

**FULL COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 9 October 2023

At 7.01 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	T Ashby	D Edwards-Hughes
	R Smith	D Newcombe
	R Crouch	J Robertshaw
	G Doughty	S Simpson
	J Doughty	J Treloar
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	One member of the public.	

526 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright, J Aitman, G Meadows and L Cherry.

A dispensation request was received from Cllr L Cherry up to 18 March 2024 and agreed by Members. It was confirmed Cllr G Meadows would assume Chair-ship of the Stronger Communities Committee and attend the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meetings as its representative during this time.

527 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers at this time.

Councillor R Smith later declared a non-pecuniary interest at the commencement of the discussion of agenda item 18 as she attended the church which proposed to run the detached youth services programme.

528 MINUTES

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 31 July and the Extra Ordinary Council Meeting on 18 September were received.

A correction to the attendees was required for the Full Council Meeting on 31 July. The Head of Estates & Operations was recorded as present, this was incorrect it was in fact the Responsible Financial Officer.

Resolved:

1. That, a correction be made to the 31 July minutes to correct the attendees and,
2. That, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 31 July and the Extra Ordinary Council Meeting on 18 September be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

529 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A member of the public was present however this was only to observe the meeting and they did not wish to speak on any agenda item.

530 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Apologies were received from Inspector Chris Ball of Thames Valley Police as he was unable to attend to present an update.

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

West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr J Doughty advised she and other councillors had attended the Annual Formal Reception of 2120 (Witney) Squadron, RAF Air Cadets, the event was a great success, and the mayor received a gift of a copy of their new Insignia.

Cllr J Doughty also highlighted the new Westhive initiative that WODC had launched and thanked Cllr J Aitman for her help to bring this to fruition. She encouraged members to contact her should they need any further information.

Cllr T Ashby highlighted that £40,000 of funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund had been spent on the two new bridges and additional walking routes from the Windrush estate; further work was undertaken by Witney Woodland Volunteers to help further improve the area.

Cllr S Simpson encouraged members to attend the in-person presentation for North Witney Development with was to be held at Witney Community Primary School on 11 October 2023.

Lastly, Cllr R Smith advised she was pleased that the library had applied to Westhive to fund a community piano which would be installed there permanently, rather than the library having to share the Oxfordshire Libraries communal piano.

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

Witney Town Charity

Cllr R Crouch advised that the charity had conducted a successful visit to the Almshouses that form part of their remit.

533 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 4 SEPTEMBER 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 4 September be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

534 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 11 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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

An update was provided by officers on H471 – Members were advised that the new boiler had been installed at Burwell Hall.

Resolved:

1. That, the update be noted and,
2. That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 September be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

Councillor A Bailey arrived at 7:15pm

535 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 18 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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

Officers provided updates on the following items:

SC497 – The request for two Grit Bins to be installed on Kingfisher Meadows was returned by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as the roads had not yet been adopted. Members were further advised that the Committee Clerk had contacted the developer, David Wilson Homes to find a resolution.

SC495 – Members were advised that the four replacement bus shelters would be installed later that week, all with a Sedum living roof. Also, confirmation had been received that the four new bus stops due to be placed on the Windrush Place housing estate would also have Sedum living roofs and that the Council would continue to push for a reduced amount of Perspex for these stops. In response a members asked that officers request the addition of electronic update boards for these new stops.

SC488 – Members were asked for nominations to join a Task & Finish Group for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day commemorations. Councillors J Robertshaw, J Treloar, A Bailey and R Smith requested to join.

SC496 – Members were asked for nominations to join a Christmas Lights Working Party. Councillors T Ashby, R Crouch, D Edwards Hughes, A Bailey and G Doughty requested to join.

SC494 – Members expressed thanks to Officers and council team for the 2023 In Bloom project which resulted in an achievement of a Silver Award.

Resolved:

1. That, the above updated be noted and,
2. That, Officers enquire to the possibility of electronic bus time boards for the new Windrush estate bus stops and,
3. That, Councillors J Robertshaw, J Treloar, A Bailey and R Smith be appointed to serve on the 80th Anniversary of D-Day commemoration Task & Finish Group and,
4. That, a Christmas Lights Working Party be established with Councillors T Ashby, R Crouch, D Edwards-Hughes, A Bailey and G Doughty to serve and,
5. That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 18 September be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

536 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 25 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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

F502 – Members discussed the language used in relation to young people who were referred to the police for unwelcome behaviour and were keen not to stigmatise them. They were also pleased safeguarding would be taking place.

F509 – It was proposed by Councillor R Crouch, who had been contacted by Burwell residents, for use of Burwell Hall to hold a Christmas event for the over 60's, that a subsidised hire of the hall be agreed to a value of £106. This was seconded by Councillor J Doughty and all members agreed.

F514 - The Town Clerk advised members that the council had been awarded Disability Confident – Level One status, this illustrated the commitment to supporting staff and was reflected on the updated email signatures in use by council staff.

Resolved:

1. That, the updates be noted and,
2. That, a subsidised hire of Burwell Hall be granted to the value of £106 to facilitate the over 60's Christmas Event and,
3. That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 25 September be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

537 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE - 15 AUGUST, 5 SEPTEMBER & 26 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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

P519 – The Town Clerk advised that the recommendation to increase the budget from £2,000 to £6,000 to allow for the commissioning of appropriate, robust welcome signage for the Lake and Country Park, and for the delegation to officers to commission and install the signage was missed from the recommendations.

P524 – The Deputy Town Clerk asked members to clarify their understanding as to the areas in which cycling would be permitted. The leader of the council confirmed her understanding on two distinct areas, there were no other opinions offered.

Resolved:

1. That, sum of £6,000 is approved in order to commission appropriate, robust welcome signage for the Lake and Country Park and that the commissioning and installation the signage be delegated to officers and,
2. That, officers proceed with the notification to the public as to the areas in which cycling is permitted in and around the country park and,
3. That, the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee meetings held on 15 August, 5 September and 26 September be received, and any recommendations therein approved.

538 **CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2023**

The Committee received and considered the notice of the conclusion of audit for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Resolved:

That, the Council notes that the Council's External Auditor – Moore – has completed the review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for year ended 31 March 2023, and in their opinion the information is in accordance with the Proper Practices (external Audit Report and Certificate 2022/23 and Notice of Conclusion of Audit for year ended 31 March 2023).

539 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS - RECEPTION REQUEST**

The Committee received correspondence from The Rotary Club of Witney enquiring to the possibility of holding a civic reception on the evening of the Christmas Light switch on.

Members discussed at length the proposal however, had reservations given the level of information provided and knowledge of hosting events involving Witney's Twinned Towns.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded members that the Christmas Light switch event is solely organised by The Rotary Club with only a grant and subsidised use of the Corn Exchange being provided by the Town Council. He further explained that it was his understanding that it would be a small, simple event with minimal additional cost than was already budgeted for.

He also added that Witney Day Centre will have use of the Gallery Room for their members to enjoy the event.

Members requested that additional information be requested by Officers from the Rotary Club to ascertain the potential size of the event and their expectations, if the event was to be a simple welcoming drink and meeting the mayor then members were happy to delegate to officers to make the arrangements.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, Officers make further enquiries as to what was expected and,
3. That, arrangements to be delegated to Officers should a simple event be required.

540 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received the report of the Mayor's Diary Secretary which listed the civic engagements of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor since the last meeting.

The mayor spoke about his visit to the Air Cadets and how pleased he was to receive the framed copy of their new Insignia which was presented to him to mark the support they had received over the past 80 years.

He also thanked everyone who supported him during recent weeks.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

541 **VANDALISM AND HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received the report of the Operations Manager which included details of vandalism incidents.

A member asked that a review was carried out in respect of the gate installed at Tower Hill Cemetery as it was thought this was the reason for an increased level of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). The Deputy Town Clerk responded to say that this was discussed by the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee (H139 Relates) earlier in 2023 which decided to not restrict access, other than when a funeral was taking place.

In respect of the ASB incident in the Corn Exchange on 26 September, a Member asked if officers had considered joining the scheme which connects shops and pubs to provide assistance to each other when issues arise. A Member who had previously used the scheme whilst working in pubs in the town confirmed that it provided a good level of staff safety which is paramount.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Venue & Events Officer investigates the connection of the council's premises to the scheme.

542 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Leader; she was sorry that the October "Councillors in the café" event had to be cancelled due to a booking at the Corn Exchange and she encouraged members to reply to the survey of dates issued so that she can coordinate to ensure future events are adequately attended by councillors.

She also offered her thanks to Officers for their commitment to providing training for council staff such as the Mental Health 1st Aid and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training. She was also

pleased to hear of the Disability confident award that the Town Clerk spoke of earlier in the meeting and in the employment of new members of staff.

She encouraged members to engage with any training that is organised by Officers, such as the Finance and GDPR sessions that were recently organised. Should Councillors find additional training contact the Deputy Town Clerk for further guidance.

Resolved:

That, the verbal report be noted.

543 **RE-NAMING OF LE TOUQUET AIRPORT**

The Council received correspondence in respect of the renaming of Le Touquet airport to include "Elizabeth II".

Members were pleased to receive this correspondence.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

544 **WEST HIVE**

The Council received correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the launch of a new community fundraising platform, Westhive.

Members were pleased to hear of the launch.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

545 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor A Bailey asked the Leader if she would be minded to request the Mayor to write to Thames Valley Police requesting to be kept informed of any hate crime incidents that arise. Cllr Bailey's concerns stemmed from the recent unrest in Middle East between Israel and Palestine.

The Mayor responded by acknowledging that his thoughts are with the people affecting both abroad and at home and hoped that a peaceful resolution is found.

Resolved:

That, the council write to Thames Valley Police with a request to be kept informed of hate crime incidents.

546 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

The Town Clerk advised that the transfer of the whole registered title of Land at Little Green and Woodgreen, Witney from Hailey Parish Council was completed in August 2023.

Resolved:

That, the Council notes Seal no. 89 dated 29 August 2023 for the transfer of Land at Little Green and Woodgreen, Witney from Hailey Parish Council.

547 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

The member of the public left the meeting.

548 **YOUTH SERVICES**

The Council received the confidential report and verbal update of the Deputy Town Clerk in relation to the draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and “Bright Futures” to provide a detached youth work service.

Members discussed that it would be necessary to include various levels of metrics in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the service being provided by Bright Futures, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that results would be provided on a quarterly basis during scheduled meetings.

The members understood the financial commitment of the council, by way of the £28,000 grant committed them for the initial 12-month period however they would like the metrics to be tied closer to future grant approvals after that initial period. It was intrinsic to invest and grow a youth provision in the town and this agreement would be a starting point to providing a provision and it needed time to grow and establish.

A proposal was made by Councillor Bailey to agree to delegate the completion of the SLA to Officers provided the necessary metrics are included. All members were in agreement.

The Deputy Town Clerk agreed that any changes would be communicated to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for approval.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the redrafting of the Service Level agreement be delegated to officers and,
3. That, any final decision or amendments on the venture be approved by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

549 **MAJOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS**

The Council received a short verbal update from the Town Clerk regarding the ongoing discussion with Courtside CIC in relation to the Leys Masterplan.

A member requested that the subject of the Leys Masterplan be added to the next Parks & Recreation Committee Agenda in order for members to better understand the matters under discussion during a confidential session.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the subject of The Leys masterplan be added to the meeting of the Parks & recreation Committee on 30 October 2023.

The meeting closed at: 8.20 pm

Chair