

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 2 August 2021

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

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan	O Collins
	L Ashbourne	H Eaglestone
	T Ashby	V Gwatkin
	R Bolger	M Jones
	D Butterfield	A McMahon
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Simon Wright	Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	No members of the public.	

405 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright, D Harvey, J King, A Prosser and R Smith

406 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

407 **MINUTES**

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Full Council Meeting of the Town Council held on 28 June 2021 be received and agreed as a correct record subject to Resolution 325 (1) being amended to read:

‘That, the budget for the Park Road Play Area project be increased *by* £10,000’

408 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

There were no updates received from Oxfordshire County or West Oxfordshire District Councillors.

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

Witney Museum – Cllr Duncan advised that Witney Museum would be extending an invite to Town Councillors to visit the museum and listen to plans for the future.

Witney Educational Foundation – Cllr Aitman highlighted the work of the foundation and asked if the Town Council website could include a link to promote their work. The Town Clerk advised that this was already in hand.

411 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING - 29 JUNE (ATTACHED) & 20 JULY 2021 (TO FOLLOW)**

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Advisory Committee meetings held on 29 June & 20 July 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

412 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 5 JULY 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 5 July 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved

413 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS - 12 JULY 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 12 July 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved

414 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 19 JULY 2021**

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

Cllr Collins indicated that the committee had recommended the establishment of a Task & Finish Group in respect of a Covid memorial for the town. Nominations to serve on the group were sought and Cllrs Aitman, Collins and Duncan indicated their interest. It was agreed that members who were not present be offered the chance to serve on the group.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities Advisory Committee meeting held on 19 July 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved

415 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 26 JULY 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 26 July 2021 be received

416 **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 and the relaxation of restrictions.

Members noted that the Council could retain the present system of advisory meetings, that could be held virtually, with all recommendations being considered by Full Council. Alternatively the Council could return to in-person meetings.

During discussion it was advised that if individual members were unable to physically attend meetings they could apply for a dispensation. It was further advised that if advisory meetings were continued decisions could be made through delegation if it was within existing policy and/or budget. Confirmation was also given that Advisory Group and Working Parties could continue to meet virtually.

On being put to a vote a majority of members voted in favour of a return to in-person meetings with a caveat that the position be reviewed if there is a change in infection levels or new advice is issued.

Resolved:

That, all Council meetings be held as in-person Meetings with the position being reviewed if there is a change in Covid rates or new advice is received.

417 **NOTICE OF MOTION - COMMUNITY PLANNING**

The Council considered a motion concerning the planning process, the motion being proposed by Cllr J Aitman and seconded by Cllr M Jones on the evening.

The proposer explained that motion related to proposed changes in legislation which it was feared would undermine some local control of the planning process. It was advised that the motion had been considered by a number of Town, Parish and District Councils, including West Oxfordshire District Council, and it had been widely supported.

It was indicated that the views of the Council, if the motion was agreed, should be communicated to Robert Jenrick MP the relevant Cabinet Minister and copied to Robert Courts the local MP.

On being put to the vote the motion was unanimously carried.

Resolved:

That, the Notice of Motion be supported and a letter sent to Robert Jenrick MP and Robert Courts MP.

418 **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to a new Communications Strategy that had been considered by the Stronger Communities Committee at the meeting held on 19 July 2021.

Members expressed their support for the strategy and thanked officers for their work in preparing such a comprehensive document.

On being put to the vote the adoption of the strategy was unanimously agreed.

Resolved:

That, the Communications Strategy be adopted.

419 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The report outlining civic duties undertaken by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor was received.

The Mayor particularly highlighted the In Bloom judging that had taken place the previous week and thanked officers for their hard work in preparing the areas for judging.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

420 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

Cllr Ashbourne, as Leader of the Council, expressed her sympathy to the family of Nicole Sanders following the tragic accident at Ducklingto Lake & Country Park. The Leader thanked staff and members for their work in dealing with the incident.

421 **CORRESPONDENCE**

Request for a Lido

The Council received a request for consideration of an outdoor pool facility in the town. The Town Clerk advised that the matter would be referred to the Parks & Recreation Committee for consideration.

It was noted that the correspondence also referred to improved signage at Ducklington Lake. In response it was explained that this was already being looked at by officers and would be actioned as soon as possible.

Junior Parkrun

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Junior Parkrun sessions had commenced. The Council had awarded money via the Youth Funding Grant to support the events.

422 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions to the Leader of the Council.

423 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

Resolved:

To authorise the sealing of documents arising from Council resolutions and to note the sealing of:

No. 84 Allotment Land Transfer – Engrossment [Allotment land at North Curbridge, Witney – known as Windrush Allotments].

424 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & 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.

425 **CORN EXCHANGE - PHASE TWO REFURBISHMENT CONTRACTS**

Sound & Lighting Contract

Cllr Collins, Chair of the Corn Exchange Working Party, advised that a meeting had been held earlier in the day and a preferred contractor identified for the sound and lighting works. It was reported that the tenders had exceeded the previously approved budget and therefore an additional £10,000 would be required for the works. In addition the Working Party was recommending that the installation of the projection equipment should be considered as part of the budget process to facilitate funding for it to be implemented in the future.

Discussion ensued regarding the financial implications including payback period, the potential community benefits of the scheme, grant funding for the scheme and likely timescale for the works.

Resolved:

1. That, the contractor identified at the meeting be awarded the contract subject to the usual due diligence;

2. That, an additional £10,000 be approved for the scheme; and
3. That, consideration of the budget for the projection equipment be deferred to the budget making process.

At this juncture the Council returned to open session

Seating Contract

Cllr Collins advised that the Working Party had agreed a specification and explained the proposed layout of the retractable seating. It was indicated that there would be a capacity of 145 for the venue. It was noted that details such as seat colour would be agreed at a later stage.

It was reported that the tender documentation would be sent out in the coming weeks and a recommendation would be presented at the October Council meeting.

Resolved:

That, the update be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.58 pm

Chair