

**MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 15 February 2021**

**At 7.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom**

**Present:**

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

|              |                         |                   |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Councillors: | L Duncan                | A D Harvey        |
|              | L Ashbourne             | M Jones           |
|              | T Ashby                 | J King            |
|              | R Bolger                | A McMahon         |
|              | D Butterfield           | A Prosser         |
|              | O Collins               | R Smith           |
|              | H Eaglestone            | D Temple          |
|              | D Enright               |                   |
| Officers:    | Sharon Groth            | Town Clerk        |
|              | Adam Clapton            | Deputy Town Clerk |
| Others:      | 1 member of the public. |                   |

73 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Gwatkin.

74 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

75 **MINUTES**

The Council received and considered the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 December 2020 and 14 December 2020 and the Extra Ordinary meeting held on 12 January 2021. There were no matters arising from the minutes to be discussed.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meetings held on minutes of the Council Meetings held on 7 December 2020 and 14 December 2020 and the Extra Ordinary meeting held on 12 January 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

76 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

77 **AN UPDATE FROM WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Harvey reported that a successful meeting of the Climate Action Group had been held and that matters were progressing. The District Council had appointed a Biodiversity and Land Management Specialist to help ensure that the move towards biodiversity and land management was moving ahead.

**RESOLVED:** that the update from Cllr Harvey be noted.

78 **REPORT BACK FROM THE COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE**

There were no reports back from Councillors working with external bodies where they served as the Council's nominated representative.

79 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2020, 5 JANUARY 2021 AND 26 JANUARY 2021.**

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020, 5 January 2021 and 26 January 2021 and moved their acceptance.

**Matters Arising – 26 January 2020**

A member commented on the Active Travel Proposals that concerned Corn Street and Holloway Road. He said that residents had a great deal of antipathy for the scheme and that the consultation period had been too short in order for the County Council to be able to spend the money. He felt that the scheme had not been thought through.

Another member added that he had spoken to the County Officer who had told him that most responses received were negative.

A member welcomed the idea of an active travel corridor in the town. Most comments on the area he represented – East Witney – had been positive. He asked the Chair of the Committee if she knew when the consultation would be concluded and when things would be announced.

The Chair replied that she had made investigations and that the consultation had been done within the statutory timeframe. However, due to the time constraints of spending the funding there would not be a second round of consultations. She was under the impression that the comments surrounding the Corn Street area had been robustly made and were being heard.

A member pointed out that the County had said that the work would be started in February and therefore he was unsure as to how much time would be spent checking the correspondence received in connection with the consultation.

The Office Manager drew members attention to minute P58 – Flooding. Members had raised the issue of how the Town Council could get the District Council to take notice of any concerns on flooding and had asked if there was a policy in place. He

explained that following the meeting, he had established that there was a policy – EH 7 - Flood Risk - which he believed that the Climate, Planning and Biodiversity Committee would be utilising in its responses when considering flooding in the future.

A member commented that he thought that the Town Council would be asked to come up with an emergency plan in the next few months. The Town Clerk advised that this had been agreed by the Stronger Communities Committee as part of the Communications Strategy so it would be coming forward in the next few months.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meetings of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee of 15 December 2020, 5 January 2021 and 26 January 2021, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2021

The Vice Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2021 and moved their acceptance.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2021 be received and any recommendation therein approved.

c) HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2021

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 and moved their acceptance.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 be received and any recommendation therein approved.

d) STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2021

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 and moved their acceptance.

Matters Arising

A member commented on page 3 item 11 – Zero Waste Roadshow, suggesting that the relevant Officer should speak to the Waste Department at the District Council as it would also be carrying out promotional work during that week and it would be an opportunity for both Councils and possibly even the County Council to work together to produce something. The Chair replied that he would ensure that the Town Council liaised with them.

A member commented about the Planters for the High street on P4. She understood that it had gone through as an action but felt that it was audacious that the Town Council was expected to pay for something that was essentially a highways closure. The Town Clerk replied that the District would be funding the planters themselves via the Government funding for Covid Secure measures.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 be

received and any recommendation therein approved.

e) POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2021

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2021 and moved their acceptance.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2021 be received and any recommendation therein approved.

80 **COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET: REVISED BUDGET 2020/21 AND ESTIMATE 2021/22**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, as circulated. She had previously given a full presentation to Council.

A member said that the Conservative Group would support the 3% increase and were happy to see the moderation in the budget considering that there would be a rise in unemployment. He also hoped that earmarked reserves would be restored over the coming years.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Conservative Group Leader for his comments. She added that considering the past year and the loss of the Council Tax support grant she was very proud of the Town Council for bringing the precept in with just a 3% increase.

A member commented about the Blue Plaque budget and the fact that he thought this project would not come on stream until 2022/23 – he felt it might be worth noting. The Town Clerk advised that she was aware of this and the money would roll forward to the following year.

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

1. that the revised budget for 2020/2021 as presented be adopted;
2. that the estimated budget for 2021/22 as presented be adopted.

81 **TO FORMALLY DECLARE THE PRECEPT FOR 2021/22**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

The proposal was to increase the precept by 3% which equated to £159.04 per annum for a band D property.

A member asked if information could be shared to illustrate how many play areas the Town Council was responsible for. The Town Clerk confirmed that a newsletter would be sent to every household explaining the budget and how it was spent. She would ensure that the number of play areas maintained was included.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and that the Town Clerk be authorised to sign and serve a precept on the West Oxfordshire District Council, in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), requiring the District Council to pay the Town Council the sum of £1, 691, 877 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2021/22.

82 **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Leader of the Council gave a verbal update, explaining that the current staff restructure that was taking place was a huge part of the corporate plan and priorities for each committee had been identified for the forthcoming year and budgeted them in. In addition there was the open spaces strategy also going on which would be a huge part of the corporate strategy. This would bring something very comprehensive in the coming months.

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

83 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered the report of the Mayor.

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

84 **VANDALISM**

The Council received and considered an update on vandalism in the town.

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

85 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

There was no update at the present time.

86 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no communication from the Leader.

87 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council received and considered a letter from the Chair of NALC, Cllr Sue Baxter, concerning three pledges:

- **Rethink relations** – more respect, commit to training, Local Council Award Scheme, better links with principal authorities
- **Rethink ambitions**, work with your community to shape place, Climate Change
- **Rethink engagement**, encourage more people to be councillors and engage more with your community

The Leader of the Council commented that she had liked the tone and sentiment of the proposals and felt that they fitted well with the Town Council. She thought it might be helpful to have the pledges in mind when considering the strategic plan.

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

88 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions to the Leader of the Council.

89 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

**RESOLVED:** that the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

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The meeting closed at: 8.11 pm

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Chair