

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Wednesday, 4 January 2023

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

Present:

Councillor L Duncan (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	V Gwatkin
	L Ashbourne	A D Harvey
	T Ashby	A Prosser
	D Butterfield	R Smith
	O Collins	D Temple
	H Eaglestone	P Hiles
	D Enright	D Thomas
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	None.	

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M Jones.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

9 COUNCIL BUDGET: REVISED BUDGET 2022/23 AND ESTIMATE 2023/24

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk advised the Council had agreed budget parameters in September which had led to the budget presented before them. The revised budget was better than anticipated a year earlier.

In response to questions the Town Clerk was able to give clarification in respect of the Ground Maintenance contract which was brought 'in house' at the start of October 2022. It was estimated this would make significant savings, however, more importantly allow the council to deliver a better service to the town's residents. It was still unclear what the final budget would be only three months in but there was a contingency in place for any disparity.

In relation to a request for a medium to long-term financial strategy, the Town Clerk advised that resources had not been in place for such a document until now, but the strategies for services adopted by the Council reflected this information.

One member raised that the running costs for the public halls were higher than they thought acceptable. The Town Clerk explained the Halls were not there just to generate income, they also provided an invaluable community resource. It was expected that with the new seating and improvement works coming to an end, that an increase in events ticket and bar sales would help to reduce the deficit. The Venue & Events Officer would be reviewing the Corn Exchange business plan to ensure this was the case.

A vote was called, all members were in favour of the recommendations made by the Town Clerk.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised budget for 2022/23 be adopted and,
3. That, the estimated budget for 2023/24 be adopted.

10 **TO FORMALLY DECLARE THE PRECEPT FOR 2023/24**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/RFO.

The current Band D council tax precept charge was £166.83. The proposal was to increase this by 4.95% which equated to £175.09 per annum.

The leader of the council commenced the debate by asking members to consider a nil increase given the current financial climate and credit crisis being suffered by residents.

Other members were also concerned of the impact of any increase on residents, however asked the Town Clerk what effect a nil increase would have on the Councils' finances. She confirmed any shortfall would have to be met from the general fund and that members should expect this to be approximately £92,000 based on the proposed budget presented in Agenda Item 3.

A proposal was made by Councillor D Enright and seconded by Councillor O Collins for the council to retain the £166.83 council tax charge for a Band D property for the forthcoming 2023/24 financial year. Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal with the exception of Councillor A Prosser who abstained.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Town Clerk be authorised to sign and serve a precept on the West Oxfordshire District Council, in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), requiring the District Council to pay the Town Council the sum of £1,861,708 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2023/24.

11 **WITNEY LOCAL CYCLING & WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

The Council received and considered the Draft copy of the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for which a consultation on the draft plan was open until 20 January 2023.

Members discussed the plan at length and generally supported the proposals and the work which had gone into it by Oxfordshire County Council.

Members raised some concerns. There was no reference to Eynsham village even though this fell within the 10km catchment area covered in the plan, and that new developments such as Windrush Place and Colwell Green were not included in the short-term plan.

Members recognised the need to make journeys as short as possible but agreed to object to any measures which suggested the use of or increased foot or cycle traffic south of Witney Lake because of the private road adjacent to Lakeside allotments off of Witney Road.

Resolved:

1. That, the Draft LCWIP be noted and,
2. That, the Deputy Town Clerk liaises with the chair of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee in order to submit a suitable response on behalf of the Council to the consultation by 20 Jan 2023.

12 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The council received correspondence by way of a letter of thanks from Mr Shadbolt, Headmaster of Wood Green School in respect of the recently introduced 20Mph speed limit in Woodstock Road.

Councillor L Duncan added that she had also received verbal thanks from Mr Shadbolt whilst attending a Wood Green event in her capacity of Mayor.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

The meeting closed at: 8.13 pm

Chair