

**MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 6 January 2025**

**At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	A Bailey G Meadows J Aitman T Ashby R Smith D Temple R Crouch	G Doughty J Doughty D Edwards-Hughes D Newcombe J Robertshaw S Simpson J Treloar
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie  Sharon Groth Nigel Warner	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Town Clerk Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	No members of the public.	

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Mubin and D Enright.

Councillor D Temple advised he would be late joining the meeting.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair advised Members that as Members would be discussing the Budget it was possible that declarations may need to be made if particular organisations became a topic of discussion.

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

**3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**4 COUNCIL BUDGET: REVISED BUDGET 2024/25 AND ESTIMATE 2025/26**

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) which provided an overview of the revised budget for 2024-25 and estimates for 2025-26.

The RFO provided additional clarification on the summary of the updates made to the 2025-26 budget following the proposal of the Council at their meeting of 12 December 2024 to raise the precept to £203.37 for a Band D property.

Members were unanimous in agreement with the recommendations outlined in the report.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised budget for 2024/25 be adopted and,
3. That, the budget for 2025/26 along with its funding from precept, reserve movements and reserves be adopted.

5 **TO FORMALLY DECLARE THE PRECEPT FOR 2025/26**

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Councillor D Edward-Hughes offered his support for the proposed increase. The decision for increase was unavoidable due to the decisions made by Central Government both current and outgoing. He proposed that the Council write to the minister responsible for Local Government to highlight the strain that decisions, such as closure of the Community Ownership Fund had placed on parish and town councils. The proposal was seconded by Councillor J Treloar.

Additionally, Councillor R Smith offered her support for the proposal however, asked that the letter be factual and a neutrally political explaining the difficulties of working within a three-tier council system.

The Town Clerk also supported the need to highlight the issues experienced by the Town Council when decisions were cascaded down from higher tier Councils and Government Bodies. It was suggested the letter be drafted alongside Cllr D Edward-Hughes, Cllr R Smith and Cllr S Simpson as the Council's political group Leaders.

A Vote was then called for on the proposal. It was carried, with voting as follows:

In Favour	13
Against	1
Abstention	0

No question arose to the budget calculation provided by the RFO and so the Chair moved to a vote to increase the council tax precept charge by 14.9% to £203.37 for a Band D property for the year. This would result in a instruction to West Oxfordshire District Council for £2,297,745 to be paid for the 2025/26 financial year. Members were unanimous in agreement.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a Council tax precept increase of 14.9% be agreed and,
3. That, the Town Clerk be authorised to sign and serve a precept on the West Oxfordshire District Council, in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), requiring the District Council to pay the Town Council the sum of £2,297,745 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2025/26 and,
4. That, a letter be sent by the Town Clerk to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution and copied to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

*(Cllr D Temple arrived at 7:16pm at the completion of the setting of the precept and therefore having not heard the debate did not participate in the vote.)*

**6 OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - ANPR ENFORCEMENT CONSULTATION**

The Council received correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council in respect of the proposed introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras across the county.

One of the locations included in the consultation was Witney High Street. Members considered if a response should be submitted from the whole Council as well as individual members submitting a response on behalf of their ward members.

A debate was had with differing opinions, it was therefore proposed by Cllr D Temple, seconded by Cllr G Meadows that the discussion be deferred to the meeting of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning on 28 January 2025.

A Vote was called for, it was carried, with voting as follows:

In Favour	13
Against	1
Abstention	1

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that all Members were welcome to attend the meeting on 28 January 2025 however to make best use of time, asked that Members prepared ahead of the meeting the points they wished to be considered in the response.

There was further discussion regarding the format to the consultation. Members felt that with multiple schemes being consolidated that the responses submitted could be skewed, for example, an individual against the Witney High Street scheme may also enter a response against other schemes in the consultation when they did not have local knowledge of the reasoning behind those other schemes.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the submission of a response be delegated to the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee and,
3. That, that the Town Clerk write to OCC to explain the Council's concerns regarding the consolidation of the schemes in the consultation.

**7 WITNEY HIGH STREET AND MARKET SQUARE - PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT**

Members received the consultation report from Oxfordshire County Council which was publicly available on its website.

**Resolved:**

That, the publication of Oxfordshire County Council's report following the most recent consultation on Witney High Street be noted.

8 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

**Resolved:**

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

*The member of the public left the meeting at 7:45pm*

9 **WORKS WELFARE ACCOMMODATION**

The Council received and considered the confidential report of the Operations Manager which provided details of potential Works Welfare Accommodation solutions.

Members heard that currently the West Witney Bowls Club was being used however that arrangement would end in March 2025. A unit had been identified close by that would suit the needs of the team until the completion of the building of the permanent works yard and welfare building at West Witney Sports & Social Club land which was expected in October 2025.

The Council were advised the alternative was to return the welfare units to the car park of the West Witney Sports & Social Club which had been unpopular with all users due to the loss of parking spaces.

All members were unanimous in agreement with Officers entering into an agreement for a 12-month period for the new unit which was also better financial value than the alternative options.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, Officers proceed with the hire of the new unit for a 12-month period.

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The meeting closed at: 7.48 pm

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Chair