

Stronger Communities

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 26th January, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Stronger Communities Committee - T Ashby, R Smith, G Meadows, A Bailey, D Edwards-Hughes, D Enright, A Mubin and J Treloar (and all other Town Councillors for information).

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 8(e)(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 items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's Code of Conduct.

3. Minutes (Pages 4 - 13)

- a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 17th November 2025.
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda. (Questions on 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 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

Communications

5. **Communications Report** (Pages 14 - 19)

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

a) **Press Coverage Update** (Pages 20 - 22)

To receive press coverage updates since the last meeting of the Committee.

Community Engagement

6. **Community Engagement Report**

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer. (to follow)

a) **Witney: Past Present & Future Working Party**

To receive the notes and recommendations contained therein from the meeting held on 14 January 2026. (to follow)

b) **Witney Community Insight Profile - 2 Dec 2025** (Pages 23 - 25)

7. **In Bloom**

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer. (to follow).

8. **Witney Youth Council** (Pages 26 - 31)

To receive an update on the work of the Witney Youth Council and notes from their meeting held on 8 January 2026.

9. **Youth Services** (Pages 32 - 40)

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

10. **Town Centre Forum**

To receive the report of the Town Clerk/CEO (To Follow)

Street Furniture & Infrastructure

11. **Request to Install Bollard - Farmers Close**

To receive and consider the report of the Head of Estates & Operations. (To Follow)

12. **Market Square Seating** (Pages 41 - 43)

To receive and consider correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council concerning seating for an area at Witney Market Square. Note: This is not part of the Oxfordshire County Council High Street Scheme, but is intended to be funded from the UK Prosperity Fund.

13. **Bike Racks & Bin Stores** (Page 44)

To receive and consider a request from West Oxfordshire District Council to facilitate the placing of a bin store facility in Market Square.

14. **Witney Town Centre Improvements - Discussion on potential projects to utilise S106 Developer Funding**

Initial discussion on potential infrastructure improvement priorities pending confirmation of available S106 funds, currently pledged or held by WODC.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 17 November 2025

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

Present:

Councillor T Ashby (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	J Treloar
	G Meadows	D Newcombe (In place of A Bailey)
	D Edwards-Hughes	D Temple (In place of A Mubin)
	D Enright	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Thomas Davies	Deputy Venue & Events Officer
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	2 members of the public.	

SC643 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bailey & A Mubin, Councillors D Newcombe & D Temple attended respectively as substitutes.

SC644 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 12 owing to her connection with the provider of the detached Youth Services provision through the church she attended.

Councillor J Treloar declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 19 due to his relationship with the individuals that organised the Witney Music Festival.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers.

SC645 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 15 September 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held 15 September 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

SC646 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Two Members of the public with an interest in Agenda item 19 were present however there was no public participation from them at this time.

SC647 **FINANCE REPORT: REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26 AND DRAFT BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2026/27**

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 also received a verbal summary of the main points from the RFO outlining the changes to allocation of staffing costs away from this Committee's spending to other areas of the Council. The 2026/27 budget would continually evolve as the RFO worked on refinements ahead of its formal presentation.

Following a Members' question regarding budget line 408/4154 – Experience Oxfordshire – the Town Clerk confirmed that these funds were to be used for the promotion of events to encourage visitors to the Town. It was hoped that with the re-establishment of the Town Forum and the new Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party, that these funds may be able to be repurposed more effectively.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the repurposing of Experience Oxford budget line be explored at the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance meeting on 24 November 2025 and,
3. That, the revised base revenue budget for 2025/26 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2026/27, as detailed in the draft estimates be noted.

SC648 **REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS, SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS, AND CAPITAL PROJECTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) along with a verbal explanation of its content which indicated the need for a £13,600 increase in support of Community projects.

Members heard that further details on the proposed revenue growth items were featured in the report to the Committee later in the meeting. Members were unanimously in agreement hearing that the existing equipment would be repurposed and that £1,200 be allocated for the replacement of digital signage.

A further question was raised regarding a Leys water refill station which officers advised would be presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, that the Revenue Growth and new Capital items be forwarded to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee for consideration.

The RFO left the meeting at 6:17pm.

SC649 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS**

With the permission of the Chair the item was moved up the agenda to allow the members of the public present to hear the discussion.

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided a report back to the Committee on the 2025 Witney Musical Festival (WMF) along with proposals for the organisation of the 2026 event.

A request had been received from WMF to utilise the site on the Thursday evening, Members heard that this would not have any financial impact on the Council as the site set up will have commenced, a question was raised regarding Health & Safety of visitors to the site during the period of construction and a response provided by both the V&EO as well as one of the WMF directors who was in attendance, who assured the Committee that mitigating measures would be taken.

Additionally, a question was raised regarding the potential additional impact to the field particularly any sports pitch area. The V&EO advised that this would not occur as the area of the site to be used was not on any pitch area.

Members were therefore unanimous in agreement to allow the additional use of the site on Thursday evening and welcomed the idea of a comedy event to enhance the already varied and diversified entertainment provided over that weekend.

The V&EO summarised the points in his report regarding the continuance of the partnership Agreements and the report received from WMF regarding the 2025 event.

Members welcomed the detail provided in the WMF report and financial appraisal. The Committee acknowledged that the event should be viewed as an outsourced event akin to those delivered by other local organisations, such as Witney Rotary who provided them with the support of the Council. Additionally, when compared to other grants a contribution of £10,000 to WMF illustrated exceptional value for a two-and-a-half-day event.

It was also noted by the Committee that the positive impact on local businesses by visitors to the event should not be underestimated.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, WMF be granted use of The Leys for an event on the Thursday Evening in 2026 and,
3. That, that the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee authorise a partnership grant payment of £10,000 to support the 2026 WMF event.

*The Venue & Event Officer left the meeting at 6:30pm
along with both members of the public.*

SC650 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

The C&CEO also provided a verbal summary of the report which provided an update to Members on the progress of the review of the Communications Strategy, which was welcomed however, it was agreed that the pages detailing information on digital analytics be removed.

The Committee considered the information regarding the production of a sponsored Newsletter and acknowledged that rather than creating one themselves it would be better use of Officers time to provide information to existing publications to support those, rather than appearing to compete with them.

On the subject of the production of an events calendar, Members were in agreement that in order to ensure accurate information was provided to residents that information was released on a regular basis via the existing newsletters rather than as an annual calendar that had the potential to be incorrect should dates change.

Members were disappointed to hear that there had only been 39 responses to the budget consultation survey so far, they agreed that the survey should be published earlier and with more direct questions as they may be more appealing to people to complete.

The Committee also received a current press coverage record and approved a new website accessibility statement for the Council.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, details of events be included in each of the newsletters and,
3. That, the updated Communication Strategy be agreed with the amendment as detailed and,
4. That, Officers explore the options and costs for issuing information to other publications and,
5. That, the updated Council website accessibility statement be approved.

SC651 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

Again, the C&CEO gave a verbal summary of the report which provided Members with an update on the current activity and engagement within the community which included details of the Citizen of the Year celebrations, Christmas light switch on engagement, details of the success of the Witney Town Band summer events and the proposals for the 2026 edition of Witney Carnival.

The Committee welcomed the invitation to participate in the Witney Food & Drink Festival and agreed that a stall in the style of Councillors at the Café be confirmed.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Council attend the Witney Food & Drink Festival and host a stall and,
3. That, the Council continue to support Witney Town Band by way of summer program at its venues and,
4. That, the proposed use of Café 1863/Corn Exchange by Witney Day Centre be agreed.

Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly from 7:05pm to 7:07pm.

SC652 WITNEY FORUM MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Witney Forum held on 2 October 2025. The Chair highlighted the Witney Volunteer Recruitment Fair which would be held in January 2026.

Though not included in the Minutes, Members were pleased to hear the news that Volunteer Link Up had been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAWS) earlier in the week for its work connecting volunteers with people in need of support.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 2 October 2025 be noted.

Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly from 7:08 to 7:10pm.

SC653 NATIONAL PRIDE WORKING PARTY

Members received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk as well as the Chair of the National Pride Working Party following its inaugural meeting on 13 November 2025.

Members heard that the working party group had discussed and agreed a change of name more befitting with its objectives settling on Witney Past, Present & Future.

The Committee also agreed that a budget of £2,000 be set to promote their activities such as St Georges Day.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the name of the Working Party be changed to Witney: Past, Present & Future be noted and,
3. That, a budget of £2,000 be requested for the promotion of activities to celebrate Witney's past, present and future.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party be approved and the recommendations therein be approved.

SC654 **IN BLOOM COMPETITIONS & COMMUNITY GARDENING 2026-27**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

Members welcomed the proposals to improve the area around Unterhaching Park which it was believed would complement the improvement works and changes being made by West Oxfordshire District Council to the Marriotts Close Shopping Area adjacent to the park.

A Member noted that the signage agreed for Unterhaching park was not yet erected and asked that Officers review this and other parks as it would hopefully address issues being reported regarding dogs in the park.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, £1,500 from the In Bloom budget be approved for works at Unterhaching Park and,
3. That, the purchase of four new Schools in Bloom wheelbarrows be approved and,
4. That, budgets of £50 be approved for vouchers and prizes and,
5. That, £40 community gardening vouchers be issued for 2026–27.

The Communications & Community Engagement Officer left the meeting at 7:12pm

SC655 **YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Engagement Administration Assistant outlining the activity of the Youth Council.

Members heard that the Youth Council has received new impetus with the recruitment of four new members, it was hoped that this would be a catalyst to further activity.

The Deputy Town Clerk provided some additional details regarding the need for the change in the roles and Terms of Reference to better suit the make-up of the Youth Council. All Members were in agreement with the changes.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the change to the Youth Council roles and terms of reference be approved.

SC656 **YOUTH SERVICES**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which provided an update on Youth Services being funded by the Town Council.

Members welcomed the details in the report that provided confirmation of the budgets proposed for the 2026/27 fiscal year. Members agreed that amounts budgeted provided exceptional value for money for the services provided by the recipients and it was agreed that this amount be ringfenced ahead of budget consideration.

The Committee did however note that information received from APCAM was limited and did not include specific details regarding the numbers of families they had supported in Witney. It

was agreed that the decision on the inclusion of a provision of funding be deferred to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee to allow Officers to request further details from APCAM.

The report also ignited a discussion between Members regarding the lack of Youth Club facilities; the Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the funding for The Station was provided on the basis of it being a detached service and therefore it was not simply a case of finding a home for their offering. It was unanimously agreed that an agenda item be added to a future meeting of the committee to discuss this further.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the amount of £28,500 and £12,000 be ringfenced in the 2026/27 budget for grant funding to The Station and Home-start Oxford respectively and,
3. That, the Youth Development Officer at WODC be invited to a future meeting and,
4. That, an agenda item be added to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss Youth Club provision and,
5. That, the decision to include grant funding provision for APCAM be deferred to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 24 November 2025.

SC657 FLAG FLYING POLICY REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk in respect of the Council flag flying policy and were unanimously in agreement with its adoption.

Members also agreed to the purchase of an Oxfordshire Flag, it was agreed that even with the proposed changes to Council Governance the border of Oxfordshire would not change, and Witney should be proud of its place within the County.

Additionally, it was agreed that in order for the England Flag to be flown with pride that a replacement should be purchased.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised flag flying policy be agreed and adopted and,
3. That, an Oxfordshire Flag be purchased at a cost of up to £300 and,
4. That, a replacement England flag be purchased at a cost of up to £150.

SC658 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) - A40 DUAL CARRIAGEWAY

The Committee formally received notification of a Public Spaces Protection Order from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to prohibit Pony & Trap racing on a section of the A40 dual carriageway.

Members agreed that the following response be submitted.

Witney Town Council welcomes and fully supports this proposed Public Space Protection Order, recognising its importance in maintaining the public safety and usability of a key traffic route into and out of the town. Ensuring this main artery remains safe, accessible, and free from behaviours that compromise road safety is essential for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the above response be submitted to WODC.

SC659 BUS SHELTER REPLACEMENT 25/26

The Committee received a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the need to replace the bus stop at the junction of Church Lane and Oxford Hill.

Members heard that following a number of acts of vandalism the proposal was to replace the existing shelter with a new vandal proofed version with a sedum roof at a cost of approximately £7,500 which was available from the infrastructure earmarked reserve.

A Vote was taken with the result being six members in favour of the replacement with one abstention.

A Member also raised the need for a shelter to be considered for Woodgreen and asked that it be added to the revenue growth items for the Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the verbal report be noted and,
2. That, a budget of £7,500 be agreed for the replacement shelter and,
3. That, a request for a shelter at Woodgreen be added as a revenue growth item.

Cllr D Temple left the meeting at 7:52pm.

SC660 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO 5(W)

Resolved

That, Standing Order 5(w) be suspended in order to allow the meeting to continue as it had now lasted for two hours.

SC661 VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGN (VAS) FOR WITNEY

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk following a request for consideration of the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs or Speed Indicator Devices.

Members raised the existing 30mph signs which were not situated in 20 mph zones and asked that the Council write to Oxfordshire County Council with the request for an audit of any redundant signs, such as the two on Curbridge Road to be re-sited.

The Committee felt that the requested audit be completed along with an assessment of the impact of the opening of the Shores Green junction and the rerouting of the A4095 which would follow. And that these steps should be completed prior to the potential purchase of additional VAS or SID signage.

It was agreed that the subject be added to the next agenda of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee on 20 January 2026 to inform them of the Council's position.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers write to OCC to request an audit of all redundant signage in and around the town and,
3. That, any research of result is shared with Witney Traffic Advisory Committee and,
4. That, the Council reconsider the request in December 2026 to allow sufficient time for the changes to the A40 and A4095 to take effect.

SC662 LITTER PICKING EQUIPMENT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk following a request for community voluntary litter picking stations.

Members considered the units illustrated in the report and agreed that they were better suited to parks or enclosed areas. An additional design option was presented by the Chair, this being a unit that was both a bin and an integrated equipment store. The cost of these units was not known, and Officers were asked to further investigate the potential as this was the preferred option.

The Committee also agreed that one of the units suitable for the park environment be considered for donation to Courtside Hub on The Leys as it offered a suitable collection point.

Members also highlighted that equipment was still available from the Town Hall administration office, this was currently underutilised and therefore should be further promoted.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the idea be further researched and referred to Policy, Governance & Finance on 24 November for consideration for inclusion as a growth item in the 2026-27 budget and,
3. That, the council consider for donation to Courtside Hub on The Leys for it to be considered as a collection point.

SC663 STREET FURNITURE CORRESPONDENCE.

The Committee received and considered the proposed street furniture for the High Street redevelopment.

Proposals had been received from both West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire Country Council for consideration. Prior to discussion the Chair advised that he had already written to WODC and OCC to request further information and an urgent review as he was concerned that installations would not be appropriate for the town and that they did not offer value for money. The thoughts of the Chair were echoed by members who were also disappointed at the lack of consultation and I approach to the proposal details received.

Members asked that the Town Clerk support the Chair's correspondence and also write to both OCC and WODC to convey the Committee's concern that individual requests for street furniture on the High Street were being considered without proper context or cohesive design and that

the Council wanted proposals to reflect a unified approach that fitted the town's Market Town identity and must be agreed with conservation officers. Additionally, a request for full consultation on aesthetic elements should be made along with an urgent meeting between the Council and the High Street Project Team ideally before Christmas to review designs so as to ensure that the project stays on track.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence of WODC and OCC be noted and,
2. That, confirmation be sent to WODC asking that they do not proceed with the proposed seating outside the Shake Shop, however the Council welcome town centre seating and,
3. That, confirmation be sent to OCC to rebut their recommendation for signage
4. That, the Town Clerk write to OCC with a request for an urgent meeting.

The meeting closed at: 8.32 pm

Chair

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Communications Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 26 January 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on various communication matters.

Current Situation

Residents' Communication Preference Survey

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer has issued a Residents' Communication Preference Survey. The survey has been designed to gather feedback from the community on the effectiveness, accessibility and reach of the Council's communication channels, and the findings will be used to inform future improvements to communication and engagement practices. A copy is attached as **Appendix A**.

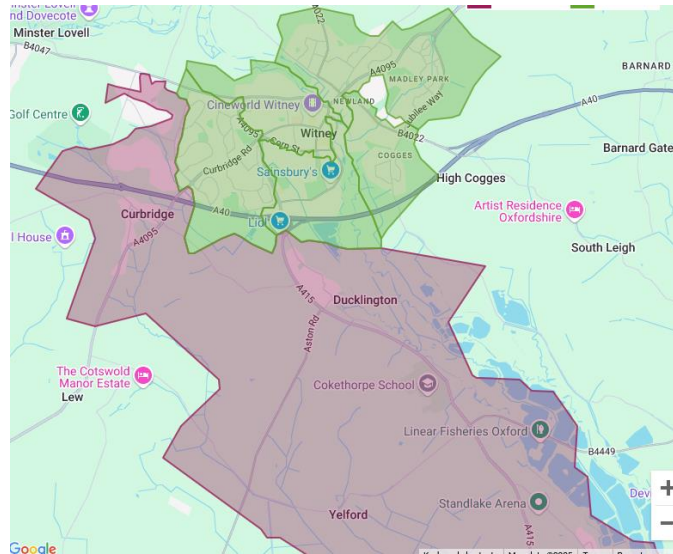
The survey is available in both paper and digital formats. Paper copies can be collected from the Administration Office, while the digital version is hosted on the Council's website and promoted across its online platforms.

To increase reach and encourage participation from groups that are traditionally under-represented, the survey will also be shared with local schools and, where possible, hospitality venues such as pubs. Councillors are asked to consider how best to achieve this. Promotion will be supported through a coordinated campaign using posters and digital signage to maximise awareness and participation. The survey can be accessed online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WTC-comms26>

2026 Spring Newsletter

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer is currently preparing content for the 2026 Spring Newsletter, which will again be produced in A5 format. Quotes for printing and distribution will be sought shortly; however, it is necessary to confirm arrangements as soon as possible if Royal Mail delivery is to be used again this year.

Distribution of the newsletter is a significant expense, and Royal Mail delivery is unreliable due to postcode overlaps. Newer estates in on the outskirts of Witney with an OX29 postcode are problematical as this postcode also includes all of Ducklington and Curbridge and surrounds. The map of where we have to exclude just to allow for Windrush Place looks this.



RM does not differentiate so it will blanket deliver to these areas as it works through the codes, and this might explain the lack of spare copies and the sporadic lack of delivery to some areas in Witney in previous years.

To overcome this last year, we organised hand delivery to Windrush Place and one other OX29 post coded area within Witney.

This is the costing for that

Title: Spring Newsletter

Format: A5 8pp

Quantity: 1,000

Location: Windrush Place, Witney

Distribution from: early March 2025

Price: £145 plus VAT

Compared with the cost for production and delivery of the bulk of the newsletter; which was:

13,500 Spring Newsletter - A5 8pp (Stitched) £ 2,413.00 including delivery -1000 which were hand delivered as above.

Councillors in the Café review

Last year the Committee reviewed Cllrs in the Café with a view to ascertaining whether members of the public were accessing the opportunity to chat with Councillors and whether members found this useful. At the time it was deemed to be useful and well attended. Members are invited to report back again on whether it is still considered a valuable form of engagement and gathering feedback.

Website

Following a recent audit of the website, the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement has been removing obsolete information and updating. The site is still very large with nine pages of information for the Lake and Country Park alone. Officers will be consulting with the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer to see where this can be streamlined to make it a little more manageable time wise.

In addition, the Facebook widget has been removed from the website's front page, as it generated multiple accessibility errors within third-party software that could not be resolved.

Press Coverage

Latest press coverage information from November 2025 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement and follows this item.

Officers are issuing a weekly round-up of social media news and events directly to press contacts. This will go out on Thursday where possible and include news posts and stories and full press releases where applicable. Officers will include any photographs and comments from Chair, Mayor, or Leader where possible.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

a) Equality –

The Council's communications activity seeks to minimise equality risks by using a mix of digital and non-digital channels to reach residents of different ages, abilities, and circumstances. The availability of the Communications Preference Survey in both paper and online formats helps to reduce digital exclusion, particularly for older residents and those without regular internet access.

b) Biodiversity –

No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from the communications work or production of printed materials.

c) Crime & Disorder –

Improved communication and community engagement may contribute to greater awareness of community activities and indirectly support community cohesion, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency –

While print production has some environmental impact, efforts will be made to minimise waste, use sustainable materials where possible, and promote digital communication channels in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

Risk

The risks linked to the matters in this report are low. However, there is a possibility that staff time, tight deadlines, and reliance on external suppliers for printing and delivery could cause some pressure on resources or delays. There is also a risk that some residents may not be reached, particularly where digital access is limited or postal delivery is unreliable. These risks will be reduced through careful planning, using a range of communication methods, checking delivery arrangements, and regularly reviewing how the Council engages with the community.

Social Value

The Council's communications activity delivers clear social value by promoting transparency, improving awareness of Council services and initiatives, and encouraging residents to engage with local decision-making. Activities such as the Town Council newsletter, consultation surveys, press engagement and *Councillors in the Café* provide opportunities for two-way communication and help build trust between councillors, officers, and the community.

Financial Implications

The production and distribution of printed materials, particularly the Spring Newsletter, represent a significant and recurring cost to the Council. Royal Mail delivery issues linked to postcode overlaps can result in inefficiencies, requiring additional expenditure on hand delivery to ensure comprehensive distribution within Witney.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider and provide feedback on the Residents' Communication Preference Survey and advise on additional ways to encourage participation from under-represented groups.
2. Comment on the continued value and effectiveness of *Councillors in the Café* as a method of community engagement.
3. Note the proposed approach to the production and distribution of the 2026 Spring Newsletter, including the challenges associated with Royal Mail delivery and the use of hand delivery where required.

Witney Town Council Communication Preferences Survey 2026



This short survey will help Witney Town Council understand how residents prefer to receive information and updates. The survey is two -sided and should take no more than 3–5 minutes to complete.

1. Where in Witney do you live?

Please share your postcode.

2. What is your age?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 31-44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-74 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75+ |

3. How do you currently hear about news or updates from Witney Town Council? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Witney Town Council website
- ☐ Witney Town Council's Social Media Accounts (e.g. Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok)
- ☐ Our Online/ Digital newsletters and leaflets/surveys
- ☐ Our Printed and Delivered Newsletter and leaflets/surveys
- ☐ Witney Town Council/Corn Exchange Posters and Advertising Boards/Noticeboard
- ☐ Local Papers/Magazines - Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, Letterbox, Round and About
- ☐ In person - Council Meetings, Visit to Admin Office, Cllrs in the Cafe
- ☐ Other Social Media sites - Spotted Witney etc
- ☐ I don't know where to find out about Witney Town Council news and events

4. How would you *prefer* to receive information from the Town Council? (Select up to three)

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Town Council Website
- ☐ Printed Newsletters or leaflets
- ☐ Public Meetings or Events
- ☐ Local Newspapers

5. How often would you like to receive updates from the Town Council?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Every Few Months
- ☐ Only When Something Important Happens

6. What types of information are most important to you?

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Witney Town Council all News and Services information
- ☐ What's On at our venues
- ☐ Planning and development updates
- ☐ Roadworks/disruptions
- ☐ Council decisions/meetings
- ☐ Community services and other local events
- ☐ Emergency or urgent notices

4. Please specify which of these local newspapers and magazines you regularly read.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Witney Gazette | <input type="checkbox"/> Oxford Mail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letterbox | <input type="checkbox"/> Round and About |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other- Please let us know which other publications you regularly read. | |

Thank you for participating in our survey



Date	Story	Reported In	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
3.9.25	Oxfordshire's largest funfair to open for an extra day	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25436134.oxfordshires-largest-funfair-open-extra-day/	
10.9.25	Water Play Park Closes for Season	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25444010.leys-splash-park-witney-close-season/	
15.9.25	Union Jack raised in Witney to mark Battle of Britain Day	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467824.union-jack-raised-witney-mark-battle-britain-day/	
15.9.25	Oxfordshire's biggest funfair opens in 'atrocious' weather	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25467909.oxfordshires-biggest-funfair-opens-atrocious-weather/	
20.9.25	Silt build-up removal brings river to normal level	BBC News	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce84znwxdwgo	
23.9.25	Warning as 20 tonnes of gravel comes to Oxfordshire park	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette, BBC News, MSN			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25487051.hgv-warning-20-tonnes-gravel-comes-witney-park/	
1.10.25	Witney preparing to host its first Eco Fair next week	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25504470.witney-preparing-host-first-eco-fair-next-week/	
1.10.25	Witney residents to speak with councillors this weekend	Thisisoxfordshire, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25505380.witney-residents-speak-councillors-weekend/	
6.10.25	Popular Oxfordshire park wins royal horticultural gold award	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, Yahoo!News	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25512207.popular-oxfordshire-park-wins-royal-horticultural-gold-award/	
12.10.25	Witney: Emergency bleed control kit installed by town hall	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall/	
15.10.25	Emergency Kit Installed	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25531564.witney-emergency-bleed-control-kit-installed-town-hall/	
22.10.25	MP and councillors view progress at development	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-new-development/	
22.10.25	Witney Lake path work ends	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake-country-park-completed/	
24.10.25	Witney: Work carried out to reduce local flood risk	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25565246.witney-work-carried-reduce-local-flood-risk/	
25.10.25	Work to improve paths at Witney Lake and Country Park completed	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559153.work-improve-paths-witney-lake-country-park-completed/	
26.10.25	Witney MP and councillors view progress at new development	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25559082.witney-mp-councillors-view-progress-new-development/	
29.10.25	Trees removed from river to reduce flood risk	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	Physical	

Date	Story	Reported In	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
8.11.25	Witney Town Council steps in to save community buses	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25595929.witney-town-council-steps-save-community-buses/	
10.11.25	Oxfordshire town marks Remembrance Day with service and tour	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25609995.oxfordshire-town-marks-remembrance-day/	
20.11.25	Witney has bird flu outbreak after swan death at lake	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25637965.oxfordshire-town-bird-flu-outbreak-popular-lake/	
30.11.25	Witney Christmas Lights Switch On: young artist's design	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25651372.witney-christmas-lights-switch-on-2025/	
09.12.25	Corn Exchange Witney serving up festive afternoon tea	Yahoo News, Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail, MSN	Yes			No	Yes (Corn Exchange)	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25681368.corn-exchange-witney-serving-up-festive-afternoon-tea/	
12.12.25	Mayor's carols in Witney gets Christmas season going	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25691553.mayors-carols-witney-gets-christmas-season-going/	
12.12.25	Blenheim and Oxford confirm more Oxfordshire bird flu cases	The Herald Series			Yes	No	No (Asked directly)	https://www.heraldfreepress.co.uk/news/25691435.blenheim-oxford-confirm-more-oxfordshire-bird-flu-cases/	
13.12.25	Witney toddlers to enjoy new adventure park equipment	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25693404.witney-toddlers-enjoy-new-adventure-park-equipment/	
14.12.25	'Well-loved' Witney Wishing Tree facing a pull test	Witney Gazette, MSN News			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25691531.well-loved-witney-wishing-tree-facing-pull-test/	



WITNEY

TOWN COUNCIL

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
06 January 2026	Cost of fixing Flag Vandalism on Lamp Posts (Features leader of the Council)	Oxford Clarion			Yes	No	No	https://oxfordclarion.uk/new-year-clarion-6-january-2026/	
07 January 2026	Witney Lake Gold In Bloom Award	Cotswold Life	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.greatbritainshine.co.uk/magazines/cotswold/25693560-rich-textile-heritage-witney-wood/	
11 January 2026	Oxfordshire town rejects controversial fire service reforms	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	No	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/25738722-oxfordshire-council-poised-oppose-fire-service-reforms/	
12 January 2026	Major Cotswolds road in Oxfordshire to close next month	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes (On behalf of OCC)	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25757595-major-cotswolds-road-oxfordshire-close-next-month/	
14 January 2026	Key Cotswolds road will close overnight next month	Cotswold Journal			Yes	No	Yes (On behalf of OCC)	https://www.cotswoldjournal.co.uk/news/25764016-key-cotswolds-road-will-close-overnight-next-month/	
17 January 2026	Witney community speedwatch volunteers celebrate anniversary	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25773859-witney-community-speedwatch-volunteers-celebrate-anniversary/	

Document is Restricted

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Youth Council Update
Meeting Date:	Monday, 26 January 2026
Contact Officer:	Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Witney Youth Council.

Background

The Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the council has actively participated in town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Witney Carnival.

The primary purpose of the Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that is heard by decision makers. By giving young people a voice, the Witney Youth Council plays a vital role in shaping a more inclusive and responsive local government, encouraging active participation, and developing key skills among Witney's young people.

Current Situation

Youth Council Meeting Frequency - 13th March 2026

Holding the last three Youth Council meetings monthly rather than every other month helped maintain motivation and move planning forward, although attendance remained about the same. The next few meetings will return to a bi-monthly schedule to allow Officers time to plan upcoming Witney Town Council events, with the option to increase the frequency again if requested by youth councillors.

End-of-Meeting Discussions

At the last meeting on 8 January 2025, officers introduced an informal post-meeting discussion, where youth councillors sat around a smaller table and talked more casually after going through the agenda. This proved very effective in encouraging them to reflect on what had been discussed and to plan their next steps. When time allows, Officers will continue to encourage this approach at future Youth Council meetings.

A Taste of Witney – Witney Youth Council Event

Witney Youth Councillors decided to host an event for young people after noting a lack of activities in Witney, and they were keen to celebrate different cultures through food. Rather than cooking themselves, they plan to invite local restaurants to provide food samples, with the restaurants managing food safety while the Youth Council provides the venue, support,

and oversees attendance. The ticketed event will take place at the Corn Exchange, with funds raised contributing to the planned water re-filling station at The Leys. Restaurants will be contacted by youth councillors by the end of January.

House of Commons Visit

Witney Youth Council has shown a strong interest in both local and national politics and has frequently requested a visit to the House of Commons. MP Charlie Maynard has offered to provide a guided tour; however, a specific date is still in the process of being arranged with his team.

Youth Council Elected Roles

Witney Youth Council re-elected roles for:

- Chair/Vice Chair
- Media Officer
- Treasurer

Three of the four roles were re-elected to different youth councillors, allowing them to develop new skills through taking on new responsibilities.

Daily Slides and End of Term Newsletters

Updates from Witney Youth Council and Witney Town Council concerning young residents are continuing to be shared with local secondary schools for inclusion in their newsletters.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Witney Youth Council inherently tackles inequality by giving a voice and a platform to young people, often apart of diverse communities. Many issues youth councillors want to tackle involve discrimination.
- b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to help Witney's green spaces have not yet been discussed.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Helping young people feel listened to through avenues such as a Youth Council can help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime by Young People through promoting mental health awareness, peer-led activities/initiatives, and improving the reputation of young people in Witney.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency –When Witney Youth Council buy items for their projects, officers have prioritised sustainability and the use of eco-friendly materials.

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.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- Organisations and local groups able to gather valuable insights on the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.
- Young residents of Witney feel heard and that their voice can make an impact.

Financial implications

- Officers' working time
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for the Youth Council meetings.

Recommendations

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

1. Consider the Youth Council update.



Minutes of the meeting of the Witney Youth Council held At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney on Thursday 8th January 2026.

Youth Councillors Present:

Seven Youth Councillors

Witney Town Council Mentors Present:

Cllr G Meadows

Cllr S Simpson

Witney Town Council Officers Present:

A Hathaway – Admin Assistant for Communications and Engagement

A Clapton – Deputy Town Clerk

The Councillors in attendance were Youth Council mentors and were there to guide and answer questions. Officers advised Members this was their opportunity to provide a voice for young people in Witney and the Town Council would try and bring about their ideas and suggestions.

1. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Declarations of Interest

Youth Councillors were advised that if they knew anyone or had any involvement in any of the items being discussed at the meeting, they should say it at this point.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Updates on the House of Commons Visit

The Youth Council Admin Assistant provided a verbal update that we were still waiting on MP Charlie Maynard's response for a specific date that works for him.

4. Cultural Foods in Witney Event (A Taste of Witney ??)

Youth Councillors assigned event roles to plan this event for the Spring. A recap was read of what was agreed in the last meeting:

- Each participating restaurant will have its own individual table.
- The event will preferably be held outdoors at the Corn Exchange, with the main hall booked as a backup in case of bad weather.
- Entry will be completely free to ensure accessibility, especially for young people.
- A dedicated table will be available for voluntary donations and fundraising for the water refilling station at The Leys, which will be monitored.

- There will be no seating to encourage movement and prevent overcrowding.
- The event will be open to all local food businesses to maximise reach and include a wide range of cultures.
- If a restaurant cancels at short notice, pre-bought cakes will be sold to fill any empty tables.
- Crowd safety will be managed by using a large open space and limiting visitors to 15-minute rotations around the tables.
- The event will take place on a Sunday to accommodate working people and young attendees.
- The event will run for approximately two hours.
- Setup and takedown will be split into two shifts and managed by different groups of youth councillors.

A list of all restaurants in Witney was noted:

Gurkha

The Old Court Hotel

The Plough

Oxon BBQ Witney

The Edge Eatery

San Marzano Witney

Curry Paradise

Huffkins Witney

Pokhara Delicious

Bella Italia

No. 14 Wesley Walk

Part & Parcel

Pizza Express

Moon Coffee

Sandwich De Witney

Ye Olde Cross Keys

The Blue Boar

Shaan Indian Restaurant

Como Lounge

USA Chicken and Pizza Witney

Café Marada 39

The Fleece

Suwanna Thai Restaurant

The Three Horseshoes

Restaurants highlighted were chosen by the Youth Councillors to visit. Groups were decided to go out and ask the restaurants on 31st January 2026 at 1:30PM. The admin for the Youth Council will be present in the centre of town at 1863 during this time for youth councillors to find if there is an issue.

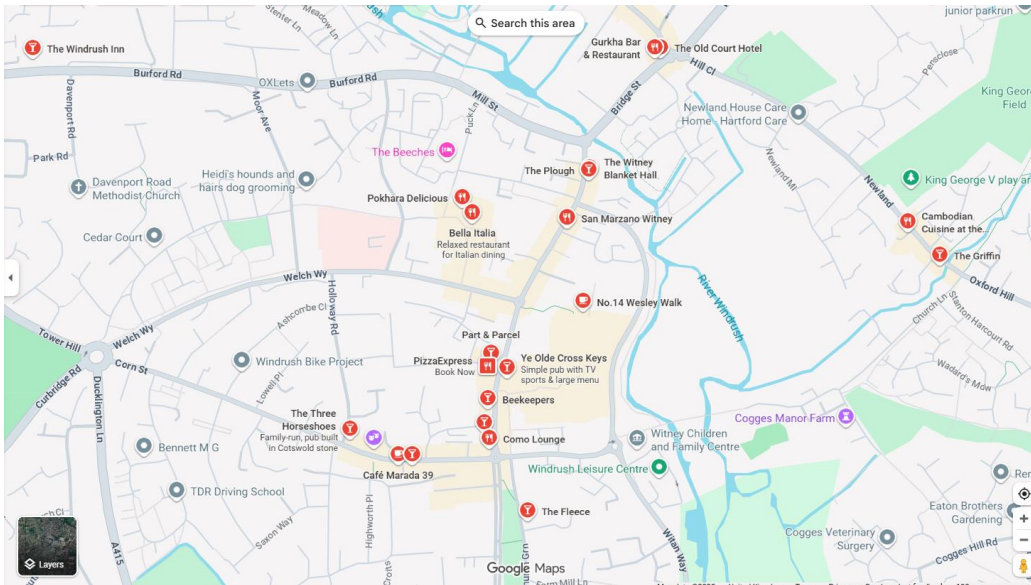


Figure 1 Map of the restaurants in Witney

5. Items for Future Agenda

A youth councillor suggested further planning for this event and a recap of the results from 31st Jan be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the upcoming Youth Council meetings were received.

- Wed 11 March 2025 – 4PM to 5PM

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Youth Services

Meeting Date: Monday, 26 January 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on youth services funded by the Town Council in 2026/27, together with services delivered by other authorities and/or stakeholders.

Background

As part of the budget-setting process, the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee recommended that the Youth Services Grant scheme be launched earlier in the year to align with the start of the fiscal year in April 2026 (Minute F694, 24 November).

At the meeting held on 15 September 2025, it was recommended that authority be delegated for the creation of a new Service Level Agreement for The Station Detached Youth, delivered by the Bright Futures charity (Minute SC531 refers).

At this Committee's previous meeting, it was agreed the matter of Youth Club provision would be included as an item for discussion at this meeting (Minute SC656 refers).

Current Situation

Youth Services Grant 2026–27

In deciding whether to bring forward the scheme the Council must take account of the pre-election period which, while primarily affecting District Council elections, begins around 25 March (dependent on when the notice of election is published). To meet the above recommendation, it is proposed that the scheme opens in mid-March and remains open until after the elections on 7 May 2026. Assessment and decision-making can then take place ahead of ratification at a Council meeting scheduled before the end of June.

Members are also invited to indicate whether they wish to propose any changes to the grant criteria or to the process by which the grant is awarded (criteria attached at **Appendix A**).

Please note that the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee retains final authority over grant awards.

The Station Detached Youth

The Chair, Leader, Chair of Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments, and the Deputy Town Clerk met with a representative from Bright Futures on 4 December 2025.

During the meeting, discussion focused on performance metrics, indoor youth provision, and the services currently being delivered. A multi-year funding request and annual inflationary increases were also acknowledged. An updated draft Service Level Agreement has since been issued to Bright Futures for review and comment, ahead of being presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting on 2 February for initial consideration.

February half-term BREAK sessions are scheduled to take place at the 1863 Café Bar from 17–20 February 2026.

Witney Youth Club Provision

At the previous meeting, Members discussed the closure of Base 33 in 2017, following 15 years of operation, and noted that the gap in youth club provision created by its closure had yet to be fully addressed.

The Committee should note the existing February and October half-term arrangements with The Station for youth café provision, alongside the redevelopment of the Courtside Hub and other forthcoming initiatives, which may help to address this gap. The issue has also been raised with stakeholders through Thames Valley Police Operation Just discussions; however, at present, Town Council officers are not aware of any confirmed Youth Clubs in Witney.

West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership

The inaugural meeting of this initiative, currently administered by West Oxfordshire District Council, was held on Friday 16 January.

The meeting included presentations outlining the group's priorities, feedback from Oxfordshire Youth on their Youth Voice Project, and an overview of the Local Youth Transformation Project. The latter was led by the National Youth Agency and related to a Department for Culture, Media & Sport Local Youth Transformation Pilot, with Oxfordshire selected as one of twelve pathfinder authorities testing approaches to delivering a local youth offer that meets young people's needs while supporting government priorities.

Presentation slides from the meeting have been circulated to Committee members separately for information.

The Youth Development Officer at West Oxfordshire District Council has indicated a willingness to attend a future meeting but is unable to attend on this occasion.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Access to well-funded, quality services can help mitigate the effects of social inequality. Ensuring that resources are directed toward the communities and individuals who need them most is a crucial step toward improving outcomes for young people, fostering social mobility, and promoting a more just and equal society.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct impact from the contents of this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder –By offering young people the tools, opportunities, and support they need to thrive, youth services reduce the likelihood that they will engage in criminal behaviour, contribute to social disorder, or face long-term negative outcomes. These services not only benefit individuals but also promote the well-being and safety of entire communities.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact from the contents of this report.

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.

- Town and Parish Councils have no statutory duty to provide youth services. There is a reputational risk residents will see further funding as additional taxation. This needs to be balanced against the social value to the community.
- These are large sums of money, so it is critical that funding is allocated strategically, managed with transparency, and coupled with ongoing evaluation and adaptation to ensure the services provided are effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Investment in youth services can reduce the risk of negative outcomes, such as involvement in crime, substance abuse, or mental health crises. By offering structured activities and support systems, these programs help prevent young people from falling into harmful behaviours and provide alternatives to risky or destructive paths.

Funding youth services is a critical investment in the future of individuals and communities. It creates long-term social value by addressing the needs of young people, promoting positive development, reducing social inequalities, and fostering a more resilient and cohesive society. The benefits are far-reaching, influencing everything from personal well-being and mental health to economic stability and societal growth.

Financial implications

- The budget for the Youth Services Grant in 2026-27 is £20,000 (4169/408)*

**Proposed.* The Council's 2026-27 budget has not yet been agreed at the time of writing.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider,

1. The timing of opening the Youth Services Grant for applications
2. The criteria for the Youth Services Grant
3. Any further action in relation to Youth Club provision
4. To note the updates concerning The Station & West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership.



Youth Services Grant 2025-26

The Town Council supports the desires of young people for enhancing and increasing places to go and things to do, supports young people's access to activities they are interested in, maintains play provision and encourages the voice of youth in the decisions that affect them through the work of the Witney Youth Council.

To realise these objectives further, Witney Town Council has established a Youth Funding Grant with a total of £20,000 available in the year 2025-26.

Purpose of the Fund

The Youth Fund is open to applications from community and voluntary sector organisations, including existing organisations and those in the process of setting up to establish easily signposted and accessible youth opportunities, supporting open access to preventative services, particularly for those who may be hard to reach and to extend activities to support the young people of Witney.

Activities may include, for example, providing guidance and support about their lives and issues relating to school, family life and peers through way of drop-in sessions.

Applications may, for example, facilitate the provision of a safe space for young people who would otherwise have nowhere to go, including a safe space to talk, and the ability to enjoy some self-directed or group/organised discretionary activities. In this instance funds could be requested towards facility hire costs and towards a permanent youth structure in the town.

Once the available resource is used the Youth Funding Grant will be closed.

Types of Assistance

- Financial assistance towards specific projects/activities or purchases of equipment
- Financial assistance towards ongoing revenue costs if the organisation can demonstrate their lack of funds and the adverse effect on the Town and its residents if the organisation is unable to continue/start or are hampered by lack of funds
- Financial assistance to groups providing specialist services
- Financial assistance towards discretionary services such as subsidised meals
- Financial assistance towards the costs to hire a facility
- Financial assistance pledged towards a permanent youth structure

- Subsidised use of the Council Buildings, such as regular use of the Corn Exchange for or Burwell Hall for activities within the terms of the fund.

The Council will look favourably on those who create opportunities to be accessible to all young people, therefore applications demonstrating how they will extend their reach to young people who have not previously engaged with these opportunities are encouraged.

Bids will need to demonstrate that they are offering new youth opportunities or extending existing ones for young people between the ages of 0 - 18 and how these opportunities will support them to live a full and varied life.

Grant Criteria

We will assess applications according to:

- Whether the proposal is providing new opportunities or extending the existing ones for young people to additional sessions, areas or groups of young people.
- How the proposed provision will meet the needs identified
- How it will support young people to live a full and varied life
- How it will add value to the local community
- How it will work with other groups and stakeholders
- How the funding will be used. We believe supporting young people should become an indispensable part of their community and young people who have benefitted from support should continue to do so after the funding period. Applications therefore are encouraged to present their plans as to how they are going to make the provision sustainable and attract hard to reach children
- to identify the local need of young people and can use local evidence from within their community. This might include using existing data and/or anecdotal evidence. The applicants will need to demonstrate how the bid will meet the identified needs.

Applicants must ensure they always have procedures in place to safeguard young people.

Who Can Apply?

Applications will only be accepted from the following:

- Local Charitable and/or non-profit-taking organisations (existing or start-up groups) *
- Community Groups
- Religious Groups (providing the funding is for non-religious activities for young people)
- Volunteer Groups

*Organisations applying to Witney Town Council should be local to Witney or, if just outside the boundary, its work should be of significant benefit to the town and its residents.

Groups and organisations should be affiliated to Oxfordshire Youth or similar recognised umbrella organisation.

Applications are unlikely to be awarded to the following:

- Commercial Organisations
- Individuals
- Charities operating overseas
- Funds established to help persons outside the UK
- Churches & Ecclesiastical charities (towards the upkeep of a building)
- National appeals are, with limited exceptions, also outside the legal scope of the Council's grant-aid scheme

Grants cannot be made to cover money already spent and the giving of a grant one year does not set a precedent for another.

Preference will be given to organisations who have not already received funding from any other body. The Council will look favourably on organisations who can demonstrate they have been unsuccessful in obtaining funding from their national bodies or West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Application Process

To ensure that fair and proper consideration can be given to all requests, the Council requires the following to be submitted before the application deadline:

- A completed application form
- The most recent full set of accounts available or a financial projection or budget for the period following the accounts*
- Any additional information the organisation considers will support their application for grant funding.

*If the organisation is a new entity with no accounts available, please provide a Business Plan, stating aims and objectives, along with a financial projection for at least the current financial year.

Please complete and submit the application form electronically or by email, along with your most recently available, year-end accounts by 12 noon on Friday 27th June 2025.

Please address postal applications to:	Deputy Town Clerk, Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, OX28 6AG.
Please send email applications to:	communities@witney-tc.gov.uk

How will applications be assessed?

The Town Council will check all applications for the Youth Services Grant against the criteria set out above. All applications meeting the criteria will be considered by the Town Council's Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Applications for larger grants may be offered the opportunity to present their proposal to this committee.

The panel will make recommendations for award and the final decision will be made by the Full Council on 28th July 2025.

Awarding the grant

Applicants will be advised as soon as possible after the dates below whether their application has been successful or not. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified without delay

Successful applicants will be asked to sign a grant agreement with the Council. Once the agreement is signed, the funds will be transferred to the organisation's designated bank account.

Key Dates

6 th	May	2025	The Youth Services Grant opens for applications
27 th	June	2025	The Youth Services Grant closes for applications
30 th	June	2025	The scoring process takes place
14 th	July	2025	Evaluation Meeting (Stronger Communities Committee)
21 st	July	2025	Agreement on awards (Policy, Government & Finance Committee)
22 nd	July	2025	Applicants notified of recommendations
28 th	July	2025	Full meeting of Witney Town Council makes final decision
31 st	July	2025	Applicants notified of final decisions

Monitoring

Successful applicants are expected to comply fully with any monitoring requests from the Council and must agree to this when signing the grant agreement. This may include a review of their project during the period of funding, checking how the money was spent, reports on the activity funded, feedback from young people and any other record of the activity funded (e.g. promotional flyers and posters).

- Grants should be spent within the year, for the purpose for which they were given
- The Council reserves the right to request a copy of invoices and/or other documentation as evidence that the expenditure has been incurred
- Organisations receiving grant-aid in excess of £500, as a condition, are required to provide the Council with a written report within 12 months of the award date to demonstrate how the funds were expended
- If an organisation dissolves the Council expects the organisation to reimburse the grant-aid awarded
- Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the town council.
- Recipients of a grant from the town council should acknowledge the fact on all relevant literature.

Successful applicants will be required to complete a monitoring report for the town council towards the end of the funding agreement.

Contacting Us

We encourage applicants to contact us with any questions they might have as early as possible. If you have any queries about the Youth Fund or the application process, please contact us on: communities@witney-tc.gov.uk

Agenda Item 12

Hello Sharon,

..... which benches would be preferred for that space outside the Shake Shop? There are the circular benches, or we could have two Eastgate benches positioned to face each other?

Circular options from Broxap:

- <https://www.broxap.com/weyburn-circular-seat.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/weybridge.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/easthorpe.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/wythenshawe.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/thames-steel-timber-curved-bench.html>
-



- <https://www.broxap.com/hexagonal-tree-seat.html>



- <https://www.broxap.com/lanchester-tree-bench.html>



If you could let me know what the Town Council would prefer, and is happy to take on as assets, I'll start looking into the installation costs.

Thank you.

Kindest regards,

[Redacted]

Market Towns Officer
Economic Development

West Oxfordshire District Council

Sent: 19 January 2026 14:21

To: Info <info@witney-tc.gov.uk>

Subject: Bike racks and bin stores

We, the District Council, have some funding set aside to provide our local businesses with bin stores to improve the look and feel of the town.

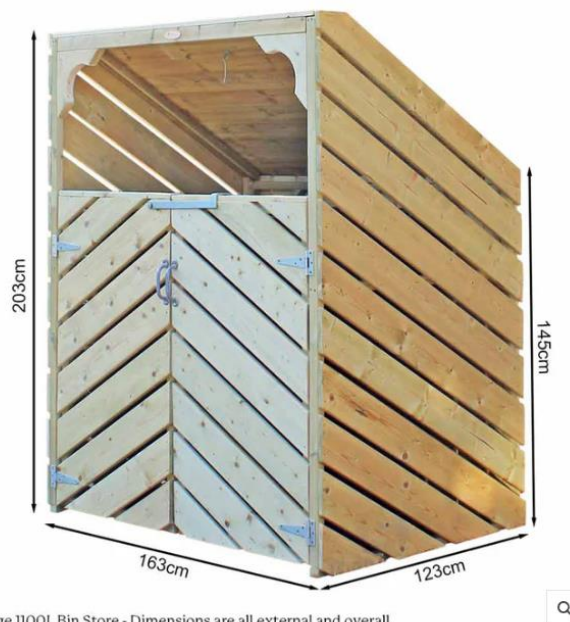
Sandwich De Witney would like to have a couple of bin stores to house their 1100L bins that are located behind the shop, on Market Square. There is currently a bike rack behind this building and we were wondering if there is any chance we could move this to accommodate the bin stores?

Kindest regards,

Market Towns Officer

Economic Development

West Oxfordshire District Council



Large 1100L Bin Store - Dimensions are all external and overall

Commercial 1100L Bin Store with Full Height Doors

£795.00

SKU: WHB-1100L-FD