

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

**Held on Monday, 21 September 2020**

**At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom**

**Present:**

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne J Aitman T Ashby D Enright	D Butterfield H Eaglestone V Gwatkin
Officers:	Nicky Cayley Adam Clapton Sharon Groth John Hickman	Democratic Services Officer Office Manager Town Clerk Operations & Estates Officer
Others:	1 member of the public.	

**SC282 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**SC283 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Aitman declared an interest in the agenda item on Youth Funding as 2 of her charities as Mayor were Got2Be and Homestart.

Cllr Ashbourne and Gwatkin declared an interest in the same item as they knew Punam Owens in a personal capacity and she ran Parkrun.

**SC284 MINUTES**

a) Minutes

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020.

b) Matters Arising

A member asked when the Council would have an Instagram page to engage with young people. The Communications Officer explained that currently the Council's Facebook page was broken and she was trying to fix this before adding Instagram.

The Office Manager gave an update on additional cycle rack installations in the town.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SC285 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The member of the public present did not wish to address the Council.

SC286 **YOUTH SERVICES - EVALUATION OF GRANT APPLICATIONS**

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission of the Chair in light of having received presentations from the three applicants prior to the meeting.

Members received and considered the report of the Office Manager which included a confidential evaluation of the applications received for the Witney Town Council Youth Fund.

The Chair suggested that a fair way of granting funding would be to give all the applicants 78% of the amount they had applied for, although this would be slightly over the budget for the fund. Members discussed this and ultimately agreed to proceed to recommend this option to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for approval.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted and that all three applicants be granted 78% of the amount applied for as follows: -

Got2B	- granted £15,210
Home Start Oxford	- granted £ 11,700
Junior Parkrun	- granted £3,120.

SC287 **OPERATIONAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. A member commented that the additional benches at Oxlease Park were well used. Members discussed the option of taking over the defibrillator at West Witney Sports Ground from Tower Hill Football Club. It was possible that it may require new parts or even a complete replacement. It was felt that this would be a sensible idea.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted and that the Town Council takes over responsibility for the Tower Hill FC Defibrillator at West Witney Sports Ground, and Officers may purchase a new defibrillator or relevant equipment if required. This would come from the existing budget.

SC288 **SALT BINS**

Members received and considered correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council concerning ordering additional salt bins for the winter 2020/21. There were also requests from members of the public for salt bins at Burwell Drive and Dene Rise. A Councillor also asked if there was a salt bin on the Wood Green Hill as she felt it was very dangerous in icy weather. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that he thought there was one on Little Green but would check as it was not on the map sent by OCC. Members were cautioned that there was no budget for this so they may wish to make provision for this in the budget for the forthcoming year.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted and:

1. that salt bins are ordered for Burwell Drive and Dene Rise;
2. that salt bins are included in the budget for next year;
3. that Officers investigate whether there is a salt bin on Little Green.

SC289 **TREES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer concerning the maintenance of the Council's existing tree stock. A member asked if the budget was overspent. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that currently it was not but there had not yet been any storm damage or suchlike.

A member asked if some trees at King George V Field could be cut back as they were close to her friend's house, and blocking the light. The Operations and Estates Officer said that he would look into obtaining a quote.

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

SC290 **FLORAL DISPLAYS FOR 2021**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer concerning next year's floral planting.

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

1. that hot, bright flowers be used again next year for the summer bedding;
2. that Witney's summer bedding be dedicated to honouring the local volunteer groups and NHS for their work during the coronavirus pandemic;
3. that a banner be purchased for the raised bed and smaller notices be purchased for the planters in town;
4. that the Leys and Tower Hill Cemetery be entered into the In-Bloom competition 2021;
5. that the areas with impact planting on roundabouts be improved;
6. that the overgrown bed on Tower Hill be cleared and replanted.

SC291 **MEMORIAL BENCHES AND TREES**

Members received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, which updated them on the request from the Rotary Club of Witney and a new request for a memorial bench. The latter had originally been requested for Witney Lake but the lady had now changed her mind and was asking for it to be located on Church Green. This would be possible, but it would not be able to be the artistic bench she had chosen – instead it would need to be the standard Witney Town Council bench.

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

1. that the Cedar of Lebanon be used to create a memorial bench;

2. that the Operations and Estates Officer be tasked with finding a suitable location near to Bishops Mill farm;
3. that the Rotary Club be asked if it wishes to be involved in this project as part of its memorial project;
4. that the resident who had changed the location of a bench she wanted to buy as memorial be advised that if she did want the bench on Church Green, it would have to be a standard Town Council bench, but that if she wished she could have the bench of her choice at the Lake and Country Park.

SC292 **COMMUNITY PIANO**

The Committee received and considered a verbal update from the Leader on the community piano which had become damaged in transit and therefore not playable. The Office Manager had suggested that it could be turned into a planter instead and the original owner of the piano was very happy with this idea. The Operations and Estates Officer explained that the insides of the piano would need to be removed in order to do this. Members also acknowledged that a student from the college had won a competition to decorate the piano with his/her design and they should be asked if they would still like to do this.

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

1. that the piano is turned into a planter;
2. that the student who had been selected to decorate the piano incorporating the new Corn Exchange logo be contacted to ask if (s)he still wanted to do this;
3. that the Operations and Estates Officer be tasked with coming up with an estimated costs for this.

SC293 **CHRISTMAS EVENTS 2020**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer in respect of the Advent Fayre and the Christmas Lights Switch On. Although the latter was organised by the Rotary Club of Witney and grant funded by the Council –the Town Clerk had been advised that Rotary wouldn't be in a position to put on this years event. Consequently, Officers considered that the Advent Fayre was too high risk given the nature of the event.

Members understood the recommendations and supported this.

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

1. that this year's Christmas Lights Switch On and Advent Fayre be cancelled due to the pandemic.

SC294 **CIVIC EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer, concerning Remembrance Day, Citizen of the Year Awards and car free day.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and:-

1. that in light of the Covid-19 Hero Awards, the Citizen of the Year awards be paused;
2. that the Communications Officer and Events Officer investigates whether there are any media students who could produce a video to commemorate this year's Service of Remembrance;
3. that the Road Closure Order for Remembrance Sunday be withdrawn.

**SC295 COVID-19 COMMUNITY COMMEMORATION UPDATE**

The Chair provided an update on the progress of the Task and Finish Group's plans to celebrate individual volunteers and businesses for the work they had done in the community during the pandemic. They were proposing certificate and badges and had designed a form (which would need to be available on line) enabling people to nominate people. The Group also envisaged that the badges could be freely available in the Corn exchange so that if people did not feel comfortable about nominating someone, they could just pick up a badge and give the relevant person.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted and:-

1. that a budget of £500 be agreed to fund the paper for certificates and the badges;
2. that the final design of the badges be delegated to the Task and Finish Group.

**SC296 WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL IMAGE & REBRANDING**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning rebranding. Officers had recently tried to implement the new branding but there were issues with this and more work and time would be needed.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and any further rebranding work be put on hold until the conclusion of the staffing review.

**SC297 INCLUSION PANEL - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered a verbal update from the Chair on the progress made on setting up the inclusion panel. Members had met with Punam Owens who was an expert in this field which had proved to be invaluable. It was planned to set up a Diversity and Inclusion Panel and it was suggested that Councillors and Senior Officers undertake Unconscious Bias Training.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the verbal update from the Chair be noted and that the Town Clerk investigates training options and brings them back to a future Personnel Sub-Committee.

**SC298 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

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

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and: -

1. that the data from the residents' satisfaction survey is published on the Council's social media channels;
2. that the draft press release on the Equality, Inclusivity and Diversity Panel as circulated be amended to the form of an invitation.

**SC299 FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. She advised that the Committee had made decisions during the meeting that would have budget implications. There was already a budget line for defibrillators which would cover the take-over of the Tower Hill FC one; the salt bins could be covered by the Equipment budget and the Covid-19 Heroes Awards could be covered by the Events budget.

A draft budget would be brought to the next cycle of meetings, which would now include an increase for defibrillators and salt bins. The Committee also agreed to add £30,000 for a Youth Services Grant.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and that the budgetary decisions made at tonight's meeting be agreed, including budgeting for the Youth Services Grant funding in 2021/22.

**SC300 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

**SC301 CHRISTMAS TREE & LIGHTS DISPLAY 2020**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Operations and Estates Officer together with two quotes from Christmas Lighting Companies for a limited display for 2020. A third quote had arrived earlier in the day but it was significantly over budget.

Members agreed that Lite Ltd was the most aesthetically pleasing and also the most environmental. It was also the least expensive of the two, and within the budget. It was agreed to proceed with this proposal.

Members also agreed to proceed with two Christmas trees – for the Buttercross and the front of the Corn Exchange.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted and: -

1. that Lite Ltd be chosen to provide this year's limited Christmas Lights display;
2. that two Christmas trees be purchased – one each for the Buttercross and the front of the Corn Exchange.

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The meeting closed at: 7.41 pm

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Chair