

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

Held on Monday, 20 March 2023

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	V Gwatkin
	L Ashbourne	A Prosser
	L Duncan	R Smith
	H Eaglestone	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	None.	

SC142 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

SC143 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

SC144 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 23 January 2023 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held 23 January 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

SC145 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

SC146 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the financial report of the Responsible Financial Officer showing figures for aspects under its remit during the last Quarter. The report also covered a recommendation to engage professional cleaning for the war memorial.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, professional cleaning of the War Memorial is carried out periodically at the estimated cost of £3,000.

SC147 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer (CCEO).

Members were disappointed to hear the annual newsletter distribution had been delayed and sporadic. The supplier had apologised for the poor service which resulted in some residents not being made aware of the Annual Town Meeting on 15 March.

Next, members discussed the proposal to change the Council's website provider and reviewed the options presented, then chose a preferred style for the CCEO to progress.

The Committee discussed the vandalism to the noticeboard at The Leys and agreed a replacement should be installed on the Coffee Shed, subject to their approval. The Town Clerk responded to a Member's question as to why the noticeboard was removed from outside the Woolgate Shopping Centre, she advised it had become disorganised and unkempt and was under the remit of West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC).

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the noticeboard at The Leys be replaced and installed on the wall of the Coffee Shed providing they agree and,
3. That, the CCEO explores the chosen Website style with the provider as presented and,
4. That, the Council writes to WODC with a request to reinstall the noticeboard outside the Woolgate shopping centre for the use of residents and community groups.

SC148 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer (CCEO).

Members discussed and provided ideas to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the NHS in July 2023. A member suggested that he had contact details for a poet who was also a NHS employee and would investigate if they were able to be involved. Members also suggested that the council could offer a free drink at the Corn Exchange for holders of the Bluelight card on the 5 July.

There were also plans for St Mary's Church to hold a drinks reception to mark the 75th anniversary and the Committee was happy to support this in principle while further discussions took place.

Members were keen to support a litter pick event and a member advised that the Witney Land Army was looking to reform; this could give them an event to recommence with, they asked that the CCEO investigate in order to arrange this for the day of the "Big Help Out" as part of the coronation events, rather than the Great British Spring Clean week 2023.

Regarding the Witney Carnival. Members felt a presence from the Council would be beneficial and thought that the idea of again presenting the school in bloom wheelbarrows would be well received. They also discussed the idea of having a “Mini Mayor” competition and delegated to the CCEO to investigate this further.

The Committee noted a wildflower planting project with the Rotary Club of Witney at Tower Hill Cemetery, a smoke-free sign competition and notes from the most recent Witney Forum meeting.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council agrees in principle to support St Mary’s Church mark the 75th anniversary of the NHS and exploring other Council events and,
3. That, the CCEO investigate a collaboration with Witney Land Army to promote a litter pick as part of the coronation “Big Help out” day and,
4. That, the wheelbarrows for the Schools In Bloom project be judged at Witney Carnival and,
5. That, the CCEO investigate the potential of hosting a “Mini Mayor” competition at Witney Carnival and,
6. That, the work of Witney Rotary in Tower Hill is noted and,
7. That, the minutes of the Witney forum meeting held 2 February 2023 be noted.

SC149 **PROJECTS UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer.

Members were pleased to hear the installation of the Covid-19 memorial was due to take place in early April, they agreed that an additional £750 be made available towards the completion of the project. Members were happy with the carving of the stone and for a small sign to be erected.

They then discussed the QE II sundial at Unterhaching Park and agreed that the council should not give up with the installation due to the act of vandalism which had delayed the project. All members agreed delegation to the Operations Manager to find the best solution and an additional £500 was agreed should this be needed.

All members were in favour of contractor two being used for the exterior signage of the Reception/Administration Office.

Members were sad to hear that no entries for the Smoke Free Playground competition had been received, they asked that officers promote again to the schools and on social media.

Lastly, members discussed the tribute to the Windrush Generation and agreed a budget of £500 towards the project. They also asked that the potential of a play or similar event could be hosted in the Corn Exchange to commemorate the 75th anniversary in June 2023 and that information is added to the council website to explain the connection to the River Windrush and the naming of the HMT Empire Windrush boat.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, the carving of the stone and small sign be installed along with an additional £750 added to the Covid-19 memorial budget and,
3. That, the installation of the QEII sundial goes ahead as planned in Unterhaching Park along with an additional £500 budget if required and,
4. That, contractor two is used to carry out the reception office signage and,
5. That, the Council proceeds with the Windrush Generation project as outlined in the report with a budget of £500 and,
6. That, officers investigate the idea of a performance in the Corn Exchange to commentate the 75th Anniversary of National Windrush Day and,
7. That, information be added to the council website explaining the relationship between the River Windrush and the Windrush Generation.

SC150 **MADLEY PARK BUS SHELTER**

The Committee received the report and verbal update of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the current condition of the bus shelters on Woodstock Road and their immediate surroundings.

The bus shelters could not be re-sited as it would undermine their structural integrity, but maintenance of the verge and hedges could take place when the regular bus shelter maintenance occurred.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, additional maintenance of 1-2 metres (including verge and hedges) around the shelter be carried out.

SC151 **WITNEY IN BLOOM**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

Members considered the sites suggested for entry to the Thames & Chiltern In Bloom competition for 2023 and agreed on the Country Park. The Mayor spoke about how many of the organisations at the award ceremony that she attended were from small groups and that this perhaps would be an idea for the 2024 entry when more time allowed to get smaller groups involved. Members also agreed to a request for a compost bin to be installed on Council land by the Edible Gardening Group.

Members discussed at length the possible theme for the school wheelbarrow competition, they were keen for this to be centred around the subject of food and settled on the name title of "Food for Thought". They welcomed the barrows being displayed on the Leys in the weeks running up to the Witney Carnival event as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Members felt that the vouchers issued to the community gardeners should be increased as proposed to £50.

Lastly, members considered the two options for planters to be placed at the entrances to the town as part of the Impact Project using the remaining 2022 In Bloom budget. They agreed the stone planters were the preferred of the two options, but a member suggested that Witney Shed would potentially be able to help with the construction of wooden planters, this would

allow for bespoke pieces however they would need to be of substantial quality and weight to protect them from theft.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Witney Lake & Country Park be entered into the Thames & Chilterns In Bloom competition and,
3. That, the theme of the Schools Inb Bloom wheelbarrow competition be “food for thought” and,
4. That, the “food for thought” wheelbarrows be displayed on The Leys and,
5. That, an increase to a £50 voucher for community gardeners be agreed and,
6. That, Officers investigate with Witney Shed if they can make the planters to the necessary standard.
7. That, the request from Edible Gardens for a compost bin be granted.

SC152 **CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer.

Members agreed that the Town Council’s Coronation offer should be a “simple but engaging event” and that this was in line with the wishes of the King.

Members discussed the proposed schedule of events and offered the following amended draft structure.

Saturday – A non-ticketed showing of the Coronation using the newly installed projector and screen in the Corn Exchange. This would be followed in the afternoon by a Childrens activity event in the Gallery Room. The Mayor would also judge a best dressed shop competition.

Sunday – Celebrate the “Coronation Big Lunches” The Leys would be used by the community to have a picnic between 2-6pm, Windrush Radio had been approached regarding hosting the event and those groups that were due to perform in the Market Square on Bank Holiday would be invited to perform as part of the Sunday event instead.

Monday – Promote the “Big Help Out” scheme with the idea of a litter picking event to include the collaboration/relaunch of the Witney Land Army and Volunteer Link-Up.

One member was passionate about the need for councillors to engage with the celebrations and support their fellow councillors and council staff in ensuring that they attend and more importantly help with the running of the events.

Members agreed to delegate the decision of the organisation of the events programme to the Communications & Community Engagement Officer in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in order to expediate decisions given the limited time until the event weekend.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, decisions on the Coronation Events be delegated to Officers in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to expediate the planning of the events and,

3. That, purchase of a coronation flag is made to be flown from the Town Hall and,
4. That, an additional budget of £3,500 be made available towards the cost of coronation events.

The meeting closed at: 7.47 pm

Chair