

**MEETING OF
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 28 June 2021

At 7.00 pm in the Main Hall, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor L Duncan (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne	V Gwatkin
	T Ashby	M Jones
	D Butterfield	A Prosser
	O Collins	R Smith
	D Enright	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Tina Jardine	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	1 member of the public.	

306 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J Aitman, R Bolger, H Eaglestone, D Harvey, J King and D Temple.

The committee noted that Cllr King was unable to attend an in-person meeting due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

307 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no interests declared by members at this point in the meeting.

308 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING**

The Chair presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Annual Council Meeting of the Town Council held on 4 May 2021 be received and agreed as a correct record.

309 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation at the meeting.

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

Cllr Enright provided an update from the County Council on discussions with bus companies to provide more frequent services. Members were also advised of a zero emissions initiative in Oxford, changes to the A40 bus lanes and an imminent consultation, 'Access to Witney' regarding the Shore's Green junction.

Cllr Ashbourne provided an update from the District Council, noting a Loyal Free App for local businesses which would be used in Witney, an open consultation on Covid-19 measures in the High Street and the reorganisation of the Council's Section 106 database.

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

There were no updates from Councillors who serve as nominated representatives on outside bodies.

312 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING - 20 APRIL, 18 MAY AND 8 JUNE 2021**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that in respect of minute no. 213(3) of 20th April, the agreed trail at the Lake & Country Park provided by Rediscover Nature would no longer be taking place.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Advisory Committee meetings held on 20 April, 18 May and 8 June 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

313 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 17 MAY 2021**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held on 17 May 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

314 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 24 MAY 2021**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Advisory Committee meeting held on 24 May 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

315 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 7 JUNE 2021**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities Advisory Committee meeting held on 7 June 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

316 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE - 14 JUNE 2021**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Advisory Committee meeting held on 14 June 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

317 **CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY - 1 JUNE (ATTACHED) & 22 JUNE 2021 (TO FOLLOW)**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

The Chair noted that A Stone of Drama by Design was not listed as being in attendance at the meeting held on 22 June.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party meetings held on 1 and 22 June 2021, with the above amendment be received and any recommendations therein approved.

318 **APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Chair sought nominations for vacancies on three outside organisations which had arisen since the Annual Council Meeting in May.

Resolved:

That the following appointments be made:

1. Lower Windrush Valley Project – Cllr. Ruth Smith to May 2023
2. RAF Brize Norton Local Consultation Group – Cllr. Liz Duncan to May 2023
3. Witney Traffic Advisory Committee – Cllr. Andrew Prosser to May 2023

319 **DESIGNATION OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Members noted the importance of the Responsible Financial Officer in statute and welcomed Tina Jardine to the role.

Resolved:

That Tina Jardine be officially designated as the Responsible Financial Officer at Witney Town Council.

320 **FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Committee considered the most appropriate way to hold the next cycle of Council meetings in the absence of legislation on virtual meetings in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Members agreed as national restrictions had been extended until 19th July, there was no difference from when the decision had been taken to hold virtual Advisory meetings in May. Therefore, it was a sensible and cautious approach to continue holding virtual meetings during the next cycle with an in-person meeting to pass any un-delegated recommendations on 2 August 2021.

Resolved:

That, the forthcoming cycle of Council meetings be held as Advisory Committee Meetings with ratification of decisions, not made under delegated powers, taking place at an in-person Full Council meeting on 2 August 2021.

321 **ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2020/21**

The Town Clerk explained that the AGAR had already been reviewed by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 14 June 2021 but the Council needed to formally agree and adopt it.

Resolved:

1. that the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 be approved, and formally adopted by the Council;
2. that the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 be approved, and formally adopted by the Council;
3. that in light of the above the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2020/21 be formally agreed and adopted by the Council.
4. that the unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 be noted.

322 **NOTICE OF MOTION - CO-OPERATIVE COUNCILS INNOVATION NETWORK**

The Council considered a motion concerning the Town Council joining the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network, the motion being proposed by Cllr D Enright and seconded by Cllr R Smith on the evening.

There was agreement that the network appeared to offer benefits to members, but these might be more suited to principal Councils. The benefits at town and parish Council level were uncertain and if membership was taken there would need to be a review of the interactions from the network to inform debate on the issue in the future.

Resolved:

1. That, Witney Town Council becomes a member of the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network, at a cost of £500.
2. That this be funded from rolling capital
3. That the membership be reviewed during the budget-setting process to confirm the benefits it brings to the Town Council.

323 **BURFORD EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC 7.5 TONNE REGULATION ORDER**

The Council received a recommendation of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee concerning the Burford Experimental Traffic 7.5 Tonne Regulation Order.

Members agreed that the interim report provided to the Town Council appeared to show that there had been an impact on Witney due to the order. Therefore, the Council should support the Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group in its campaign and ask Oxfordshire County Council to remove the ETRO and investigate alternative solutions to the issue at Burford.

Resolved:

That, Witney Town Council supports the Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group and asks Oxfordshire County Council to remove the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order at Burford Bridge at the earliest opportunity.

324 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received a list of engagements undertaken by the Mayor since the last meeting.

The Chair, Cllr Duncan thanked the Mayor for her continued hard work in what continued to be difficult circumstances.

Resolved:

That the Civic Announcements report be noted.

325 **PROJECT UPDATE**

The Council received and considered the report of the Project Officer regarding projects at; Park Road Play Area, Windrush Place Allotments, Corn Exchange, Burwell Hall and The Leys Recreation Ground.

Members were pleased to see the projects progressing and were advised that the administration of the Windrush Place allotments would be transferred to the Allotment Association on completion of the legal works. All other preparation by the Town Council had been completed apart from the inclusion of a composting toilet; it was disappointing that incorrect information had caused dissatisfaction amongst residents near to the site on the potential handover date.

Resolved:

1. That, the budget for the Park Road Play Area project be increased to £10,000.
2. That, these funds are taken from the Council's rolling capital.

3. That, the delegation of the progress on this project be confirmed to Officers and Cllrs L Ashbourne and L Duncan.

326 **POSITION OF TOWN CRIER**

The Council considered the position of Town Crier for Witney for the forthcoming municipal year.

Members agreed that it had been a difficult year and the incumbent of this position had done a good job in the circumstances. Members agreed that the current arrangements should stay in place for another year, but a volunteer recruitment process should take place for the next.

Resolved:

1. That, the current arrangements for the position of Town Crier of Witney continue for the new municipal year.
2. That, a recruitment process for this position takes place for the year 2022-23.

327 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Council received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk on Health & Safety matters.

Members were advised that the Leys Splash Pad had been commissioned and once Covid-19 social-distancing restrictions were lifted, it would be opened to the public.

It was also confirmed that Witney Carnival had been cancelled by the organisers due to the extension of pandemic restrictions. In response to a member, the Town Clerk confirmed that the funds allocated to this by the Town Council would be returned to the discretionary grants budget.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

328 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no official communication to share but the Leader thanked Officers of the Council for their work during recent months and during the pandemic.

329 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Deputy Town Clerk shared correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council on the future of Community Recycling Centres in Witney, following consultation.

Members were disappointed the Town Council's response to this consultation appeared to have been ignored and this should be followed up by the District Councillors who also served on this Council.

There was discussion on what would now happen in these areas and a suggestion was made that these could be parklets. Members agreed that the freed parking spaces would not be in the best location for this scheme.

330 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions raised at the meeting.

331 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents to seal at the meeting.

332 **EXCLUSION OF THE 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.

333 **ADOPTION OF OPEN SPACES STRATEGY**

With the permission of the Chair this item was moved up the agenda for consideration.

The Council considered the adoption of the Open Spaces Strategy, previously circulated, as a working document outlining the Council's objectives during the forthcoming five years.

Members were in agreement this was a sound, comprehensive document and looked forward to items being implemented through the Committee process.

Resolved:

That, the Open Spaces Strategy as previously circulated to members be agreed and adopted by Witney Town Council.

334 **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

The Council received the confidential report of the Town Clerk concerning Grounds Maintenance.

Resolved:

That, the recommendations contained in the Town Clerk's confidential report be agreed.

The meeting closed at: 8.14 pm

Chair