

**ANNUAL COUNCIL 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
Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group	Cllr R Smith Cllr A Bailey
Witney Community Profile Steering Group	Cllr L Cherry Cllr J Aitman

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
Witney Town Charity	Cllr G Meadows
Witney Educational Foundation	Cllr L Cherry
Madley Park Hall Trust	Cllr J Aitman

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
Cogges Welfare Trust Charity	Cllr J Aitman Cllr A Bailey Mr H W Chirgwin

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 R Smith

Cllr A Bailey

Cllr D Edwards-Hughes

Cllr S Simpson

Cllr R Crouch

Cllr G Meadows

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