

**MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 13 February 2023**

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

**Present:**

Councillor L Duncan (Chair)

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

**76     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Jones, R Smith, J Aitman, D Thomas and T Ashby.

**77     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

**78     MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held 5 December 2022 and 4 January 2023 were received.

Members raised two minor discrepancies in the minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2022.

Firstly, the silence for former Mayor Jim King were led by Councillor Owen Collins. This had been amended in the minutes prepared for signing.

Secondly, the two references to the “climate” event in Councillor Aitman’s District Councillor update (minute 613) should have read “cost of living”.

A Member noted the minutes did not refer to a discussion regarding the cost of the proposed County Council Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) packages. The Plan currently listed the costs at £73m but it was widely accepted these would be higher, possibly over £100m. These were formidable amounts of money alone, and it would be disappointing if these

proposals were implemented to the detriment of other infrastructure and service needs from developer funding, if no other financial contributions were available.

**Resolved:**

1. That, amendments are made to the minutes of 5 December 2022 be noted to correct the discrepancies and,
2. That, the minutes of the meetings held 5 December 2022 and 4 January 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

79 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

80 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

A representative of the Witney Police Team was unable to attend the meeting and no written or verbal report was provided.

The Chair expressed her gratitude to the Witney Police Team for the work they do and understood the pressures they were under to be able to attend Council meetings.

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

**Oxfordshire County Council**

Councillor Enright provided an update advising that it was “Budget Week” at the District and County Councils. Efficiencies would need to be agreed which would not affect front line services, particularly in Adult and Social Care at the County.

Councillor Enright also reported the County Council were progressing with a number of schemes including the Shores Green improvements for which planning would be submitted in March 2023. The Eynsham Park & Ride development was also progressing, and changes would be more evident soon.

**West Oxfordshire District Council**

Councillor Prosser advised the District Council would be hosting a Climate & Biodiversity event on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**Resolved:**

That, the verbal updates from Councillors be noted.

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

There were no reports from Councillors.

83 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

The Council received minutes of Committees and Sub Committees.

84 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE - 6 DECEMBER 2022, 3 JANUARY AND 24 JANUARY 2023**

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 6 December 2022, 3 January and 24 January 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

85 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 9 JANUARY 2023**

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 9 January 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

86 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 16 JANUARY 2023**

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 16 January 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

87 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 23 JANUARY 2023**

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

SC43 - The Chair updated members that following correspondence received, to be discussed later in the meeting under Agenda Item 19, amendments had been made to the Council's plan of events for the coronation.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 23 January 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

88 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 30 JANUARY 2023**

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

F69 – The Deputy Town Clerk gave a verbal update in respect of the application received from Clean Slate. Additional Information had been received from the charity and circulated to members of the committee. Members deferred the decision to the next meeting.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the grant request from Clean Slate be deferred to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance committee on 27 March 2023 and,
2. That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 30 January 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

89 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received the report of the Mayor & Mayor's Secretary.

The Mayor thanked all the Officers, Staff and Deputy Mayor for their support whilst carrying out her duties and particularly whilst she was out of action in the previous weeks.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

90 **STANDING ORDERS**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

A Member queried the start time of meetings being 6pm for Committees and 7pm for the meeting of the Full Council. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed this has historically been the case to allow members to balance their attendance with work and home commitments.

A member requested the amendment of the use of the word 'he' in section 47e in order for it to be non-gender specific in line with the rest of the document.

Adoption of the amended Standing Orders was proposed by Councillor Collins, seconded by Councillor Harvey and unanimously approved by all members.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the amendment to 47e be made and,
3. That, these Standing Orders be adopted by Witney Town Council with immediate effect.

91 **APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND EXTERNAL BODIES/OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

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

### **Witney Town Charity**

The Council had a vacancy for a nominated trustee and unable to fill the position had sought suggestions from the Charity. Members welcomed the appointment of one of those proposed, providing they were able to commit to the role. The appointment was proposed by Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Harvey and approved unanimously.

A Member expressed thanks to the Witney Town Charity and the work they did to ensure that the Almshouses remained in a beautiful and well-presented manner.

### **Air Quality Action Plans (AQAP) Steering Group**

The District Council was in the process of establishing this steering group and sought a representative from the Town Council.

Councillor Duncan was happy to attend this group and report back to the Council. There were no objections to her offer.

#### **Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council proposes the appointment of the suggested nominee to serve on Witney Town Charity on behalf of Witney Town Council and,
3. That, Councillor L Duncan represents Witney Town Council on the AQAP Steering Group.

## 92 **CIVILITY & RESPECT**

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

Members were disappointed that the local MP was not prepared to support Early Day Motions (EDMs) and agreed EDM 611 was vitally important as it sought to formalise civility and respect standards at parish and town council level, and discussed the action that they wish to take.

A member raised that Mr Courts' reasoning for not supporting EDMs was due to his holding a Ministerial position. As this is no longer the case it was felt the council should follow up earlier correspondence on this issue to ask if he could advise of the current position.

All members were in agreement to support the EDM.

#### **Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Witney Town Council support the EDM 611 – Intimidation at community, parish and town councils and,
3. That, Witney Town Council write to MP Robert Courts to request his support in EDM 611.

## 93 **WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk in respect of the partnership agreement between Witney Town Council and Witney Music Festival.

The adoption of the partnership agreement was proposed by Councillor Gwatkin and seconded by Councillor Collins.

Members voted. The proposal was carried, with voting as follows:

In Favour	6
Against	0
Abstentions	3

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the partnership agreement with Witney Music Festival be adopted.

94 **DESIGNATION OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Members noted the importance of the Responsible Financial Officer in statute and welcomed Mr Warner to the role.

**Resolved:**

That, Mr N Warner be officially designated as the Responsible Financial Officer of Witney Town Council.

95 **PROJECTS UPDATE**

The Council received the report and verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members were updated on a number of projects. Further discussion arose on some of the projects.

**Platinum Jubilee Garden**

Members were disappointed to hear that on the first night following its installation at Unterhaching Park the post to support the sundial was vandalised. The Operations Manager would be investigating alternative options for the installation..

Members were happy for the proposed planting to go ahead at Unterhaching Park as this would ensure the Sundial is complemented as planned when the installation can be completed.

**Children's Memorial Garden**

It was advised that the proposed archway would need to be made from a more robust material than first thought. Members agreed that this decision be delegated to the Officers and the Chair of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments (HCA) Committee.

**Burwell Hall Boiler Replacement**

Members discussed and agreed that a decision on a replacement should be deferred to the HCA Committee with the request that it is looked at one final time with all options considered. They stressed it was now important that a decision is reached.

**The Leys Traffic Calming**

Members received an update advising that an informal survey of the residents surrounding the Leys was in progress and results would be known soon. Members agreed to defer to the Parks & Recreation Committee to allow feedback to be provided to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report, and verbal report be noted and,
2. That, Officers, and the Chair of the HCA Committee decide on a suitable memorial archway for the Children's Memorial Garden and,
3. That, a decision for the Burwell Hall Boiler is reached by the HCA Committee and,
4. That, the Parks & Recreation Committee feedback to OCC regarding the Leys Traffic Calming responses.

96 **COUNCIL'S VEHICLE FLEET**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O.

Members discussed the Council's fleet of vehicles and the global issues impacting the delivery of electric vehicles. Members recognised the immediate need for vehicle replacements, however wished to retain the option of the UTV and therefore agreed to leave the order in place so the issue and how it relates to the Council's carbon neutrality objectives are considered.

Members discussed the importance that the Ranger and Works Team had suitable vehicles to perform their duties, particularly now the Council was responsible for all the grounds maintenance.

The proposal to purchase a vehicle for the Ranger was proposed by Councillor D Harvey and seconded by Councillor O Collins.

Members voted. The proposal was carried, with voting as follows:

In Favour	8
Against	0
Abstentions	1

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a vehicle is purchased for the Ranger and,
3. That, the decision to cancel the purchase of the UTV is deferred to the next meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee and,
4. That, the purchase of future vehicles is made via the procurement partnership.

97 **VANDALISM AND HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk confirming the change in Health & Safety support partner.

**Resolved:**

That, the verbal report be noted.

98 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

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

99 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council received the following correspondence.

100 **WITNEY HIGH STREET**

The council received correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) concerning the Witney High Street enhancement scheme.

Members were disappointed that OCC were yet to make arrangements to hold consultation sessions with residents.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the OCC Project Lead had attended the meeting of Witney Traffic Advisory Committee on 10 January 2023 and advised stakeholder and public consultation would happen, likely after local elections in May and that there would be further engagement during the year. No further update had been received.

Members agreed that pressure should be maintained by sending correspondence to confirm that free use of the Corn Exchange is available to OCC to utilise for the public consultations.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, a reminder letter, offering the Corn Exchange for public consultation meetings, is issued to OCC.

101 **KING CHARLES III'S CORONATION**

The Council received correspondence from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities giving direction regarding community events for the Coronation period.

**Resolved:**

That, the correspondence be noted.

102 **A40 HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE - SMART CORRIDOR**

The Council received correspondence from the Department of Transport in relation to the removal of the Side Roads and Compulsory Purchase Orders.

**Resolved:**

That, the correspondence be noted.

103 **ROTARY CLUB OF WITNEY - FIREWALK**

The Council received correspondence from the Rotary Club of Witney requesting support for their Fire Walk Event on 24 March 2023.

Members discussed the request and agreed to support by way of a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange and warmly supporting them via the council social media channels and noticeboards.



**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted.
2. That, subsidised use of the Corn Exchange is provided for the event,
3. That, the Council and Councillor support the publicising of the event.

104 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A member asked that the watering cans at Windrush Cemetery are corrected. They currently have the spelling of "Cemetary" rather than "Cemetery"

105 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents sealed.

---

The meeting closed at: 8.21 pm

---

Chair