

Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Tuesday, 7th November, 2023 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee - A Bailey, G Meadows, R Smith, J Aitman, O Collins, J Robertshaw, S Simpson and D Temple (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83965591698>

Meeting ID: 839 6559 1698

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

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members 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.

Standing Order 309a)(v) permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have informed the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

2. 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.

3. Public Participation

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of five minutes each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

4. **Planning Applications** (Pages 3 - 4)

To receive and consider a schedule of Planning Applications from West Oxfordshire District Council.

To also note an updated consultee comment agreed by members concerning planning application 23/01203/RES - Reserved matters approval for local centre and associated infrastructure pursuant to outline permission 12/0084/P/OP. Land East Of Isabelle Spencer Way Witney Oxfordshire. Comments were required ahead of this meeting due to a short time frame provided by the Planning Authority following the submission of updated plans.

5. **Pesticides Policy** (Pages 5 - 9)

To receive and consider the report and draft policy concerning the use of pesticides on Council owned land from the Operations Manager.



Town Clerk

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4.1 **WTC/151/23** Plot Ref :- 23/02635/S73 Type :- VARIATION
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 24/10/2023
Parish :- CENTRAL Date Returned :-
Location :- 33 BEECH ROAD Agent
BEECH ROAD
Proposals :- Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) to permission
23/02023/HHD to substitute flat roof section with pitched roof,
addition of rooflight and alteration to door position.

Observations :-

4.2 **WTC/152/23** Plot Ref :- 23/02470/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOL
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 24/10/2023
Parish :- CENTRAL Date Returned :-
Location :- 59 BURFORD ROAD Agent
BURFORD ROAD
Proposals :- Dropped Kerb for vehicular access.

Observations :-

4.3 **WTC/153/23** Plot Ref :- 23/02634/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOL
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 30/10/2023
Parish :- CENTRAL Date Returned :-
Location :- 29 WOODPECKER WAY Agent
WOODPECKER WAY
Proposals :- Erection of a garden shed and summerhouse.

Observations :-

4.4 **WTC/154/23** Plot Ref :- 23/02711/S73 Type :- VARIATION
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 30/10/2023
Parish :- SOUTH Date Returned :-
Location :- 87 CORN STREET Agent
CORN STREET
Proposals :- Variation of condition 4 of Planning Permission 20/03281/FUL to
allow a mixture of natural stone and stone coloured render in place
of artificial stone on external walls.

Observations :-

23/01203/RES - Reserved matters approval for local centre and associated infrastructure pursuant to outline permission 12/0084/P/OP. Land East Of Isabelle Spencer Way Witney Oxfordshire

Witney Town Council acknowledge the revised plans and welcome the new siting of Block A, and the improved location and number of cycle racks.

Witney Town Council had previously asked for a commitment to a full Zebra Crossing on the Western side of the development, crossing Isabelle Spencer Way – a walking route from the Community Hub to the school. However, Members note that Oxfordshire County Council has stipulated a signalised crossing, since OCC are the technical consultee on these matters, Witney Town Council defer to OCC as the recognised authority and agree; The times at which this pedestrian route is busiest, is the time that signalisation will improve safety for pedestrians, especially children.

In earlier comments Witney Town Council wrote that swift sightings are now prevalent on the site. Is there a commitment to swift bricks on the site?

Witney Town Council would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the earlier request for Grampian conditions to be imposed, which require that both this Community Hub development, and the Sports Pavilion development (23/01202/RES) be completed ahead of the construction of 74 homes sought by planning application 23/01206/FUL. Planning and construction conditions that protect the access to the football pitches during construction of the Pavilion and the Local Centre are imperative so that safe and screened-off access is available in the eventuality that the pitches are brought up to a playable standard, as they should be.

Witney Town Council see value in assigning one of the proposed retail units as a flexible community space/cafe, to be used for daytime and evening activities. The Council ask that the developers consider handing one space over to the community, or to a council to run for the community, as a public hall.

Where possible, members ask that the developer considers options which will reduce fossil fuel emissions and therefore improve carbon offset, by way of minimising energy demands and energy loss and demonstrate resilience to future climate change. In line with plan policies OS3 and OS4.

The Town Council also has little confidence in the capacity provided for local water and sewerage infrastructure on this development and asks for reassurances this area and Witney as a whole will be able to absorb the increased capacity required from further dwellings.

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 7 November 2023

Title: Pesticides Policy

Contact Officer: Operations Manager

Background

At the Climate, Biodiversity meeting on the 13th of June 2023, officers reported to the council on the current systems of weed control with the purpose of creating a new pesticide policy. It was decided officers draft a pesticide policy on Town Council-owned land for agreement at a future meeting.

This policy would also help administrative staff with complaints they receive regarding these matters, rather than dealing with each situation individually.

Current Situation

A draft policy has been started and will be submitted to the next Policy, Governance & Finance meeting on the 20th of November. This report is a chance for councillors to steer how that policy aims to tackle issues that require pesticide applications.

No Spray Zones

An aim of the policy is to control and reduce the application of pesticides across land managed by Witney Town Council. A large amount of that control and reduction will come in the form of no-spray zones that will be defined by a map.

The policy drafted covers basic pesticide application to the below-mentioned, total weed killers will be used and then followed up with a residual weed killer to reduce the overall use of those total weed killers.

- Windrush ashes path
- Tower Hill memorial wall
- Buttercross

Other areas are more specifically defined such as trees and ivy and the Council is asked for the best procedure for officers to use. The policy will also set out the pesticide use across bowls and cricket greens (fine turfs).

Ditches and watercourses

To avoid the need to complete LERAP (Local Environment Risk Assessments for pesticides) documentation and the high environmental risk that comes with the use of pesticides around water courses no spraying or direct injection will take place near watercourses, these will be defined in the no spray zones.

Trees

The damage caused by mowers and strimmer's to tree roots and trunks is minimal due to the cut height of around 35-50mm however it has caused complaints from residents.

- Continue with the current mowing practices.
- Apply a growth regulator around the base of trees.
- Leave the areas uncut around trees to a height of around 100-125mm, reducing the total number of cuts and risk of blades coming into contact with protruding roots.

Applying a growth regulator would be an unnecessary use of a herbicide to tackle this issue however it's the only complete solution. A better solution would be to avoid cutting the areas however as trees provide shade, they are prime locations for residents to use and the long grass would cause complaints.

Ivy growth

Ivy growth is not a huge issue affecting Witney and the programme of ringing the ivy in autumn or spring and then removing dead growth a month later has been successful in controlling its growth. The office has received some comments on ivy growth but nothing substantial. As ivy is very resistant to herbicide applications and it would require substantial herbicide use this is an area where any potential complaints don't outweigh the use of herbicides.

The policy will be supported by a map highlighting non-spray zones and the processes carried out in those areas to manage ivy growth, weed control, self-seeding trees and any other plant that require pesticide application.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Pesticides have an impact on the environment, some glyphosate-based herbicides don't break down causing unintended damage to the surrounding environment. In all areas, the council should be aiming to reduce its pesticide application and balance this against potential complaints and the overall image of the town.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- There is a sufficient budget to cover the cost of additional herbicides and basic equipment in the ground maintenance budget.
- To train more staff in the storage and safe use of pesticides an increase in the training budget of £1500.00 would be required for future years to ensure the team has sufficient numbers trained in their use.
- The Operations Manager has explored the potential use of modern equipment for weed control but the majority of these are built for particular tasks, not just one for all. It would result in a large financial outlay for an assortment of equipment for relatively small areas within the town.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Provide feedback to officers for the final drafting of the policy for the use of pesticides across Witney Town Council open spaces. In particular, the implementation of no-spray zones and the exclusions listed, the approach to ditches/watercourses and ditches, and confirmation on an earlier committee recommendation on growth regulator around trees.

Document is Restricted