

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

Held on Monday, 16 November 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 L Duncan
Officers:	Nicky Cayley Adam Clapton John Hickman Polly Inness	Democratic Services Officer Office Manager Operations & Estates Officer Communications & Events Officer
Others:	2 members of the public.	

SC383 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Gwatkin.

SC384 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Collins declared an interest in the final item as he worked for West Oxfordshire Community Transport.

SC385 MINUTES

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

b) Matters Arising

Minute SC289 - The Chair asked for an update relating to the trees at King George V field. The Operations and Estates Officer confirmed that he had asked for quotes.

SC386 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned in line with Standing Order 42, in order to receive public participation.

Mr Adrian Phillips addressed the Council about an on-line pantomime.

Ms Katy Jennison addressed the Council about WW2 Pill Boxes.

Following these addresses the Committee reconvened.

SC387 **COMMUNITY SUPPORT INITIATIVE - ONLINE PANTO GIFT**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from Mr Phillips who had spoken under public participation.

There followed a discussion about how this might work and a member estimated that in order to give free access to the pantomime to all children in receipt of free school meals, the Council would be looking at funding for around 150/160 families. The cost to the Council would be wholesale prices.

Members felt it was a good idea whilst acknowledging that there were some financial issues that needed to be tidied up with the Town Clerk/RFO.

RECOMMENDED:

1. to accept the proposal from Mr Phillips;
2. that the Town Clerk/RFO discusses the financial issues in terms of not making a profit with Mr Phillips;
3. that Cllr Duncan contacts all of the primary schools in the town to discuss the proposal with them.

SC388 **WITNEY'S WW2 PILLBOXES**

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission of the Chair so that the member of the public had spoken about it under public participation could hear the debate.

Members discussed the issues that needed to be tackled if the pill box on Langel Common was to be planted up, the largest of these being that it was not on Town Council land but belonged to the Church. The Operations and Estates Officer advised that the Church would need to be contacted.

The Council might also need planning permission and listed building consent. Cllr Smith was happy to continue to pursue these issues. The Town Clerk asked that she copied in herself and the Operations and Estates Officer to these communications to ensure that the process went through the correct channels.

A member suggested that this should be put onto the strategic plan.

As it was the 80th anniversary of a bomb being dropped on Church Green on Sunday, the Committee agreed that a social media post should be put out with possibly a video message from the Mayor.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Officers are tasked with looking into planning issues and listed building consent;
2. that Cllr Smith continues to liaise with Historic England, and copies Officers into these communications;
3. that Officers look into planting schemes;
4. that this item is put onto the Strategic Plan;
5. that a social media post commemorating the bombing of Witney in WW2 is delegated to the Communications and Events Officer, the Chair and the Mayor.

SC389 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, which included a request for a memorial bench in the town.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and that the resident's request for a memorial bench be granted and this is sited at King George V Field.

SC390 **FLORAL DISPLAYS AND TREES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, which included a recommendation on the cracked willows at Queen Emma's Dyke which the Tree Surgeon had advised were at the end of their lifespan, in terms of management.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and that Tree no's T277, T280 and T281 be felled and replaced with something more suitable.

SC391 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer which advised that the switch on would be a little different to previously advised. Due to the lockdown in force the actual switch on would now take place a day before the residents had been invited to switch on lights at home in order to avoid any possibility of people forming a crowd to watch the lights being turned on in the town centre.

The Communications and Events Officer confirmed that people would be encouraged to post photos of their houses and tag them with #witneymagic.

A member asked when the Council would go out to tender for the next Christmas Lights contract. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that it would be January.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and:-

1. that the Christmas Lights be switched on on the evening of 26 November to avoid the possibility of crowds gathering unofficially;
2. that the Mayor be filmed "switching on" the lights on 26 November;

3. that the social media campaign to get residents to switch their own lights on at 6pm on 27 November goes ahead, with residents being encouraged to post pictures.

SC392 **STREET FURNITURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

a) **TOWER HILL BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS**

The Committee received the report of the Office Manager, updating members on the Tower Hill bus stop improvements. He advised that Oxfordshire County Council had verbally stated it could source additional funding above and beyond that which was allocated for this project, but written confirmation had not been received. Members discussed how to progress this item and agreed that removing the RTI displays would reduce the cost and not be detrimental to the project as this route was not as well served as others in the centre.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:

1. that the Town Council agrees to the Tower Hill Bus Stop improvement proposal submitted by Oxfordshire County Council, without the inclusion of the Real Time Bus Information, providing the additional funding can be sought from other developer funding;
2. that the purchase of the bus shelter should be through a Town Council procurement process;
3. that provision and installation of cycle racks be agreed and funded from the existing budgets/developer funding;
4. that a provisional budget of £1,800 from the Bus Shelter maintenance budget 4035/402 be allocated and that the use of this budget to be delegated to the Town Clerk/Office Manager if deemed necessary to complete this project;
5. that a consultation with residents who lived between Burford Road and Park Road on both sides of the hill to ascertain their thoughts on the bus stop. This should be in the form of a letter with a freepost return envelope.

b) **PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager and the draft Public Transport Infrastructure Strategy. Members agreed that it should be adopted with some amendments.

The Office Manager explained that Oxfordshire County Council were trying to realign some of its designated section 106 developer funding to where it was most needed, if possible. Therefore he was looking for agreement and input from Members with knowledge in their wards.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:

1. that the strategy as presented be adopted with the following amendments and reallocations:
 - that the allocation of funds for Curbridge Road be swapped to Windrush Place;
 - that the allocation for timetables be utilised for the Community Bus timetable cases;
 - that the bus stop on Woodstock Road be included.

SC393 **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

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

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

SC394 **CIVIC EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer. Members gave thanks to the Officer for her work on the virtual Remembrance Day and also Mr Woodward who had done the filming.

Members agreed to proceed with an online advent calendar with members and officers contributing to it.

Members also decided to defer the Covid Heroes awards and leave it to the task and finish group to progress.

The Committee supported the idea of an Eco/Green pop up event – the Communications and Events Officer advised that she hoped it could be covered by the existing Events budget.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:-

1. thanks be given to James Woodward who filmed and edited a video for Remembrance Day;
2. that the online Advent Calendar be agreed – this could be extended to others in the community (e.g. from the Church if some members/staff did not wish to participate);
3. that the Task and Finish group meets again to decide when the Covid-19 heroes awards would be given out;
4. that the Eco Green Pop Up event be agreed with suggested budget of £1,000 from existing budgets.

SC395 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

a) **REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21 AND BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2021/22**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk on the revised revenue budget 2020/21 and base revenue budget for 2021/22.

The Town Clerk explained that this was the first attempt at the budget for the year but there were still several unknowns that was making it difficult to finalise a cohesive budget. She had provided a comprehensive report detailing the budget lines this Committee were responsible for.

A discussion took place on the budget allocated to Blue Plaques and for Alice Batt. A Member provided an update on the progression of the Blue Plaque and members agreed to allocate £500 towards this, which was likely to come to fruition in 2022.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:

1. that the Council supports Alice Batt's blue plaque with a donation of £500;
2. that the Council confirms that it still wishes to support the following events by way of grant funding in 2021/22 financial year:
 - a. Witney Carnival & Christmas Lights Switch-on Event 2021 – grant to Rotary Club of Witney for £3,100;
 - b. Witney Dementia Alliance – continue to support Witney in Blue with a grant of up to £1,000;
 - c. Free Play Day for the Community on 5 August 2021 – in partnership with OPA by providing a grant of £1,000;
3. that the Town Council agrees in principal that the revised base revenue budget for 2020/21 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2021/22, as detailed in the draft estimates be approved – subject to any further adjustments necessary.

b) **REVISED CAPITAL AND SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS PROGRAMME 2020/21**

The Committee received and considered the report on the revised capital and special revenue projects programme 2021/22.

RECOMMENDED: that the revised Capital and Special Revenue Projects Programme 2021/22 and beyond be noted and referred to the meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for approval.

c) **REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS PROGRAMME 2021/22 AND BEYOND**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk on the Revenue Growth Items and Capital/Special Revenue Projects Programme 2021/22 and

beyond.

The Town Clerk brought to Members attention the request of the Witney & District Twinning Association for additional funding by way of a grant application form, which the Committee fully discussed. Some of the items listed in the application were expenses the Council could not fund through its grant criteria. It agreed that it should continue to provide the grant to support the administration of the association.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:-

1. the planting of the community piano and the rebranding of the Council be included;
2. that £500 be granted to the Witney & District Twinning Association – the Council's usual support for the administration.

SC396 **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.

SC397 **WITNEY BUS SERVICES**

The Committee received and considered a confidential report on Witney's bus services.

RESOLVED: that the confidential report, as circulated be noted and the report be passed to the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee for consideration.

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair