

Full Council

Meeting of Witney Town Council

Monday, 17th June, 2024 at 7.00 pm



To members of the Full Council - O Collins, G Meadows, J Aitman, T Ashby, D Enright, R Smith, D Temple, A Bailey, L Cherry, R Crouch, G Doughty, J Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, D Newcombe, J Robertshaw, S Simpson and J Treloar

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, 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.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting 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 30(d)(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 confirmed to 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. Minutes (Pages 5 - 13)

To approve and adopt the minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 8 May 2024 in accordance with Standing Order 18 including questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item.

4. **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.

5. **Witney Community Policing Issues**

To receive an update from the Witney Police Team (if appropriate).

6. **An Update from Witney Oxfordshire County Councillors and West Oxfordshire District Councillors**

To receive a short verbal update from Oxfordshire County Councillors representing Witney Wards and West Oxfordshire District Councillors.

7. **Report Back from the Councillors on the Work with External Bodies where they serve as the Town Council's Nominated Representative**

To receive a short verbal update from councillors who sit on external bodies where they serve as the Town Council's nominated representative.

8. **Committee Places** (Pages 14 - 15)

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

9. **Minutes of Committees and Sub Committees**

To receive and NOTE the RESOLUTIONS in the minutes of the meetings held between 15 April 2024 and 10 June 2024, and agree the RECOMMENDATIONS contained therein.

a) **Climate, Biodiversity & Planning - 15 April, 23 April, 14 May & 4 June 2024** (Pages 16 - 40)

b) **Parks & Recreation - 13 May 2024** (Pages 41 - 45)

c) **Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments - 20 May 2024** (Pages 46 - 49)

d) **Stronger Communities - 3 June 2024** (Pages 50 - 57)

e) **Policy, Governance & Finance - 10 June 2024** (Pages 58 - 67)

10. **Civic Announcements** (Pages 68 - 69)

To receive the report of the Mayor & Mayor's Secretary.

11. **Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 - Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24** (Pages 70 - 93)

To receive and consider the report of the RFO to agree the Annual Governance statement along with the Final Internal Audit Report.

In line with The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 - To receive and consider the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for 2023/24 – and formally agree and adopt.

Should Members have any queries about the accounts, advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, on this occasion by 12:00hrs on Monday 17 June, to allow for a response to be prepared for the meeting.

12. **Motion - Thames Water** (Pages 94 - 96)

To consider a proposed motion and resolutions concerning Thames Water in accordance with Standing Order 13:

- a) Witney Town Council has no confidence in Thames Water's competence as a sewerage undertaker.
- b) Witney Town Council proposes that a letter should be sent by the Leader of the Council to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urging His Majesty's Government to place full regulatory and administrative limits on Thames Water, suspending bonuses, bringing criminal charges to individuals responsible where found and to evaluate the pros and cons of the renationalisation of Thames Water.

The attached document lists the full motion/background information.

Proposed by Cllr G Meadows

Seconded by Cllr R Crouch

13. **Witney Town Centre CCTV Scheme - Upgrade to HD Digital**

Subject to the outcome of the WODC Executive Meeting of 12th June 2024 – agree in principle to the financial contributions towards the Witney Town Centre CCTV Scheme: £11,267 (25/26); £11,591 (26/27); £11,922 (27/28).

The report for the above WODC meeting can be seen here which provides background information [WODC Executive - CCTV Upgrade & Monitoring](#)

14. **Compliments & Complaints** (Pages 97 - 103)

To receive the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

15. **Health & Safety**

To receive a verbal update from Officers on Health and Safety items, if appropriate.

16. **Vandalism** (Page 104)

To receive an update showing the latest vandalism to Council property.

17. **Communication from the Leader**

To receive such communications as the Leader of the Council may wish to bring before the Council and to consider the recommendation of the Leader on how such communications should be dealt with.

18. **Correspondence**

To receive any correspondence received (if applicable).

a) **Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group** (Page 105)

To receive correspondence concerning consultation with supporting parishes.

19. **Questions to the Leader of the Council**

Questions to the Leader of the Council concerning the business of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 15.

20. **Sealing of Documents**

To receive details of documents sealed by the Council (If applicable).



Town Clerk

Members Interests & Registration of Gifts & Hospitality

Members are reminded that any changes to the register of interests previously completed by them, or any registration of Gifts or Hospitality received which exceed £50 should be reported to the Town Clerk **within 28 days** of the occurrence.

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

Held on Wednesday, 8 May 2024

At 7.03 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	G Doughty
	T Ashby	J Doughty
	R Smith	D Edwards-Hughes
	D Enright	G Meadows
	A Bailey	D Newcombe
	L Cherry	J Robertshaw
	R Crouch	S Simpson
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
	Annie Hathaway	Business Administration Apprentice
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
Others:	No members of the public.	

223 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR 2024/25

Following the appointment of Cllr O Collins as Mayor-Elect at the meeting of the Council on 15 April 2024, he invited any further nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year however none were forthcoming.

Other than one abstention from Cllr O Collins, all members were in agreement. Cllr O Collins was therefore nominated and duly elected Chair/Mayor by the Council.

He thanked all members for the support he received in his first year as Mayor and looked forward to his second term.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Owen Collins be elected Town Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2024/25 and,
2. That, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed following the meeting in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council.

224 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR 2024/25**

The new Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year. Cllr A Bailey was nominated and duly elected Deputy Mayor by the Council.

The Mayor expressed his thanks to the outgoing Deputy Mayor, Cllr G Meadows for the support provided and for attending events when he could not.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Andy Bailey be elected Deputy Town Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2024/25 and,
2. That, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed following the meeting in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council.

225 **ELECTION OF LEADER 2024/25**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Leader of the Town Council. Cllr R Smith was nominated and elected by the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Ruth Smith be elected as the Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2024/25.

226 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY LEADER 2024/25**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Leader of the Town Council. Cllr J Aitman was nominated and elected by the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Joy Aitman be elected as the Deputy Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2024/25

(Members heard from Councillor J Doughty who stepped down as leader of the Conservative members of the Town Council, she was replaced by Cllr David Edwards-Hughes. She thanked the Leader & Mayor for their support over the past year)

227 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Treloar and Temple due to their work commitments.

An apology was also received from the Town Clerk/CEO.

228 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

(The Communications & Community Engagement Officer & Business Administration Apprentice left at 7:13pm)

229 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 15 April 2024 were received and considered.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 April 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

230 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

231 **ADOPTION OF MEETINGS CALENDAR 2024/25**

The Council received the proposed calendar of meetings for the ensuing 2024/25 municipal year. All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

That, the calendar of Council meetings be adopted.

232 **APPOINTMENT OF ANY NEW COMMITTEES IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 30**

Resolved:

There were no new committees to be appointed.

233 **REVIEW (OR REQUEST THE TOWN CLERK TO REVIEW) ANY TORS**

There were no requests made for the review of Terms of Reference at this point.

During the appointment of members to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee later in the meeting it was proposed by Cllr D Edwards-Hughes, seconded by Cllr G Meadows that the Committee membership be amended to be six members plus the Mayor and Leader (ex Officio). All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

- a) That, term (x) relating to the membership of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee be amended to read, *The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Leader and Town Mayor ex officio.*

234 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES AND THE ELECTION OF CHAIRS

Members received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and considered the appointment of standing committees, sub committees, working parties and task & finish groups. The following appointments were proposed, seconded, and agreed unanimously:

Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee

Cllr O Collins	Cllr R Smith	Cllr J Aitman
Cllr A Bailey	Cllr G Meadows	Cllr J Doughty
Cllr S Simpson	Cllr G Doughty	

Chair of Committee: Cllr A Bailey

Parks and Recreation Committee

Cllr O Collins	Cllr R Smith	Cllr J Aitman
Cllr T Ashby	Cllr R Crouch	Cllr J Treloar
Cllr D Newcombe	Cllr S Simpson	

Chair of Committee: Cllr D Newcombe

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee

Cllr O Collins	Cllr R Smith	Cllr J Aitman
Cllr R Crouch	Cllr D Edwards-Hughes	Cllr D Enright
Cllr D Newcombe	Cllr J Robertshaw	

Chair of Committee: Cllr R Crouch

Stronger Communities Committee

Cllr O Collins	Cllr R Smith	Cllr S Simpson
Cllr T Ashby	Cllr A Bailey	Cllr L Cherry
Cllr J Doughty	Cllr G Meadows	

Chair of Committee: Cllr L Cherry

Personnel Sub-Committee

Cllr O Collins	Cllr R Smith	Cllr J Aitman
Cllr A Bailey	Cllr R Crouch	Cllr D Newcombe
Cllr J Doughty	Cllr G Meadows	

Chair of Sub-Committee: Cllr R Smith

Disciplinary & Grievance Panel

Cllr G Doughty	Cllr D Enright	Cllr S Simpson
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Inclusivity & Diversity Task & Finish Group

All Committee Chairs

Christmas Lights Working Party

Cllr T Ashby
Cllr R Crouch

Cllr R Smith
Cllr G Doughty

Cllr A Bailey
Cllr J Aitman

D-Day Task & Finish Committee

Cllr R Smith
Cllr J Treloar

Cllr A Bailey

Cllr J Robertshaw

Youth Council Task & Finish Committee

Cllr L Cherry
Cllr J Aitman

Cllr G Meadows
Cllr S Simpson

Cllr R Smith
Cllr R Crouch

Following the agreement to amend the Terms of Reference in respect of the membership of the Committee there were two recommendations for the final appointment to the Policy Governance & Finance Committee.

Cllr G Meadows was proposed by Cllr D Enright, seconded by Cllr G Meadows and,
Cllr J Doughty was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr A Bailey.

Vote was taken:

Appointment of Cllr J Doughty	7
Appointment of Cllr G Meadows	5
Abstentions	2

Therefore, Cllr J Doughty was elected to membership of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee, the final membership being:

Policy, Governance & Finance Committee

Cllr O Collins
Cllr A Bailey
Cllr J Doughty

Cllr R Smith
Cllr L Cherry
Cllr D Newcombe

Cllr J Aitman
Cllr R Crouch

Chair of Committee: Cllr J Aitman

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the membership of the standing committees, sub committees, working parties and task & finish groups and their Chairs be agreed as detailed above.

235 **APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES & EXTERNAL BODIES/OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning nominations for advisory committees and external bodies/outside organisations.

Requests were received from some members to step down and a replacement sought to serve for the remaining 3-year terms. The following appointments were proposed, seconded, and agreed unanimously:

Witney Traffic Advisory Committee	Cllr J Aitman Cllr T Ashby Cllr S Simpson Cllr R Smith
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (Larger Councils)	Cllr R Crouch
West Witney Sports & Social Club	Cllr D Newcombe Cllr R Smith
Witney Town Band	Cllr O Collins
Witney District & Twinning Association	Cllr O Collins (Mayor) Cllr R Crouch Cllr R Smith
West Oxfordshire Museum Centre	Cllr O Collins
St Mary's Church Preservation Trust	Cllr O Collins (Mayor)
Volunteer Link Up	Cllr J Aitman
RAF Brize Norton Local Consultation Working Group	Cllr D Newcombe
Witney Allotment Association	Cllr R Crouch
Witney Youth Council Mentors	Cllr G Meadows Cllr S Simpson Cllr J Aitman
Friends of the Cemeteries	Cllr J Doughty Cllr D Enright
Home Start Champions	Cllr J Aitman Cllr L Cherry Cllr S Simpson
Lower Windrush Valley Project	Cllr A Bailey
West Oxfordshire Community Transport	Cllr D Enright

Witney Fair Trade Action Group Champion	Cllr R Smith
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Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group	Cllr R Smith Cllr A Bailey
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Witney Community Profile Steering Group	Cllr L Cherry Cllr J Aitman
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Nominees Serving as Trustees

The following were proposed as town council nominees to serve on outside bodies for four-year terms of office.

Witney Town Hall Charity	Cllr O Collins Cllr S Simpson
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Witney Town Charity	Cllr G Meadows
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Witney Educational Foundation	Cllr L Cherry
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Madley Park Hall Trust	Cllr J Aitman
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The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the vacancies for Witney Town Charity and Cogges Welfare Trust Charity. Members agreed unanimously that the following appointments be made.

Witney Town Charity	Mrs M Jones
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Cogges Welfare Trust Charity	Cllr J Aitman Cllr A Bailey Mr H W Chirgwin
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Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the appointments to advisory committees & external bodies/outside nominations be agreed as detailed above.

236 **REVIEW OF COUNCIL POLICIES**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Town Council had been reviewed and formally adopted since January 2023.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

237 **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2024**

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 20 March 2024 were received.

Members agreed that the meeting had been successful, well attended and upbeat.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting be noted.

(Cllr T Ashby offered his apologies and left the meeting at 7:50pm)

238 **CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

The Council received the update report of the Head of Estates & Operations regarding the Council's climate emergency plan.

Members were pleased to see that Officers had a handle and that a lot was going on behind the scenes to work towards the ambitious 2028 target. They encouraged them to look to the established team at West Oxfordshire District Council who had a well-established team working on their own climate plan as they believed they could provide expertise.

A recommendation was made by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Bailey that once the strategy and action plan has been compiled that it was communicated via a public meeting. All members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the creation of a climate change strategy and climate emergency action plan were welcomed and,
3. That, a public meeting be held to inform the public once the above were completed.

239 **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk along with a verbal update regarding the former Council proposal to explore the option for a Community Governance Review of the parish/town boundary.

Members agreed that the initial decision to be made was as to whether the request should be made of West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to consider carrying out a review. All Members were in agreement with this action.

It was further proposed that a Task & Finish group be established to ensure a coherent approach. The membership of the T&F group should be cross party and include representatives from all affected wards.

The following membership of a Task & Finish Group was proposed by Cllr O Collins, seconded by Cllr D Enright and unanimously agreed.

Community Governance Review Task & Finish Group

Cllr O Collins
Cllr D Edwards-Hughes
Cllr G Meadows

Cllr R Smith
Cllr S Simpson

Cllr A Bailey
Cllr R Crouch

Members requested that Officers inform WODC of their decision and request them to commence the process of a Community Governance Review.

Members were keen that to ensure transparency that all potentially affected parishes are informed along with residents, particularly those already resident in Colwell Green and The Coppice already. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that should a review go ahead then a public consultation would be carried out.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers contact WODC to ask that they consider carrying out a Community Governance Review and,
3. That, a Task & Finish Group be established with the above membership and,
4. That, Communications commence at the earliest opportunity with the Parishes that would be affected.

(Cllr R Crouch left the meeting at 8:11pm during the following item)

240 **COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE REGISTER 2023/24**

The Council received an annual attendance register for Members of the Council for the 2023-2024 municipal year.

A Member congratulated everyone as the attendance figures were a good indication for the work that Councillors put in given that as Councillor, they are volunteers. It was also raised that attendance at meeting was simply the tip of the iceberg; so much more activity goes on outside of the Committees.

A Member raised a point regarding the potential for low attendance figures to show due to ill-health, it was agreed that a caveat should be added to advise the public that due to the rules that govern the democratic process of attendance, a low percentage figure can be due to a variety of factors, some of which are outside of the control of Members, such as the inability to hold virtual or hybrid meetings.

The Mayor thanked those present for their efforts during the past year and remarked how effectively the Council was when its members work together.

Resolved:

1. That, the annual attendance register for 2023-24 be noted and,
2. That, a caveat be added to advise the reason why a Member's attendance may be low whenever the information is published.

The meeting closed at: 8.10 pm

Chair

FULL COUNCIL

Date: Monday, 17 June 2024

Title: Committee Places

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Current Situation

Personnel Sub-Committee

The following Councillors were selected as Members of the Personnel Sub-Committee at the Annual Council Meeting on 8 May 2024,

R Smith* (Chair)	J Aitman	A Bailey	G Meadows
R Crouch	D Newcombe	O Collins*	J Doughty

The membership of this Committee includes the Chairs of the Council's standing Committees, along with the Mayor, Leader and (the potential of) 1 other member.

There was some confusion at the meeting - Cllr J Doughty was selected as an additional Member for continuity, and Cllr G Meadows was selected in place of Cllr L Cherry (Chair of Stronger Communities) to reduce the burden of meetings. As the Personnel Sub-Committee runs under the management of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee, where Cllr L Cherry attends, it is proposed that the membership of the PSC is reduced to seven Members as below to avoid any confusion and that Cllr Cherry, although not listed as a Member, is welcome to attend when she can,

R Smith* (Chair)	J Aitman	A Bailey	R Crouch
D Newcombe	O Collins*	J Doughty	

Stronger Communities Committee

At the first meeting of this Committee in the new year, Cllr Aitman was elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

However, Cllr Aitman is not a Member of the Stronger Communities Committee so the position will need to be refilled. It is proposed that Cllr R Smith be Vice Chair of this Committee for the 2024/25 year.

Environmental impact

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

Risk

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

Financial implications

There are no financial implications.

Recommendations

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

1. The proposal to reduce the number of Members in the Personnel Sub-Committee.
2. The proposal to elect Cllr R Smith as Vice Chair of the Stronger Communities Committee.

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 9a

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 15 April 2024

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	J Robertshaw
	R Smith	S Simpson
	J Aitman	D Temple
	O Collins	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Claire Green	Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
Others:	Three members of the public. Councillor Geoff Doughty Councillor Thomas Ashby Councillor Rachel Crouch Councillor Denis Newcombe Councillor Jack Treloar	

P188 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

P189 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

(Cllr G Meadows joined the meeting at 6:05pm)

P190 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from three residents of the town concerning Agenda Item 5

The Committee reconvened.

(During the discussions of Item 4 Cllr T Ashby left the meeting at 6:46pm and rejoined at 6:49pm.)

P191 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the outline planning application for the North Witney Strategic Development Area received from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Members recognised a development at this site was designated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and there was little scope to object. There was agreement however, that the development should be the best possible and must be tied to agreements and legal obligations which ensured vitally needed infrastructure was considered at this outline application stage and delivered early in the development.

There was further agreement that the Council should explore the possibility of a community governance review of Witney's boundaries as this development would utilise Witney's infrastructure and services.

Resolved:

1. That, the comments, as per the attached document be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council and,
2. That, Witney Town Council considers requesting a Community Governance Review, with officers providing a report at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at: 7.04 pm

Chair

Consultee Comments for Planning Application 24/00482/OUT

Application Summary

Application Number: 24/00482/OUT

Address: North Witney Strategic Development Area New Yatt Road Witney Oxfordshire

Proposal: Outline planning application for a residential-led mixed-use development (Use Class C3 / C2), a 2.2ha primary school (Use Class F1), and up to 400m2 community use and/or co-working hub and/or shop (Use Class E and F2) and Northern Distributor Road with creation of new vehicular access off Woodstock Road, New Yatt Road and Hailey Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. (All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of access to the site)

Case Officer: Joan Desmond

Consultee Details

Name: Mrs S Groth

Address: Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6AG

Email: info@witney-tc.gov.uk

On Behalf Of: Parish Council

Comments

Witney Town Council recognise that housing needs to be delivered as part of the development in the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2031 and given that this proposal has been identified as a Strategic Development Area there are limited opportunities to object. However, the Council recognises both the impact and opportunities a development of this scale could bring to Witney as a neighbouring parish and main service centre and will be exploring opportunities for a community governance review with all relevant parties.

In addition to the queries and concerns raised by technical consultees, the town council also asks that all neighbouring parishes comments be considered in the planning process.

Members have highlighted the following concerns:

1. In order to secure essential infrastructure to support and protect residents, any permission must be accompanied by legally binding conditions or agreements that guarantee timely and fit for purpose services and facilities with sensible phasing to ensure operational services are available to residents from the outset. Including but not limited to;
 - a. Sewerage – infrastructure and treatment works' capacity. The Environment Agency particularly, should be called upon to support with sewerage conditions and objections.
 - b. Community facilities – shops, schools, public spaces, community halls, sports pitches and pubs.

c. Delivery of the West End Link Road – and further connectivity through and to the site.

2. The current levels of sewage discharge into Witney waterways are completely unacceptable. An increase in sewerage demand, coupled with the huge loss of natural permeable drainage area will lead to increased flood risk and increased occurrence of untreated sewage discharge in what is already a high flood risk area. Developers and West Oxfordshire District Council need to secure support and cooperation from Thames Water and the Environment Agency. Witney Town Council ask that independent flood risk and drainage reports are sought.

Planners should think creatively and ensure representation is provided by the Environment Agency on how best to deliver the West End Link road and how its design could help with flood mitigation before water reaches the Bridge Street/West End catchment area of the River Windrush.

3. Witney town centre and surrounding roads have existing problems with traffic congestion. The active travel ideals made by the developer are acknowledged, however, the reality is that Witney will be the main service centre for residents of this proposed development and given the distance of the development to the town centre, it is unlikely that the majority of residents will bus, cycle or walk to access facilities. The West End Link road is absent from the plans – Witney Town Council are not aware that this anticipated road infrastructure upgrade has been cancelled. In order to future-proof traffic and travel options the link road should be incorporated at the planning stage, along with full connectivity through and around the site, to include options for active travel, bus routes and private transport. Therefore, the town council insists upon a Section 278 agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver this infrastructure and more to benefit this development and North Witney.
4. Witney Town Council note the comments from the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group which clearly state significant issues with capacity, directly affecting primary care services. Funding and planning for provision of these services should be in place ahead of new residents moving to the area, with agreed sums being index-linked.
5. Members welcome innovative proposals for the housing mix – In Witney there is a lack of bungalows for those looking to down-size and for residents with accessibility needs. There is strong demand for starter homes, and it is incredibly difficult for those looking to get on the property ladder, this would be more achievable if there was a greater supply of 1-bed houses, and a better offering if 1-bed properties were available as houses as well as flats. Accessibility needs should be considered across the offering, with options available across the mix that provide for accessibility – family homes that can include a downstairs bedroom/wet room facility; and if flats are considered, blocks should include lift access to upper floors and not just stairwells.
6. Outdoor community spaces should consider inclusivity and the needs of different age groups. These could include a ‘forest school’ type nature space that can be used by anticipated schools and other community groups. Spaces for teenagers, public houses for social gathering, and recreational space for children should offer well-lit safe spaces for teenagers to meet, as well as other facilities for families with younger children, and children with disabilities. There does not appear to be an allocation for sport pitches which are currently under-served in Witney.

7. More detail would be welcome on the use of renewable energy and sustainable design. Every opportunity should be sought to demonstrate sustainable, energy efficient homes, as is required by local and national planning policies. The Town Council also stresses a high importance on environmental and biodiverse thinking within the development site and the need for large biodiversity net gain, given the vast amount of green space being lost at the site.
8. With the creation of approximately 1,250 dwellings, generating an estimated population of 3,000, Witney Town Council expects a significant impact from the residents of this development who will look towards Witney for the vast majority of its services and infrastructure, given the proximity to the town and the natural buffer to the Hailey village envelope.

As the main service centre, the Council welcomes the response from the District Council outlining the needs for leisure, recreation and play facilities but would go further in requesting additional specific off-site contributions towards the Leys Play Area, the Witney Parkrun course, and other Open Spaces upgrades as set out in the Town Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy which will help deliver social and environmental outcomes from the development. It is stated that,

'...by improving the quality and provision of open spaces in an area, WTC can make a positive impact on the overall health and physical activity of its residents.'

Further off-site contributions are sought for community infrastructure, cemeteries, public halls, heritage, and climate and biodiversity initiatives. Therefore, Witney Town Council would request the following based on a yearly sum per dwelling which provides services in these areas, multiplied by the anticipated number of dwellings (1,250) to deliver infrastructure impacted by the development :

- Sports & Recreation £39,900
Specific contributions to upgrade the Leys Adventure Play & Splash Park Areas, improvement to sports pitch changing rooms at Burwell Hall and ongoing delivery of items in the Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy. (in addition to funds requested from WODC regarding sports pitches and play areas).
- Community £98,900
Contributions towards street scene infrastructure including bus shelters, bins, grit bins, community noticeboard and benches, for the provision of services and utilities to allocated allotment land, and a West Witney Parkrun hogging path (£30,000). Also, an additional sum of £10,000 towards the provision of the community bus route to serve the development and £15,000 towards the town council's demonstrable detached youth service funded to serve young people, of which there will be an increase in number from this development.
- Cemeteries £19,500
A contribution towards Windrush Cemetery for the anticipated demand for grave spaces and associated internal layout.

- Public Halls £16,700
A contribution to the Corn Exchange as a community arts facility for Witney & West Oxfordshire to provide continued improvement of theatrical equipment.
- Climate & Biodiversity £11,000
A contribution towards nature recovery and re-wilding works at Witney Lake & Country Park as set out in the Council's Land Management Plan and across Witney.
- Heritage £100,000
A contribution towards refurbishment works of the town's historical buildings in the town council's ownership, including the Buttercross, Town Hall, Corn Exchange, St Mary's Church Carillon and Tower Hill Cemetery Chapels.

Total sum: £286,000

9. The Town Council would also like further information on the primary school provision, the combined use of community spaces and the potential for a community hub, and the mode of stewardship for facilities i.e. something run by community representatives, rather than private management companies.
10. Much of the above is referenced in the North Witney Strategic Development Area specific plan policy – POLICY WIT2, and as such Witney Town Council would expect that West Oxfordshire District Council will be making every effort to ensure that this development delivers are set out in a masterplan and is a policy compliant scheme that accords with the points so clearly outlined within POLICY WIT2.

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 23 April 2024

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	S Simpson
	J Aitman	D Temple
	J Robertshaw	
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Claire Green	Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities
Others:	None	

P216 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins.

P217 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

P218 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

P219 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning applications from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Resolved:

That, the comments, as per the attached schedule be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

P220 **NOTICE OF PLANNING APPEAL DECISION - KINGSMEAD, 51 WOODLANDS ROAD, WITNEY**

The Committee received and considered correspondence concerning the appeal decision APP/D3125/D/24/3337152 for Kingsmead, 51 Woodstock Road, Witney.

Resolved:

That, the appeal decision be noted.

P221 **APPLICATION FOR VARIATION TO PREMISES LICENCE W/24/00356/PRMMV 9-11 HIGH STREET, WITNEY**

The Committee noted the Application for Minor Variation from Co-op, 9-11 High Street, Witney under the Licencing Act 2003.

Members had no objections to the application.

Resolved:

That, a no objection response be forwarded to the licencing team at West Oxfordshire District Council.

P222 **OXFORD TRAFFIC FILTERS**

Cllr R Smith provided Members with a verbal explanation of the proposal received from the Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) asking for help in the facilitation of an event to present to residents of the town the details of the Oxford Traffic Filter scheme due to be trialled from Autumn 2024.

Following the resolution at the meeting of the Council on 15 April 2024 for the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee to make the arrangements for the event, Members discussed the options in respect of the venue in which to host the event.

There were reservations as this would not be a Town Council event. Members wished it be clear that the scheme was that of Oxfordshire County Council and the importance for residents to be aware of this, some members therefore thought that hosting in a town council building such as the Corn Exchange may cause confusion whereas Burwell Hall would give a community feel to the presentation.

Members also discussed the potential attendance of such an event and would welcome as high attendance as possible. The Chair asked that Officers review available dates and venue options.

A member raised his lack of knowledge of the scheme and asked that further information be circulated by Officers.

Resolved:

1. That, further information be circulated by Officers to update Members on the scheme and,
2. That, Officers work with the Leader and Chair of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee to find a suitable date and venue.

The meeting closed at: 6.43 pm

Chair

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 14 May 2024

At 6.05 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	J Doughty
	S Simpson	R Smith
	G Doughty	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	None.	

P252 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Collins & J Aitman.

P253 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

P254 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

P255 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning applications from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Officers advised that Planning Application 24/00986/LBC 34 High Street was withdrawn since the publication of the agenda and therefore no longer required consideration.

Resolved:

That, the comments, as per the attached schedule be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

P256 **APPLICATION FOR NEW PREMISES LICENCE - W/24/00396/PRMA - CHRIS HAYTER TRANSPORT, TUNGSTEN PARK**

The Committee received and considered an application for a New Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003 from Chris Hayter Transport, Tungsten Park.

Resolved:

That, a no objection response be forwarded to the licencing team at West Oxfordshire District Council

P257 **WITNEY SHORES GREEN - DUST MANAGEMENT PLAN - PLANNING REF: R3.0051/24**

The Committee received and considered the Dust Management Plan Ref: R3.0051/24 in respect of the works at the Shores Green Junction of the A40.

Members welcomed the information and supported this application for the improvement to roads infrastructure given the benefits for Witney and the residents of the town.

Resolved:

That, the following comment be submitted to Oxfordshire County Council.

Witney Town Council notes this Management plan and welcomes any plans to mitigate against dust during the construction period.

P258 **WITNEY SHORES GREEN - TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN - PLANNING REF: R3.0052/24**

The Committee received and considered the Traffic Management Plan Ref: R3.0052/24 in respect of the works at the Shores Green Junction of the A40.

Members again welcomed the information as they had the Dust Management Plan earlier in the meeting and supported this application for the improvement to transport infrastructure given the benefits for Witney and its residents.

A Member raised the CLOCS (Construction Logistics and Community Safety) Standard which required developers of large construction sites to plan the movement of their HGVs to keep them away from busy or high-risk areas, such as school gates during drop-off times, as well as setting minimum safety standards for their fleet. Members therefore asked that these standards be adhered to during the construction stage.

Resolved:

That, the following response be submitted to Oxfordshire County Council.

Witney Town Council notes the reference to CLOCS (Construction Logistics and Community Safety) Standard in the application data. However, it would like to see further evidence of how the Contractor will ensure safety for pedestrians and school children travelling between South Leigh and Witney during construction to show greater adherence to these standards.

P259 **PROPOSED DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PLACES**

The Committee received and considered the proposals received from Oxfordshire Country Council to amend the provision for disabled parking arrangements in Bourton Close and Corn Street in order to facilitate improvement to disabled parking facilities.

Members welcomed the changes.

Resolved:

That, Witney Town Council offers no objection.

P260 **PLANNING APPEAL - 141 QUEEN EMMA'S DYKE - 20/03068/FUL**

The Committee received notice of Planning Appeal APP/D3125/W/24/3339455 for 141 Queen Emma's Dyke, Witney.

Resolved:

That, the Planning Appeal be noted.

The meeting closed at: 6.41 pm

Chair

Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, We ask that due attention is paid to the comments of the neighbouring property in respect of the potential impacts of the screening.

255- 6	WTC/063/24	Plot Ref :-24/00927/FUL	Type :-	FULL
	Applicant Name :-		Date Received :-	24/04/2024
	Location :-	HALL REAR OF 52 HIGH STREET	Date Returned :-	15/05/2024
	Proposal :	Demolition of existing hall and erection of 2 x two-bedroom homes and associated works.		
	Observations :	While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.		

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255- 8 WTC/065/24 Plot Ref :-24/01008/ADV Type :- ADVERTISING
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 08/05/2024
Location :- 70 Date Returned :- 15/05/2024
HIGH STREET
Proposal : Installation of externally illuminated fascia sign. (Retrospective).
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.

255- 9 WTC/066/24 Plot Ref :-24/00965/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 08/05/2024
Location :- 70 Date Returned :- 15/05/2024
HIGH STREET
Proposal : Installation of fascia sign. (Retrospective)
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objection to this application.

It is however, disappointed to note this is a retrospective application and expects any such applications to be submitted prior to work being carried out in the future so that consultation may take place

255- 10 WTC/067/24 Plot Ref :-24/00986/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 08/05/2024
Location :- 34 Date Returned :-
HIGH STREET
Proposal : Proposed maintenance to the roof, timber windows and shopfront
Observations :

255- 11 WTC/068/24 Plot Ref :-24/01023/CLP Type :- LAWFULNESS
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 08/05/2024
Location :- 7 Date Returned :- 15/05/2024
NORTHFIELD SQUARE
Proposal : Certificate of Lawfulness (formation of habitable room in roof space with front and rear velux rooflights)
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.

The Meeting closed at : 6:41pm

Signed : _____ Chairman Date: _____

On behalf of :- Witney Town Council

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 4 June 2024

At 6.06 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	G Doughty
	J Aitman	J Doughty
	S Simpson	R Smith
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Cara Cannon	Administrative Assistant - Communities & Planning
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
Others:	No members of the public.	

P292 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins.

P293 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

P294 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

There being no other nominations, it was proposed and seconded that Councillor G Meadows be elected.

The Chair advised a request had been received from Cllr O Collins to step back from the Committee in his Ex-Officio capacity due to the time constraints the role of Mayor had on his schedule. All Members were in agreement with the request.

Resolved:

1. That, Councillor G Meadows be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year and,

2. That, Councillor O Collins be removed from the Committee membership for the 2024/25 municipal year.

P295 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 15 April, 23 April and 14 May 2024 were received.

There were no matters arising

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 15 April, 23 April and 14 May 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

P296 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

P297 **LAKE & COUNTRY PARK OPERATIONAL UPDATE**

The Committee received the Operational Update of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer (B&GSO) detailing the work completed since April 2024 along with a verbal update.

The B&GSO thanked members for agreeing the appointment of the Green Spaces Operative as this had allowed for work that could not be completed single handed.

In response to a Member query regarding the planting at Curbridge Roundabout, the B&GSO confirmed that work would improve wildflower coverage on this site over the next 2-3 years as the seed took dominance. He also agreed that a strip around the outside of the roundabout would be cut to aid the sight lines for drivers and pedestrians.

The Committee was also pleased to hear that the installation of the rubbing posts had taken place and welcomed the new nature information posts which would be installed in the coming weeks. A Member suggested that a link to the new nature area established by West Oxfordshire District Council at West Witney could be explored by Officers.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That Officers explore the opportunity of linking residents with the new West Witney nature area.

(Cllr S Simpson joined the meeting at 6:20pm)

P298 WITNEY LAKE - REQUEST TO REGISTER AS A FISHERY

The Committee received and considered a request from Witney Angling Society via the Biodiversity & Green Space Officer (B&GSO) to apply to formalise the Lake as a fishery.

The B&GSO outlined the advantages of which included being able to create a working party of anglers to help improve the environment around the lake, create a better working relationship with the Environment Agency and the opportunity to add fish stock to the lake which would greatly improve its biodiversity. There were no financial implications to the Council in establishing the fishery.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the request from Witney Angling Society to register a fishery be approved.

P299 LAKE & COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee received the updated Management plan of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer (B&GSO) detailing the plans for the short, medium and long term.

Members were pleased to see the advances made already after just one year of the plan and thanked all council staff that had helped implement this. They also acknowledged the award of grant funding that the B&GSO had instigated.

The B&GSO advised that the plan was now very close to finalisation and would be openly available to the public via the website and as a paper master copy at the Town Hall. The plan would be regularly updated and presented to the Committee.

A Member raised a question as to whether the publication of the plan put wildlife at risk, the B&GSO responded to explain that some details would be held back in any communication, such as the specific detail of nesting sites, however it was felt strongly that the Council should promote its advances in Biodiversity as much as possible.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted.
2. That, the Management Plan and its appendix be added to the Council website.

(The Biodiversity & Green Space Officer left the meeting at 6:36pm)

P300 COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk/CEO concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

The Town Clerk advised Members that the comprehensive 10 Year Lake & Country Park Management Plan would feed into many of the objectives in order to provide results.

Resolved:

That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted.

P301 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

Members were pleased to see that the spending was 6.5% under budget for the year.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

P302 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning applications from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC).

With the express permission of the Chair, owing to WODC not being able to offer an extension of time to respond to application 24/00655/FUL – 111 Manor Road, Witney the following response was formulated by members outside of the committee and agreed for submission.

Witney Town Council note the amended plans to include the insertion of additional windows to the East elevation however still object to this application. Members continue to show concern for the scale of the proposed development in contrast to the site dimensions, the proposed dwelling will appear very cramped. The application is not compliant with the General Principles of policy OS2 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, the development is not of a proportionate and appropriate scale to its context and does not form a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development.

Further, policy OS4, requires that development does not harm the use or enjoyment of land and buildings nearby including living conditions in residential properties - Members expressed concern to the lack of amenity land/garden and they see no change in the amended plans

Resolved:

1. That, the comments, as per the attached schedule be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.
2. That, the comment noted above be forward to WODC in respect of application 24/00655/FUL.

P303 **PLANNING DECISIONS**

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning decisions received from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC).

Resolved:

That, the list circulated advising of WODC planning decisions be noted.

P304 OXFORD TRAFFIC FILTERS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk relating to the information evening to be held to inform residents about the new Oxford Traffic Filter scheme being introduced by Oxfordshire County Council.

Members were happy to proceed with the event even though it would fall within the period of campaigning for the general election. Members agreed that the Chair of the Committee should Chair the evening on 27 June 2024.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and
2. That, Cllr A Bailey be Chair for the CoHSAT/Oxford Traffic Filters information evening.

P305 WITNEY SHORES GREEN - SIGNAGE PLAN - PLANNING REF: R3.0062/24

The Committee received and considered the Signage plan ref R3.0142/23 in respect of the works at the Shores Green Junction of the A40.

Resolved:

That, the following comment be submitted to Oxfordshire County Council

Witney Town Council notes this signage plan and welcomes the plans.

P306 LONDON OXFORD AIRPORT - AIRSPACE CHANGE PROPOSAL

The Committee received the correspondence from London Oxford Airport's Air Change Proposal Team regarding their review of their design principles.

Members considered the proposal and noted the low engagement numbers from the original consultation with stakeholders earlier in the year. They acknowledged that though the airport was eight miles from Witney and was mainly used by small aircraft there was still a need to ensure that comments were submitted.

Resolved:

That, the following comments be submitted.

- In relation to Design Principle E1 – Improved Profiles for Noise, the Council ask that consideration is given in order that there is no increase in the noise profile over Witney.
- In relation to Design Principle E2 Improved profiles for Carbon dioxide (CO2)/Emissions, the Council encourage Carbon Offset in the immediate area of the airfield and its surroundings.
- Lastly, the Council in respect of any increase to air traffic ask that a review of ground transportation takes place and is met with appropriate measures to reduce the environmental impacts which may be caused by increased passenger journeys associated with the airport.

P307 **UPDATE ON PLANNING APPEAL RECEIVED FOR LAND SOUTH EAST OF OXFORD HILL, WITNEY**
- 20/02654/OUT

With the express permission of the Chair of the Committee received an update of the Planning Appeal Public Inquiry for APP/D3125/W/23/3333790- Land Southeast of Oxford Hill, Witney.

The notice advised that the appeal would be held on 18 June 2024 over two days rather than the original proposed six days. It was agreed that this was due to West Oxfordshire District Council's decision not to contest the appeal.

The Council's Leader advised members that this could impact negatively on the services provided to the town by means of the Section 106 contributions which it was hoped would be enhanced as part of the public inquiry. All Members were in agreement that the Town Clerk engage with West Oxfordshire District Council in order to get the best for the Town.

Resolved:

1. That, the Planning Appeal be noted and,
2. That, delegate the Town Clerk engage in discussions with WODC.

The meeting closed at: 7.38 pm

Chair

mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

302- 10	WTC/078/24	Plot Ref :- 24/01256/HHD	Type :-	HOUSEHOLDE
	Applicant Name :- .		Date Received :-	22/05/2024
	Location :- 54 NEW YATT ROAD NEW YATT ROAD		Date Returned :-	05/06/2024
	Proposal : Erection of garden store (retrospective)			
	Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.			

302- 11	WTC/079/24	Plot Ref :- 24/01275/HHD	Type :-	HOUSEHOLDE
	Applicant Name :- .		Date Received :-	23/05/2024
	Location :- 2 BIRDLIP CLOSE BIRDLIP CLOSE		Date Returned :-	05/06/2024
	Proposal : Erection of single-storey rear extension.			
	Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.			

302- 12	WTC/080/24	Plot Ref :- 24/01146/HHD	Type :-	HOUSEHOLDE
	Applicant Name :- .		Date Received :-	24/05/2024
	Location :- 62 WEST END WEST END		Date Returned :-	05/06/2024
	Proposal : Erection of single-storey rear extension to replace lean-to conservatory.			
	Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.			

The Meeting closed at : 7:38pm

Signed : _____ Chairman Date: _____

On behalf of :- _____ Witney Town Council

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 13 May 2024

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor D Newcombe (Chair)

Councillors:	T Ashby	R Smith
	O Collins	S Simpson
	R Crouch	J Treloar
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	Two members of the public.	

PR241 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Aitman

PR242 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

PR243 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Crouch and seconded by Councillor Collins that Councillor R Smith be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Ruth Smith be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

PR244 MINUTES

The minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 were received.

P121 – The Leys Parking Restrictions – The Head of Estate & Operations provided an update to say that the Project Officer continues to work with OCC Legal advisors towards a resolution. An Update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 4 March 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR245 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from a member of Witney parkrun who gave an update on their activity at West Witney Sports Ground which had been affected greatly by the poor weather over the winter season. They offered their appreciation for the support received from the Council's Works Team in supporting them to improve the troublesome areas of the course.

He expressed the importance of ensuring that the course remains in good condition as many of the 200+ runners did not participate in other parkruns if the Witney event was cancelled; for some of individuals who don't travel it was an important element of their wellbeing.

The Committee reconvened.

PR246 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

Members were pleased to receive this positive set of figures, however noted that these may be subject to further adjustment for year-end accruals and prepayments.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

PR247 COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO along with a verbal update concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

A Member thanked Officers for their continued hard work pressing West Oxfordshire District Council to take over projects in order for them to achieve delivery.

The Head of Estates & Operations provided additional information in relation to the Town Council taking on the management of the project to improve the facilities in the Raleigh Crescent area. He advised that a public consultation would take place to establish the needs of residents and users to ensure there was inclusivity. He was positive that the Town Council would deliver an improved environment.

Members were pleased to hear these views and were confident that Officers would build on the success of the recent Skatepark consultation and implementation.

Resolved:

That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted.

PR248 SPORTS PITCHES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager regarding the use of the Council's sports pitches at West Witney Sports Ground for Cricket by Witney Swifts.

The Head of Estates & Operations gave a verbal summary to Members confirming that the Works Team had achieved the necessary standard of grounds preparation required by the league in which Witney Swifts played.

A request had been made by Witney Swifts for the purchase of a lawnmower, Members heard that the Works Team mower could cut to a level of 1mm, the mower requested by the club would cut to 4-5mm. It was therefore agreed that the preparation by the Works Team would be sufficient, and the expense of a mower was not necessary.

A Member reminded the Committee that with the improvements to be made in late 2024 to the WWSCC building, all the sports clubs would soon be experiencing a much-improved facility which, it was hoped, would show the clubs in a good light to visiting teams.

The Town Clerk explained that historically, when the Council's contractors undertook the wicket maintenance, Witney Swifts would do any last-minute maintenance on match day – on occasions this did have some issues – hence why clarification on any arrangement via an agreement was recommended. Members agreed that Officers would draw up a user agreement with Witney Swifts for the avoidance of doubt as to what preparations would be carried out by the Council and which would be the responsibility of the Cricket Club at West Witney Sports Ground. The Chair & Vice Chair would also meet with the club to verbally discuss the Council's reasons for the decisions being made.

Regarding the cost of booked sessions, Members asked for a breakdown to be supplied at a future meeting for them to better understand what value the cricket users receive. All Members agreed that charges remain unchanged.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee meet with Witney Swifts and,
3. That, booking charges remain unchanged and,
4. That, the request from Witney Swifts for a green's mower be refused.

(Cllr Treloar left the meeting at 6:40pm)

PR249 MAJOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer regarding the major projects within the Town along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations (HE&O)

Leys Skatepark

Members were pleased to hear that the £57,975 grant provided by the FCC Communities Foundation was due to be received imminently following the key achievements being met and evidenced. Members reflected on what a great reception the park has had from users.

West Witney Sports Social Club

Members heard that Officers continued to progress grant funding opportunities and were now at the stage of drawing up the final specification and design. Members welcomed the advances on the project and were pleased to hear that renewable energy sources, including a ground source heat pump and photovoltaic panels were being explored. The HE&O advised that they hoped to meet the next grant funding window which was due to be open for June/July.

Also, during the public participation item earlier in the meeting the representative from Witney parkrun had asked to be included at an early stage in the Work Depot development so that they may be aware of the proposed layout and if this would impact on the parkrun course, particularly the proximity of the entrance to the Depot. The Head of Estates & Operations offered his contact details so that an onsite meeting could be arranged to discuss this further.

The representative also raised an issue with a bollard that protects the sports field and asked that this be fixed to prevent unauthorised access of vehicles to the field.

Witney parkrun were also pleased to see via a members social media feed that £30,000 had been budgeted for improvements to the section of their course which ran adjacent to Deer Park Road. It was, however, understood this would not be sufficient to complete the whole project and Officers would discuss this further when they meet with the representatives in order to identify specific needs and assist with potential further funding/grant resources.

Courtside Hub/Leys Redevelopment

The HE&O explained the issues regarding drainage and the works on the building foundations being experienced by Courtside which had delayed the delivery of the project. It was expected that completion would now be in the late summer. Members were disappointed to hear this however, they were pleased to hear officers were in regular contact to provide support in order that residents were kept up to date.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, an onsite meeting be arranged with representatives of Witney parkrun to discuss the plan for the new depot at West Witney as well as the possibility of improvement to the Deer Park Road path and,
3. That, the broken bollard at West Witney Sports Ground be repaired.

PR250 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.

(Members of the public left the meeting at 7:04pm)

PR251 **FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO provided on future ownership and management of sports pitch provisions in the town.

Members were pleased to receive a comprehensive summary of the progress of discussions between the Town Clerk and West Oxfordshire District Council. Each of the individual proposals and recommendations in the report were discussed and Members were unanimous in agreement of the recommendations below.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, WTC take on the grassed area of Deer Park Road Training Pitch on a freehold basis and,
3. That, WTC take on the grassed area including the MUGA/MUSA at Raleigh Crescent Training Pitch on a freehold basis. The grassed area from Spring 2025 and the MUGA/MUSA project when completed and,
4. That, ownership and maintenance of trees and hedges at both Deer Park Road and Raleigh Crescent remain with WODC and,
5. That, WODC be requested to re-establish the perimeter ditches at both Deer Park Road and Raleigh Crescent to stop illegal encampments and,
6. That, in respect of the Windrush Place Pavilion, Pitches and Play Zone/MUGA, WTC runs the site in line with its other sports pitches/pavilion/changing rooms dealing with allocation of the pitches and,
7. That, WTC confirm no changes are required to the internal layout of the Windrush Place Pavilion and,
8. That, should the 3G Pitch be situated at West Witney Sports Ground that the ownership will be transferred to WTC, and the Council establish a sinking fund in order to budget for the ongoing financial & maintenance commitments and,
9. That, WTC will establish demand for municipal pitches at Madley Park and,
10. That, subject to sufficient demand WTC offer to take on the freehold of the Madley Park Playing Fields and maintain from 2029 when the dual use agreement ends providing the pitches are brought back to specification and,
11. That, the Town Clerk reviews the administrative and maintenance resources required as a result of taking on these additional facilities, including a new bookings system.

The meeting closed at: 7.35 pm

Chair

**HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 20 May 2024

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Edwards-Hughes D Newcombe R Smith	J Treloar (In place of J Robertshaw) A Bailey (In place of O Collins)
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Sharon Groth Mark Lewis	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Town Clerk Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	No members of the public.	

H261 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Enright and Aitman.

Further apologies were also received from Councillors Robertshaw and Collins, Councillors Trelaor and Bailey attended as a substitute respectively.

The Deputy Town Clerk reminded members of the importance to inform the Committee Clerk should they be unable to attend a meeting as requested.

H262 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor J Treloar later declared a potential non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as a relation may be a contractor for the proposed works to be carried out.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers.

H263 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Bailey and seconded by Councillor Crouch that Councillor D Enright be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Duncan Enright be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

H264 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 March 2024 were received.

There were no matters arising.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 March 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H265 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

H266 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

A member raised a question in relation to the split of the Fizzy Friday and Loyalty drink promotion costs.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, further details is provided to members of the cost of promotions.

H267 **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk/CEO concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

A Member raised a question regarding the final cost of the works to improve the storage at the Corn Exchange. The Head of Estates & Operations confirmed this was slightly above the original budget of £5,000.

A further question arose regarding the need to link the fire alarm to the proposed security improvements for the Corn Exchange, the HE&O confirmed that this was not a legal requirement however Officers had been in contact with the supplier and the work to connect the external door entry and fire alarm system would be completed at no additional cost. Officers would ensure that the system is fully compliant.

The Town Clerk/CEO provided a update to confirm that the faculty for the work to repair the wall at St Marys Church had now been received and it is hoped that work would commence shortly.

Lastly, in response to a members question the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that a request via Section 106 had been included in the North Witney Development response in order to protect Witney heritage and address the Survey of the unused cemetery buildings (Ref: IS3).

Resolved:

1. That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted and,
2. That, priority of the project be delegated to Officers.

H268 PUBLIC HALLS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer concerning an update on the council Public Halls.

Members were pleased to hear of the improved storage in the Corn Exchange and the immediate effect this had on improving the appearance.

Members then considered the options regarding Wireless or wired microphones in relation to the proposed new conferencing arrangements. Members provided personal experience of using wireless microphones and agreed the importance to ensure a high-quality output and also to future proof the installation given the potential for hybrid council meeting in the future.

The Committee welcomed the reintroduction of the Fizzy Friday event as proposed however asked that the opening hours of the Corn Exchange were advertised clearly in order to maximise the promotion and avoid disappointment to potential venue visitors.

A member questioned why the decision to run a promotion was required by the Committee, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that this was due to the additional cost of staffing requirements.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, wired microphones be the preferred choice when updating the conferencing system and,
3. That, the Fizzy Friday promotion recommence from 7 June 2024 and,
4. That, the Corn Exchange opening times be made clear.

H269 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer concerning the recent activity in the Public Halls.

Members were pleased to hear of the recent successful events and the proposals for the upcoming period and in particular the link up with the University of Gloucestershire and asked that an invitation be extended to students to attend a future meeting to allow them to present their work and for members to thank them directly.

The Committee considered the proposal for the live music events to start in June, all members agreed that this would be an excellent opportunity to promote the Corn Exchange and increase the cosmopolitan feeling on the square experienced in the summer months.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, an invitation be extended to the University of Gloucester to attend a future meeting and,
3. That, live music events commence from 14 June 2024.

H270 PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW

The Head of Estates & Operations advised the Committee that the Business Plan for both the Burwell Hall and Corn Exchange were in progress and therefore would be presented at the meeting of the Committee on 8 July 2024.

H271 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.

H272 UPDATE ON PROPERTY MATTERS – LEASES & ASSETS

The Committee received and considered the confidential report along with a verbal update from the Town Clerk/CEO.

Members received details from the Head of Estates & Operations regarding the options for repairs to be carried out to the Madley Park Hall dividing doors. Members were in agreement that Officers project manage the repairs and that an earmarked reserve be used to fund the repair.

Members proceeded to discuss the issues that had arisen with the running of the Witney Allotment Association (WAA), which covered allotment sites at Newland, Hailey Road, Windrush Place and Lakeside. Members agreed that the Council should issue a single lease to the WAA and allow them to arrange the administration, constitution and running of the allotments as they saw fit.

It was therefore proposed that the WAA be issued one lease they would then have the flexibility to operate separate “branches” for the allotments. The Town Clerk advised that it was necessary for the lease to include named individuals and therefore she would take legal advice to ensure that the lease would be workable and protected the council.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers project manage the replacement of the Madley Park Hall internal dividing doors and, it be funded from the EMR,
3. That, subject to legal advice the Town Clerk arrange for a single lease with WAA be drawn up.

The meeting closed at: 7.02 pm

Chair

**STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 3 June 2024

At 6.04 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor L Cherry (Chair)

Councillors:	O Collins	A Bailey
	R Smith	S Simpson
	T Ashby	D Edwards-Hughes (In place of J Doughty)
Officers:	Adam Cook	Project Officer
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
	Annie Hathaway	Business Administration Apprentice
Others:	One member of the public. Councillor Joy Aitman	

SC273 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Doughty, Councillor D Edwards-Hughes attended as a substitute.

SC274 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 11 as she was a member of the church that provided the Detached Youth Service.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

SC275 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 18 March 2024 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held on 18 March 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

SC276 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representation from Bright Futures Oxfordshire/The Station detached youth service concerning Agenda Item 11 which consisted of a verbal update on the work they had been carrying out since their commencement in February 2024.

A written report had also been provided to Members ahead of the meeting and Members asked questions.

The Committee reconvened.

(The member of the public left the meeting at 6:20pm)

SC277 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

SC278 **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO along with a verbal update concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

In response to a request from a Member to recommence the St George's Day parade, the Town Clerk advised that she thought this was historically organised by the local Scouting Association. The Committee discussed and were informed by a Member close to West Oxfordshire Scouts that they no longer had a desire to organise an event, the Members would respond to the residents who had raised the request.

The Project Officer provided an update on the sundial in response to a question. He was currently communicating with local organisations who had connections with the late Queen with the plan being that one would take the dial to instal themselves.

Resolved:

1. That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted and,
2. That, no amendments to the Objective & Work Plan were required.

(Cllr A Bailey left the meeting at 6:27pm during Agenda Item 7 – Committee Objectives, he returned at 6:38pm during Agenda Item 8 – Communications Report)

SC279 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Communities Engagements Officer (C&CEO) regarding the council's website, written communications and social media.

The C&CEO outlined the visual differences in the old & new website inviting Members to provide comments. She explained that town council staff would continue to work to improve the website and that the decision to carry this work out in house, rather than outsourcing it allowed for greater flexibility and a potential saving of £12,000. All Members were pleased to see the progress of the work and the considerable monetary saving.

Members were pleased to hear of the response from young residents to the survey following the communications sent to schools by Officers. The C&CEO would work to include this feedback within the Youth Forum and Youth Council.

The Committee discussed the positive and negative effects of disabling comments on the Town Councils Facebook posts. It was strongly felt that it was important not to stifle residents' views but understood the importance to not allow offensive comments. Members agreed that the Council had official channels, including the option for residents to visit the Town Hall, have face to face communications, and correspond by telephone and email should they have any issues to report.

All Members were in agreement to delegate to the Officers to decide if comments would be disabled on a post-by-post basis and for them to report back to the Committee at a future meeting.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the disablement of comments on Facebook posts be delegated to Officers and,
3. That, the C&CEO provides an update on the disablement of comments to the meeting of the committee on 23 September 2024.

SC280 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Communities Engagements Officer (C&CEO) regarding upcoming community events.

The C&CEO advised with only a few days to go, the arrangements for the 80th D-Day Commemorations were going well and encouraged all Members to do what they could to support the event.

Members were pleased to hear of the development with the 50th Anniversary events including an activity at the Oxfordshire Play Day Event, Witney Carnival and the new visitor activities available at the country park.

The C&CEO outlined the plans for a Heritage Day, the Mayor's Coffee Morning fundraiser, offering free hire of the Corn Exchange on Mental Health Day and a potential Eurovision Party. All events were welcomed by Members.

Members also discussed the hanging of the official portrait of the King. Two locations were proposed, the Café area of the Corn Exchange and the Town Hall Reception, both which had potential footfall. A vote was taken with two votes for the Café Area and six votes for the Town Hall Reception.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal report be noted and,
2. That, the Council have a nature-based activity at the Oxfordshire Playday event and,
3. That, the Mayors Coffee morning be held on the day of the Heritage Day and,
4. That, a budget of £100 be set for the Mayors Coffee Morning and,
5. That, that the Corn Exchange hire be waived for any organisation on Mental Health Day and,
6. That, the Kings portrait be hung in the Town Council Reception and,
7. That, Officers proceed with plan to host a chargeable ticketed Eurovision Event in 2025.

SC281 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Having been moved to a later point on the agenda the Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor J Aitman be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor J Aitman be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

(Subsequent to the meeting it was noted that Cllr Joy Aitman wasn't a member of the Committee – the matter will be reverted to Full Council on 17 June 2024)

SC282 COMMUNITY INSIGHT STEERING GROUP NOTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meetings held 25 March and 30 April 2024 along with a verbal update from the Chair who had attended the second of the two meetings.

The Chair advised that she would report back to the Committee after each meeting.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Community Insight Steering Group held 25 March and 30 April 2024 be noted.

(Cllr A Bailey left the meeting at 7:34pm during Agenda Item 10, he returned at 7:50pm during Agenda Item 13)

SC283 INCLUSIVITY & DIVERSITY PANEL

The Committee received a verbal update from the Leader of the Council in respect of the recent meeting she facilitated. She was disappointed that only one of the eight groups invited had attended the online meeting.

Members discussed if future meetings would be held in person and decided this should be considered along with informal Terms of Reference and guidance for this Councillor led panel.

The Chair opened up conversation on what “Inclusivity & Diversity” meant to each individual member and many different views were expressed during the conversation focusing around removing barriers, listening rather than talking, actively encouraging residents/participants views and being open to be educated by different groups.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

SC284 YOUTH SERVICES

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk regarding an update on Youth Services within Witney.

Members had earlier in the meeting received the report on detached youth work from the representative of The Station and the report included an update from the Youth Services Forum which took place on 29 May 2024.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

(Cllr O Collins left the meeting at 7:43pm)

SC285 YOUTH COUNCIL

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk regarding progress of the Youth Council.

Members asked that Witney Scouts be added to the list of invited member organisations along with a change of working on the poster to better reflect the benefits of participation.

The Committee were keen to progress the establishment of the Youth Council and therefore all agreed to delegate any final decisions so as to no slow down progress.

Resolved

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Witney Scouts be added to the list of invited organisations and,
3. That, the word ‘Earn’ be replaced with ‘Gain’ on the posters promoting the Youth Council and,
4. That, final changes be delegated to Officers, Leader and Chair of the Stronger Communities Committee.

(Cllr O Collins returned to the meeting at 7:45pm)

(Cllr L Cherry left the meeting at 7:45pm returning at 7:48pm)

SC286 GRAFFITI PROJECT - SKATE PARK

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer regarding a proposal to hold a graffiti art competition along with a verbal update.

Members were enthusiastic to hear details of the competition and were pleased to hear that Officers would have full oversight of the brief issued to potential artists.

Members also discussed the possibility of a 'temporary wall' being made available which would allow graffiti to be continually updated and hopefully deter the defacement of the feature walls.

All Members were in agreement that the competition be launched with the proposed prize and that the walls be protected to ensure their longevity. They also agreed that the brief should focus on "colour, inclusivity, youth, belonging & Witney"

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the competition be run as presented with the prize being an iPad and Apple Pencil (£428). The funding for this, along with the protective coating (£229.06) being taken from the Wheeled Sports Park earmarked reserve and,
3. That, the working of the brief be amended to replace 'environment' with 'belonging' and,
4. That, Officers consider making a wall available for temporary graffiti artwork.

SC287 WOODGREEN BUS SHELTER UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer regarding the request for a bus shelter at Woodgreen.

Members were disappointed to hear that Estelle Manor felt they were unable to assist financially and agreed that the cost was outside of that affordable to the Council given the low number of passengers that use the stop.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

SC288 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO 48 (A)

Resolved:

That Standing Order 48 (a) be suspended to allow the meeting to continue as it had now passed two hours in length.

SC289 MARRIOTT'S BUS SHELTER

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the removal of the bus shelter at Marriotts Walk.

The Town Clerk gave a brief verbal history of the shelter, and Members welcomed the replacement in a more fitting location.

All Members agreed that the Council take on the responsibility of the new shelter once it was in place.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Council includes any new shelter in its bus shelter portfolio.

SC290 BLUE PLAQUES REFURBISHMENT

The Committee received and considered the report and verbal update from the Business Administration Apprentice regarding the refurbishment of three of the Blue Plaques on the Council's buildings.

Members agreed that having seen the great results of the renovation of the Corn Exchange Plaque, that the work to refurbish the remaining three should go ahead. Members were in agreement that to reduce cost the plaque on the Buttercross be delayed until the equipment was available during the Christmas Period or earlier should the opportunity arise.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, refurbishment of the Town Hall and Langdale Hall Plaque proceed and,
3. That, the refurbishment of the Buttercross Plaque take place later in 2024.

SC291 THIRD PARTY EVENTS

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer regarding third party events due to take place on the Councils Land.

Members were pleased to welcome back the Oxford Playhouse to The Leys for them to provide the free outdoor theatre shows and all Members were in agreement with the request for a subsidised let.

With the express permission of the Chair the Members also heard details of a request from Witney Churches who had requested use of the events field at The Leys on 17,18 & 19 July to host events for Key Stage 3 to 5 Children. Members were pleased to facilitate these free to all events, though some held reservations over the potential religious aspect of the group running these particular series of activities.

The Committee also heard from the Committee Clerk brief details of a proposal received from a local writer regarding a play to highlight the issues of Dementia. Further details, once established, would be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a subsidised let to the value of £1,500 be agreed for Oxford Playhouses Outdoor Theatre events and,
3. That, delegation to Officers be agreed concerning Courtside CIC's request to use of The Leys for live music events during the summer and,
4. That, Witney Churches be allowed free use of The Leys on 17-19 July 2024.

The meeting closed at: 8.09 pm

Chair

**POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 10 June 2024

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch	L Cherry
	O Collins	D Newcombe
	R Smith	D Edwards-Hughes (In place of J
	A Bailey	Doughty)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer &
		Committee Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	Nine members of the public. Councillor James Robertshaw	

F308 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Doughty, Councillor D Edwards-Hughes attended as a substitute.

F309 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor O Collins declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 – Mayor Tree Policy owing to him being the current and previous years Mayor

Councillor Collins further declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 13 – Subsidised Letting owing to one of the subsidised letting requests being for the Mayoral Charity events for the municipal year.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

F310 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Rachel Crouch be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Rachel Crouch be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

F311 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 25 March 2024 were received.

F167 – The Mayor advised that he had received thanks from Witney Photo Group for the subsidised use of the Corn Exchange.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 25 March 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

F312 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from representatives of Windrush School, 1st Witney Rangers, Lowland Resue Oxford and Be Free Young Carers all concerning their respective grant applications to be discussed under Agenda Item 13.

The Committee reconvened.

F313 COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO along with a verbal update concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25.

The Town Clerk/CEO explained that some of the objectives listed in her report overlapped with other Committee's objectives however, due to the financial, legal or policy nature they also appeared on this Committee plan.

The Chair offered thanks on the comprehensive update on projects and noted the Council was doing a huge amount and was constantly doing more and more for the town and residents.

Members were disappointed to note that the Community Ownership Fund was on hold due to the general election and the impact this would have on the Council and its plans for the West Witney Sports & Social Club development. A Member proposed that the Council write to both the Labour and Conservative House of Lords leaders to make the request that the fund is reopened as soon as possible.

Resolved:

1. That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2024/25 be noted and,
2. That, the Town Clerk/CEO write on behalf of the Council to the Lords leaders in respect to the suspended Community Ownership Fund.

F314 **TREE POLICY REVIEW**

Members received and considered the updated Tree policy; the Head of Estates & Operations advised that the policy will be further updated with Bio-Diversity net gain details and a tree planting policy in the future.

He also advised that though Witney Town Council were responsible for 9,000 trees and there were many more around the town that fell under the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, as well as those with private or no known owner; hence there was a need for a robust Tree Policy so as not to put a financial burden on the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the updated Tree Policy as presented be adopted.

F315 **MAYOR'S TREE PLANTING POLICY**

The Committee received the joint report of the Deputy Town Clerk and Operations Manager regarding the Mayoral Tree Planting Policy.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that a review of the policy was necessary following approaches from ex-mayor's families as some of the dedicated trees had fallen into poor health or died.

Following consideration, a vote on whether to continue the planting of an annual mayoral tree was taken with the result being six members in favour and one against.

Members agreed that any planting should be in conjunction with the forthcoming tree planting policy and that the tradition of dedicating a tree should be retained, though this could also be extended to a Bench or Shrub if preferred by the incumbent Mayor.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Council continue with planting a tree, shrub or erection of a bench for each Mayor, with a preference for that Mayors electoral ward being chosen and,
3. That, trees that are currently deceased or unhealthy should be replaced, their locations being deferred to Officers to arrange suitable locations and,
4. That, it be deferred to Officers to decide if any future damaged or unhealthy tree should be replaced.
5. That, further information on planting sites is considered/included in the Council's tree planting policy.

(Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting at 7:09pm , rejoining at 7:11pm)

also

(Cllr L Cherry left the meeting at 7:17pm and returned at 7:19pm)

F316 **ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2023/24**

The Council received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) concerning the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24 under its obligations of the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 along with the final report of the Council's independent Internal Auditor.

The RFO outlined the historical changes to the Audit practice and pointed out that Members took a collective responsibility for ensuring there was a sound system of internal control in order to agree.

It was proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Cherry that questions 1 to 8 be answered "yes" and question 9 answered "Not Applicable" in Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement and that the statement be agreed and recommended for signing at Full Council on 17 June. All Members were in agreement.

It was further proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Cherry that the Accounting Statement which formed section 2 be recommended to Full Council for agreement and adoption. All Members were in agreement

The RFO advised that the remainder of the report was for information; Section 3 would be submitted to the External Auditor with supporting information and would be an analytical review concentrating on variances year on year, or above a certain percentage. The general public would have the right to inspection of the documents which would be published following adoption.

Lastly, it was proposed by Cllr Crouch, seconded by Cllr Edwards-Hughes that the Annual Internal Audit Report be approved, all members were in agreement (excluding Cllr Cherry who had briefly left the meeting)

The Leader of the Council thanked officers, particularly the RFO for their diligence in presenting the information in such an understandable format.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved, and formally adopted by the Council and,
3. That, the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved, and formally adopted by the Council and,
4. That, in light of the above the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2023/24 be formally agreed and adopted by the Council and,
5. That, the internal Audit report for 2023/24 be approved and,
6. That, the draft notice advertising electors rights for 2023/24 be noted.

F317 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets for the Council which along with details of the investment activity for 2023/24.

The RFO advised that regarding the management accounts, only a small amount of work remained outstanding before the financial end of year could be completed, this being to deal with the earmarked reserve movements. However, all income and expenditure had been allocated.

Members considered continuation of the membership to Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) and felt that this membership, which had previously been provided free, had not been fully utilised. The Town Clerk/CEO expressed her opinion that membership was more beneficial to Members rather than Officers and was aimed more at District and County Council level.

It was proposed by Cllr Bailey, seconded by Cllr Edwards-Hughes that the Council continue with membership for one year with an evaluation review to be carried out as it its benefit at the end of the 2024 membership year. All Members were in agreement and suggested Committee Chairs could also consider the work of their committees for future case studies.

In respect to the recommendation contained in the report it was:

- Proposed by Cllr Bailey and Seconded by Cllr Crouch that the Management Accounts to 31 March 2024 be noted and approved.
- Proposed by Cllr Cherry and Seconded by Cllr Bailey that the update on Investment Returns report be noted and approved.
- Proposed by Cllr Smith and Seconded by Cllr Crouch that the Investment Activity report for 2023-24 be noted and approved

All Members were in favour of the three proposals.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts to 31 March 2024 be approved and,
3. That, the update on Investment Returns report be noted and approved and,
4. That the Investment Activity report for 2023-24 be noted and approved and,
5. That, the Council renew its membership of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network for a further year with a review to be carried out at the end of the 2024 membership year.

F318 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer with the accompanying payment schedules, bank statements and reconciliations.

Officers pointed out that due to the financial year end, the schedules were slightly further behind than they would normally be, due to the technicalities of the accounting system, but this would be rectified at the next meeting.

Resolved:

That, the report, bank statements and reconciliations be noted, and the following schedule of payments be approved:

Payment reference/ Cheque Numbers	In the sum of:	Account
Cheques 101236-101238, DDs and Standing Orders February 2024 – net excluding transfers from BPA	£572,799.32	General CB 1
Cheques 34533-34588 (cheques 34573-34588 voided), DDs and Standing Orders February 2024	£183,909.39	Imprest CB 2
Cheques 101239-101240, DDs and Standing Orders February 2024 – net excluding transfers from BPA	£121,398.08	General CB 1
Cheques 34589- 34677, DDs and Standing Orders February 2024	£210,061.66	Imprest CB 2

(Cllr Bailey left the meeting at 7:40pm and returned at 7:42pm)

F319 FINANCIAL MATTERS REFERRED FROM SPENDING COMMITTEES

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk outlining the financial implications pertaining to recommendations of the Council's spending Committees.

No questions arose.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, the recommendations of the spending Committees be approved.

F320 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 48 A

Resolved

That Standing Order 48a) be suspended in order to allow the meeting to continue as it had now lasted for two hours.

F321 GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk detailing requests for the award of Grants and Subsidised lettings.

Discretionary Grants

Members had heard earlier in the meeting during Public Participation from the representatives of Windrush School, 1st Witney Rangers, Lowland Resue Oxford and Be Free Young Carers concerning their respective grant applications.

Prior to the Committee considering Discretionary Grant Applications for the 2024/25 financial year the Leader of the Council reminded members of the amount of Grant funding that remained in the budget (£17,000) and that a further grant window would open in January 2025, therefore it would be necessary to view the grant requests with this in mind.

Windrush School – Members felt that rather than fund a salary, they preferred to fund equipment or training to existing staff to help with the needs of the children up to the value of £1,000. Therefore, they made no official award and asked that Officers request that the school submit a revised request should they wish.

1st Witney Rangers Girl Guides – It was proposed by Cllr Cherry and seconded by Cllr Edwards-Hughes that the award be increased to £1,000. Members were unanimous in support for the social value the opportunity the request would provide for young people. Members also asked Officers to make offer of the Council's Halls to the group to host fundraising events so that they may be considered for subsidised lets.

Lowland Rescue Oxford– It was proposed by Cllr Bailey, seconded by Cllr Crouch that an award of £2,500 be made. Members were unanimous in support and thanked the group for what they did, particularly recently in Witney.

Be Free Young Carers – Members considered the reach of the group which was intended to cover the whole West Oxfordshire area. They agreed that as Witney held approx. 40% of the young people in the district then the award should reflect that data. Members were unanimous in their agreement to award £2,000. Members also requested that the council write to the Witney schools to highlight the award and encourage them to engage with the group.

A Member raised and it was agreed by the Committee that it was clear from all four applications received and the representations given, that Mental Health featured in all which is a representation of the pressures that all sections of society were facing.

Subsidised Lettings

The Committee was unanimously in agreement for the request from the Mayor of Witney for subsidised letting of the town council halls totalling approx. £300 to support his charity fundraising efforts in 2024/25.*(The mayor having removed himself from the meeting whilst the item was considered)*

Members also considered additional subsidised letting for Witney Fairtrade Action Group, Witney Traffic Advisory Committee, CoHSAT and Oxfordshire County Council these were unanimously approved.

Other Grants

The Committee considered an extra ordinary grant award for Witney Town Band which was agreed unanimously approved. The Committee asked Officers to extend the offer of free use of The Leys or Corn Exchange for the Band to use for a future fundraising event following an update from the Deputy Town Clerk to advise that their fund reserves were low. A Member also asked that if they knew of any opportunities at which the Band could play for a fee that they should be forwarded to the Band.

Members considered the draft policy criteria for the Council's 50th Anniversary Grants. The Committee agreed to delegate to Officers in conjunction of the Chair of the Committee for

agreement of these small awards. They also asked that a photo of how the individual grant awards were spent so that these may be used to publicise the grant scheme.

Finally, Members were pleased to receive correspondence from Witney Day Centre, West Oxfordshire Citizen Advice and West Oxfordshire Community Transport for the grant awards they had previously received.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Windrush School be contacted, and a revised grant application be requested for Play Therapy equipment and,
3. That, the sum of £1,000, be awarded to 1st Witney Rangers Girl Guides and,
4. That, the sum of £2,500, be awarded to Lowland Rescue Oxford and,
5. That, the sum of £2,000, be awarded to Be Free Young Carers and,
6. That, the subsidised lettings applications for Witney Fairtrade Action Group (£199.50), Mayor of Witney (approx. £300), Witney Traffic Advisory Committee (£78.50), CoHSAT (£157) and Oxfordshire County Council (Lettings discounted by approx. 48%) be approved and,
7. That, the extra-ordinary grant of £1,000 be approved for Witney Town Band and,
8. That, the Councils 50th Anniversary Grant Aid policy be approved and,
9. That, the awarding of the 50th Anniversary Grant Scheme be delegated to Officers in conjunction with the Chair of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee and,
10. That, all grants be awarded under the General Power of Competence and that the recipients be asked to acknowledge the Council's financial contribution in their promotional literature and provide pictorial evidence of their spending and,
11. That, the correspondence from Witney Day Centre, West Oxfordshire Citizen Advice and West Oxfordshire Community Transport be noted.

(Cllr Cherry left the meeting immediately following the awarding of Discretionary Grants at 8:10pm and therefore did not take part in the discussion or agreement of the Subsidised Lettings or Other Grants)

F322 SUBSCRIPTION OPPORTUNITY - SAFER ROADS STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Committee received and considered the request to subscribe to the Safer Roads Stronger Communities initiative.

Members agreed that the work was a duplication of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee that the Council already facilitated and therefore agreed, unanimously to not join the initiative at this time.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

F323 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND 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.

F324 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TENDER EVALUATION

The Committee received the confidential report of the Head of Estates & Operations along with a verbal update and a visual presentation provided by the successful contractor.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the award of the contract be made in open session after the conclusion of the confidential session.

F325 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO.

As well as the written report, the Town Clerk/CEO gave a verbal update on Deer Park & Ralegh Crescent Training Pitches, Madley Park Pitches, Windrush Place Pavilion, Pitches and Play Zone/MUGA and the prospective 3G pitch.

The report also contained updates on Leases with third parties including Courtside CIC, West Witney Sports & Social Club, Madley Park Hall Trust and the Witney Allotment Association.

Members were pleased to see the details of the lease agreement with Witney Lawn Tennis Club and hear of the advantages this has to both the Council and the Tennis Club.

An update was also provided on other legal matters including the Council's Temporary Welfare Units at West Witney Sports and Social Club and the Windrush Place Adventure Play and Ralegh Crescent MUGA/MUSA.

A summary was provided to the Committee of Insurance Claims involving the Council that are currently being dealt with.

Finally, the Town Clerk/CEO provided details of an offer to purchase land had been made to the Council. The Committee agreed with the Town Clerk/CEO pursuing this further.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, the offer of land be pursued further by the Town Clerk/CEO to establish more information.

F326 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee meeting held on 3 June 2024.

Resolved:

That, the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 3 June 2024, and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

F327 **REVERT TO OPEN SESSION**

Following the completion of the closed session to consider confidential matters the Committee reverted back to open session to formally award the Christmas lights tender.

F328 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CONTRACT 2024-2027**

Members were pleased to hear and see of the advances in lighting that would be part of the agreed contract.

It was proposed by Cllr Collins seconded by Cllr Edwards-Hughes that the contract be awarded to LITE (Lighting and Illumination Technology Experience Limited). All members were in agreement.

Resolved.

That, the Christmas Light Contract be awarded to LITE (Lighting and Illumination Technology Experience Limited for 3 years from 2024 to 2027 subject to necessary checks and contractual legislation. The whole life cost of the awarded contract being £133,467.

The meeting closed at: 8.40 pm

Chair

FULL COUNCIL

Date: 17 June 2024

Title: Civic Announcements

Contact Officer: Secretary to the Mayor – Loraine Harwood

The role of Mayor involves chairing the Town Council, sitting as an ex officio voting member on council committees, representing and promoting Witney, organising key events in the town in partnership with others, raising funds for local charities, and supporting community activities which contribute to the life of the town and the objectives of the Witney Town Council. The Mayor is supported by the Deputy Mayor, whose attendance in place of or alongside the Mayor is noted in the report below.

This is a regular report to each full council meeting, detailing the activities of the Mayor since the last meeting.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Town Band AGM - Methodist Church Witney
Liz Evans Beauty re-opening event - Church Green Witney
Reverend Toby Wright's final service at St Mary's Church
Witney Beer Festival
Chair of WODC fundraising quiz
Grand opening of Heritage Bakery – Witney
Witney Food Festival
Witney Pride Festival Day
Volunteer Link Up summer social
The Elm Tree Sunset Social male mental health fundraiser
Launching the two new buses for WOCT
Joining fundraiser Steve Rance on his two-day marathon walk round Witney to raise money for cancer charities
Opening Witney Music Festival on the Leys

REPRESENTING and PROMOTING WITNEY

St George's Day Civic Service, St Michael's at the North Gate, Oxford – Deputy Mayor attended (GM)

Lord Mayor of Oxford Mayor making – Oxford Town Hall

Faringdon & District 100th anniversary of Royal British Legion – Deputy Mayor attending (AB)

Lord Lieutenant of Oxon & Bishop of Dorchester dinner invite celebrating local government in Oxfordshire – Dorchester Abbey - Deputy Mayor attending (AB)

KEY EVENTS AND COUNCIL ACTIVITY

St George's Day flag raising - Town Hall
Young litter picker presentation – Lake & Country Park
Witney Pride flag raising – Town Hall
D Day 80th anniversary events

RAISING FUNDS

Mayor's Charities 2023-24/2024-25:

APCAM

Yellow Submarine

Prepared by: ***Cllr Owen Collins and Loraine Harwood***

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FULL COUNCIL

Date:	Monday 17 June 2024
Title:	Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24
Contact Officer:	Responsible Financial Officer

Background

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require relevant bodies to complete an Annual Return which is attached at Appendix A. The Annual Return must be submitted to the external auditors by the 30 June having been approved by full council before that date.

This is a matter which by law must be considered by the Full Council. However, in order to assist, the matter was considered by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting of 10 June 2024, with a recommendation to approve the AGAR and the report of the Internal Auditor.

Annual Governance Statement

It is a statutory requirement that Members take responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control in place for the Council and give answers to nine questions in 'Section 1 – Annual governance statement'.

The Responsible Financial Officer has prepared the following notes to assist Council's consideration of the Annual Governance Statement. Council is required to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to each of the statements 1 to 9 below. In the event of a 'No' response, explanations must be provided to the external auditor together with a description of the action that is being taken to address the weakness identified.

Statement 1: We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.

[yes means.... prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations]

[A] The Statement of Accounts in section 2 of the annual return has been produced and certified by the Council's Responsible Financial Officer. The accounts are prepared in

accordance with proper practices and in particular with reference to the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) 2023 edition of the Practitioners' Guide, published by the National Association of Local Councils. The Practitioners' Guide ('the guide') is issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) to support the preparation by smaller authorities in England of statutory annual accounting and governance statements found in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. This 2023 edition of the Guide applies in respect of financial years commencing on or after 1 April 2023. In accordance with Section 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, an authority is a 'smaller authority' if the higher of the authority's gross income for the year and its gross expenditure for the year does not exceed £6.5m.

Statement 2: We maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.

[yes means.... made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge]

[A] The Council's system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level.

As Members you are all monitoring the Council's Internal Control mechanisms by attending Committee and Council meetings when regular management and financial information is provided, covering items including:

- Service delivery and project performance;*
- Financial reports measuring actual expenditure against budgets;*
- Comprehensive budget cycle.*

Key elements of the internal control environment include:

- Internal Audit is independent and outsourced to Auditing Solutions Ltd and was re-tendered in 2021.*
- The Council adopted an updated 'Model Code of Conduct' on 10th October 2022 (minute 528). Following the May 2023 ordinary elections, the new administration adopted the Code at its Annual Meeting on 17th May 2023 (minute 245).*
- Standing Orders & Financial Regulations in place and regularly reviewed.*
- The Council adopted an Annual Investment Strategy for 2004/05 on 5 May 2004 (minute 170/04 refers), which has been reviewed annually since. The last review being for 2023/24 on 5 February 2024 (minute F74).*
- This Committee adopted a formal Risk Management Policy and programme for 2005/06 on 4 April 2005 (minute F142 refers), which has been regularly reviewed,*

and presented annually for approval. The last review being for 2023/24 on 25 March 2023 (minute F169).

- *Operational Risk Assessments have been presented to Council as and when they arise. The Corporate Risk Assessments and Risk Register was presented and adopted by this Committee on 25 March 2024.*
- *In previous years the Council used sector-specific software to maintain its risk register but the software is now out of date and no longer supported. Therefore your officers are now maintaining a register in Word for corporate and financial purposes. This comprises nine sections:*
 - *Financial administration.*
 - *Banking and investments.*
 - *Expenditure.*
 - *Grants.*
 - *Income.*
 - *Insurance.*
 - *Payroll.*
 - *Internal audit.*
 - *Strategic risks.*
- *The Council's book-keeping and accountancy is undertaken in-house by the Responsible Financial Officer (30 hours per week) and the Administrative Support Assistant - Policy, Governance & Finance (25 hrs. per week). Financial procedures have been designed to allow for appropriate segregation of duties and other internal controls.*

Statement 3: We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.

[yes means.... has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so]

- [A] *The Town Clerk and Internal Auditor constantly review legislative processes to ensure compliance and take action to overcome identified areas of non-compliance. Standing orders and Financial Regulations are established and referred to as appropriate.*

The Council has the Power of General Competence (March 2016) which was reaffirmed at the Annual Council meeting on 17 May 2023 following the ordinary elections.

Statement 4: We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

[yes means.... during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts]

[A] *Compliance with year-end statutory requirements is prompted and monitored by the external auditors. Annual Reports including Financial Statements are available for inspection throughout the year. Financial information is also available on the Council's website. For information the draft notice advertising electors' rights for 2023/24 is attached as appendix B.*

The report from the external auditor, Moore East Midlands, dated 19 September 2023 and in relation to the 2022/23 audit stated: "The inspection period for the exercise of electors' rights was set for 31 working days which is more than the mandatory 30 working days as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Paragraph 14 (1) . Although this is considered to be a minor technical breach, given more than the standard amount of time was provided for, in future the Council should ensure it provides the precise public inspection period. We would anticipate the Council taking this into account when it completes Assertion 4 on its 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return." Members are requested to consider accordingly; I do not consider that this adversely effects the answer to this question and believe that the Council can assert that "We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations."

Statement 5: We carried out an assessment of the risks facing the council and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.

[yes means.... considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly]

[A] *Your officers maintain a register in Word for corporate and financial purposes. This identifies and prioritises risks facing the council. Reports detailing actions taken and persons responsible are reviewed annually by council. The Internal Auditor also independently reviews the effectiveness of actions and controls. A comprehensive insurance policy is in place through Zurich Municipal.*

Statement 6: We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council accounting records and control systems.

[yes means.... arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority]

[A] *The internal auditor is appointed by council every five years. He attends at least three times a year with the resultant internal audit report reviewed by the Policy, Governance*

& Finance Committee. The contract was re-tendered in the Summer of 2021 and a report presented to PGF on 27 September 2021 (minute F504 refers).

Statement 7: We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.

[yes means.... responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit]

[A] Management responses and actions taken are recorded as part of the annual audit reports from internal and external auditors which are reviewed by council.

Statement 8: We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.

[yes means.... disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant]

[A] The Town Clerk and the RFO review and accrue for any material known or contingent liabilities at the year-end.

Statement 9: Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we have discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.

[A] Not applicable.

The Policy, Finance and Governance Committee has recommended that the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024, with questions 1 to 8 answered “yes” and question 9 “not applicable, “ be approved and adopted.

Annual Return 2023/24

‘Section 2 of the Annual Return – Accounting Statements’ is the statutory form of accounts required of councils if the higher of the authority's gross income for the year and its gross expenditure for the year does not exceed £6.5m.

It is subject to audit as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3.

Note that following a review of the Council’s financial procedures the previously produced “unaudited Financial Statements” are no longer produced. Instead members are referred to the management accounts for the year (see separate agenda item) and a further report from the RFO regarding the Council’s financial position which will be published at a future meeting.

The Policy, Governance and Finance Committee have recommended that the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved and adopted.

Draft notice advertising electors' rights for 2023/24

The draft notice advertising electors' rights for 2023/24 is attached at Appendix B.

Annual Internal Audit Report

Throughout the year Auditing Solutions Ltd, the Council's independent Internal Auditors have carried out a number of visits and also undertaken some work remotely, in order to scrutinise internal procedures and accounting.

The Internal Auditor, Adrian Shepherd-Roberts of Auditing Solutions has carried out the final audit work for the year and the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023-24 has been completed and signed by the Internal Auditor on page 3 of the AGAR. This is a matter to note.

The full Internal Audit Report is included at appendix C. The Policy, Governance and Finance Committee have recommended that the Internal Audit report for 2023/24 is approved.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Recommendations

The Policy, Governance and Finance Committee recommend:

- 1) that the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024, with questions 1 to 8 answered "yes" and question 9 "not applicable, " be approved and adopted;
- 2) that the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved and adopted;
- 3) that the Internal Audit report for 2023/24 is approved;
- 4) that the draft notice advertising electors' rights for 2023/24 is noted.

APPENDIX A

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2023/24 FORM 3.

APPENDIX B

NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN - ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024.

APPENDIX C

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FOR 2023/24.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2024**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2024**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2024.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2024**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?		
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).</i>	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).</i>	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

06/10/2023

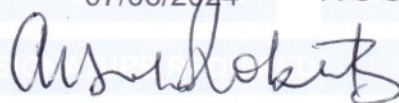
07/03/2024

07/06/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

A C Shepherd-Roberts INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

07/06/2024

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

****Note:** If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	'Yes' means that this authority:
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward			<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies			<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts			<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs			<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments			<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments			<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward			<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments			<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets			<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings			<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				<i>The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2023/24

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date


DD/MM/YYYY

Smaller authority name: **Witney Town Council**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION
OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN**

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

**Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)**

NOTICE	NOTES
<p>1. Date of announcement <u>Tuesday 18 June 2024</u> (a)</p> <p>2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR has been published with this notice. As it has yet to be reviewed by the appointed auditor, it is subject to change as a result of that review.</p> <p>Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested. For the year ended 31 March 2024, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</p> <p>(b) Mr Nigel Warner, Responsible Financial Officer, Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, OX28 6AG.</p> <p>commencing on (c) Wednesday 19 June 2024</p> <p>and ending on (d) Wednesday 31 July 2024.</p> <p>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and • The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority. <p>The appointed auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose between the above dates only.</p> <p>4. The smaller authority's AGAR is subject to review by the appointed auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the NAO's Code of Audit Practice 2015. The appointed auditor is:</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>Moore (Ref AP/HD) Rutland House Minerva Business Park Lynch Wood Peterborough PE2 6PZ</p> </div> <div style="flex: 1; text-align: center;">  <p>MOORE</p> </div> </div> <p>5. This announcement is made by (e) Mr Nigel Warner, Responsible Financial Officer.</p>	<p>(a) Insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the date in (c) below</p> <p>(b) Insert name, position and address/telephone number/ email address, as appropriate, of the Clerk or other person to which any person may apply to inspect the accounts</p> <p>(c) Insert date, which must be at least 1 day after the date of announcement in (a) above and extends for a single period of 30 working days (inclusive) ending on the date appointed in (d) below</p> <p>(d) The inspection period between (c) and (d) must also include the first 10 working days of July.</p> <p>(e) Insert name and position of person placing the notice – this person must be the responsible financial officer for the smaller authority</p>

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

Please note that this summary applies to all relevant smaller authorities, including local councils, internal drainage boards and 'other' smaller authorities.

The basic position

By law, any interested person has the right to inspect the accounting records of smaller authorities. If you are a local government elector or registered to vote in the local councils' elections, then you are able to ask questions about the accounts and object to them.

The right to inspect the accounting records

When your council has finalised its accounts for the previous financial year, they must advertise that they are available for people to inspect. You must then provide the council with reasonable notice of your intentions. Following this, by arrangement you will then have 30 working days to inspect and make copies of the accounting records and supporting documents. You may be required to pay a copying charge.

The right to ask the auditor questions about the accounting records

If you have any questions regarding the accounting records, you should first ask your smaller authority. This must be done during the 30-day period for the exercise of public rights. You may also ask the appointed auditor questions about an item in the accounting records. However, the auditor can only answer 'what' questions, not 'why' questions so is limited with their response. To avoid any confusion, it is advised that you put your questions in writing.

The right to make objections

Should you view something as unlawful or believe there are matters of wider concern in the accounts, you may wish to object. If you are a local government elector, you have the right to ask the external auditor to apply to the courts for a declaration that an item is contrary to the law and should be reported as a matter of public interest. This must be done by telling the appointed auditor which specific item in the accounts you object to and why you believe it to be unlawful or think a public interest report should be made about it. You must provide clear evidence to support your objection, and this should be done in writing and the copied to the council.

You should not use the 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against your smaller authority. Complaints of this nature should be taken to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre or to your solicitor.

A final word

Smaller authorities, and so local taxpayers, meet the costs of dealing with questions and objections. In deciding whether to take your objection forward, the auditor must consider the cost that will be involved. They will only continue with the objection if it is in the public interest to do so. If you appeal to the courts against an auditor's decision, you may have to pay for the action yourself.



Witney Town Council

Internal Audit Report 2023-24: Final Update

Adrian Shepherd-Roberts

***For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd***

Background

All town and parish councils are required by statute to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Return. Auditing Solutions Ltd has provided this service to Witney Town Council since 2003.

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2023-24 financial year which was undertaken on 5th & 6th October 2023 and 7th March and 6th June 2024. We wish to thank the Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer and staff for assisting the process, providing all necessary documentation to facilitate completion of our review for the year to date. We have ensured that governance and financial controls remain effective.

Internal Audit Approach

In undertaking our reviews for the year, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts/Annual Return. We have employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in a number of key areas in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate and fit for the purposes intended.

Our programme of cover has been designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems are robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the Council's Annual Return, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

We have concluded that, on the basis of the programme of work we have undertaken, the Council has maintained adequate and effective internal control arrangements during the year.

We are also pleased to record that, in the areas examined, no major issues or concerns have been identified, we did at the last audit identify one area that we considered should be addressed by the Council which is set out later in this report and recommendations made. We are pleased to report that the recommendations have been addressed.

We consider the Clerk and her staff continue to operate generally effective control procedures in in most areas. We ask that members consider the content of this report and acknowledge that the report has been reviewed by Council.

We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, having concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Witney Town Council. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no responsibility or liability is accepted by Auditing Solutions Ltd to any third party who purports to use or rely, for any reason whatsoever, on this report, its contents or conclusions.

Detailed Report

Review of Accounting Arrangements & Bank Reconciliations

The Council maintains its accounting records using Omega software and continues to operate three bank accounts with Barclays, the Current account being used for the receipt of income and processing of high value payments, with the second Imprest account used for all routine payments and the third for retention of surplus funds and to provide funding for the former two accounts.

Our objective here is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers. To that end, we have:

- Ensured that the ledger remains in balance at the current date;
- Verified the opening trial balance detail with that reported in the 2022-23 Accounts and Annual Return;
- Checked and agreed transactions in the three bank account cashbooks to the relevant bank statements for April and August 2023 and January and March 2024 noting that these records continue to be maintained in a timely and accurate manner;
- Checked and agreed all inter account “sweep” transactions between the Imprest and premium accounts, to retain a daily balance on the former of £1,000, for the same months; and
- Checked detail on bank reconciliations as at 30th April 2023 and 31st August 2023 and January and March 2024 for each account to ensure that no long-standing uncleared cheques or other potentially anomalous balancing entries exist.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified from work completed in this area for the financial year.

Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place; that Council and Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and that, as far as we are able to ascertain, no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation. We: -

- Noted previously that the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed and formally approved by Full Council in February and April 2023 respectively;
- Noted previously that General Powers of Competence were adopted at the May 2019 Full Council meeting; and
- Have undertaken our review of the Council’s minutes and consideration of other governance issues for the year to identify whether or not any issues exist that may have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council’s future financial stability.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified from work currently undertaken in this area.

Review of Expenditure

Our aim here is to ensure that: -

- Council resources are released in accordance with the Council's approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate records, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- An official order has been raised for the acquisition of goods or service delivery, where one would be anticipated;
- All discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

We have completed our testing in this area, examining a sample of payments.

We also note that VAT returns continue to be completed in a timely and accurate manner, with electronic "on-line" submission now in place, in line with HMRC requirements. We have examined the quarterly reclaims to December 2023 and March 2024 confirming that the detail correlates to that in the Omega VAT control account.

Conclusions

No matters arise in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our aim here is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks identified in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

We note that the LCRS based risk assessment documentation was formally re-adopted by Council in the 2023-2024 financial year.

We have also examined the Council's insurance policy schedule for 2023-24, with cover again provided by Zurich Municipal, noting that Fidelity Guarantee cover is in place at £5 million, Public Liability at £15 million & Employer's Liability at £10 million.

Conclusions

No matters arise in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Precept Determination and Budget Control

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has a robust procedure in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of precept to be drawn down from the District Council: also, that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also aim to ensure that the Council retains appropriate funds in general and earmarked reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

We note from the Full Council minutes that the Council, at its 8th January 2024 meeting approved a precept of £1,984,834 for 2024-25.

We are pleased to note that members continue to receive regular budget monitoring reports with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review.

Conclusions

No issues have been identified in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Income

The Council receives income from a plethora of sources in addition to the annual precept including allotments, cemeteries, sports pitches and the Corn Exchange. We have previously agreed a five-year strategic plan of cover of these areas with the Town Clerk and Council, which is subject to ongoing review and update, where necessary, following any changes in service provision. We have: -

- Examined the controls in place over the identification and recovery of income due to the Council from the two cemeteries together with the invoicing, tracing detail from the source documents and the burial records to the subsequent receipt and banking of the fees.
- We note that fees for the Cemeteries. Hall hire and sports related facilities have been reviewed and approved by Council.
- We have also reviewed the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall primarily in respect of the bar stock and subsequent sales at these venues.

The Corn Exchange has an EPOS till which is used in the café for both food sales and alcoholic beverages. This has a listing system on the till which identifies with both the café and bar sales, however the till is not used to its full potential and especially the holding of the bar stock. The bar stock can be input and new deliveries added when received so that when sales are entered it can be assessed for stock levels and usage. This information can also be cross referred to the independent, quarterly stock audits.

Burwell Hall holds a small amount of bar stock which is primarily retained for functions such as parties, weddings or wakes. The hall is used on a limited basis and therefore the bar stock is not turned over regularly which could lead to stock becoming out of date. The till is a register only and does not hold an EPOS system. This till is used to reconcile drink totals and the PDQ (Card Reader). We have been advised that no cash is taken at Burwell Hall.

We have also reviewed the unpaid invoices relating to the outstanding debtor position. We have discussed this debtor position with the Responsible Finance Officer and we consider that there is satisfactory monitoring in respect of these invoices.

Conclusions and recommendations

With out adequate stock control this could financially expose the Council due to over ordering and/or wastage.

At the interim update audit we were pleased to report that the areas identified had been addressed.

- R1. The Council should consider the input of bar stock and deliveries for both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall on to the EPOS system at the Corn Exchange. **This has been implemented.***
- R2. Consideration for stock not being stored at Burwell Hall due to becoming 'out of date'. When there is a function at Burwell Hall stock should be taken to the hall and the excess stock returned to the Corn Exchange. It should be possible to indicate stock removal and return on a 'no sales' basis. **This has been resolved***

Petty Cash Account

Our aim in this area is to ensure that appropriate controls are in place; that all expenditure incurred is adequately supported by trade invoices or till receipts; that the expenditure is appropriate for the Council's requirements; that VAT has been separately identified for periodic recovery and that cheque encashments from the main cashbooks are properly recorded.

We have checked the cash at both the Town Hall and the Corn Exchange cafe and reviewed the holdings from the information that we have been provided.

We have also reviewed the fuel Card accounts data and consider that the controls regarding its use are satisfactory.

Conclusions

There are no matters requiring formal comment or recommendation in this area of our review process.

Salaries and Wages

In examining the Council's payroll function, we aim to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions, together with meeting the requirements of the local government pension scheme, as further revised from 1st April 2021 in relation to employee percentage bandings. To meet that objective, we have checked detail of payroll transactions in September 2023, ensuring that: -

- Gross salaries are paid in accord with the approved NJC scale points;
- The correct PAYE codes and NIC tables were being applied;
- Appropriate rates of superannuation deductions are being applied;
- Timesheets are prepared, signed by the employee and certified as correct for payment by their supervising officer; and
- Net salary payments, via the BACS banking process, were in accord with staff payslips for the month.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified in this area of our review.

Fixed Asset Registers

The Governance and Accountability Manual requires all councils to maintain a record of all assets owned. We have checked and agreed the principles used in the detail, as recorded in the Council's Asset Register, noting that it has been prepared using purchase cost values or where that value is unknown at the previous year's Return level or uplifted or decreased to reflect the acquisition or disposal of assets.

Conclusion

No issues require formal comment or recommendation.

Investments and Loans

Our objectives here are to ensure that the Council is "investing" surplus funds, be they held temporarily or on a longer term basis in appropriate banking and investment institutions, that an appropriate investment policy is in place, that the Council is obtaining the best rate of return on any such investments made, that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records. We also aim to ensure that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with appropriate loan agreements.

The Council has two specific investments with CCLA Investment Management Limited, a deposit account and a long-term investment in the CCLA Property Fund, with the remaining surplus funds being held in the Barclays Business Premium account.

We also note that the Council have provided a loan to the Witney Town Bowls Club repayable over a ten-year term.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no issues have been identified in this area of our review.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Accounts and Audit Regulations required that all Councils prepare a detailed Statement of Accounts, together with supporting statements identifying other aspects of the Council's financial affairs.

As part of our year-end review, we have checked to the March 2024 cash books, nominal ledgers, purchase & sales ledgers and year end trial balances.

We have also examined the Council's procedures in relation to the preparation of the year-end detailed Annual Governance and Accountability Return data, also reviewing the Trial Balance figures and the accounts to include the identification of year-end debtors and creditors with no issues arising.

Conclusions

No issues have arisen in this review area currently and, on the basis of the work undertaken during the year, we have duly signed off the Internal Audit Report of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, assigning positive assurances in each relevant area.

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
Review of Income		
R1	The Council should consider the input of bar stock and deliveries for both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall on to the EPOS system at the Corn Exchange.	This has been implemented
R2	Consideration for stock not being held at Burwell Hall due to becoming 'out of date'. When there is a function at Burwell Hall stock should be taken to the hall and the excess stock returned to the Corn Exchange. It should be possible to indicate stock removal and return on a 'no sales' basis.	This has been resolved

Motion of No Confidence in Thames Water.

Witney Town Council notes that:

- Thames Water has been releasing untreated sewage into our rivers for 20 years. In Witney, the Sewage Treatment Works (STW) has a Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) that outfalls into Colwell Brook. Colwell Brook enters Witney Town Council land at the edge of the Lake and Country Park on the path from Ducklington. It merges with Queen Emma's Dyke, which joins the Windrush at the confluence in the Country Park, and later joins the Thames.
- Records show that illegal spills date back to 2004 or beyond. The Environment Agency fined TW £75 000 in 2006 for the presence of sewage fungus in Colwell Brook and £10 000 in 2009 for the deaths of 650 fish. [1]
- Sewage fungus was found more extensively in Colwell Brook in 2014 after a winter of spills, but the EA did not investigate. [1]
- Data analysed for 2019 revealed that sewage was discharged in Witney for 13 295 hours.[2]
- Thames Water received a petition from the people of Witney and West Oxfordshire in June 2020, including the comments left by residents who signed. [3]
- Thames Water received a letter from the people of Witney who marched in protest from the Bathing Place to the STW in March 2022 [4]
- In 2023, the Windrush in Witney received 5823 hours of sewage discharge including plants upstream, of which over 2000 hours were Witney STW itself. [5]
- Every time it rains, the poor repair of Thames Water's infrastructure across Witney allows infiltration. The inadequate capacity of the Sewage Treatment Plant, coupled with management decisions, leads to days of overflow into Colwell Brook. The last three Christmases are well-documented, but it happens all year round -
 - The spill from Christmas Day 2021 ran till 9 January 2022 [6]
 - The spill from 28 December 2022, which was reported in the Guardian 607 hours later, was still going at 18 January 2023 [7]
 - The spill from 30 December 2023 ran well into January 2024 [8]. Last Christmas, the CSO action was accompanied by Witney residents having sewage backing up into their homes too.The sewage spill map frequently shows discharges at times of rainfall that then turn to illegal dry spills.

- The "more than £17 million" (figure from TW report, 9 May 2024 [9]) upgrade pledged for Witney is under-ambitious (this was £8.5 million in January 2023, but the scope, unlike the cost, has not increased much - 60% to 66% increase in capacity). Thames Water has a target of 50% reduction in discharge by 2030, and compliance with the government's 2050 expectations [10] by 2040-45.
- A baby born today will be 16-21 before sewage overflows are "compliant". Whole childhoods are knowing nothing but hazardous water and mismanagement of resources.
- The UK is the one of two nations to have privatised water, with the other being Chile. This privatisation has been shown to be one likely cause of TW's financial issues and is clearly non-standard.
- TW is requesting a bill rise of 44% over the 2025-2030 period.
- Henley Town Council passed a motion of no confidence in Thames Water on 4 June 2024 and also a motion calling for renationalisation.

Witney Town Council believes that:

- TW's sewerage service is beyond inadequate. With illnesses on the rise, bringing serious risk of death, administrative change is needed.
- The privatisation of TW is a root cause behind the inadequacy of service.
- TW is not sustainable without direct intervention and renationalization.
- TW's request for an increase in consumer bills of 44% over the next 5 years is extortion and is a clear show of poor business management and decades of collecting payments from residents without using them to maintain the network.

Witney Town Council resolves that:

- Witney Town Council has no confidence in Thames Water's competence as a sewerage undertaker.
- Witney Town Council proposes that a letter should be sent by the Leader of the Council to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urging His Majesty's Government to place full regulatory and administrative limits on Thames Water, suspending bonuses, bringing criminal charges to individuals responsible

where found and to evaluate the pros and cons of the renationalisation of Thames Water.

- [1] <https://www.windrushwasp.org/single-post/thames-water-showcase-their-work-at-witney-sewage-treatment-works-friday-9th-september>
- [2] <https://www.windrushwasp.org/data-analysis>
- [3] <https://news.westoxon.gov.uk/news/council-backs-river-pollution-petition>
- [4] <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19991708.dozens-protest-witney-river-pollution-thames-water/>
- [5] <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24017817.oxfordshire-sewage-discharged-thousands-hours>
- [6] <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19841738.witney-mp-accuses-thames-water-using-sewage-releases-a-routine-process/>
- [7] <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/23/thames-waters-real-time-map-raw-sewage-discharges-rivers>
- [8] <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24028112.oxford-west-mp-criticises-thames-water-sewage-leak/>
- [9] <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/performance/river-health/frequently-asked-questions/information-about-specific-sites#w>
- [10] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/storm-overflows-discharge-reduction-plan>

FULL COUNCIL

Date: Monday, 17 June 2024

Title: Comments, Complaints & Compliments

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

Witney Town Council welcomes all comments, compliments, and complaints as they help identify how it is performing and how services it provides can be improved.

Current Situation

A list of compliments and complaints, compiled by the PA to the Town Clerk & Secretary to the Mayor between 1 December 2023 and 4 June 2024 is attached for information.

The list encompasses comments either made explicitly as or interpreted as a complaint in line with the Council's Complaints Procedure as well as comments on social media communications.

There have been 51 identified compliments/positive comments and 35 complaints/negative comments regarding town council services and all, but 5 more recent ones have been satisfactorily resolved/closed. 5 complaints received regarding services provided by other authorities are included for information.

The compliments received are predominantly regarding the staff and individuals who have provided excellent service/customer service to residents, the completion of well-received projects (Wheeled Skate Park) and events (D-Day 80th Anniversary).

The complaints continue to mainly focus on the Council's open spaces which are the noticeably visible areas.

Where complaints relate to individual services, these are dealt with by Line Managers and the Senior Management team. It is good practice for the Council to review these complaints and compliments bi-annually to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to provide excellent customer service and governance. A review of the complaint's procedure will be undertaken by the Deputy Town Clerk when possible during the year.

Each Committee will receive comments from the resident's annual satisfaction survey during the next cycle of meetings.

Environmental impact

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

Risk

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

There is reputational risk if complaints are not dealt with in a timely and satisfactory manner. Members and Officers must balance resident expectation against agreed policies and available resources. This report highlights the Council takes all complaints/comments seriously and applauds compliments when received.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications pertaining to this report.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and accompanying compliments/complaints list.

Compliments and Complaints

1 December 2023 to 4 June 2024

	Written/Verbal Compliments Received	No	Written/Verbal Complaints Received	No
Witney Town Council	<u>Parks & Recreation</u> Compliment to works team for prompt leaf removal Compliment – “new skatepark is fantastic”	2	<u>Parks & Recreation</u> Complaint about parking at WWSSC by WTC vehicles Complaint re Burwell recreation ground worn away causing puddles and mud Complaint re dogs in children’s play areas at Leys and insufficient signage Complaint re football pitches availability and cancellations Complaint re signage at the Leys re dogs being banned from play areas Complaint re large quantity of dog waste on the Leys Complaint re the Leys playpark plastic coming up causing trip hazard Complaint re Oxlease exercise equipment noisy and needing oiling Complaint re safety matting slippery at Wood Green play area Complaint re state of grass length at Newland War Memorial Complaint re users of wheeled skate park not allowing scooters Complaint re skate park users Complaint that council illegally using WW sport ground Complaint re sports places in Witney	14
	<u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u> Compliment for organising memorial bench in time for anniversary Compliment for recent evenings at Corn Exchange and special thanks for caretaker “for making everything much better” Compliment to caretaking staff Compliment to staff for support through memorial bench application Compliment to staff re CE event “will look at using venue again in future. Heartfelt thanks to caretaker for help and		<u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u> Complaint re facilities available for hall hire booking for party Complaint re parking at Corn Exchange Complaint re burial availability delay Complaint from hall user re heating going off early	

	<p>support”</p> <p>Memorial bench – “Thanks to everyone who contributed to make the memorial bench happen. Admin team particularly.</p> <p>Showing of D-day film at Corn Exchange - "the showing of the film was great; very poignant in view of today’s date plus rations! More of the above at £2 would tempt us over 60s in!"</p> <p><u>Stronger Communities</u></p> <p>Thanks from Witney Shed for wood delivery from Operations team</p> <p>Thanks to WTC staff from Witney Shed for raffle money from bake sale for World Men’s Day</p> <p>Compliment from resident at Cllrs Café re development of the town in an amazing way</p> <p>Compliment to officers organising D-day event - “arrangements look thoughtful and inclusive”</p> <p>Compliment to Admin/Reception for helpful front of house service</p> <p>Thank you to Comms Officer and team for hard work and effort in making commemoration service for D-day such a wonderful occasion. Most moving and respectful tribute. Not too sombre and pitched at perfect level for all. Without exception all those who contributed did so in such a dignified and sincere manner. You certainly did the Town proud</p> <p>D-day arrangements- “what a wonderful service, you did Witney proud”</p> <p>Soldier stories –“that’s a lovely thing”</p> <p>Compliment for Soldier stories and lantern pack for care homes</p> <p><u>Policy, Governance & Finance</u></p> <p><u>Climate, Biodiversity & Planning</u></p> <p>Flowers around the town “brightens up a spring day”</p> <p>Spring planting compliment -</p> <p>Compliments about larger planter at Five Ways roundabout “looked beautiful and wonderful combination of flowers on show”</p> <p>Spring planting – “lovely colour choices and given her a lift”</p>	7		
	<p><u>Stronger Communities</u></p> <p>Complaint about “ the state of the town, run down and no-one doing anything about it”</p> <p>Complaint about cancellation of civic visit to an afternoon tea at care home (due to unforeseen circumstances)</p> <p>Complaint re resident parking on WTC land</p> <p><u>Policy, Governance & Finance</u></p> <p><u>Climate, Biodiversity & Planning</u></p> <p>Complaint re maintenance of a green area in Weavers Close</p> <p>Complaint re grounds maintenance workers</p> <p>Complaint re lack of tree debris clearance at Cogges</p> <p>Complaint re trees extending to resident’s property causing rodents to gain access</p>	9	3	

	Compliment to Admin for organising grass cut and works team for great job Compliment to works team for flower beds in town	5	Complaint re trees in front of property in Pensclose Complaint re trees adjacent to resident's property Complaint re grass trimmings left over resident's driveway	7
West Oxfordshire District Council			Complaint re litter bins in town and asking for green bin Concerns by residents re proposed Deer Park training ground Complaint re removal of litter bin	3
			Complaint re maintenance of green areas owned by WODC and OCC	1
OTHER			Complaint re nearly tripping in Market Square Witney due to slippery pavement – should be OCC	1
	Compliments via social media	No	Complaints via social media	No
WTC X (formerly Twitter)	<u>Parks & Recreation</u> Wheeled Sports Park final design “Most excellent work” “fabulous” <u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u> <u>Stronger Communities</u> <u>Policy, Governance & Finance</u> <u>Climate, Biodiversity & Planning</u>	2	<u>Parks & Recreation</u> WWSSC sports facilities football in particularly seriously lagging behind other towns, good WTC have recognised, but lots still to be done <u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u> <u>Stronger Communities</u> <u>Policy, Governance & Finance</u> <u>Climate, Biodiversity & Planning</u>	1

WTC Facebook	<u>Parks & Recreation</u> Improvement to WWSSC – “awesome” “fantastic news, massive” “spending money on good stuff” “long time coming but pleased to see something positive happening” Wheeled Skate Park final design reveal “most excellent work” Wheeled Skate Park opening “excellent” “excellent – can’t wait for the basketball to be there too” “looks fab, just need some Banksy colour on it. Love the fun logo too” “looks great” “love this; amazing” “well done WTC and all the Cllrs (Witney Labour Cllrs) responsible for giving our young people such a fabulous facility” “looks amazing; great place for all to enjoy. Can’t wait to visit thank you to all involved”	12	<u>Parks & Recreation</u>	
	<u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u> Compliment re organising memorial bench Burwell Hall promotion – very good hall	2	<u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u> Burwell Hall promotion – unkempt appearance of car park	1
	<u>Stronger Communities</u> International Women’s Day videos by Town Clerk and Leader – “so glad we have women like you both supporting our wonderful town; big thank you” “Fab video of ladies” “bravo ladies” Lois the Eco Warriar visit to Country Park – “how lovely” “Love, love, love this!” “this is wonderful – well done” Christmas lights competition – “lovely gesture” Soldier stories for 80 th anniversary of D Day “Thanks for this; I see graves when there with my dog and often wonder what happened. RIP they gave their lives so we could be free” Civic Reception 2024 – “looks stunning; well done to all” “well done everyone; amazing”	10	<u>Stronger Communities</u>	

	<p><u>Policy, Governance & Finance</u></p> <p>WOCT new bus – “this is what Town & Parish councils are all about; supporting the community in whatever way opportunities present themselves and helping to make Witney a great place in which to live, work and play”</p> <p><u>Climate, Biodiversity & Planning</u></p> <p>Green Spaces update – “Compliment to Ranger on hard work and dedication”</p>	1	<p><u>Policy, Governance & Finance</u></p>	
		1	<p><u>Climate, Biodiversity & Planning</u></p> <p>Community Speed Watch – “was safe when we could go 10 mph faster; divided Witney in decreasing speed limit “spending time and money and volunteers into upholding 20 mph dream, but grass verges not maintained, river full of sewage, fields with floodwater, no youth spaces, limited swimming, empty high street units roads full of pot holes so cycling dangerous”</p> <p>“poorly delivered, divisive and meaningless waste of money now policed by volunteers.</p> <p>“waste of tax payers’ money pushing 20 mph in places not needed. Fix roads. 20 mph will never be policed”</p> <p>“Precept increase, explanation of wasted costs involved with 20 mph changes and wasting taxes when cost of living crisis”</p> <p>No Mow May – “whilst ecosystem benefits higher and adds beauty to town, left to grow to dangerous levels last year onto road posing danger and reducing visibility”</p>	5
	Totals	51		40

Vandalism

16/04/24 – 17/06/24

Date	Item/Location	Date/Time/Who Reported	Cost if known	Action	Police Reference
05/05/24	Bike Rack Vandalised – St Marys Church	SG 07.05.24		Repair by Operations Team	INC-20240509-0500
19/05/24	Further damage to St Marys Bike Rack	AC 19.05.24		Repair by Operations Team	INC-20240509-0500
21/05/24	Graffiti including a 5ft Phallus – Skatepark	Admin 21.05.24		Actioned by Works Team	
11/05.24	Large daytime fire at Lake	CW 11.05.24		Attended by Fire Service, 2hrs of WTC staffing to remove burnt wood.	Police Attended
21/05/24	Planting removed from flower beds on Welch Way.	Admin 21.05.24			
22/05/24	Toddler multi-play Vandalised at The Leys	AW 22.05.24	£100- 1,000	If Works Team able to repair then lower cost. If full replacement needed then higher figure	
26/05/24	Discarded Needle at Splash Park	SG 26.05.24		Removed by Works Team and passed to Police.	BCA-33896-24-4343-IR
27/05/24	Unauthorised Encampment at Burwell Recreation Field	SG 27.05.24		Police attended & OCC Gypsy & Traveller Service provided support.	Police Attended
29/05/24	Unrest at Burwell Hall	Hall User – 31.05.24		Hall Users locked doors to prevent further harassment and attempts to enter the hall by youngsters.	Police Attended
30/05/24	Break in to Vikings Container at Burwell. Damage to contents	Social media posts		Damage to end of year trophies and stolen footballs	Police Attended
09/06/24	Flower Basket thrown to ground	Cllr Treloar 10.06.24		Broken flower basket, loss of flowers.	Police Attended may even have witnessed

Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2024 3:56 PM

Subject: Starting WING Consultation with supporting parishes

Dear Clerks

The representatives from the ten local councils (including yours) that support the WING campaign have been working hard and we are now in a position to start the process of consultation with all of you. WING has objected to the application for outline planning permission from the North Witney developer and we submitted a full report that sets out our reasons for objection. This report is now available to read on the website that WING has set up – www.Witney.ing

The report has collated the views and opinions from all ten local councils to produce what we feel is a representative 'best fit'. We will be seeking feedback from your council in due course but, as a starting point, we request that you add an item on the agenda for your next meeting to note that WING has submitted a report and to ask your Councillors to read it and give their feedback.

The representatives from the ten local councils who make up the WING committee have been cc'd to this email. If you have any questions please speak to your representative for help and advice.

We will be in touch again in due course to gather your feedback.

Best wishes

Mark McCappin