

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 5 December 2022

At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	V Gwatkin
	T Ashby	A McMahon
	D Butterfield	A Prosser
	H Eaglestone	R Smith
	D Enright	D Thomas
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	3 members of the public.	

Before the meeting Councillor O Collins paid tribute to former Mayor Jim King and led a one-minute silence

608 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Duncan, P Hiles, D Harvey, D Temple, M Jones, and L Ashbourne.

609 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

610 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

611 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from Dr R Hall concerning Agenda Item 12 – Witney High Street. The resident requested an extended time to speak and at the agreement of the Chair was granted 15 minutes followed by questions.

The Chair thanked the resident for their contributions and confirmed that the council had offered to Oxfordshire County Council the use of the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall as venues for hosting public consultations on the matter

The Committee reconvened.

612 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Members received a verbal update from Inspector C Ball of Thames Valley Police (TVP)

The update advised that crime and Anti-Social Behaviour levels in Witney were low.

TVP had not experienced any large-scale issues around firework night, they had put this down to community engagement and high visibility policing.

In response to questions from members, Inspector Ball confirmed that more officers would be visible in coming weeks in Witney Town Centre in order to deter shoplifting, he was not aware of recent report of counterfeit money being used in the town however advised that this was a risk for traders in the busy period around Christmas.

Inspector Ball also responded to a member on the use of cycling, and especially e-scooters on pavements. Although officially illegal to use on the highway unless part of a scheme, TVP were reluctant to criminalise the use of e-scooters. Enforcement was carried out if needed which included a warning and ultimately confiscation.

He also explained that on average his team attend one call each week relating to individuals on bridges and are working closely with mental Health organisations to mitigate these potential suicide incidents.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted

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

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Councillor Enright advised that the recent news about the A40 improvements being halted was incorrect. Though the cost of the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) on surrounding land was being reassessed the work to be carried out on Cycle & Bus lanes to connect with the new Park & Ride/Transport Hub at Eynsham and the Saltcross garden village development would continue as a phased development with no current overall change to the completion dates.

Also unaffected was the Shores Green project of which he expected planning permission to be submitted in the new year. All CPOs were in place on this project.

Councillor Enright also advised on the closure to Botley Road in Oxford during 2023. This closure was led by Network Rail, however OCC were in negotiation with partners in order to put mitigation plans in place to provide connection with the city and its outlying areas via connections at Seacourt Park & Ride.

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

Councillor Enright advised that WODC were due to approve the reimbursement of pavement licence fees next week. He also thanked the council for the wonderful Advent Fayre they held on 27 November and how pleased WODC were to provide the snow globe to support the event. WODC had established a "what's on this Christmas" page on their website to assist businesses and local event organisers this Christmas.

Councillor Aitman provided an update on the work that she and Councillor Prosser were spearheading as part of WODC's fight against the climate crisis. Local foodbanks were now receiving help from a company with the purchasing and storage of food in bulk on pallets.

Councillor Aitman advised that there was lots of information available via the WODC dedicated webpage to assist councillors with their casework, also she reminded councillors that they are able to refer those in need to the foodbank, though this is limited to one referral per household per month.

The Climate awareness event held in the Corn Exchange allowed people to connect and was therefore a great help and help with sustainable warmth energy grants was now available, subject to qualifying criteria.

Councillor Aitman had also visited the Witney Hotel which was now housing refugees and reported that it is full of families with young children. Both WODC and OCC were providing assistance with safeguarding advice and support with organisation.

Lastly, Councillor Aitman advised that a potential site for a new Artificial Turf Pitch was progressing though she was restricted to offering details due to confidentiality.

Councillor Smith provided detail on estimates of children in the Witney Hotel. She understood the children were made up of approx. 20 children of secondary school age and a similar amount of primary school age along with approx. 6 of Sixth Form age.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates from Councillors be noted.

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

The Chair advised that the Councillor Duncan had attended a meal organised by the Twinning Association which included representatives of Le Touquet and Unterhaching during the Remembrance Day weekend.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update from The Chair on behalf of Cllr Duncan be noted.

Councillor T Ashby Left the meeting

615 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE - 4 OCTOBER, 25 OCTOBER & 15 NOVEMBER 2022**

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

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 4 October, 25 October and 15 November 2022 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

616 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 31 OCTOBER 2022**

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 31 October 2022 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

617 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 7 NOVEMBER 2022**

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 7 November 2022 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

618 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 14 NOVEMBER 2022**

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

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 14 November 2022 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

Councillor T Ashby returned to the meeting

619 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 21 NOVEMBER 2022**

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

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 21 November 2022 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

620 **CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY - 24 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Chair of the Working Party presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party Committee meeting held on 24 November 2022 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

621 **STANDING ORDERS – 2022 REVIEW**

The council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk who had submitted revised Standing Orders which contained up-to-date legislative changes and items on best practice for the running of town and parish Councils.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the revised Standing Orders had been recommended for approval by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee and following their submission, they would stand adjourned until the next scheduled full meeting of the Council on 13 February. The adjournment was to enable members to fully consider the document ahead of discussion, due to its importance.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised Standing Orders be adjourned to the Full Council meeting on 13 February 2023.

622 **FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

The council received the report and verbal update of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members were satisfied with the current arrangement of meeting facilitation and saw no reason to amend them.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, meetings of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee continue in their current form with two cycle meetings being held online and the final (Full) meeting, encompassing minutes, climate and biodiversity items be held in-person and,
3. That, Working Party and Task & Finish Group Meetings continue to be held online.

623 **APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES - WITNEY TOWN CHARITY**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members were asked to consider nominations for one additional town council nominated trustee for Witney Town Charity.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the decision on a nominated trustee be deferred to the Stronger Communities Committee on 23 January 2023

624 **MOTION - WITNEY HIGH STREET**

The council received a motion on Witney High Street, proposed by Councillor Thomas Councillor Temple was not present and therefore the Chair asked for a member to second the motion. Councillor Gwatkin seconded with a request for an amendment, being the removal of the first paragraph.

Councillor Enright requested a further amendment, with the removal of the initial wording of the third paragraph.

A vote took place regarding the removal of the first paragraph – Members in favour 10. Cllr Ashby was an abstention.

A vote took place regarding the removal of the initial working of third paragraph – Members in favour 10. Cllr Ashby was an abstention.

Councillor Thomas agreed with the amendments to his initial motion and expressed that the most important outcome was to call on OCC to action the scheduling of public meetings.

Amended Motion to read:

‘At the Full Council Meeting on 1st August 2022, Witney Town Council agreed that the Corn Exchange be offered to Oxfordshire County Council to host open meetings with Witney Residents so that everyone has a voice about the future of our High Street. As of yet, these meetings have not come to fruition.

This Council calls on the Leader to write to Oxfordshire County Council to set out dates for fully accessible, open public meetings about the plans for the High Street that will enable Highway Planners to set out fully costed plans to transform our High Street for the better.’

Resolved:

That, the Town Clerk and Leader of the Council write to OCC to request action in the scheduling the public meetings.

625 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received the report of the Secretary to the Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor advised that he and Councillor Ashbourne attended the Remembrance event in Unterhaching and were warmly welcomed and the people of Unterhaching asked for their good wishes to be passed onto the Council.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

626 **COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

The Chair felt very strongly about some of the complaint points outlined in the report that resulted from the inappropriate actions of members of the Council.

The Chair said it was a “crying shame” that a resident did not attend the Remembrance Service due to the issuing of a political leaflet that advised that the council had cancelled the parade and it was an outrage that members should use what should be a sombre and nonpartisan event for crass and political point scoring.

The Chair continued to say that the Council was an open, democratic, and accessible council. Members could attend any committee and receive the minutes of all committees. If members felt that anything was not reflected correctly then they should raise this so a correction can be made. If members acquiesced to the accuracy of the minutes, however, then post on social media to contradict this, then it was “pitiful” and if they chose to not turn up to a meeting but then spread division and discontent within the town then this was “pathetic”.

The Chair also expressed that the growing culture of mistruth and mendacity emulating from members, ex councillors and in some cases members of other authorities that did not represent Witney was “contemptable”. These actions held in contempt the good residents of Witney, the councils’ officers and the people that give up their time for the benefit of Witney. There was even an occasion where a member of the council was sworn at to their face. Members that had contributed to this either actively or inactively or had been present when this had occurred should be “deeply ashamed”.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the comments of the Chair are noted.

627 **RESIDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2022 UPDATE**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

The report outlined items listed in the survey which were being addressed in the current or a future year. It was important to highlight the town council was an open and transparent organisation and feedback was welcomed and acted on where possible.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

628 **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FLOOD WARDEN SCHEME**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members thought that it would be residents that were close to river and watercourse that would naturally be more interested and engaged in becoming a flood warden, for example the residents of Riverside Gardens. The importance of “eyes and ears” could not be underestimated.

Members raised questions of what the Council’s insurance policy would cover and asked the Town Clerk to investigate further before the scheme was promoted.

It was also suggested that Witney Flood Mitigation Team could be contacted and asked if they had any recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, the Town Clerk checks the detail of insurance cover and if there is any restriction before promotion in the community.

629 **VANDALISM & HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Council received a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk concerning internal health and safety testing.

Resolved:

That, the verbal report be noted.

Councillor H Eaglestone left the meeting.

630 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was nothing to report in respect of Communications from the Leader.

631 **TOWN CRIER - COMMONWEALTH DAY PROCLAMATION**

The Council received the correspondence of the Town Crier.

Resolved:

That, the Town Crier acknowledges the invitation for the Town Crier to participate in the Commonwealth Day Celebrations at Oxford in March 2023.

632 **LE TOUQUET - PASSING OF HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

The Council received the correspondence from the Mayor of Le Touquet Paris-Plage.

Members were pleased to hear that Le Touquet Paris-Plage were considering naming their airport after the Late Queen.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

633 **A40 UPDATE**

The Council received the correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council regarding a delay in Compulsory Purchase Orders for the A40 Project. An update had already been provided by Cllr Enright at the beginning of the meeting on this matter.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

634 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions for the Leader of the Council.

635 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents sealed.

The meeting closed at: 8.20 pm

Chair