

**MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 11 October 2021**

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

**Present:**

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	T Ashby D Butterfield H Eaglestone D Enright V Gwatkin	M Jones A Prosser R Smith D Temple
Officers:	Sharon Groth Loraine Harwood  Simon Wright	Town Clerk PA to the Town Clerk and Secretary to the Mayor Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	2 members of the public.	

513 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Ashbourne, R Bolger, O Collins, L Duncan, A D Harvey, J King and A McMahan.

514 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

515 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 2 August and 6 September 2021 were approved and adopted.

In respect of Minute No. 459 – Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan it was reported that the response to the consultation had been submitted.

Councillor Enright joined the meeting at this juncture.

516 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The meeting adjourned for this item.

Mr Mark McCappin representing Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group addressed the meeting regarding Agenda Item No. 11 - Burford Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.

*The meeting reconvened following public participation.*

The Council at the request of the Chair agreed to take Agenda Item No. 11 before Agenda Item No. 5.

517 **WINDRUSH VALLEY TRAFFIC ACTION GROUP**

The Council was requested to consider whether it wanted to send a supplementary letter to Oxfordshire County Council confirming the request that the Burford Experimental Traffic Restriction Order (ETRO) should be rescinded when the matter is considered in January 2022.

**Resolved:**

That, a further letter be sent to Oxfordshire County Council confirming the request for the Burford ETRO to be rescinded.

*Councillor Enright abstained from voting.*

518 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Insp Chris Ball, Thames Valley Police, introduced himself and explained that he had recently been appointed to oversee policing in West Oxfordshire following the retirement of the previous postholder.

In response to questions Insp Ball indicated that intervention schemes, particularly with younger people, to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) would be a priority. It was noted that there were particular issues with ASB at the Town Council cemeteries and patrols would be undertaken in those areas.

Insp Ball encouraged the reporting of low-level crime through the non-emergency number as this data informed policing priorities in the district.

The Chair expressed the hope that the Town Council and Thames Valley Police would be able to work collaboratively to address any issues in Witney.

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

**Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)**

Councillor Enright reported that a new 20mph zone policy was being implemented and would mean OCC working in partnership with Town & Parish Councils to identify sites. In respect of costs, it was explained that OCC would pay for road markings and signage but other aspects such as electronic signs would need to be financed separately.

Councillor Enright advised that OCC had invested in a specialist Housing Association to provide accommodation for clients with learning difficulties. It was noted that the budget process for the next financial year had started.

Finally, it was reported that an initial meeting had been held with interested parties to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Witney.

**West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)**

Councillor Prosser reported that WODC had commenced a refugee support programme and dedicated resources had been allocated to support Afghan refugees.

Councillor Eaglestone advised that the Witney Flood Mitigation Group had attended the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and raised concern about flooding issues in the town. Representatives of the Environment Agency had also been present at the meeting and responded to issues raised.

Councillor Prosser indicated that the Flood Group would also like to address the Town Council and this would be facilitated at a Planning, Biodiversity & Planning meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Prosser updated members on the WODC Planning Sub-Committee that had been held earlier in the day. It was reported that Application No. 21/02210/FUL – Unit 1-5, Avenue Two, Witney to which the Town Council had raised objection had been approved. It was noted that the applicant had indicated that they would be prepared to discuss access issues to the Lake & Country Park.

Councillor Temple joined the meeting at this juncture.

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

Witney Town Charity – It was noted that a new representative would be required in due course. The Town Clerk advised that the charity would contact the council when a nomination was needed.

Witney Educational Foundation – The Chair reported that a lot of requests were being received for financial support. In addition the foundation had thanked the council for suggesting the road name of Isabelle Spencer Way at the new Windrush Primary School.

521 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE - 10 AUGUST, 31 AUGUST AND 21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

In respect of Minute No. P441 of 10 August 2021, it was agreed that an update on the wildflower planting would be provided.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Advisory Committee meetings held on 10 & 31 August and 21 September be received and any recommendations therein approved.

522 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 6 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 6 September 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

523 **HALL, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 13 SEPTEMBER 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 Committee meeting held on 13 September 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

524 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 20 SEPTEMBER 2021**

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee Councillor Aitman presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Councillor Smith reported that an officer from Oxfordshire County Council had met with local residents regarding Tower Hill Bus Stop improvements. As a result further discussions would be held regarding location and the requirements of the S106 agreement.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 20 September 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

525 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 27 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

The Town Clerk reported that in respect of Minute No. F505 the contractor had indicated that they would be able to undertake the necessary works in respect of wildflower planting at the closed churchyards within the current budget. The Council was therefore requested to rescind resolution 2 of the minute and this was agreed.

In respect of resolution 3 of the same minute it was advised that the figure should read £1,700 and this was agreed.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes, as amended, of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 27 September 2021 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

526 **CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021**

It was reported that the Council's External Auditor, Moore Stephens, had completed the review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for year ended 31 March 2021, and in their opinion the information is in accordance with Proper Practices. Members thanked officers for work in achieving such a good audit opinion.

**Resolved:**

That, the outcome of the review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for year ended 31 March 2021 be noted.

527 **CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE**

The Council received the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer updating on progress in meeting the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2028.

Members considered the proposed target for reducing CO2 emissions and it was suggested that the target should be more ambitious than 5% year on year. It was acknowledged that if certain works were undertaken this could accelerate meeting the targets as they would equate to a large reduction in emissions. It was suggested and agreed that the target should be revised to a 15% target. Clarification was given that the baseline for calculations would be 2019 when the declaration of a climate emergency had been made.

Confirmation was given that a budget of £5,000 had been allocated for the replacement of Town Council vehicles with electric vehicles as and when this was required. It was further suggested that the replacement of the Corn Exchange heating system should be investigated with an initial budget of £20,000 being requested.

Discussion ensued on options for offsetting carbon usage against Town Council owned green spaces. It was acknowledged that this was subject to specific requirements and guidelines and the key was to switch away from fossil fuels. It was agreed that offsetting should be considered as part of the overall strategy. The Council further agreed that the targets should also include tenants of Council buildings and contractors working for the Council.

After further discussion it was:

**Resolved:**

1. That, the progress to date and existing allocated budgets for addressing the climate emergency be noted;
2. That, the target for reducing CO2 emissions be set at 15% year on year and publicise the results of how targets have been achieved;
3. That, the focus of the strategy be on switching away from fossil fuels with the possibility of using green tariffs and carbon offsetting also being investigated to meet targets; and
4. That, the replacement of the heating system at the Corn Exchange be investigated with an initial budget allocation of £20,000 being requested.

528 **CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT - LETTER OF APOLOGY**

The Council received the confidential report of the Town Clerk regarding a Code of Conduct complaint against a Town Councillor.

**Resolved:**

That, the letter of apology as appended to the confidential report be noted.

529 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

The Mayor highlighted that the number of events was increasing following the relaxation of Covid restrictions. Members thanked Councillor Aitman for her hard work in representing the Council at civic and other events.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

530 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Town Clerk reported that the defibrillator at Burwell Hall was to be replaced and if the old one was returned then that would be kept as a spare.

It was reported that a member of staff had tested positive for Covid and the offices had been deep cleaned with services only being interrupted for a short time.

**Resolved:**

That, the Health and Safety update be noted.

531 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader advised there were no communications.

532 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council received correspondence regarding funding of a taxi service for lone people at night. It was noted that this was outside the remit of the Council.

Discussion ensued regarding safety of residents particularly at night. Insp Ball acknowledged the concerns and advised that a new Night-Time Economy plan was being developed and would include a more visible police presence. It was noted that a review of CCTV provision was also being undertaken.

**Resolved:**

That, the correspondence be noted.

533 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

In the absence of the Leader, there were no questions for the Deputy Leader of the Council.

534 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

**Resolved:**

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

No. 85 License to Assign [The Cemetery Lodge, Tower Hill to Kenmore Estates Ltd & Mid Counties C-operative Funeral Ltd.].

535 **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.

536 **CORN EXCHANGE - RETRACTABLE SEATING CONTRACT**

The recommendations of the Corn Exchange Working Party meeting held on 7 October 2021 were outlined.

It was reported that a contractor had been recommended by the Working Party and they had also noted that there had been an underspend on the sound and lighting contract so additional funding was recommended to facilitate extra works identified in the report.

Members supported the recommendations of the Corn Exchange Working Party.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the Retractable Seating Contract be awarded to Hussey Seatway for the sum of £66,593; and
2. That, a sum of £1,593 is used from the underspend of the allocated Sound & Lighting budget to deliver necessary extras included in the above price

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The meeting closed at: 8.18 pm

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Chair