

Annual Council Meeting of Witney Town Council



Wednesday, 17th May, 2023 at 7.00 pm

To: J Aitman, T Ashby, O Collins, L Duncan, R Smith, D Temple, D Enright, A Bailey, L Cherry, Crouch, G Doughty, J Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, Meadows, D Newcombe, Robertshaw, S Simpson and J Treloar.

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Main Hall, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting and speak on a particular item should contact the Committee Clerk (derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) in advance.

Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Deputy Town Clerk or Committee Clerk know before the start of the meeting.

Agenda

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 the first business of the Annual Meeting is the election of the Mayor, and this marks the start of the new Council year.

1. Election of Mayor

To receive nominations for the position of Mayor for the civic year 2023-24 and to elect the Chair/Mayor of the Town Council.

[Cllr O Collins was elected as Mayor-Elect at the Council Meeting held on 17 April 2023]

2. Election of Deputy Mayor

To receive nominations for the position of Deputy Chair/Mayor for the civic year 2023-24 and to elect the Deputy Chair/Mayor.

3. Election of Leader

To receive nominations for the position of Leader of Witney Town Council for the Council term and to elect the Leader.

4. Election of Deputy Leader

To receive nominations for the position of Deputy Leader of Witney Town Council for the Council term and to elect the Deputy Leader.

5. Designation of Mayor's Chaplain

To note and confirm the Rev'd Toby Wright as Mayor's Chaplain for the Council term.

6. **Apologies for Absence**

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Councillors who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk (derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) prior to the meeting, stating the reason for absence.

7. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

8. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 12)

To approve and adopt the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 April 2023 in accordance with Standing Order 18 including questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item.

9. **Adoption of Meetings Calendar 2023-24** (Pages 13 - 14)

To formally adopt the timetable of Council Committee meetings for the 2023/24 municipal year.

10. **Appointment of any new Committees in accordance with Standing Order 30**

To consider whether to create any new Council Committees.

11. **Review (or request the Town Clerk to review) any Terms of Reference**

To consider whether any Committee terms of reference should be reviewed. If not, terms of reference will be included on the agenda of the first meeting of the Committee.

12. **Appointment of Committees, Sub-Committees & Working Partys and the Election of Chairs** (Pages 15 - 16)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk, and appoint Members to the Standing Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Parties, Task & Finish Groups and Elect the Chairs for the municipal year 2023/24.

13. **Appointment to Advisory Committees & External Bodies/Outside Organisations** (Pages 17 - 20)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and appoint Members Advisory Committees & External Bodies/Outside Organisations and Elect the Chairs for the municipal year 2023/24.

14. **Review of Council Policies**

To note Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Council were reviewed earlier this year and review any further policies if appropriate.

a) Standing Orders (reviewed and adopted February 2023)

b) Financial Regulations (reviewed and adopted March 2023)

15. **Review of any delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff, and other local authorities**

No current delegations are to be carried over other than those set in Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. A review of the Scheme of Delegation to Committees will take place during the municipal year.

16. **Adoption of the General Power of Competence** (Pages 21 - 22)

To reaffirm that the Town Council meets the eligibility criteria for the General Power of Competence, as set out in section 8 of the Localism Act 2011 and to formally adopt the Power.

17. **Member's Code of Conduct** (Pages 23 - 36)

To formally adopt the member's Code of Conduct for the new Council term.

18. **Council Bank Mandate** (Pages 37 - 38)

To receive the joint report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O and Responsible Financial Officer.

19. **Councillor Annual Attendance Register** (Pages 39 - 40)

To receive the annual Councillor attendance register for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

20. **Position of Town Crier** (Pages 41 - 44)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.



Town Clerk

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**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 17 April 2023

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

Present:

L Duncan (Chair)

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

190 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Hiles, D Thomas and D Butterfield.

191 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

192 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2023 were received.

A member requested clarification regarding the Witney Music Festival partnership agreement and potential liability placed on the Council, the member was not present and therefore unaware of it was approved by the Council at the meeting of 13 February 2023. It was confirmed the Memorandum of Understanding had been created to avoid any such issues occurring and had been agreed under minute item 93.

Councillor J Aitman requested that all councillors considered supporting the events being arranged by the Council to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles. Minute Item 101 related.

Councillor D Harvey advised that the water can misspelling was "Cemetery" and not "Cemetary" as noted in minute item 104.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

193 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

194 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Apologies were received from Inspector Ball that unfortunately a representative of the Witney Thames Valley Policing Team was unable to attend the meeting. No written or verbal report was provided.

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

Oxfordshire County Council

Councillor Enright provided an update advising that a decision regarding the Shores Green development in East Witney had been deferred to May due to the supply of information from South Leigh Parish Council.

West Oxfordshire District Council

Councillor Enright provided an update advising that WODC were close to securing a new tenant for the empty unit, previous occupied by Debenhams. He also expressed his delight with the umbrella decorations that added to the look for the shopping area.

Councillor Smith updated that the Audit Committee would analyse the results of the voting due to take place on 4 May 2023 in order to gather demographic information to assist with decision making. A lot of work has gone into ensuring voters were aware of the new requirements to provide Identification in order to vote.

Councillor Prosser advised members that the next stage of the Local Plan was due for decision the following week and that there has been good engagement with the consultation. The next stages were to call for sites for use as Green Space, renewable energy and housing.

Councillor Aitman asked members to provide any comments or feedback they had in respect of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates from Councillors be noted.

196 **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.

197 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE - 14 FEBRUARY, 7 MARCH & 28 MARCH 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 14 February, 7 March and 28 March 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

198 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 6 MARCH 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 6 March 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

199 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 13 MARCH 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 13 March 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

200 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 20 MARCH 2023**

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 20 March 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

201 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 27 MARCH 2023**

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 27 March 2023 be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

202 **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING - 15 MARCH 2023**

The Mayor presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on 15 March 2023 be received and be adopted as a true record.

203 **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW**

The Council received the amended Financial Regulations as recommended by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee per minute no. F158.

The adoption of the Financial Regulations was proposed by Councillor Ashbourne and seconded by Councillor Harvey.

Members voted and the proposal was carried unanimously.

Resolved:

That, the amended Financial Regulations be adopted by Witney Town Council.

204 **WORKING PARTY'S**

The council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk in respect of the dissolution of the councils working parties along with smaller task and finish groups as their objectives had been achieved.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the council's Corn Exchange, 20mph and Platinum Jubilee Working parties be dissolved.
3. That, the smaller task and finish groups be dissolved on the completion of their objectives.

205 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

The Mayor thanked those councillors that attended the Civic Reception to celebrate the Citizen of the Year Awards which was the highlight of her term as Mayor.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

206 **TO AGREE A MAYOR ELECT**

The Council considered the election of a Mayor Elect. Members discussed at some length and merits of the election.

An agreement to elect a Mayor elect was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Prosser.

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

In Favour	9
Against	3
Abstentions	1

Further discussion ensued regarding the importance of ensuring that any candidates were hard-working and aware of the importance of a good social media presence. Upon completion, Councillor O Collins was proposed to be Mayor Elect by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Gwatkin.

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

In Favour	9
Against	3
Abstentions	1

Resolved:

1. That, a Mayor Elect be agreed and,
2. That, Councillor O Collins be Mayor Elect subject to a successful re-election to the Town Council on 4 May 2023.

207 **COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH SCHEME**

The council received the report and verbal update of the Deputy Town Clerk regarding a proposed speed watch scheme.

Members discussed the council providing support to establish the scheme which would include some administration and members were in favour providing it was made clear that responsibility lay with the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC).

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, administration support is provided by council staff to TAC in the establishment and administration of a Community Speedwatch Scheme..

208 **VANDALISM AND HEALTH & SAFETY**

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

Members discussed the issues experienced relating to access from Ducklington Village to the Country Park either via the privately owned access road at the Allotment end or via the Scottish & Southern Electric owned access road.

Members requested that Witney schools were contacted to advise of anti-social behaviour in Tower Hill Cemetery and also the other areas of the town and to encourage their students to be more socially responsible.

Regarding Health & Safety events, Members heard that the council had completed the Fire Extinguisher assessment. A swing had been identified as unsafe in a recent inspection Which had led to the replacement of all swing chains across the Council's play areas.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, a letter is issued to Witney Schools regarding anti-social behaviour.

209 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

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

210 **CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

The Council received correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council regarding the transfer of on-street parking enforcement that took effect on 1 April 2023.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

211 **CIVILITY & RESPECT - ETHICAL STANDARDS REVIEW - STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

The Council received correspondence from the office of Robert Courts MP in response to his letter to Paul Scully MP concerning the Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Members were disappointed to see the errors in the letter and lack of further support to an Early Day Motion on the issue.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

212 **THAMES VALLEY POLICE - NEW CHIEF CONSTABLE**

The Council received correspondence from Thames Valley Police advising of the appointment of Jason Hogg as the new Chief Constable.

Members asked that a letter of congratulations is sent to him along with an invitation to attend a meeting of the full council. All members were in favour.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted.
2. That, a letter of congratulations is sent along with an invite to attend a meeting.

213 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions for the Leader.

214 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents sealed.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Mayor thanked Councillor D Harvey and Councillor H Eaglestone, for their longstanding service, along with all other councillors not standing in the upcoming elections. She also thanked all staff who guided the council through the COVID period to ensure the continued services for the town.

Councillor Gwatkin also received thanks for her support, leadership and dealing with official correspondence on behalf of the council.

Councillor Harvey reflected on his 25 years as a Councillor following his decision not to stand in the upcoming elections. He thanked the support of officers and staff during this time.

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair

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Witney Town Council – Calendar of Meetings 2023-24

			All meetings held at the Corn Exchange, Witney unless otherwise stated on the published Agenda						
CLIMATE, BIO-DIVERSITY & PLANNING	6pm	Tuesday	18 April 2 May 23 May 13 June*†	4 July 25 July*†	15 August 5 September 26 September*†	17 October 7 November 28 November*†	19 December 9 January 30 January*†	20 February 12 March 9 April*†	23 April 14 May*†
PARKS & RECREATION	6pm	Monday	22 May	3 July	4 September	30 October	15 January	4 March	
HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS	6pm		5 June ^x	10 July	11 September	6 November	22 January	11 March	
STRONGER COMMUNITIES	6pm		12 June	17 July	18 September	13 November	29 January	18 March	
POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE (& Personnel sub-committee)	6pm		19 June	24 July	25 September	20 November	5 February	25 March	
COUNCIL	7pm		26 June***	31 July	9 October	4 December 11 December**	19 February	15 April ^x	

Sub- Committees

Working parties

Annual Council Meeting – Wednesday 15th May 2024

Annual Town Meeting – Wednesday 20th March 2024

NOTE: CHRISTMAS BREAK – Meetings will not be called between 19 December 2023 and 3 January 2024 unless deemed necessary

* Indicates full Planning Committee Meeting, including minutes † Meeting to incorporate Environmental/Climate Items
Full Planning/Environmental meetings will be held 'in person' with other planning meetings being held online.

** Meeting on 11 December 2023 for budget purposes only

*** Meeting for adoption of AGAR

^x Meeting outside of normal schedule due to Bank Holiday

Witney Traffic Advisory Committee at 2.30pm – 13th June 2023, 26th September 2023, 16th January 2024, 26th March 2024

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ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Date:	Wednesday, 17 May 2023
Title:	Appointment of Standing Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties, and the Election of Chairs
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Background

The Town Council has five standing Committees which cover various aspects of its work. A copy of the Committee Structure is attached as Appendix A to this report.

For ease the Deputy Town Clerk has provided the following table with details of the membership required.

Committee/Sub-Committee	Membership required
a) Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee	6 Members + Ex-officio Town Mayor & Leader
b) Parks & Recreation Committee	6 Members + Ex-officio Town Mayor & Leader
c) Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee	6 Members + Ex-officio Town Mayor & Leader
d) Stronger Communities	6 Members + Ex-officio Town Mayor & Leader
e) Policy, Governance & Finance	2 Members + Chair of the above Standing Committees and Ex-officio Town Mayor & Leader
f) Personnel Sub-Committee <i>[this is a sub-committee of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee]</i>	Town Mayor, Leader, and Chair of above Standing Committees. Subject to inclusion of an elected Member with experience in this field maybe 1 additional Member
g) Disciplinary & Grievance Panel	3 Members* – must not be Chair or Members of Personnel/Policy Governance & Finance Committee

NOTE: The Vice-chair of these Committees/Sub-Committees will be appointed at the first meeting.

Working Parties	Membership required
None Currently	
Task & Finish Groups	Membership required
Inclusivity & Diversity Panel	Chairs of Committees

NOTE: The Chair of the Working Parties will be appointed at the first meeting.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. that the membership to the Council's Standing Committees (a to d) be elected, and;
2. that the Chairs of those Standing Committees be elected, and;
3. that in order to form the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee at € – it be made up of the Committee Chairs (a to d) plus Ex-Officio Town Mayor and Leader, plus 2 additional Members to make the membership of 8 Members;
4. that the Personnel Sub-Committee is formed of the Town Mayor and Leader, plus the Chairs of the Standing Committees
5. that a Disciplinary & Grievance Panel is elected – *to be formed from Councillors not sitting on the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee* – membership is a minimum of 3.

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Date:	Wednesday, 17 May 2023
Title:	Appointments to Advisory Committees and Outside Organisations
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Background

The Town Council appoints representatives to the following Advisory Committees/Outside Bodies and it is usually recommended that those appointed as per below should serve until the Annual Council Meeting following the next ordinary election of Councillors in 2027.

Witney Traffic Advisory Committee	-	4
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils [Larger Councils]	-	1 – Leader of the Council
West Witney Sports & Social Club	-	2
Witney Town Band	-	1
Witney & District Twinning Association	-	3 (Mayor (Ex officio))
West Oxfordshire Museum Centre	-	1
St Mary's Church Preservation Trust	-	Mayor
Volunteer Link Up	-	1
RAF Brize Norton – Local Consultation Working Group	-	1
Witney Allotment Association	-	1
Witney Youth Council Mentors	-	2
Friends of the Cemeteries	-	2
Home Start Champions	-	3
Lower Windrush Valley Project	-	1
West Oxfordshire Community Transport	-	1
Witney Fair Trade Action Group Champion	-	1

NOMINEES – SERVING AS TRUSTEES

Listed below are the Town Council nominees serving on other outside bodies. The expiry dates of terms of office on these bodies are shown. The terms of office are set by the various bodies and Council appointments are made on the expiry of the term or vacancies caused by resignation, disqualification, etc.:

(* Denotes non-Member of Witney Town Council)

Term of office expires

Witney Town Hall Charity – 4-year term of office

The Witney Town Hall Charity owns the Town Hall, Townhouse and the Buttercross and is the Town Council's landlord. The primary purpose of the Charity is to ensure the properties are kept in good order, and secondly with the rental income a small grant pot is provided to support the work of local organisations.

Mr H B Eaglestone*	May 2025
Ms Mandy Collicut* (Co-opted Trustee)	Feb 2027
Cllr O Collins	May 2023
Mrs L Duncan	May 2023
Mrs R Crouch*	May 2026
Mr D Semaine* (Co-opted Trustee)	Oct 2023
Mrs L J Semaine*	Jun 2026
(The Town Council does not nominate co-opted Trustees)	

Witney Town Charity – 4-year term of office

The charitable objectives of the Witney Town Charity are:

1. The provision and maintenance of Almshouses for poor persons
2. The relief of poor persons in conditions of need, hardship or distress. It operates 18 Almshouses and also provides grants for those in need.

Within its constitution it allows for 6 Witney Town Councillors to be on the Trust as nominated Trustees

Mr B Beadle*	May 2026
Mrs M Jones*	Jun 2024
Mrs R Crouch*	May 2026
Vacancy	May 2027
Cllr J Aitman	Jun 2025
Mr C Woodward*	Feb 2026

Witney Educational Foundation (WEF) – 4-year term of office

WEF provides financial support for the schools of Witney and surrounding communities to enable all students to enjoy full range of activities offered by each school. It also provides grants for families in need, to assist with the cost of extra-curricular activities, educational visits, school clothing and other essential items.

Cllr J Aitman	July 2023
Cllr L Duncan	May 2025
Mr R W Barton*	May 2024
Mr C K Woodward*	May 2026

Cogges Welfare Trust Charity – 4-year term of office

The Cogges Welfare Trust Charity maintains the charities property including the upkeep of the Witney Market Clock and Clock House. Remaining income is used for the relief of hardship etc. by the way of grants to people in need.

J Aitman	July 2024
D Enright	July 2024
Mr H W Chirgwin*	July 2024

Madley Park Hall Trust - 4 year term of office

Objectives and aims: The provision and maintenance of a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of Witney and the surrounding area without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, including use for:

- (a) meetings, lectures and classes, and
- (b) other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants

J Aitman	May 2023
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Arising from the above it will be seen that nominations are required as listed below:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Witney Town Hall Charity:- | 2 Council-nominated vacancies |
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Members should note that the Clerk to the Trustees of Witney Town Hall Charity is now Mrs Sharon Groth, Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer of Witney Town Council.

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| 2. Witney Town Charity:- | 1 Council-nominated vacancy |
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- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 3. Witney Educational Foundation:- | |
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The term of office for Cllr Joy Aitman expires in July 2023.

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| 4. Madley Park Hall Trust:- | 1 Council-nominated vacancy |
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Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

- 1. consider the appointments to the outside bodies/organisations, and
- 2. consider the appointments as trustees to the four organisations where trusteeships have or are due to expire this municipal year.

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ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Date:	Wednesday, 17 May 2023
Title:	General Power of Competence
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with information so it can consider a resolution to renew the General Power of Competence (GPC), held by the Witney Town Council since 2016.

Background

The GPC provides the Town Council with ‘the power to do anything that individuals generally may do’ as long as they do not break other laws. It is intended to be the power of first resort instead of any other powers the Council may be entitled to use in legislation.

Before the GPC was introduced via the Localism Act in 2011 parish/town council’s powers were constrained to specific and appropriate legislation.

Having met the criteria for eligibility full council must resolve to effect the General Power of Competence. *The council must revisit the decision and make a new resolution at every ‘relevant’ annual meeting of the council to confirm that it still meets the criteria to enable the power to continue. A ‘relevant’ annual meeting is the annual meeting of the council after the next ordinary election has taken place.*

Current Situation

There are three conditions for eligibility which are as follows:

- **Resolution:** the council must resolve at a meeting that it meets the criteria for eligibility relating to the electoral mandate and relevant training of the clerk.
- **Electoral mandate:** at the time the resolution is passed, at least two thirds of the council must hold office as a result of being declared elected (i.e., not co-opted).
- **Qualified clerk:** At the time that the resolution is passed, the clerk must hold a recognised professional qualification (e.g., Certificate in Local Council Administration, Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy) that includes the CiLCA module relating to the general power of competence.

In consequence, eligibility remains in place until the ‘relevant’ annual meeting even if the conditions of the eligibility criteria have changed. If the council loses its qualified clerk or has insufficient elected councillors it must also record its ineligibility at the next ‘relevant’ meeting.

Environmental Impact

There are no environmental implications pertaining from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The only real limitation is that the general power of competence cannot be used to circumvent an existing restriction in an existing specific power; for example, it cannot be used to raise the precept.

Existing duties remain in place, such as having regard to the likely effect on crime/disorder and biodiversity. There are also many existing procedural and financial duties that remain in place for the regulation of governance (e.g., no delegation to a single councillor). Furthermore, councils must comply with relevant existing legislation (e.g., employment law, health and safety, equality legislation and duties relating to data protection and freedom of information).

If another council has a statutory duty to provide a service (e.g., a support service such as a Children's Service), it remains their duty to provide it. Nonetheless, under the General Power of Competence the Parish council may assist.

Financial Impact

- There is currently no fiscal impact relating to the Council invoking the General Power of Competence.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report; and

1. Resolve that Witney Town Council meets the criteria for eligibility, and therefore invokes the General Power of Competence, these being that:
 - a. At least two thirds of the council hold office as a result of being declared elected and;
 - b. The Clerk holds a recognised professional qualification.



Member Code of Conduct

1.0 Introduction

The Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council, and formally adopt a code of conduct, in accordance with the *Localism Act 2011*.

2.0 Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a Councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow Councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all Councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of the Councillor and in Local Government.

3.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a “Councillor” means a member or co-opted member of the local authority. A “co-opted member” is defined in the *Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4)* as “a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- 3.1 is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- 3.2 is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee”.

4.0 General Principles of Councillor Conduct

Everyone in public office and all who serve the public or deliver public services, including Councillors and local authority officers, should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles, (see Appendix A).

Building on these principles of selflessness, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and integrity and leadership, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of Councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in Councillors, on all occasions a Councillor shall:

- act with integrity and honesty
- act lawfully
- treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of Councillor.
- impartially exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- avoid conflicts of interest
- exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with the local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

These general principles have been incorporated into the obligations of the Code of Conduct as set out below.

5.0 Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of Councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a Councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a Councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a Councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a Councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including at face-to-face meetings, at online or telephone meetings, in written communication, in verbal communication, in non-verbal communication and in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish Councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

6.0 Standards of Councillor Conduct

This section sets out the obligations (in bold below), which are the minimum standards of conduct required of a Councillor. Should a Councillor's conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against them, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is also included below each obligation to help explain the reasons for the

obligations and how they should be followed.

6.1 Respect

A Councillor:

6.1.1 Shall treat everyone, including other Councillors and members of the public with respect.

6.1.2 Shall treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a Councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in Councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from everyone. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the relevant social media provider and/or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor-officer protocol.

6.2 Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

A Councillor:

6.2.1 Shall not bully any person.

6.2.2 Shall not harass any person.

6.2.3 Shall promote equalities and not discriminate against any person.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes

alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Legislation places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

6.3 Impartiality of Officers of the Council

A Councillor:

6.3.1 Shall not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral, (other than political assistants where applicable). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. A Councillor may question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, a Councillor must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

6.4 Confidentiality and access to information

A Councillor:

6.4.1 Shall not disclose information either given to them in confidence by anyone or acquired by them which they believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless

- i. They have received the consent of a person authorised to give it; or**
- ii. They are required by law to do so; or**
- iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or**
- iv. the disclosure is reasonable and in the public interest; and also made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the**

local authority and consultation with the Monitoring Officer has taken place prior to its release.

- 6.4.2 Shall not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of their role as a Councillor for the advancement of themselves, their friends, family members, employer or business interests.**
- 6.4.3 Shall not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.**
- 6.4.4 When making decisions on behalf of, or as part of, the Council shall have due regard to any professional advice provided by the Council's Officers.**

6.5 Disrepute

A Councillor:

- 6.5.1 Shall not bring their role or local authority into disrepute.**

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other Councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions.

6.6 Use of position

A Councillor:

- 6.6.1 Shall not use, or attempt to use, their position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of anyone.**

A Councillor should not take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and privileges to further their own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

6.7 Local authority Resources and Facilities

A Councillor:

- 6.7.1 Shall not misuse council resources.**
- 6.7.2 Shall, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use**

by others, act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which they have been elected or appointed.

A Councillor may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist them in carrying out their duties as a Councillor. Examples may include office support, stationery, equipment such as phones, computers and transport and access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

6.8 Compliance with the Code of Conduct

A Councillor:

- 6.8.1 Shall undertake Code of Conduct training as required by the local authority.**
- 6.8.2 Shall cooperate with any Code of Conduct assessment, investigation, hearing and/or determination.**
- 6.8.3 Shall not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.**
- 6.8.4 Shall comply with any sanction imposed on them following a finding that they have breached the Code of Conduct.**

It is extremely important for a Councillor to demonstrate high standards, to have your actions open to scrutiny and not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with the Monitoring Officer.

7.0 Registering and Declaring Interests

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

7.1 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

A Councillor must, within 28 days of taking office as a member or co-opted member, notify the Council's Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary interest as defined by regulations made by the Secretary of State (see Appendix B), where the pecuniary interest is yours, your spouse's or civil partner's, or is the pecuniary interest of somebody with whom you are living with as a husband or wife, or as if you were civil partners. Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You must disclose the interest at any meeting of the Council at which you are present, where you have a disclosable interest in any matter being considered and where the matter is not a 'sensitive interest'. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you must disclose the fact that you have an interest but do not have to disclose the nature of it. (A sensitive interest is an interest which, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, if disclosed, could lead to the Councillor, or a person connected with them, being subjected to violence or intimidation.) You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting.

Following any disclosure of an interest not on the Council's register, or the subject of pending notification, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days beginning with the date of disclosure.

Unless dispensation has been granted, by the Clerk, you may not participate in any discussion of, or vote on, or discharge any function related to any matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest. You must withdraw from the room or chamber when the meeting discusses and votes on the matter.

Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered, you must notify the Clerk of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up to date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in Appendix B is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

7.2 Other Registerable Interests

You must also register your other registerable interests with the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of taking office and ensure these are kept up to date by notifying any changes within 28 days.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in Appendix C), you must disclose the interest. Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where you have an Other Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered, you must notify the Clerk of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

7.3 Non-Registerable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests at 7.1 above), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a sensitive interest you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***affects*** your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out at 7.2 above and appendix C you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where you have a Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered, you must notify the Clerk of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

8.0 Gifts and Hospitality

A Councillor:

- 8.1 Shall not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.**
- 8.2 Shall register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.**
- 8.3 Shall register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that they have been offered but have refused to accept.**

The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality but there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered.

You do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a Councillor.

It is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a Councillor.

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in the table below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>

Contracts	<p>Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council —</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land and Property	<p>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.</p> <p>‘Land’ excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.</p>
Licenses	<p>Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.</p>

Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issues share capital of that class.

* 'Director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'Securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Appendix C: Disclosure of Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any Body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii)** directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii)** one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Date:	Wednesday, 17 May 2023
Title:	Bank Mandate – Authorised Signatories in accordance with Financial Regulations
Contact Officer:	Town Clerk – Sharon Groth RFO – Nigel Warner

Background

Financial Regulations require:

“that the council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO in consultation with the Town Clerk, and approved by the council following a recommendation from the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

They shall be regularly reviewed for safety and efficiency.

Two current accounts shall be maintained at the bank (currently Barclays), a general account, and an imprest account.

Banking arrangements may include online access to bank accounts subject to the scheme being approved by the Council and in accordance with these regulations and good practice.”

Current position

These current Financial Regulations, which detail the banking arrangements, were approved by the Town Council at its meeting on 17 April 2023, following a recommendation of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee.

These provide that:

1. All payments of less than £5,000 are authorised by the Town Clerk (or RFO/Deputy Town Clerk if appropriate permissions are in place by Council resolution) and paid by cheque or electronically, from the Council’s Imprest (No.2) account. The permissions for the Deputy Town Clerk and the RFO are detailed at Minute F164/23 “that the Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton and Responsible Financial Officer, Nigel Warner be approved as authorised officers in order to deal with banking queries and be able to cash cheques up to £500 for petty cash purposes.”

2. All payments of £5,000 or more require the approval of two members prior to payment and paid on the Council's General (No.1) account. To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque or order for payment with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the cheque counterfoil.

Following the Town Council elections, the Council is now required to appoint signatories in order to approve payments as a number of the signatories are no longer serving Members. The Council has previously appointed Members of its Policy, Governance and Finance Committee, as constituted in the first year of an administration, as cheque signatories and your officers **recommend** accordingly, that Members of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee as appointed by the Town Council at its meeting of 17 May 2023 are also appointed as payment signatories for all payments of £5,000 until the Annual Meeting due to take place in May 2027.

Furthermore, your officers **recommend** that the same principle applies to the surplus funds held in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and the Local Authorities Property Fund.

Environmental

There are no environmental matters directly related to this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The officer recommendations are inline with the Council's Financial Regulations and strengthen the financial checks and balances to negate the risk to the Council.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and RESOLVE to nominate the appointed members of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee, as constituted in the first year of an administration, as cheque signatories for all payments of £5,000 until the Annual Meeting due to take place in May 2027.

That the same principle applies to the funds held in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and the Local Authorities Property Fund.

If required, that two Councillors be nominated to be named as those with joint authority to deal with matters relating to the bank in the absence of the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and RFO.

Councillor Attendance 2022-23 – All Scheduled Meetings						
Councillor	Expected Attendances	Present	Percentage	Absent	Apologies received	In attendance
Cllr Joy Aitman	49	38	78 %	3	8	
Cllr Luci Ashbourne	22	14	64 %	0	8	1
Cllr Thomas Ashby	38	30	79 %	2	6	
Cllr Daniel Butterfield	19	12	63 %	4	3	
Cllr Owen Collins	32	30	94 %	0	2	
Cllr Liz Duncan	52	45	87 %	0	7	
Cllr Harry Eaglestone	20	14	70 %	1	5	
Cllr Duncan Enright	20	15	75 %	0	5	
Cllr Vicky Gwatkin	49	37	76 %	3	9	
Cllr David Harvey	16	7	44 %	0	9	
Cllr Phil Hiles	33	27	82 %	0	6	
Cllr Mel Jones	20	10	50 %	0	10	
Cllr Andy McMahon	14	3	21 %	9	2	
Cllr Andrew Prosser	32	31	97 %	0	1	
Cllr Ruth Smith	39	36	92 %	0	3	1
Cllr Dean Temple	9	4	44 %	3	2	
Cllr Darren Thomas	6	4	67 %	0	2	

*Note: The Annual Attendance includes those who were serving Councillors at the end of the 2022-23 term on 3rd May 2023.

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ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 17 May 2023

Title: Position of Town Crier

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Background

The position of Town Crier was established in 2019 by way of an ad-hoc competition at the annual Summer Carnival and later formalised as an official position under the umbrella of the town council in July 2020.

Prior to 2019, Witney had not previously had an official Town Crier as historically the Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council, by nature of the role as civic figurehead of the town (and first citizen) fulfilled this purpose; they are elected to represent the residents of Witney and the Town Council at civic engagements in the town.

At the meeting held on 11 May 2022, the Council resolved to continue the arrangements in place for the position of Town Crier for a further municipal year and agreed it should be considered again following the election of a new administration (minute number 216 refers).

Current Situation

The current incumbent has been in the post since 2019 and in this time has supported the Town Council, Mayor and local businesses at community events across the town. A volunteer job description was created for the position (attached as **Appendix A**).

Members should consider the position of Town Crier, supported by the Town Council and whether a new volunteer recruitment process should take place, or whether the position and incumbent should be confirmed for a further period of time.

Expressions of support for the current incumbent to continue in the post have been received from The Shake Shop and Witney In Pink team.

Environmental Impact

There are no environmental implications pertaining from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Falling under the umbrella of the Council it would need to ensure that the Town Crier would conduct themselves appropriately and not bring the Council into disrepute, and not misuse their position for their own gains. Consideration should probably be given to DBS checking.

Financial Impact

- There is currently no fiscal impact relating to the position. The current incumbent purchased her own outfit and equipment.
- A recruitment process would incur a potential small outlay as well as officer resources.
- A DBS check would incur a small fee.
- Membership to the Guild of Town Criers would incur a small fee (approx. £40).

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report; and

1. Consider how to proceed with the position of Town Crier for 2023-24 and beyond.

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