered.

The intention would be to provide a clear framework for joint working during the feasibility stage only, rather than committing either council to the project or any future implementation.

Before we draft anything, it would be helpful to understand whether this is something the Town Council would be willing to consider in principle.

I'd be grateful for your thoughts.

Kindest regards

Emma Phillips

From: Sam Stronach

Sent: 02 September 2026 12:13

To: Sharon Groth

Subject: Re: Proposed Archway at Langdale Court Entrance

Hi Sharon,

It's encouraging to hear that there are no fundamental concerns with the location in principle. We fully recognise the practical considerations you've highlighted, particularly around emergency vehicle access, operational access for the Town Council's maintenance activities and seasonal lighting, and the need for any proposal to respect the heritage setting of the Corn Exchange and the wider conservation area.

At this stage, we are simply exploring the feasibility of the concept, so your comments provide valuable guidance for any future design work. We have also noted the points regarding the structure needing to be freestanding, as well as the need for clarity around ownership, maintenance and future responsibilities.

As the project develops and further information becomes available, including any initial designs or visualisations, we will continue to keep you and the Town Council updated on progress. We are keen to maintain an open dialogue throughout the process and ensure that any emerging proposals take account of the considerations you've outlined.

Many thanks again for your helpful response and guidance.

Kind regards,

Sam

Sam Stronach

Economic Development Manager