

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

**Held on Monday, 6 July 2020**

**At 6.00 pm in the VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM - Virtual Meeting**

**Present:**

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne J Aitman T Ashby D Butterfield	H Eaglestone V Gwatkin L Duncan (sub D Enright)
Officers:	Sharon Groth John Hickman Adam Clapton Polly Inness	Town Clerk Operations & Estates Advisor Deputy Town Clerk Communications & Community Engagement Officer
Others:	None.	

**SC171 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Enright. Cllr Duncan was attending as a substitute. Cllr Smith was also in attendance to offer advice on the item on bus shelters.

**SC172 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

**SC173 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr Ashbourne be elected as Vice Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

**SC174 MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

SC175 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present for this item.

SC176 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received and considered the draft terms of reference for the Committee as circulated with the agenda.

**RESOLVED:** that the terms of reference as circulated be agreed with the addition of “Recognising the value and benefit of voluntary groups and endeavours within our community, supporting and helping to facilitate where possible” as the first Term of Reference.

SC177 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. He advised that the hanging basket extenders had gone missing in delivery transit. He had visited St. Mary’s Churchyard earlier that day with the Tree Surgeon looking at tree T583. The Tree Surgeon would requote for this tree as it looked to be quite difficult to get down due to its size.

Witney Feast was still due to go ahead in September.

He advised that Tower Hill Football Club were looking to get the defibrillator back to A1 condition before they formally asked the Town Council to take it on.

A member asked if the Council would be guided by Government as to whether the fair could take place. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that they were allowed to take place now. The member asked if this changed would it be due to Government guidance and not the Town Council. It was confirmed that this was correct. Officers would check nearer to the time that the fair would comply with Government Guidance.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

SC178 **MEMORIAL BENCH REQUEST - TOWER HILL F.C**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the negotiation for the bench and its siting be delegated to the Operations and Estates Officer.

SC179 **COVID-19 COMMEMORATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer and correspondence from the Rotary Club. The Chair said that members had informally discussed an idea of a memorial for Covid-19 Victims and the volunteers.

Members proceeded to debate a suitable location. The Officers pointed out that the Council would inherit the ongoing maintenance cost of such a memorial. A member commented that she felt that the Committee was talking about two different things – a memorial to those who had lost their lives and a thank you to volunteers. She felt that the two didn't need to be together and that a memorial bench could happen quite quickly.

There was also some discussion about convening a working party. The Town Clerk advised that as it had been agreed not to have working parties, perhaps a group of councillors could work together and then bring back a proposal to a future meeting.

**RECOMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the siting for a bench, tree and planting in conjunction with Rotary be delegated to the Operations and Estates Officer to progress;
3. that the Town Council Offers £1,000 match funding to Rotary (bearing in mind the ongoing maintenance costs);
4. that a group of councillors discuss ideas for a tribute to volunteers and bring them back to a future meeting.

**SC180 CYCLE RACKS - WINDRUSH & TOWER HILL CEMETERIES**

Members received a verbal update from Cllr Smith regarding the installation of cycle racks at Tower Hill and Windrush cemeteries along with correspondence concerning potential funding by Oxfordshire County Council for further ones in the town.

The Committee was in agreement that cycle racks should be installed at the two cemeteries and were advised that County Cllr Suzanne Bartington had indicated the cost of these could be covered from her Councillor Priority Fund.

The County Council funding for additional cycle racks was in response to the wider Covid-19 pandemic transport scheme and the Town Council had been asked to identify potential sites for these as soon as possible. It was suggested that the racks at the cemeteries could be funded through this project, along with cycle racks for the proposed Tower Hill Bus Shelter and a list of sites should be submitted.

**RESOLVED:** that the verbal update be noted and:

1. that cycle racks should be installed at Tower Hill and Windrush cemeteries; and that this be funded from the Covid-19 cycle rack fund if possible. If not, this should be funded from Cllr Bartington's Councillor Priority Fund;
2. that a list of potential cycle rack locations across the town be delegated to Cllr Smith and the Office Manager for submission to Oxfordshire County Council, and this should include the Tower Hill Bus Shelter site.

**SC181 BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager concerning £10,000 of S106 funding for bus stop infrastructure on Tower Hill. There had already been a site meeting with ward Councillors. A proposal had been put together by OCC which was significantly over the funds allocated to this project. The Town Council had previously purchased some bus shelters which were under £3,000. OCC had agreed that the Town Council could choose the supplier. County Councillor Price was very interested to know costings and to see if she could help source additional finance.

Members debated how to proceed. It was felt better to choose a stop on the side of Tower Hill on which buses went into town.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and the final decision on design and add-ons for a bus shelter on the town centre bound side of Tower Hill be delegated to the Chair and the Office Manager.

**SC182 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer which included details on the annual resident's satisfaction survey. Members were concerned that young people weren't responding but the Communications and Events Officer explained that many ways including direct engagement had been tried but they were not interested. She would continue to explore options for this.

A member suggested asking the Youth Council and the Communications and Events Officer agreed to ask them to get involved.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Communications and Events Officer produces in depth analysis from the annual resident's satisfaction survey results to help inform the Council's plans for the next year.

**SC183 WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL IMAGE & REBRANDING**

The Chair had circulated some designs for the rebranding of the Town Council prior to the meeting. Cllr Gwatkin spoke to the Committee about her design. Another member commented that he liked the banner but didn't actually feel that the current branding was outdated, especially compared to other parish councils. He was also unsure how it would work at the bottom of a letter. Another member liked the fact that it illustrated what the Council did. Other members thought that it would work at the bottom of a letter. Members continued to debate this.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the design as circulated is put forward as a proposal to Full Council.

SC184 **INCLUSION PANEL**

The Committee received and considered a verbal report from the Chair on forming an 'Inclusion Panel' made up of members of the community's various minorities, who could advise the Council on various matters to take greater account of the impact on all sections of the community. The Leader also added some detail. She proposed that the Council should reach out to people who were under-represented by the Council, and get expressions of interest. Her idea was that Committee Chairs could meet with the people and get their views on upcoming agendas so that they could be represented, therefore requiring no Officer input.

Members agreed that this would be a step forward.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the verbal report be noted and that an Inclusion Panel is created, to be made up of Chairs of the Committees and minority members of the community. This would be supported by appropriate communications from the Communications and Events Officer.

SC185 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS DISPLAY & COMPETITIONS 2020**

The Committee received and considered the verbal report of the Operations and Estates Officer updating Members on this year's Christmas lights display along with the report of the Cemeteries Officer regarding the children's Christmas competitions.

Members discussed other ideas such as putting lights in window, and the impact on the night time economy. The Town Clerk commented that previously it had been difficult to get the retailers to support the event, and to her knowledge Rotary had nothing planned due to the difficulties brought about from COVID-19.

The Operations and Estates Officer explained that he was not happy with the idea of rushing out a tender because if it was not right the Council would be stuck with it for 3 and 4 years. He would be happier arranging a very small display just for this year.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a small lights display should be arranged for this year only;
3. the Mayor's Christmas Card competition should be run, via social media rather than through schools;
4. that consideration be given to a Christmas poem initiative at the next meeting.

SC186 **CIVIC EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;

2. that commemorations for VJ Day be delegated to the Mayor and the Office Manager to progress;
3. that for Remembrance Day, the Communications & Events Officer progresses an event along the lines as detailed in her report but ensuring it is COVID-19 safe;
4. that a press release is prepared to explain the change in the event;
5. that plans may be subject to change depending on the situation nearer to the time.

**SC187 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

*As the meeting had now reached over 2 hours in length, the Committee agreed to suspend standing order 48 in order to allow the meeting to continue for a further 10 minutes.*

**SC188 YOUTH SERVICES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager, which recapped previous decisions. Members discussed grant criteria and an accompanying application form.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted.
2. that the proposed grant criteria and application form be accepted;
3. that Youth Services Signposting takes the form of a dedicated webpage, with an interactive map on the Council's website as a starting point which would list the services commissioned by the Town Council and then evolve, embedding links to the other resources;
4. that the applicants are affiliated with Oxfordshire Youth or a similar organisation.

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The meeting closed at: 8.05 pm

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Chair