

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

**Held on Monday, 21 March 2022**

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

**Present:**

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman D Butterfield	H Eaglestone L Duncan
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Simon Wright	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	1 member of the public.	

As there was no legislation in place for the Town Council to hold virtual meetings, and because of the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, the Stronger Communities Committee formed virtually as an Advisory Committee. Any recommendations outside of the current work programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 11 April 2022.

**SC126 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashbourne, Gwatkin and Prosser.

Councillor Duncan attended for Councillor Gwatkin

**SC127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

**SC128 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2022 were adopted and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

Minute SC 30– Public Benches - The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the District Council had Advised that it had not been possible to progress the provision of public benches in the town as agreement could not be reached with Oxfordshire County Council on their siting.

**SC129 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

Mr. Eric Marshall representing Witney Music Festival addressed the committee in respect of Agenda Item. 9 – Third Party Events.

*The Committee reconvened following public participation.*

The committee, at the request of the Chair, agreed to take Agenda Item No 9 before Agenda Item No 5.

SC130 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Venue & Events Officer. It was noted that in respect of the grant application by Witney Music Festival (WMF) that the decision would be made by Policy, Governance & Finance Committee but this committee could make recommendations.

In respect of free usage of The Leys by Witney Music Festival for the main concert it was agreed that should be continued.

The committee considered the application for a grant, to be paid back later, and expressed their support for events and ongoing development of the arts in Witney. It was noted that no budget was specified for this purpose but an allocation for the free use of The Leys had been made. Clarification was given that the last festival had broken even. Members suggested that other organisations such as Witney Educational Foundation could be approached for financial support.

After discussion the committee recommended that the festival continued to be supported and Policy, Governance & Finance be requested to consider what funding, if any, could be made available for a grant to the organisers.

Members received an update on further third-party events proposed to be held on The Leys and Burwell Recreation Ground. In response to a question, funding from the Town Council for Witney Carnival was clarified. It was noted that there had been some concern about noise from some events and the committee considered whether some kind of limit on the frequency of events should be implemented.

After discussion it was agreed that only a small number of events had potential noise impact for local residents and levels were controlled by legislation therefore no changes were needed. It was further agreed that the current first come, first served basis for event requests should be maintained.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the first come, first served basis regarding event requests for the same or periods of time which are too close together be endorsed; and
2. That, the request from Witney Music Festival for a financial contribution through a grant application be supported and the application be considered to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

SC131 **HAPPY TO CHAT BENCHES**

The committee considered a request for the provision of a designated bench for people to be able to sit and chat with others about issues they may have.

Members noted that a similar scheme had not been progressed due to the pandemic. It was agreed that it would be a positive initiative and that Guideposts should be approached to see if they were still interested in being involved. If Guideposts were not able to help then the possibility of working with other voluntary organisations could be investigated or the Town Council could undertake the project itself.

The committee considered the financial implications and agreed that an increased budget of up to £150 should be allocated and that clear signage was needed so that people understood the idea about the use of the bench.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the provision of a designated bench in Witney be supported;
2. That, Guideposts be approached be approached to see if they would like to be involved in the project;
3. That, in the event that Guideposts are not involved that the scheme be progressed with another voluntary partner or by the Town Council itself; and
4. That, a budget of up to £150 be allocated for the project.

**SC132 IN BLOOM/WILD WITNEY**

Consideration was given to the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer including the recommendations of the In Bloom Task & Finish Group.

The committee expressed support for continuing to participate in the In Bloom competition and to run the Wild Witney scheme and noted the positive feedback from last year's events. It was agreed that participation in 2022 should be supported. In respect of Autumn planting, it was noted an order would need to be made in May and members supported the planting scheme being similar to previous years.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the Council enters the national In Bloom competitions with sites at Tower Hill Cemetery and Tiny Forest being nominated;
2. That, each school be allocated a £25 voucher towards cost with three Community Groups receiving £100 vouchers and one at £40;
3. That, the Autumn planting scheme be similar to previous years; and
4. That, the Wild Witney competition be approved for 2022.

**SC133 COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The committee considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

Members noted that if the council had a Tik Tok account this would be free. It was considered that the platform could be beneficial particularly when engaging with young people and in promoting climate issues. It was suggested that it be trialled to see how effective the format was.

The committee discussed the Town Council app and what improvements may be needed. It was agreed that the focus should be more transactional and it was suggested that focusing on priorities such as healthy lifestyle could be appropriate and maybe offering loyalty bonuses for the Café could be introduced. It was agreed that the current usage figures should be looked at with a further report to the committee on options for content of the app.

Members discussed options for marking National Thank You Day on 5 June. It was noted that there was no flag or associated colour so lighting up of the Corn Exchange was not appropriate. It was suggested and agreed that a video montage of councillors thanking residents should be considered.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that a request had been received for posters to be placed in bus shelters promoting the Safer Streets initiative. Members expressed support dependent on clarification about any policies relating to flyposting.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the creation of a Tik Tok for a trial period be approved;
2. That, a further report be presented on improvements to the Town Council app to include usage figures and suggestions of future content;
3. That, a video montage of councillors thanking residents be produced to mark National Thank You Day; and
4. That, the placing of posters in bus shelters to promote Safer Streets be supported subject to clarification of any guidance from West Oxfordshire District Council

**SC134 PLATINUM JUBILEE WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received the minutes of the Platinum Jubilee Working Party held on 17 February 2022.

Members approved the budget reallocation for the legacy project at Unterhaching Park. The committee received details of the proposed sundial to be placed on the site as part of the project.

**Recommended:**

That, the minutes of the Platinum Jubilee Working Party held on 17 February 2022 be received and the recommendations therein be approved.

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The meeting closed at: 7.05 pm

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Chair