

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

Held on Monday, 15 April 2024

At 7.15 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	R Crouch
	J Aitman	G Doughty
	T Ashby	D Edwards-Hughes
	D Enright	D Newcombe
	R Smith	J Robertshaw
	D Temple	S Simpson
	A Bailey	J Treloar
	L Cherry	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	Inspector Chris Ball (Thames Valley Police)	

192 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Doughty.

193 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor O Collins declared a personal interest in Item 8 as the applicant of the request for a subsidised letting was known to him.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

194 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 19 February 2024 were received.

Minute Item 99 – A Member raised a concern regarding the wording of the minute. The Town Clerk confirmed that this wording was directly taken from the statement that she made and was therefore an accurate reflection of the meeting. The request for an amendment was withdrawn.

Minute Item 102 – It was suggested that Members may like to re-consider amendments to the Committee Calendar following the resolution of Item 10 on the agenda, in which case, the minutes should be approved subject to this item.

A vote to approve the minutes was taken. The result being:

In Favour	16
Against	0
Abstention	2

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 19 February 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair, subject to minute 102 regarding the Committee Calendar.

195 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

196 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Members received a verbal update from Inspector Chris Ball of Thames Valley Police (TVP). He began by thanking the council for the subsidised use of the Corn Exchange for the launch of the “through their eyes” campaign which attracted 60 attendees. TVP hoped this scheme would be introduced nationally.

He also thanked the Council for the support provided for Youth Services which would complement the sessions that TVP had planned throughout the summer at the All-Terrain Pitch on Gordons Way to engage with younger people.

Insp Ball also reported that his team had recently:

- Begun the introduction of a new scheme (DISC) to link shops and other premises together to share information about incidents, shoplifting and other Anti-Social behaviour.
- Carried out speed enforcement on Downs Road following complaints.

Members thanked Insp Ball for the support TVP had provided in deterring the use of Pony & Trap racing on the A40. Though he advised this was not legal activity there was a concern for safety of the participants as well as other road users.

A Member asked Inspector Ball for further information on the yellow phone located outside Witney police station following the advice from the Inspector at the Annual Town Meeting that residents are able to speak to an officer directly if used. Inspector Ball advised that the calls were routed to the main Kidlington call centre who were able to radio to local officers; he did acknowledge some issue with this facility and residents using web access which he is investigating.

A Member raised concerns about unauthorised access to the old boxing club on Newland; Insp Ball asked that information on the ownership be forwarded to him, and he would try and encourage that repairs are made to restrict the access.

A Member also raised the issue of the level of shoplifting in the town which they described as being “rampant”. In response Insp Ball advised that there had been 13 report incidents in March however, he did not believe it was higher and incidents were under reported. He hoped that the introduction of the new DISC scheme and the encouragement for premises to improve their CCTV technology should help to reduce incidents of shoplifting along with Anti-Social behaviour (ASB) issues in retail premises.

A Member asked if there was evidence of assaults on shop and health workers in Witney. Inspector Ball advised that this was not a major issue other than the ASB mentioned.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

(Inspector Ball left the meeting at 7:40pm)

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

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Councillor D Enright advised that the planning inspectorate hearing in relation to the Shores Green had ruled in favour of the scheme proceeding and it was hoped this would proceed with pace.

West Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Councillor D Enright highlighted to members that the West Hive scheme can be utilised by small business, 34 grants were paid out in March, the District Council is keen to particularly support requests which provide a Biodiversity or Net Zero advance.

Councillor R Crouch updated members on the activity at the Witney Hotel, the initial occupancy of 280 was now down to around 60 as the Home Office has processed claims and residents are either being sent home or moved on to accommodation in the UK.

Cllr R Smith advised that the district’s housing stock would be looked at by a new Housing Enablement Officer.

Councillor T Ashby advised members that a temporary surface was to be applied by the County Council to the bridleway between the Deer Park and Windrush Place estates. He also reported that work was in progress in relation to an adventure playpark and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in the Deer Park area.

He also advised that the WODC planning enforcement team was working with businesses on the Tungsten Business Park to ensure they adhere to their planning conditions on lighting and other matters.

Lastly, Councillor J Aitman updated on Youth Services and the funding of a Youth Officer. She also encouraged members to recommend the West Hive scheme and assured members that

organisations should not hold back making applications as WODC officers are very willing to advise and are able to assist in any form filling.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

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

Witney & District Twinning Association

Cllr O Collins along with Cllr R Crouch had attended the AGM and witnessed new energy within the committee and their keenness to celebrate the 35th anniversary with Unterhaching and 45th Anniversary with Le Touquet in 2025.

Witney Educational Foundation

Cllr R Crouch advised the organisation provided several grant opportunities, including for families struggling to pay school trip costs.

Witney Town Charity

Cllr R Crouch updated the Council that works were progressing and that checks on the Almshouses were ongoing, with one currently vacant.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

199 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING - 20 FEBRUARY, 12 MARCH & 9 APRIL**

The minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 20 February, 12 March & 9 April 2024 were received.

P180 – A proposal by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Bailey to include a QR code on the signs to direct the public to information of the current sewage discharge at Colwell Brook was agreed unanimously by Members.

Members also noted the verbal recommendation from the earlier Special Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee regarding the Witney North Strategic Development Area that a Community Governance Review of boundaries should be considered and discussed at a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. That, Officers include a QR code on the Colwell Brook sewerage signage and,
2. That, the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meeting held on 20 February, 12 March & 9 April 2024 be received, and any recommendations therein approved and,
3. That, that officer prepare a report on a Community Governance Review to be received at the Annual Council Meeting on 8 May 2024.

(Cllr A Bailey offered his apologies and left the meeting at 7:54pm)

200 **PARKS & RECREATION - 4 MARCH 2024**

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

Cllr Aitman thanked the Council and Officers for their support to Earthwatch regarding the erection of the wooden monolith at the Tiny Forest.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

201 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS - 11 MARCH 2024**

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 11 March 2024 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

202 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES - 18 MARCH 2024**

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr L Cherry, presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

SC152 - Cllr Smith advised that an online meeting of the Inclusivity & Diversity panel was due to take place on 22 April 2024 and an update to Council would be provided.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 18 March 2024 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

203 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE - 25 MARCH 2024**

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

F162 – A Member asked that Officers approach West Oxfordshire District Council to request use of specialist machinery if this would lead to a lesser use of Glyphosate. The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) advised that the policy was adopted however Officers would consider on a case-by-case basis.

Owing to his earlier declaration, Cllr O Collins relinquished the Chair and passed to Deputy Cllr G Meadows for the consideration of a request for a subsidised letting. The DTC advised that owing to the event being held on 14 June it was necessary to present to the Council at late notice.

Members discussed the request and all members agreed bar the abstention of Cllr Collins to a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange to a value of £257 with the stipulation that evidence of the payments to the two charities is provided to Officers by 28 June 2024.

Resolved:

1. That, a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange to a value of £257 be approved for a charity quiz event in favour of Oxfordshire Mind and Bridewell Gardens subject to evidence of the payments to the charities being provided and,
2. That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 25 March 2024 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

204 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received the report of the Mayor and Mayor's Secretary which highlighted the civic engagements of the Mayor and Deputy since the last meeting.

He expressed thanks to his Deputy and Secretary and reported that the "Mumma Mayor" event in Thame did not take place however he attended the Chipping Norton Mayor fun run and duck hunt instead.

He also expressed his pleasure at opening the new wheeled sports park which was attended by what he described as over 100 people of all ages.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

(Cllr L Cherry left the meeting at 8:10pm)

205 **MAYOR ELECT**

The Chair, Cllr O Collins invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year.

With no further nominations forthcoming Cllr Collins was proposed to serve a second term by Cllr G Meadows and seconded by Cllr D Enright. All Members agreed with one abstention from Cllr Collins himself.

Therefore, Cllr O Collins was duly voted Mayor Elect by the Council for the municipal year 2024/2025.

Following the resolution, Members re-considered the calendar of meetings for 2024-25 and were all in agreement that the date of the Annual Council Meeting be reverted back to 8 May 2024 along with an amendment to the first meetings of the Parks & Recreation and Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments in the cycle.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Owen Collins be voted Mayor Elect for the ensuing municipal year and,
2. That, the dates of the Annual Council Meeting, Parks & Recreation and Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments be amended, and a new calendar of meetings be circulated. This would include a change of date for the next Traffic Advisory Meeting, now due to be held on 18 June.

206 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

There were no Health & Safety items to update Council on.

207 **CORN EXCHANGE ACCESS & SECURITY**

The Council received the report of the Venue & Events Officer concerning a proposal to install a magnetic door access system to the Corn Exchange main door.

Members were pleased to hear of the potential financial savings and additional security the system would provide however, a member raised a query regarding the release of the doors in the event of a fire alarm.

Members agreed that if the release of the doors occurred in the event of a fire alarm, they were happy to proceed with the purchase at a cost of £1,321 ex VAT.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, Officers further investigate the options for release of the doors in the event of fire and,
3. That, the proposed magnetic lock system is purchased at a cost of £1,321.

208 **VANDALISM & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council received a list of vandalism reports since the last meeting.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

209 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Council received a verbal report from the Leader regarding a request from CoHSAT (Coalition for Health Streets and Active Travel) to facilitate an awareness meeting between CoHSAT and the residents of Witney regarding the "Traffic Filters" which were being introduced in Oxfords during the Autumn, these would require many people who drive vehicles into Oxford to make changes to their route. This would be a chance to receive information at a free, ticketed event and was not a consultation event.

Members discussed a proposal from the leader, seconded by Cllr Aitman for a meeting to be held and that this would be a subsidised letting if Oxfordshire County Council who were introducing the scheme were unwilling to pay for the hire of the venue. A vote was taken, the result of which was:

For	13
Against	0
Abstention	1

Members agreed that the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee would discuss the proposal further at a future meeting of that committee.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal report be noted and,
2. That, the request from CoHSAT be added to the agenda of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee on 15 April 2024 for further discussion.

210 **OCC PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council received correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council advising of the approval of the Shore Green development and welcomed the projection of this long-awaited scheme.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

211 **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council received correspondence from the Environment Agency with a project update on the Thames Valley Flood Scheme.

Members welcomed the update.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

212 **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY RESPONSE**

The Council received correspondence from the Environment Agency Area Director for the Thames following the letter submitted by the Council on 21 February 2024 regarding the flooding issues being suffered in the town.

Members were disappointed at the lack of commitment in the reply however were pleased to hear that a programme of works was proposed for August 2024.

Members were also disappointed that a response had not been received from the Environment Minister who was also written to in February 2024.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

213 **POLICE CRIME COMMISSIONER CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council received correspondence from Matthew Barber the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the letter had been restricted in the Agenda Pack due to the pre- election period of purdah as Mr Barber was a candidate seeking re-election.

Members welcomed the update and asked that once the new PCC was appointed that they be invited to a future meeting of the council.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the future PCC be invited to a meeting of the Council.

214 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A Member asked that reference to a West Oxfordshire Conservative Association Election Agent in meetings ceased. They were not relevant to the matters being debated by the Council, and if they were so, should be noted in the minutes.

A Member asked that the Council consider the display of a portrait of the King, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that one had been procured through a free nationwide scheme and the matter would be discussed further at the Stronger Communities Committee meeting on 3 June.

In response to a further question, the Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that an update on the Climate Emergency was being prepared by the Head of Estates & Operations for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

215 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

The Town Clerk advised the following leases had been signed and sealed.

Date	No of Seal	Nature of Document
07 March 2024	90	Lease relating to Unit 3 Coseley Building, Windrush Ind Estate, Witney. Welland Property Trustee I Limited & Welland Property Trustee II Limited In duplicate
07 March 2024	91	Licence to carry out works Lease relating to Unit 3 Coseley Building, Windrush Ind Estate, Witney. In duplicate

Resolved:

1. That, the above sealed documents be noted and,
2. That, the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 8.42 pm

Chair