

Public Document Pack

Full Council

Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 16th February, 2026 at 7.00 pm

To members of the Full Council Committee - A Bailey, J Doughty, O Collins, G Meadows, J Aitman, T Ashby, D Enright, R Smith, D Temple, A Mubin, R Crouch, G Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, D Newcombe, J Robertshaw, S Simpson 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 of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. Minutes (Pages 5 - 23)

To approve and adopt the minutes of the Council Meetings held on 8 December 2025, 15 December 2025, 5 January 2026 and 2 February 2026 in accordance with Standing Order 26 including questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item.

4. Public Participation

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of pu

participation, in line with Standing Order 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

5. Witney Community Policing Issues

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

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

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

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

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

8. Minutes of Committees and Sub Committees

To receive and NOTE the RESOLUTIONS in the minutes of the meetings held between 9 December 2025 and 2 February 2026, and agree the RECOMMENDATIONS contained therein.

- a) **Planning & Development Committee - 9 December 2025, 6 January & 27 January 2026** (Pages 24 - 41)
- b) **Climate & Biodiversity Committee - 13 January 2026** (Pages 42 - 46)
- c) **Parks & Recreation Committee - 12 January** (Pages 47 - 49)
- d) **Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - 19 January** (Pages 50 - 53)
- e) **Stronger Communities Committee - 26 January** (Pages 54 - 59)
- f) **Policy, Governance & Finance Committee - 2 February** (Pages 60 - 65)

9. Civic Announcements (Page 66)

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

10. Health & Safety (Pages 67 - 70)

To receive an update from Officers on health and safety items.

11. Vandalism & Anti Social Behaviour (Page 71)

To receive an update showing the latest vandalism to Council property and reported Anti-Social Behaviour.

12. Future of Local Government in Oxfordshire

The government consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire has now opened and is available at the following link - [Local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-oxfordshire)

This statutory consultation seeks views on the proposals that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has received following the Secretary of State's invitation to councils in Oxfordshire to submit proposals for unitary local government for Oxfordshire. The three proposals in this consultation were made by the following councils on 28 November 2025:

Oxfordshire County Council proposed 1 unitary council. This would comprise the current areas of:

- **Oxfordshire:** Cherwell, Oxford City, Oxfordshire County, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire

Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council proposed 2 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Oxford and Shires Council:** Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire
- **Ridgeway Council:** South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, plus West Berkshire (outside of invitation area)

Oxford City Council proposed 3 unitary councils: This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Greater Oxford Council:** Oxford City (includes boundary change)
- **Northern Oxfordshire Council:** Most of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire
- **Ridgeway Council:** South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, plus West Berkshire (outside of invitation area)

This consultation asks questions about each proposal to help inform the assessment of the proposals. The Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) are encouraging Councils to directly respond to the consultation as a corporate body.

13. Committee Calendar 2026/27 (Page 72)

To receive and formally approve the calendar of meetings as agreed by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 2 February 2026.

14. Register of Interests, Hospitality & Data Protection (Pages 73 - 76)

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

15. Communication from the Leader

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

16. Correspondence

To receive any correspondence received (if applicable).

a) NALC Open Letter (Pages 77 - 78)

To receive an Open Letter from the new Chair of the National Association of Local Council.

b) Civility & Respect - Cllr Statement of Assurance (Pages 79 - 80)

To receive notice of the National Association of Local Council's (NALC) information concerning a Councillor Statement of Assurance as part of its work on Civility & Respect for information. Officers will provide a report to a future meeting for discussion.

c) **WODC - Community Governance Review Request Response** (Page 81)

To receive correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council concerning the Town Council's request for a Community Governance Review of Witney's boundaries (minute no F701 – Policy, Governance & Finance, 24 November 2025 refers).

17. Questions to the Leader of the Council

Questions to the Leader of the Council concerning the business of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 22.

18. Sealing of Documents

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



Town Clerk

Agenda Item 3

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 8 December 2025

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

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| Councillors: | J Doughty G Meadows J Aitman T Ashby D Enright R Smith D Temple | A Mubin R Crouch G Doughty D Edwards-Hughes D Newcombe J Robertshaw J Treloar |
|--------------|---|---|

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|-----------|---|---|
| Officers: | Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie | Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |
|-----------|---|---|

Others: Three members of the public.

703 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor O Collins & S Simpson.

704 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

705 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held 6 October, and 10 November 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Council meetings held 6 October, and 10 November 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

Cllr D Enright joined the meeting at 7:03pm.

706 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from two volunteers of a local radio station concerning the Council's support for the Witney Music Festival.

The Committee reconvened.

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the member of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

Two members of the public left at 7:35pm.

707 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Apologies had been received from Inspector C Ball who was unfortunately unable to attend or send a representative.

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

Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr T Ashby updated Members on a range of current matters, including a Fire Service Improvements consultation, recycling centre opening hours, proposals relating to the Local Government review, the Oxford congestion zone, Witney Library re-opening, the opening of Councillor priority funds, and ongoing work on the Local Plan.

Cllr J Robertshaw raised issues relating to infrastructure, Oxfordshire Link, Shores Green, the Flood Plan and the SEND deficit.

West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr J Doughty thanked officers for the work undertaken at Marriots Walk in support of the Christmas Fayre, which coincided with the masterplan for the facility.

Cllr D Enright reported that Marriots Walk had experienced its most successful start to a Christmas season to date, with footfall increasing by 50%.

Cllr R Crouch advised that the Communities Department, in partnership with Oxfordshire Mind, was offering free two-hour training courses for Councillors. Further details would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Cllr R Smith reported that an internal audit had taken place at West Oxfordshire District Council. This included a review of Section 106 requests from the previous year, and feedback was being sought on how the process had operated. It was also noted that a Tree Officer is now in post at West Oxfordshire District Council.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

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

Cllr D Edwards-Hughes reported that he had attended a meeting of the Witney Chamber of Trade and was looking forward to collaborative working through the **Town Centre Forum**.

Cllr D Newcombe advised that he had attended a meeting of the **RAF Brize Norton Local Consultation Group** on behalf of the Council and provided updates on proposed runway works, including a potential closure of up to six weeks, along with initiatives relating to energy efficiency, noise and light pollution reduction and flooding.

Cllr R Smith reported that **Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group (WING)** had met and discussed whether the North Witney development should be designated as a strategic development area. She also reported on **Witney Town Band**, noting a successful season and the significant contribution the Band had made to civic and community events.

Cllr R Crouch advised that the **Witney Educational Foundation** had appointed a new business manager who was reviewing the charity's financial position. She further reported that the Deputy Mayor had attended Unterhaching in November to commemorate Volkstrauertag in conjunction with **Witney Twinning Association**.

Cllr R Crouch also advised that **Witney Town Charity** had recently inspected the Almshouses, with very positive outcomes and with good grant management. Finally, she noted that the **Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils** was considering the Local Government Review and its potential impact on town and parish councils

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

710 **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 7 OCTOBER, 28 OCTOBER & 18 NOVEMBER**

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Planning & Development Committee meetings held on 7 October, 28 October & 18 November 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

711 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 3 NOVEMBER**

The Mayor presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 3 November 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

712 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 10 NOVEMBER**

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 10 November 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

713 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 17 NOVEMBER**

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities meeting held on 17 November 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

714 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 24 NOVEMBER**

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

P702 – In response to a members question the Town Clerk provided clarification that any decisions that impacted the budget of the Council would be communicated to all members via the budget setting process. However, ordinarily the minutes from the Personnel Sub Committee were not widely circulated due to the fact it also dealt with other staffing related matters such as grievance and disciplinary issues which were strictly confidential.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 24 November 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

715 **CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY - 25 SEPTEMBER**

The Mayor presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Cllr D Enright advised that he had been omitted from the Councillors in attendance and asked that this be corrected.

Resolved:

1. That, a change be made to reflect Cllr Enright's attendance and,
2. That the minutes of the Climate Action Working Party meeting held on 25 September 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

716 **WITNEY: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY - 13 NOVEMBER**

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party (previously known as the National Pride Working Party) meeting held on 13 November 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

During the following Agenda Item Cllr D Edwards-Hughes briefly left the meeting at 8:01pm returning at 8:03pm.

717 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

The Mayor thanked his Deputy for covering duties following the birth of his child and his secretary for assisting with the arrangements for the Mayor's Carol Service. These thanks were echoed by Members.

A Member also noted that the period from early November through to the end of the year was particularly busy with events and commented that these had all run smoothly. Thanks were therefore extended to officers for their work in delivering these events.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

718 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received the report of the Compliance & Environment Officer which provided an update on Health & Safety matters.

Members thanked officers for their work in these areas in ensuring the Council's compliance and welcomed the successful staff training, which was noted as helping to mitigate potential issues.

Resolved

That, the report be noted.

719 **VLANDALISM & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council received the report of vandalism & Anti-Social behaviour which had occurred since the last meeting.

Members noted with satisfaction a reduction in incidents at the Covid-19 Memorial since the summer and thanked staff for their efforts in addressing these matters.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal update be noted.

720 **COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS, FOIS & SARS**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which outlined complaints, comments and compliments received since the last report in June 2025.

Members heard from the Deputy Town Clerk who provided additional details and highlighted the continuing trend of more compliments than complaints.

The report did not align with the Council's new complaints processes and policy which had only been adopted at the last Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting.

Members raised questions relating to complaints regarding the accessibility of a new path at Witney Lake and the number of bike racks, asking if a report on the Council's stock could be provided.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

721 **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OXFORDSHIRE**

The Council received a verbal update from the Town Clerk/CEO who advised that West Oxfordshire District Council had scheduled a workshop on the matter, which clashed with the Council's budget meeting. She confirmed that a separate meeting was planned early in the new year. She also reiterated that, at the recent OALC Larger Councils meeting, a presentation had been given on preparing for unitarisation for larger councils by the NALC Chair of the Larger Councils Committee.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

722 **OCC CONSULTATION - TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER FOR A40**

The Council received notice of a consultation concerning a proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the A40.

Members welcomed the TRO which complimented a Public Space Protection Order being sought by West Oxfordshire District Council for the same stretch of road. With both in place, the Authorities would have enhanced powers to help deter pony and trap racing here.

Resolved:

That, Witney Town Council welcomes the TRO on the A40 and submits a response of the same to Oxfordshire County Council.

723 **OCC CONSULTATION – WEST END (WITNEY) PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL PERMIT PARKING**

The Council received notice of a consultation concerning a proposed residential parking permit scheme at West End, Witney.

Members noted they had seen an earlier iteration of the proposal, and little had changed. This had been an ongoing issue for many years and this scheme, with multi-road restrictions did not seem to be the answer.

Resolved:

That, Witney Town Council objects to the proposal as presented.

The last remaining member of the public left the meeting at 8:25pm.

724 **OCC CONSULTATION - PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE OXFORDSHIRE'S FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

The Council received notice of a consultation concerning proposals to change Oxfordshire's Fire & Rescue Service.

Members noted the direct improvements to Witney's service but also the wider repercussions for West Oxfordshire which could have an impact.

Resolved:

That, a response be drafted by officers and presented to the meeting on 5th January for approval and submission in response.

725 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader had nothing to be communicated.

Resolved:

That, the verbal report be noted.

726 **HIGHWAYS ASSET RESPONSE TEAM (HART)**

The Council received the correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council Highway Engagement Team.

Following discussion, it was agreed that this be deferred to the Planning & Development Committee for further debate with Members being encouraged to submit details of any maintenance activity that was required within their wards so that it may be collated.

Resolved

That, a response be considered by the Planning & Development Committee at their meeting of 6 January 2025.

727 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions for the Leader of the Council.

728 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no items sealed since the last meeting.

Resolved:

That, the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 8.44 pm

Chair

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 15 December 2025

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

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

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| Councillors: | J Doughty O Collins G Meadows J Aitman T Ashby D Enright R Smith D Temple | R Crouch G Doughty D Edwards-Hughes D Newcombe J Robertshaw S Simpson J Treloar |
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| Officers: | Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie | Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |
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| Others: | None. |
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736 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

737 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

738 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

739 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

Resolved:

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions 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.

During the following item:

Cllr J Aitman left the meeting at 7:25pm

Cllr R Crouch left the meeting at 7:32pm

Cllr D Enright left the meeting briefly between 7:45 and 7:49pm

Cllr R Smith left the meeting briefly between 8:10 and 8:18pm

Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly between 8:12 and 8:15pm

Cllr A Bailey left the meeting briefly between 8:16 and 8:17pm

740 **PAVILION WORKING PARTY**

The Council received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O.

The Chair of the Pavilion Working Party explained that the Working Party had approached discussions with a neutral position, with a fallback option of the Town Council operating the facility if required. Having considered proposals from the interested party and assessed both the positive and negative impacts for football clubs, the wider community and the Council, the Working Party concluded that the proposal would offer benefits to all parties. While not a perfect solution, the arrangements were considered realistic and costed, with the potential to create a vibrant community facility. Key benefits included avoiding an increase in the precept for Witney residents and contributing positively to the West Oxfordshire District Council's Playing Pitch Strategy, which identified a need for additional adult pitches. It was also noted that the Council had previous experience of operating facilities under a Community Trust model.

Concerns were raised about the level of information available to Members. The Town Clerk advised that some details were commercially sensitive and that the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee had delegated the matter to the Pavilion Working Party. Supported by officers, the Working Party had undertaken due diligence, including detailed financial scrutiny, and concluded that the Community Trust model presented was workable, recommending progression to a formal stage of negotiation.

While several Members supported the Community Trust approach, others sought further information or a delay. Concerns were expressed regarding opportunities for other clubs, the absence of resident consultation, the football club's growth and potential future requirements for league-standard facilities, including responsibility for funding any additional works and maintaining community access to the open space.

Officers advised that a decision was required ahead of budget-setting to allow costs to be accounted for once the facility was transferred from the developer in 2026, and that no further information was available at this stage. Governance arrangements were also discussed, including trustee representation, with a proposal for one trustee from the Witney West ward and two from relevant standing committees.

Members noted that the Working Party was satisfied in principle that the proposal met Witney Town Council's requirements in respect of; community access, financial sustainability and protection of Council assets (subject to a full repairing lease).

The recommendation to approve progression to formal lease negotiations with the proposed Community Trust, subject to the nomination of three Council Trustees was moved. A Member requested this be a named vote:

For: Cllrs A Bailey, J Doughty, O Collins, G Meadows, D Enright, R Smith, G Doughty, D Newcombe, S Simpson

Against: Cllrs T Ashby, D Edwards Hughes, J Treloar, J Robertshaw, D Temple

A further recommendation to delegate to the Town Clerk/CEO, in consultation with the three nominated Council Trustees, authority to: Prepare draft Heads of Terms, develop a Service Level Agreement; and Progress detailed legal negotiations was moved. This was also requested to be a named vote:

For: Cllrs A Bailey, J Doughty, O Collins, G Meadows, D Enright, R Smith, G Doughty, D Newcombe, S Simpson.

Against: Cllrs T Ashby, D Edwards Hughes, J Treloar, J Robertshaw, D Temple

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, the Council approves progression to formal lease negotiations with the proposed Community Trust, subject to the nomination of three Council Trustees and,
3. That, the Town Clerk/CEO, in consultation with the three nominated Council Trustees be delegated authority to:
 - Prepare draft Heads of Terms;
 - Develop a Service Level Agreement; and
 - Progress detailed legal negotiations.

On completion of the item a short recess was taken from 8:38pm to 8:43pm and the meeting reverted to open session

*Cllr J Aitman returned to the meeting at 8:38pm
Cllr D Temple left the meeting at 8:38pm*

Cllr A Bailey rescinded the Chair to his deputy and left the meeting at 8:45pm

741 **DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029**

The Council received the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O with accompanying final draft of a Corporate Strategic Plan 2025-29 for the Council.

Members thanked officers for preparing the document and welcomed the final draft of the Plan, which set out the Council's strategic goals and seven strategic priority themes that would underpin the Council's work over the next four years.

The Plan also consolidated other Council strategies into a single document, with the budget, financial planning and a supporting action plan to be completed and incorporated into the final published version.

The recommendations were in the report were moved en-bloc with voting as follows:

For: 9
Abstentions: 4

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the draft Corporate Strategic Plan 2025-29 be adopted as the Council's primary corporate policy framework as a living document as amended and,

3. That, the supporting Action Plan be drafted and will be subject to annual review and budget approval and,
4. That, the Strategic Plan will undergo design and be published in a public-facing illustrated format and,
5. That, the Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually, with a comprehensive refresh following the May 2027 Town Council elections.

742 **NALC - LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME (SILVER)**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the National Association of Local Council's (NALC) Local Council Award Scheme.

The scheme provided Council's with the opportunity to demonstrate they met sector-defined standards, while establishing a framework for ongoing improvement. The Council had been awarded a bronze accreditation earlier in 2025.

Members welcomed the report and recognised the Council was in the position to apply for silver award status so whole-heartedly supported the application and hoped the Council it would be able to press for gold in 2026.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council confirms that it has the required documents, information and conditions are in place (whether published or not) for both the bronze and Silver Council Award Scheme accreditations, and that these are published on the Council's website, where applicable and,
3. That, therefore, as Witney Town Council meets the criteria, it resolves to apply for the NALC Local Council Award Scheme Silver Award.

The meeting closed at: 8.59 pm

Chair

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 5 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

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| Councillors: | O Collins G Meadows J Aitman D Enright R Smith A Mubin | R Crouch D Edwards-Hughes J Robertshaw S Simpson J Treloar |
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| Officers: | Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Nigel Warner Caitlin Head | Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Responsible Financial Officer Finance Apprentice |
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| Others: | None |
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1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Newcombe, G Doughty, J Doughty, T Ashby & D Temple.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As Members would discuss the Council's Budget, the Mayor highlighted the possibility of subjects or organisations becoming a topic of discussion. Therefore, Cllr O Collins declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a non-paid Director of West Oxfordshire Community Transport who were currently a recipient of an annual grant awarded by the Council.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

4 OCC CONSULTATION - PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE OXFORDSHIRE'S FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Council considered the draft response to the proposals to improve Oxfordshire's Fire & Rescue Service.

Members welcomed the draft which had been prepared based on the outcome of their discussions on 8 December 2025. It was agreed that a figure be included in the response to signify the estimated number of properties being considered in the proposed large-scale housing developments.

Additionally, it was agreed that the support the Fire & Rescue Service provided to the town in respect non-fire activities be acknowledged, particularly the support in times of flooding.

These amendments were unanimously agreed.

Resolved:

That, the draft response be submitted with the inclusion of the additional amendments.

5

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS & REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Council considered the appointments to “The Community Trust” to be created for the management of the Windrush Place Pavillion & Pitches.

Three appointments were required based on a set criterion previously agreed.

- A West Witney Ward Member - It was proposed Cllr G Doughty be appointed.
- A Member of the Parks & Recreation Committee – It was proposed that Cllr J Aitman be appointed.
- A Member of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee – It was proposed that Cllr R Crouch be appointed.

There being no other nominations the proposed appointments were unanimously agreed.

Resolved:

That, Cllrs Geoff Doughty, Joy Aitman & Rachel Crouch be appointed as the Councils representative trustees on the “The Community Trust”.

6

COUNCIL BUDGET: REVISED BUDGET 2025/26 AND ESTIMATES 2026/27

The Council received and considered a presentation from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), together with his verbal explanation, which summarised the budget-setting process of the Council to date.

The presentation provided a summary of the current financial outlook for the Council and set out three draft proposals for funding the budget for 2026/27. These proposals were based on the outcomes of discussions from the previous cycle of Committee meetings, during which each Committee had outlined its anticipated requirements.

Members were advised of several factors outside of the Council’s control which could impact future financial planning, including increases to the Council’s insurance long term agreement, geopolitical events, and changes to national and international policy.

Members received an update on the progress of the West Witney Projects and were informed of the potential options available should the overall project come in under the initial budget. The

Council was pleased to hear of the work being undertaken by Officers to monitor expenditure closely and to identify and deliver cost savings.

The Council also heard of the continued diligent work of Officers to trim and reduce costs where possible across all other areas of the Council's spending. An explanation was provided on the purpose of earmarked reserve accounts, details of which were provided at the meeting, and the options available for their utilisation to enable spending in other priority areas. The RFO emphasised that decisions to remove or amend budget lines were matters for the Council, rather than for the RFO.

The Chair thanked the RFO for his presentation, a sentiment echoed by other Members. A lengthy discussion followed with all Members who wished to speak being given the opportunity to do so.

Members discussed the potential impact of different levels of increase to the precept. It was noted that while some Members expressed a desire for a 0% rise above inflation, there was also concern that failing to increase the precept at this stage could result in compounded and more significant increases in later years.

Members were informed that Café 1863 turnover had increased by approximately 18%; however, it was recognised that future increases were likely to be more modest as daytime trade in particular, was nearing capacity. Reference was made to the business plan, including potential ideas to protect and grow alcohol sales.

During the discussion, a request was made by a Member for further information to enable fuller consideration prior to a final decision being taken. The Mayor highlighted the significant work and achievements delivered by the Council during 2025 and suggested that the budget-setting process presented an opportunity to promote these successes to residents.

In concluding the discussion, the RFO summarised that he had taken the overall steer from Members that a Council Tax increase should sit between inflation (using the most appropriate measure) and 5%.

It became clear that the majority of Members favoured either option two or three of the presented budget proposals. It was therefore agreed that these two options, which differed by £2.20 over the course of the year for a Band D property, be explored further by the RFO.

The Council agreed that the decision to formally set the level of increase to the precept would be made at an Extraordinary Council Meeting to be held on 2 February 2026.

Resolved:

1. That the Responsible Financial Officer refine the budget calculations to reflect an increase in the Council's precept for the financial year 2026/27, resulting in an increase of approximately £8 to £10 for a Band D property; and,
2. That a final decision on the level of precept be made at the Extraordinary Council Meeting scheduled for 2 February 2026.

The meeting closed at: 8.48 pm

Chair

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

Held on Monday, 2 February 2026

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

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| Councillors: | J Doughty G Meadows J Aitman T Ashby D Enright R Smith R Crouch | G Doughty D Edwards-Hughes D Newcombe J Robertshaw S Simpson J Treloar |
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|-----------|---|--|
| Officers: | Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Nigel Warner Caitlin Head | Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Responsible Financial Officer Finance Apprentice |
|-----------|---|--|

| | |
|---------|----------------------------|
| Others: | Two members of the public. |
|---------|----------------------------|

64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Collins, A Mubin, and D Temple.

65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

66 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representation from a member of the public concerning agenda items 4 and 5.

The Committee reconvened.

67 COUNCIL BUDGET: REVISED BUDGET 2025/26 AND ESTIMATE 2026/27

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (R.F.O).

The RFO advised that the final budget options presented in the report were the result of several months of work, in line with Committee direction and statutory and best practice requirements. He also responded to a member's pre-submitted question regarding salary calculations.

The final budget report outlined revised revenue budgets for 2025/26 and estimates for 2026/27, with detailed information on income and expenditure, general reserves, and rolling capital and special revenue projects. Members were provided with comprehensive financial forecasts and a range of funding options for the year ahead. Also included were scenarios relating to the Council's loan for the West Witney projects and consideration of opting to tax at Burwell Hall.

Members unanimously thanked the RFO for the preparation of the budget and the comprehensive nature of the report. It was acknowledged that inflationary pressures had impacted the budget and that the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee had made significant reductions to Committee requests submitted in November. Some Members expressed a preference not to defer expenditure that may become more costly in future and favoured either option 2 or option 4 within the report.

Cllr R Smith proposed the substantive motion of a 4.91% increase in the Council Tax, which was seconded by Cllr G Meadows. The Chair advised that all proposals and amendments would be considered following full debate.

Cllr J Doughty proposed an amendment for a 4.2% increase, seconded by Cllr G Doughty.

Other Members raised concerns about the impact of a Council Tax increase on residents. It was suggested that, in the absence of a costed decarbonisation plan, funding for this project should be removed. Members noted that this, together with a reduced loan requirement and other adjustments, including increasing prices at the 1863 café bar, could result in an alternative option of a 2% increase. It was also noted that verifying the costs of an alternative proposal during the meeting would be difficult.

Cllr D Edward-Hughes proposed a further amendment for a 2% increase, seconded by Cllr T Ashby.

Following the completion of the debate, a recorded vote was agreed, with amendments taken first and the original proposal treated as the substantive motion.

That the Council Tax precept be increased by 4.2%

For: Cllrs G Doughty & J Doughty

Against: Cllrs J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, D Enright, G Meadows, D Newcombe, S Simpson & R Smith

Abstained: Cllrs T Ashby, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar.

The amendment was not carried.

That the Council Tax precept be increased by 2%

For: Cllrs T Ashby, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar

Against: J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, J Doughty, D Enright, G Meadows, D Newcombe, S Simpson & R Smith

Abstained: Cllr G Doughty

The amendment was not carried.

That the Council Tax precept be increased by 4.91%

For: Cllrs J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, D Enright, G Meadows, D Newcombe, S Simpson & R Smith

Against: Cllrs T Ashby, G Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar

Abstained: Cllr J Doughty

The proposal was carried.

The Committee also considered the scenarios for drawing down the West Witney projects loan and how the funds may be deployed in line with Council aspirations and longer-term financial standing of the Council.

Members discussed the implications of the various scenarios and expressed differing views on the preferred option should the project come in below budget and therefore not require all the funding allocated. Some Members felt that the Council should fully utilise the earmarked reserves allocated to the project, not to use any underspend on other projects, and to draw down a lower loan than that which had been approved. Others suggested that the full loan, as approved should be drawn down and those earmarked reserves not required then be used to deliver additional projects at the site, ensuring that facilities would be in place for the enjoyment of future generations.

Following the completion of the debate, a recorded vote was agreed on the two scenarios discussed.

That scenario two be approved –The Council would draw down the full amount of earmarked reserves and minimise the amount taken out as a loan. This would mean the loan taken out would be £979,901 i.e. £270,099 less than that which was approved.

For: Cllrs T Ashby, G Doughty, J Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar

Against: Cllrs J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, D Enright, G Meadows, S Simpson & R Smith

Abstained: Cllr D Newcombe

The proposal was not carried.

That, Scenario One be approved – this assumed that the Council took up the full loan of £1,250,000. In this scenario then £270,099 of earmarked reserves would not be required and could be retained or redeployed.

For: Cllrs J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, D Enright, G Meadows, D Newcombe, S Simpson & R Smith

Against: Cllrs T Ashby, G Doughty, J Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar

Abstained: none

The proposal was carried.

Finally, Members unanimously agreed to delegate authority to the Town Clerk/C.E.O to opt to tax Burwell Hall to enable the Council to continue reclaiming all input tax. The option would apply for a minimum period of twenty years and would be passed on to the end user, resulting in increased charges; however, the Council had the option of absorbing the VAT in the hire charges and this was the approach favoured by Members.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised budget for 2025/26 as presented be adopted and,
3. That, the budget for 2026/27 as presented be adopted and that its funding, including the reserve movements as recommended in the report and amount of precept, an increase of 4.91% be approved and,
4. That, Scenario One as presented in the report be approved as the Council's preferred approach to drawing down the loan for the West Witney projects and,
5. That, delegation be given to the Town Clerk/C.E.O to opt-to-tax at Burwell Hall and to absorb the additional VAT within the current letting fee.

68 **MINUTES - 5 JANUARY 2026**

Members received the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Council meeting held on 5 January 2026 for information.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 5 January be noted.

A Member of the Public joined the meeting at 6:58pm

69 **TO FORMALLY DECLARE THE PRECEPT FOR 2026/27**

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (R.F.O).

Following approval of the budgets in the previous item, the formality of declaring the precept for 2026/27 was agreed. It was agreed that votes should be recorded.

That, the precept for 2026/27 be agreed as £2,427,251.

For: Cllrs J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, D Enright, G Meadows, D Newcombe, S Simpson & R Smith

Against: Cllrs T Ashby, G Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar

Abstained: Cllr J Doughty

That, the Town Clerk be authorised to sign and serve a precept on the West Oxfordshire District Council.

For: Cllrs J Aitman, A Bailey, R Crouch, D Enright, G Meadows, D Newcombe, S Simpson & R Smith

Against: Cllrs T Ashby, G Doughty, D Edwards-Hughes, J Robertshaw & J Treloar

Abstained: Cllr J Doughty

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted,
2. That, the precept for 2026/27 be agreed as £2,427,251
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 £2,427,251 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2026/27.

The meeting closed at: 7.04 pm

Chair

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 8a

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 9 December 2025

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting via MS Teams - Virtual Meeting

Present:

Councillor G Doughty (Chair)

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| Councillors: | J Doughty G Meadows | R Smith D Temple |
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| Officers: | Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie | Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |
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| Others: | None. |
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P729 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Aitman and S Simpson.

P730 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

P731 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

P732 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

Resolved:

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

P733 25/02832/OUT - THE PADDOCK SHORES, GREEN WITNEY

The Committee received and considered the above planning application which fell outside the periphery of the town boundary.

Resolved:

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

P734 **APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE - SAINSBURYS, UNIT 4, 39 CENTENARY WAY, WITNEY**

Due to the short statutory timescale for Witney Town Council to respond and, with the express permission of the Chair an additional item was added to the meeting regarding the consideration of an application W/25/01361/PRMA for a New Premises Licence at Sainsburys, Unit 4, 39 Centenary Way, Witney under the Licensing Act 2003.

Members had no objection to the licencing application and welcomed the arrival of a new neighbourhood convenience store to the area.

Resolved:

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

P735 **APPLICATION FOR MINOR VARIATION OF PREMISES LICENCE - PIZZA EXPRESS, 6 MARKET SQUARE, WITNEY**

Due to the short statutory timescale for Witney Town Council to respond and, with the express permission of the Chair an additional item was added to the meeting regarding the consideration of an application W/25/01374/PRMMV for a minor variation of a Premises Licence at Pizza Express, 6 Market Square, Witney under the Licensing Act 2003.

Members had no objection to the minor amendments.

Resolved:

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

The meeting closed at: 6.37 pm

Chair

Witney Town Council

Planning Minutes - 9th December 2025

732

732- 1 WTC/130/25 Plot Ref :-25/02694/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE

Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 21/11/2025

Location :- 2 VINER CLOSE Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
VINER CLOSE

Proposal : Erection of a two storey side extension and single storey rear extension with associated works.

Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

732- 2 WTC/131/25 Plot Ref :-25/02699/FUL Type :- FULL

Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 21/11/2025

Location :- THE PLOUGH, 98 HIGH STREET Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
HIGH STREET

Proposal : Installation of reclaimed timber lintel to outbuilding doorway and reinstallation of stonework, architraves and door. (Part retrospective).

Observations : The extension hereby approved shall be used as accommodation ancillary to the existing dwelling and shall not be occupied separately or as a separate dwelling.

732- 3 WTC/132/25 Plot Ref :-25/02700/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI

Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 21/11/2025

Location :- THE PLOUGH, 98 HIGH STREET Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
HIGH STREET

Proposal : Internal and external alterations to install reclaimed timber lintel to outbuilding doorway and reinstallation of stonework, architraves and door. (Part retrospective).

Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.

732- 4 WTC/133/25 Plot Ref :-25/02753/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE

Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 21/11/2025

Location :- 11 PENSCLOSE Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
PENSCLOSE

Proposal : Erection of 1.5 storey side extension with associated works.

Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West

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|---|-------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 732- 5 WTC/134/25 | Plot Ref :-25/02798/HHD | Type :- | HOUSEHOLDE |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 21/11/2025 |
| Location :- 36 ORCHARD WAY ORCHARD WAY | | Date Returned :- | 10/12/2025 |
| Proposal : Erection of single-storey rear extension and 1.5 storey side extension, conversion of attic with box dormer to rear, demolition of existing rear extension and garage, and associated works. | | | |
| Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, However it Supports the comment of WODC's Flood Risk Management Officer. | | | |
| It notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. | | | |

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| 732- 6 WTC/135/25 | Plot Ref :-25/02743/HHD | Type :- | HOUSEHOLDE |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 21/11/2025 |
| Location :- 4 WOODFORD MILL, MILL STREET MILL STREET | | Date Returned :- | 10/12/2025 |
| Proposal : Installation of second-floor window on the west elevation. | | | |
| Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. | | | |

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|---|-------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 732- 7 WTC/136/25 | Plot Ref :-25/02760/FUL | Type :- | FULL |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 25/11/2025 |
| Location :- 29 HIGH STREET HIGH STREET | | Date Returned :- | 10/12/2025 |
| Proposal : Change of use from bank to dental practice along with the infill of the opening used for the ATM with a window. | | | |
| Observations : Witney Town Council supports this application and welcomes the introduction of a new dentistry practice to the town which will bolster its social infrastructure and ensure that an empty High Street premise is utilised. | | | |

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| 732- 8 WTC/137/25 | Plot Ref :-25/02532/FUL | Type :- | FULL |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 27/11/2025 |
| Location :- 113 WADARDS MEADOW WADARDS MEADOW | | Date Returned :- | 10/12/2025 |
| Proposal : Installation of a home electric vehicle charge point on the front of the property and associated EV cable channel in the footway outside the property. | | | |
| Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. It welcomes and encourages the installation of measures that help to contribute to the reduction of the carbon impact of the Town. | | | |

732- 9 WTC/138/25 Plot Ref :-25/02661/OUT Type :- OUTLINE
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 27/11/2025
Location :- 61 MIRFIELD ROAD Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
MIRFIELD ROAD
Proposal : Outline application with all matters reserved for the erection of two self build 2 bedroom flats.
Observations : Witney Town Council look to object to the application as they feel they lack sufficient details in order to make an informed decision
Witney Town Council feels that the proposal may to over development and will contribute to a lack of green space within its residential setting,

732- 10 WTC/139/25 Plot Ref :-25/02838/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLD
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 27/11/2025
Location :- 19A WOODLANDS ROAD Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
WOODLANDS ROAD
Proposal : Erection of replacement conservatory and addition of front porch.
Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

732- 11 WTC/140/25 Plot Ref :-25/02681/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLD
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 27/11/2025
Location :- 168 WADARDS MEADOW Date Returned :- 10/12/2025
WADARDS MEADOW
Proposal : Erection of a single storey front extension with associated works.
Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns and welcomes the provision of accommodation suitable to the residents needs.
However it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

The Meeting closed at : 6:37pm

Signed : _____ Chairman Date: _____

On behalf of :- Witney Town Council

Comments for Planning Application 25/02832/OUT

Application Summary

Application Number: 25/02832/OUT

Address: The Paddock Shores Green Witney Oxfordshire OX29 6UU

Proposal: Outline application with some matters reserved (apart from access and scale) for the demolition of existing dwelling house and construction of 70 room motel and restaurant diner for 65 people with drive-thru, plus car parking and associated works.

Case Officer: Mike Cassidy

Details

Name: Mrs S Groth

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

Email: info@witney-tc.gov.uk

On Behalf Of: Parish Council

Comments:

Witney Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this outline application lying in the parish of South Leigh due to the impacts on Witney as its nearest service centre. The Council recognises that increased accommodation capacity would encourage tourism and enable more visitors to explore Witney's attractions, shops, arts and local heritage, but is mindful of transport and environmental concerns.

Active Travel and Sustainable Transport Contributions

The Town Council considers it essential that this development contributes meaningfully to sustainable transport infrastructure. In line with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), the Council requests that developer funding (S106 or equivalent) be secured to:

- Improve active travel routes serving the site, such as a new shared use footway/cycleway on the southern side of Oxford Hill or the proposed new toucan crossing servicing Windrush Cemetery.
- Consideration should also be given to safe pedestrian and cycle links to Witney town centre and the wider network as well as the enhancement of wayfinding and accessibility for visitors arriving without private cars.
- In addition, the Council requests a financial contribution towards bus services so that both staff and guests have reliable access to the town centre, employment areas, and visitor destinations. This will help reduce car dependency, support local businesses, and integrate the development more effectively into the wider community.

Traffic, Access and Highway Safety

The Council recognises that a motel, restaurant and drive-thru will generate significant vehicle movements and therefore has concerns regarding traffic generation, queuing associated with the drive-thru (as experienced at other drive-thru facilities across the town), junction capacity, parking provision, and pedestrian safety around the site.

While these matters are fundamental to the assessment of the proposal, the Council places reliance on Oxfordshire County Council as the local highway authority to undertake a full and robust review of the access arrangements, Transport Assessment, and any necessary highway works or mitigation. The Council requests that any highway improvements identified by Oxfordshire County Council be secured through condition or s106 agreement and that provision is made for safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists across and between the site and adjacent routes.

Tourism, Local Economy & Arts

Witney Town Council welcomes the prospect that a modern motel could expand local accommodation options and increase footfall from tourists and business visitors. Appropriate connectivity and integration with existing transport and retail facilities will be essential to ensure that the economic benefits are realised within Witney rather than solely within the development itself.

For these reasons, the Town Council would also like to request a Section 106 contribution to public arts as patrons of the proposed establishment are highly likely to be attending events in the town, for example at Witney Corn Exchange (public Arts Centre) where additional funds would help secure a variety of entertainment.

Environmental Considerations and Rewilding Project

The Council notes the proximity of the Wychwood Forest Trust Gibbet's Hill rewilding project at and emphasises the need to fully consider and protect this important environmental asset. The following should be secured by condition or obligation where appropriate:

- Protection of biodiversity and avoidance of harmful impacts on habitats adjoining or linked to the rewilding site;
- Measures to minimise light pollution, particularly from external lighting, signage and drive-thru operations, using low-spill and directional lighting design; and
- Opportunities for ecological enhancement and habitat creation within the site, consistent with local biodiversity priorities.

Public Document Pack Appendix

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 6 January 2026

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting via MS Teams - Virtual Meeting

Present:

Councillor G Doughty (Chair)

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| Councillors: | J Aitman | R Smith |
| | J Doughty | D Temple |
| | G Meadows | |

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| Officers: | Adam Clapton | Deputy Town Clerk |
| | Derek Mackenzie | Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |

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| Others: | None |
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P7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

P8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

P9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

P10 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

Resolved:

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

P11 APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE - THE CORN ROOM, 64 CORN STREET WITNEY

The Committee received the application from The Corn Room for a new premises licence.

Members had no objection to the application however, raised a concern for the protection of children due to the serving of alcohol until the closure of the establishment at midnight on

weekend nights in a residential area, particularly on a Sunday with this being the night before the start of the school week and the potential for disturbance to sleep.

Resolved:

That, the Council makes the above response to this application.

P12

ADDRESS MANAGEMENT - 3 NEW DWELLINGS WEST END WITNEY

The Committee received the request from West Oxfordshire District Council address management team regarding the naming of three New Dwellings West End.

Following discussion Members had No Objection to the request to the use of "Phoenix Row".

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, a no objection response be submitted.

P13

HIGHWAYS ASSET RESPONSE TEAM (HART)

The Committee received and considered the correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council in respect to the introduction of a Highways Asset Response Team (HART) which had been deferred to the Committee. (Minute FC725 Full Council 8 December 2025 refers).

Members welcomed the initiative which would deal with small maintenance tasks. It was agreed that all Council members be asked to raise a FixMyStreet report for issues in their wards and forward these to the Committee Clerk for collation and onward submission to OCC Highways in order that they be monitored.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, all Members of the Council be requested to provide details of issues to the Committee Clerk by 20 January 2026 and,
3. That, Officers report back to the Committee on the outcome of each of the issues submitted to OCC.

The meeting closed at: 6.37 pm

Chair

Minute Item P10

Witney Town Council

Planning Minutes - 6th January 2026

10

10- 1 WTC/001/26 Plot Ref :-25/02811/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- 23 Ducklington Lane Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Ducklington Lane
Proposal : Erection of single storey side extension and demolition of existing carport
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application

10- 2 WTC/002/26 Plot Ref :-25/02797/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- 3 Applegarth Court Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Applegarth Court
OX28 6PE
Proposal : Conversion of part of car port to create store and installation of cladding to side elevation. (Retrospective).
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application

10- 3 WTC/003/26 Plot Ref :-25/02925/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- The Plough Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
98 High Street
Proposal : Alterations to erect illuminated and non-illuminated signs to the exterior of the building
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application

10- 4 WTC/004/26 Plot Ref :-25/02924/ADV Type :- ADVERTISING
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- The Plough Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
98 High Street
Proposal : Erection of illuminated and non-illuminated signs to the exterior of the building
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application

10- 5 WTC/005/26 Plot Ref :-25/02880/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- 6 Aerodrome Lane Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Aerodrome Lane
Proposal : Conversion of loft with front flat roof dormer and rear velux rooflights
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application

10- 6 WTC/006/26 Plot Ref :-25/03012/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- 5 Viner Close Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Viner Close
Proposal : Erection of single storey rear extension to replace existing conservatory, and
erection of a two storey front extension, with associated works including
provision for additional off-street parking
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.

10- 7 WTC/007/26 Plot Ref :-25/02995/FUL Type :- FULL
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- Isabelle Spencer Way Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Isabelle Spencer Way
Proposal : Installation of an Automated Teller Machine (ATM).
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application and
welcomes the inclusion of an esential cash related service and resource.

10- 8 WTC/008/26 Plot Ref :-25/02996/ADV Type :- ADVERTISIN
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 19/12/2025
Location :- Isabelle Spencer Way Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Isabelle Spencer Way
Proposal : Erection of signage surrounding ATM.
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application and
welcomes the inclusion of an esential cash related service and resource.

10- 9 WTC/009/26 Plot Ref :-25/03017/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 22/12/2025
Location :- 13 Market Square Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Market Square
Proposal : External window and roof repairs, with rear elevation facade remedial works
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. They
welcome any work to preserve features of the Town's buildings holding a listed
status.

10- 10 WTC/010/26 Plot Ref :-25/02933/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLDE
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 22/12/2025
Location :- 4 Gloucester Place Date Returned :- 07/01/2026
Gloucester Place
Proposal : Erection of first floor extension above garage.
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.

The Meeting closed at : 6:37pm

Signed : _____ Chairman Date: _____

On behalf of :- Witney Town Council

Public Document Pack Appendix

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 27 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor G Doughty (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Councillors: | J Aitman | R Smith |
| | J Doughty | D Temple |

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------|---|
| Officers: | Adam Clapton | Deputy Town Clerk |
| | Derek Mackenzie | Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |

| | |
|---------|------|
| Others: | None |
|---------|------|

P54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

P55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

P56 MINUTES

The minutes of the Committee meetings held on 18 November and 9 December 2025 and 6 January 2026 were received.

P12 – The Committee Clerk updated the Committee on the decision of the developer to proceed with the naming as “Phoenix Row” despite the objection of a WODC Councillor.

P13 – The Committee Clerk confirmed that the submission had been made to the County Council Highways Asset Response Team (HART) however, many of the reported items had been rebuffed by HART. Members asked that the Committee Clerk follow up with HART to obtain further feedback and invite representation from HART at a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes of the Committee meetings held on 18 November and 9 December 2025 and 6 January 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair and,
2. That, Officers follow up with the HART team with an invite to attend a meeting of the Committee.

P57 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

P58 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

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

Resolved:

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

P59 **PLANNING DECISIONS**

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

The Committee Clerk summarised the reasoning for the decisions that were contrary to the Committee's submission.

Resolved:

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

P60 **APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE - 52 HIGH STREET, WITNEY**

The Committee received the application from DhyeyDev Brothers, 52 High Street for a new premises licence.

Resolved:

That, the Council submit the following response.

Witney Town Council have no objection to the application they welcome the new business to the High Street ensuring that a shop premises does not remain empty.

P61 **WITNEY TRAFFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) provided a verbal update of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee held 20 January 2026. The update included details of the progression of Oxfordshire County Council's projects, a request to bring forward the bus users meeting to spring 2026, community Speedwatch. The completed minutes would be circulated at the next meeting of this Committee.

Additionally, the DTC updated members on the Stronger Communities recommendation made the previous evening to continue with their requests for the installation of Eastgate style benches in the High Street which was contrary to the proposals being put forward by both West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

P62

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that due to the pressure on Officers time, the draft Infrastructure Funding Statement was yet to be finalised.

Resolved:

That, the Infrastructure Funding Statement be added as an agenda item to the meeting of the Committee on 31 March 2026.

P63

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK - PROPOSED REFORMS

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a verbal update following his attendance at a webinar on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

He reported that the proposals represented a significant and radical change to the current planning system. Key elements of the reforms included a presumption in favour of approving substantial developments; increased responsibility on planning authorities to produce and maintain local plans; a focus on development around train stations; the redesignation of sites delivering between 10–49 dwellings; a preference for urbanisation of developments; exemptions for small sites from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements; changes to the role of statutory consultees; and an increased emphasis on community involvement in the planning process.

The Committee considered the relevance of the proposed reforms to Witney and expressed concern that changes to statutory consultee arrangements could result in the Town Council being removed or marginalised within the planning process. Members also raised concerns regarding the potential impact of development on flooding both upstream and downstream, and the lack of clear responsibility placed on developers to provide and fund appropriate mitigation measures.

The Committee discussed the wording of Policy F7 and agreed that it should be strengthened. Members felt that the scope and use of the term “elsewhere” should be explored further and more clearly defined, to ensure that flood risk was properly addressed and not displaced to other locations. A Member further noted that it was important to remember that the planning system should focus on “building communities, not just houses,” with appropriate infrastructure and services considered alongside housing delivery.

Recommended:

1. That, the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework be noted and,
2. That, a response be submitted to express concern regarding any reduction in the role of parishes as statutory consultees in the planning process and,
3. That, Policy F7 be reviewed and strengthened, with particular regard to the definition and use of the term “elsewhere” and the responsibility of developers to address flood risk and mitigation and,
4. That, the Town Council favours a planning approach that prioritises the creation of sustainable communities, not solely the delivery of housing.

The meeting closed at: 6.46 pm

Chair

Minute Item P58

Witney Town Council

Planning Minutes - 27th January 2026

P58

P58- 1 WTC/011/26 Plot Ref :-25/03011/FUL Type :- FULL
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 06/01/2026
Location :- 1 Kernahan Way Date Returned :- 28/01/2026
Proposal : Change of use of conservatory to create a dog grooming business.
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application.

P58- 2 WTC/012/26 Plot Ref :-25/02939/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 06/01/2026
Location :- 74 High Street Date Returned :- 28/01/2026
OX28 6HL
Proposal : Internal and external alterations to include works to roof and windows, along with reinstatement of chimney (retrospective)
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. They welcome the restoration of the building to protect its heritage.

P58- 3 WTC/013/26 Plot Ref :-25/02977/LBC Type :- LISTED BUI
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 06/01/2026
Location :- Flat 1 Weavers Barn Date Returned :- 28/01/2026
Proposal : Internal and external alterations to replace existing windows in rear and front elevations.
Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. They welcome the changes which would hopefully improve the environmental changes leading to minimising energy use.

P58- 4 WTC/014/26 Plot Ref :-25/03122/HHD Type :- HOUSEHOLD
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 06/01/2026
Location :- 1 Wilmot Close Date Returned :- 28/01/2026
Proposal : Demolition of existing garage and erection of two storey side extension and single story rear extension.
Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|------------|
| P58- 5 WTC/015/26 | Plot Ref :-25/03152/S73 | Type :- | VARIATION |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 06/01/2026 |
| Location :- McDonalds - Ducklington Lane | | Date Returned :- | 28/01/2026 |
| Proposal : Non compliance of condition 1 of permission 12/0119/P/S73 to enable the the restaurant to trade 24 hours a day, seven days a week | | | |
| Observations : Witney Town Council raises no objection to the above application; however, they wish to make the following comments and request the consideration of conditions in order to protect residential amenity and community wellbeing. | | | |
| <p>Lighting and Impact on Residential Amenity - WTC are concerned about the potential impact of extended opening hours on nearby residential properties arising from external and internal lighting, particularly during night-time hours. Increased illumination from signage, menu boards, internal lighting and vehicle headlights has the potential to cause light intrusion and disturbance to neighbouring dwellings, contrary to the aim of protecting residential amenity. Consideration should be given to the intensity of external lighting and illuminated signage to minimise spill and glare on the surrounding area.</p> <p>WTC also note the potential for anti-social behaviour, particularly during the spring and summer months when customers are more likely to congregate late into the evening resulting in groups gathering outside the premises and in the car park area with an increase in noise and disturbance.</p> <p>Whilst WTC acknowledges that such matters can overlap with licensing controls, they remain material considerations where they relate to the use of land and its impact on local amenity.</p> <p>WTC strongly requests that conditions be concerned to ensure that the operation of the premises actively supports a Respect Our Neighbours approach. Such as the use of clear signage requesting customers to leave the area quietly, measures to discourage customers from congregating outside the premises and management practices to minimise noise, litter and disturbance particularly during late-night hours.</p> | | | |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------|------------------|------------|
| P58- 6 WTC/016/26 | Plot Ref :-25/03155/HHD | Type :- | HOUSEHOLD |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 13/01/2026 |
| Location :- 36 Davenport Road | | Date Returned :- | 28/01/2026 |
| Proposal : Erection of two storey side and rear extension, conversion of loft to create additional living space, and erection of front porch. Demolition of existing detached garage, and associated works | | | |
| Observations : While Witney Town Council does not object to this application in terms of material concerns, it notes the loss of permeable drainage and would ask that mitigating measures are considered to help decrease the possibility of surface water flooding in this area, in accordance with policy EH7 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| P58- 7 WTC/017/26 | Plot Ref :-25/02993/ADV | Type :- | ADVERTISING |
| Applicant Name :- . | | Date Received :- | 13/01/2026 |
| Location :- Land East Of Isabelle Spencer | | Date Returned :- | 28/01/2026 |
| Proposal : Installation of two fascia signs and one projecting sign, all internally illuminated. | | | |
| Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. | | | |

P58- 8 WTC/018/26

Plot Ref :-25/03016/FUL

Type :- FULL

Applicant Name :- .

Date Received :- 13/01/2026

Location :- 13 Market Square

Date Returned :- 28/01/2026

Proposal : External window and roof repairs, with rear elevation facade remedial works

Observations : Witney Town Council has no objections regarding this application. They welcome any work to preserve features of the Town's buildings holding a listed status.

The Meeting closed at : 6.46pm

Signed : _____ Chairman Date: _____

On behalf of :- Witney Town Council

Agenda Item 8b

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Tuesday, 13 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| Councillors: | D Temple (In place of J Robertshaw) A Bailey A Mubin D Newcombe | R Smith J Treloar R Crouch (In place of D Enright) |
| Officers: | Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie | Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |
| Others: | None. | |

CB21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright & J Robertshaw, Councillors R Crouch & D Temple attended as substitutes respectively.

CB22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

CB23 MINUTES

The minutes of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting held on 9 September 2025 were received.

C505 – The Committee received an update to advise of the ongoing work in respect of a nature walk around Witney which was being carried out in collaboration with West Oxfordshire District Council and local residents.

C513 – Members were provided with a response provided by the Project Officer which addressed their questions regarding the Photovoltaic array and battery configuration for the West Witney Projects.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal updates be noted and,

2. That, the minutes of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting held on 9 September 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

CB24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

CB25 CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Climate Action Working Party held on 25 September 2025.

15 - The Compliance & Environment Officer advised Members that the Eco Fair held on 9 October 2025 had been successful. It was proposed that any future Eco Fair should be held on a Saturday in order to attract a greater audience of residents.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the minutes of the Climate & Biodiversity Working Party meeting held on 25 September 2025 be noted.

CB26 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Compliance & Environmental Officer, which provided an update on the draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

The Committee noted that, although overall emissions had remained broadly the same as the last review in 2019, the grounds maintenance services was now delivered in-house meaning a greater amount of data on fleet emissions was now captured and reflected in the emissions data. The Council had doubled both its fleet and workforce during that period, resulting in more accurate data for the Council to focus on. Members asked that the infographic be shared with all Councillors to inform them of the established new baseline.

In relation to next steps for implementation of the Action Plan, Members were advised that a comparison of the Council's building data and EPC ratings was underway. EPCs completed in December 2025 showed that Burwell Hall had improved from a Grade C to a Grade B, while the Corn Exchange had changed from a Grade B to a Grade C. It was noted that a further report would be provided on the reasons for this change at the Corn Exchange, however the primary reason identified for the change was the commencement of Café 1863 and its greater use as a facility. It was advised that improvements would be made within existing approved budgets.

The Committee noted that Low Carbon Hub had surveyed the Windrush Cemetery building and that a number of "quick wins" had already been identified and implemented, including the installation of timers on the electric heating system. These works were undertaken within existing maintenance budget parameters.

On the subject of benchmarking, Members were advised that the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) had enquired as to whether Witney Town Council could take a leading role, as SLCC did not currently hold benchmarking data, having not previously undertaken work in this area.

Members were informed that the implementation roadmap would be developed, with dates to be set once further detail was available, in order to provide accurate guidance to the Committee.

It was further noted that a Climate & Biodiversity Working Party would be arranged soon and that the revised Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan would be shared with all Council Officers for review and input from their respective areas of responsibility.

The Committee noted that the Action Plan included a traffic light system and a clear separation between emissions reductions attributable to the Council and those relating to the wider community, in line with the Committee's previous request.

Members thanked the Compliance & Environmental Officer for her work and expressed their desire for the Council to continue to lead by example and to focus further on reducing emissions.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the infographic contained within the report be shared with all Councillors.

CB27 LAKE & COUNTRY PARK REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer, who provided an update on works carried out at the Lake and Country Park.

The Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer outlined completed works, including flood mitigation measures, some of which had been part-funded through grant support, and path improvements around the lake, which had received positive feedback from the public.

Members were advised that a separate water testing report would be brought to a future meeting, and it was agreed that this report would be shared with WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution).

Members were informed that steps would be taken to reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour in the area of the community orchard on the former railway line at the Country Park, where issues had been identified.

The Committee noted that an £87,000 grant application had been submitted to fund further path improvements around the lake, with an update on its success to be provided in future reports.

Members heard that the B&GSO continued to monitor avian flu and outlined the measures and actions that would be taken should any further cases be reported.

Members were also informed that opportunities to recruit additional volunteers would be pursued, including engagement at the forthcoming volunteer fair.

The Committee noted the positive engagement and strong collaborative working with the Witney Flood Group, with both parties providing mutual support and sharing information effectively.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal update be noted.

CB28 NATURE VERGE UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the reports concerning the application for the establishment of Road Verge Nature Reserves in West Witney.

Members heard that Officers would liaise with the resident who had brought forward the proposal in order to monitor biodiversity changes and to consider the potential introduction of Road Verge Nature Reserves in other areas across Witney.

In response to a Member's question regarding signage, the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer advised that standard Oxfordshire County Council signage would be used, which is already well recognised by the public and local residents.

Members were unanimous in their agreement to support the application.

Resolved:

That the reports be noted.

CB29 SEASONAL PLANTING SCHEMES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Estates & Operations regarding the proposed summer bedding.

Further to the report, the Compliance & Environmental Officer provided a verbal update on matters for consideration in relation to the proposed planting.

Members were advised that decisions regarding summer bedding needed to be progressed promptly. An option was therefore proposed to replace dahlias with antirrhinums, which would provide better value for money, similar colour displays, and comparable height, while also offering high pollinator benefits. It was noted that dahlias may be more appropriate for use in future once space becomes available at the new depot to allow for out-of-season bulb storage.

Officers requested guidance on moving towards a more perennial planting approach, while retaining some higher valued seasonal bedding in key locations, such as war memorials.

The Committee unanimously agreed to move towards a mixed planting arrangement and approved the removal of dahlias and their substitution with antirrhinums where Officers felt this was appropriate.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers proceed with a mixed planting arrangement with a full review of planting being presented to a future meeting.

CB30 **TREE POLICY**

The Committee received and considered the revised Tree Policy, together with a verbal explanation of the amendments from the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer.

The Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer explained the rationale behind the policy, highlighting the importance of having a clear and easily understood framework to support consistent decision-making, protect the Council's financial position, and ensure public funds were used responsibly.

Members noted that the primary purpose of the policy was to ensure the safe, sustainable, and cost-effective management of trees under the Council's control, balancing environmental stewardship with public safety and long-term maintenance responsibilities for the benefit of residents. Some members expressed concerns that the policy would not adequately support the most vulnerable members of the community.

A vote was taken on the acceptance of the policy without further amendment, with the following result:

For: 7

Against: 1

Recommended:

That, the revised Tree Policy be approved by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee at its meeting on 2 February 2026.

CB31 **MEMORIAL TREE POLICY REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the revised Memorial Tree Policy.

Members welcomed the policy which was noted to be very clear and were unanimous in agreement with its approval.

It was requested that the policy be reviewed after two years.

Recommended:

That, the revised Memorial Tree Policy be approved by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee at its meeting on 2 February 2026.

The meeting closed at: 7.23 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 8c

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 12 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|--|--|
| Councillors: | J Treloar R Smith J Doughty | D Edwards-Hughes D Temple G Doughty (In place of J Aitman) |
| Officers: | Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Adam Cook | Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Project Officer |
| Others: | None | |

PR14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Aitman, Councillor G Doughty attended as a substitute.

Councillor A Bailey submitted his apologies after the meeting had commenced, and as such, they could not be formally communicated during the meeting.

PR15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

PR16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee held on 3 November 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 3 November 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

PR17 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

There was no public participation.

PR18 **WEST WITNEY - TOWN COUNCIL DEPOT & CLUBHOUSE**

The Committee heard from the Project Officer regarding the progress of the West Witney projects.

Members welcomed the positive progress of the new depot build and noted that completion remained on track for mid-February. It was further reported that redevelopment of the main social club building had commenced, with a proposed completion date of mid-April.

Members were advised that sports clubs had been consulted regarding access to toilet facilities during the construction period and in response to a Member's question, the Project Officer confirmed that the contractor was working with Witney Mill Bowls Club to provide access to facilities they had requested, noting that these works would be undertaken at the Bowls club's own expense.

Members were provided with further details of regular site inspections by Officers and the Council's consultants Berry's and noted that savings were being achieved through the introduction of a fortnightly payment plan, alongside additional savings identified through value engineering.

Members queried how any savings would be realised, including whether this would result in a reduced drawdown of loan facilities or be utilised for additional project works at the West Witney site. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was still too early to determine the level of savings; however, she advised that direction would be required prior to the setting of the Council's 2026/27 budget on 2 February 2026. The Responsible Financial Officer would provide the most up-to-date financial information in advance of that decision.

Finally, Members were offered the opportunity to attend a site visit, with further details to be circulated by the Project Officer.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, details of a site visit be circulated to Councillors and,
3. That, details of the current financial position of the West Witney project be presented to Council at its meeting on 2 February 2026.

PR19 **THE LEYS - COURTSIDE HUBS**

The Committee heard from the Project Officer regarding the Leys Courtside development.

Members were advised that a simulated flood event of the site had recently taken place, with positive results reported.

It was noted that the project would see the hub opening in stages; however, information received from Courtside regarding the precise timescale and details of the staged opening had been limited.

The Committee heard that Oxfordshire County Council had been challenging to engage with concerning the implementation of parking restrictions, but Officers expressed optimism that this issue would be resolved in the near future.

Members were further informed that the Council had still not yet made its financial contribution to the project, as this was dependent upon the achievement of key milestones in the final delivery stages of the development.

Resolved:

1. That, the update on the Leys Courtside development be noted and,
2. That, Officers continue to liaise with Courtside and Oxfordshire County Council to clarify the staged opening timetable and progress with parking restrictions and,
3. That, the Council's financial contribution remains linked to the achievement of the project's key milestones, with updates to be reported to the Committee as appropriate.

PR20 RALEIGH CRESCENT - MULTI USE GAMES AREA (MUGA)

The Committee heard from the Project Officer regarding the progress of the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Raleigh Crescent.

Members were advised that the project was continuing to progress and that Officers were working with West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to finalise the tender documentation for issue.

The Committee noted that there had been a delay in WODC issuing the tender; however, Officers had been assured by WODC that it was expected to be issued in January. Members further heard that any future consultation would relate solely to the design of the MUGA.

Officers advised that this consultation would be shared with local schools to encourage engagement from potential users and to seek their views and support for the proposed design.

Resolved:

1. That, the update on the Multi-Use Games Area at Raleigh Crescent be noted and,
2. That, Officers continue to liaise with West Oxfordshire District Council to ensure the timely issue of the tender documentation and,
3. That, Officers undertake future design consultation with local schools to seek feedback and support from potential users, with outcomes to be reported back to the Committee.

The meeting closed at: 6.26 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 8d

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

Held on Monday, 19 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|--|--|
| Councillors: | J Treloar J Robertshaw A Bailey | G Doughty D Temple J Aitman (In place of O Collins) |
| Officers: | Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Thomas Davies | Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Deputy Venue & Events Officer |
| Others: | None | |

H32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Smith and O Collins, for whom Councillor J Aitman attended as a substitute.

H33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

H34 MINUTES

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 10 November 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 10 November 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

H36 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered a detailed report from the Venue & Events Manager.

Bar Hire Policy – Private Hire Events

The Committee discussed at length the introduction of a proposed cost-based bar hire policy, which comprised of two options for private hirers.

Members noted that the proposed policy was focused on loss prevention rather than profit generation, with the primary aim of protecting the Council from subsidising private events and reducing financial risk. It was highlighted that the existing £50 flat fee no longer reflected the true cost of operating a bar service.

The Committee welcomed the transparency of the two options presented, considering them a fair and proportionate approach to address the variety of usage at both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall. Members noted that the policy would help support the proposal to increase booking volumes, particularly at Burwell Hall, while ensuring that the Council was protected from potential losses.

It was further noted that hirers would retain the option not to use the bar, and that the policy would be subject to review to assess its effectiveness.

With regard to community and charity events, the Venue & Events Manager explained that four options were presented within the report for consideration. A Member highlighted that charities come in various sizes and that the policy should be fair to all. It was also noted that smaller charities and community groups may continue to benefit from the opportunity to apply to the Council for a subsidised let. The Committee were unanimous in agreement with proceeding with Option two meaning that the Council would equally bear the risk of losses with the community groups.

Cancellation Policy Review

The Committee reviewed the existing cancellation policy, which had been in operation for over twelve months. It was noted that the policy had been applied successfully with no complaints being recorded and that the policy would continue to be monitored by Officers.

1863 Café – Local Art Display Proposal

The Committee considered a proposal to use wall space in the café for the display of local artwork. Members broadly supported the principle and emphasised that the scheme should be kept simple, with arrangements that were easy for staff to manage. The display should maintain accessibility for emerging and young artists, with a limited display period to ensure that no single artist dominates the space.

It was suggested that artists could be asked to offer an honest commission on any sales, perhaps in the range of 10–20%, rather than charging any fee to display.

Members agreed that a draft policy should be prepared by officers for consideration, and that they should structure this in a similar way to the community window initiative.

Recommended:

1. That, the Minimum spend policy for private event hires be approved with a review in six months and
2. That, Option two be adopted for charity and local community events, applying a 50% cost-based staffing charge for bar provision and,
3. That the cancellation policy remains appropriate, and no changes are required and
4. That, the 1863 Local Art Display scheme be approved and officers draft a policy for further consideration

H37 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer

Members were informed by the Deputy Town Clerk that the use of the word “obligation” in the second paragraph of the report had been raised by a member of the public. While the provision of an arts facility was not a statutory duty of the Council, the Town Council was obliged to provide it in respect of the funding received from West Oxfordshire District Council towards the renovation of the Corn Exchange.

Members welcomed the report on the café and bar, noting a significant year-on-year increase in takings, as well as the positive feedback received from recent events, including the Advent Fayre and Christmas afternoon teas.

Members congratulated officers and staff on the success of recent events and the ongoing improvements at the Corn Exchange.

Resolved:

That the report and verbal updates be noted.

H38 WAA - REQUEST TO INSTALL RAISED BEDS AT LAKESIDE ALLOTMENTS

The Committee considered a request from the Witney Allotment Association for funding to install raised beds to improve accessibility at Lakeside allotments which would also help to reduce the waiting list.

Members supported the principle of improving accessibility and agreed in principle that practical solutions should be explored, particularly given the flooding issues at Lakeside. However, they noted concerns regarding the wide cost range quoted and requested that Officers obtain a more detailed, itemised cost breakdown from the Allotments Association so as the proposed expenditure could be assessed alongside the long-term value for money and potential return on the investment

Members heard that the costs could be met from the existing Allotments Ear Marked Reserve.

Resolved:

That officers seek further detailed costings and additional information from the Lakeside Allotments Group before a decision is made on the proposal.

The meeting closed at: 7.07 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 8e

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 26 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor T Ashby (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| Councillors: | R Smith G Meadows A Bailey D Edwards-Hughes | D Enright A Mubin J Treloar |
| Officers: | Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Mark Lewis | Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Head of Estates & Operations |
| Others: | 3 members of the public. | |

SC39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

SC40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

SC41 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 17 November 2025 were received.

SC659 – The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had been notified of its successful application for a £1,000 Community Resilience Grant towards the replacement bus shelter at Oxford Hill.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 17 November 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

SC42 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from a resident of Farmers Close, Witney, who spoke in support of the installation of a bollard under agenda item 11, and from a representative of the Oxford for Europe Group, who attended in relation to agenda item 6.

The Committee reconvened.

SC43 REQUEST TO INSTALL BOLLARD - FARMERS CLOSE

With the permission of the Chair, this item was raised up the agenda.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Estates & Operations concerning the installation of a bollard at Farmers Close, Witney.

Members welcomed the request, noting that it would provide greater protection to well-used amenity land in the Council's ownership from existing maintenance budgets. They were satisfied that the proposed improvement would not impede pedestrians and that the path would remain accessible for bicycles, mobility aids and the Council's grounds maintenance equipment.

Officers advised that installation would be subject to approval from Oxfordshire County Council and the emergency services.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the installation of a bollard in the area presented at Farmers Close in the report be agreed, subject to the necessary permissions being granted.

Cllr D Edward-Hughes briefly left the meeting from 6:41 to 6:44pm during the next item.

SC44 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

Members agreed that the residents' communication preferences survey and the annual satisfaction survey should be included in the spring newsletter, and that a quotation be sought from a local leaflet delivery company to improve delivery across Witney.

Updates were received on the Council's website, including performance improvements, potential streamlining of the biodiversity page, and proposed updates to the Youth Council page.

The Committee agreed that the Councillors @ The Café initiative remained an effective engagement activity aligned with Council strategies and should continue with increased Councillor involvement. Current press coverage, provided as an appendix, was noted.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and
2. That, the communications preference survey be included in the annual newsletter and,
3. That, a further quote be sought for local delivery of the annual newsletter and,
4. That, Councillors @ The Café should continue on the first Saturday of each month and,
5. That, the updates on the website and press coverage be noted.

SC45 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

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

Members received an update on the Witney: Past, Present and Future Working Party, together with the notes of the previous meeting. The Committee noted some apprehension expressed by young people about the event and reiterated its intention for the event to be celebratory and inclusive, per what was being planned.

Further updates were provided on engagement for the Advent Fayre in November, Witney Carnival 2026 and Heritage Open Day.

It was agreed that the Council should facilitate SEND sessions at this year's Advent Fayre, retain the wheelbarrow competition at the Carnival with the necessary resources in place, and mark Heritage Open Day in collaboration with local heritage contacts. A wider Visit Witney project was also noted.

Finally, the Committee considered a request to fly the Council of Europe flag annually in May from the Town Hall. The request was assessed against the Council's flag-flying criteria and, subject to the flag being donated and no planning legislation being contravened, the Committee agreed that the flag could be flown.

The Committee also noted the Community Insight Profile Steering Group notes from 2 December 2025 which were appended to the report.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the proposed small-scale, family friendly format for St George's Day events, with activities split across 23rd and 26th April 2026, be approved and,
3. That, the introduction of dedicated SEND friendly sessions at future Advent Fayres be approved and,
4. That, the success of the Christmas Lights Engagement event in the Gallery Room be noted and use by the ICE Centre in 2026 be approved, subject to capacity and,
5. That, the Schools in Bloom wheelbarrow competition be judged at Witney Carnival, subject to officers being delegated responsibility for agreeing a pragmatic solution for storage and staff facilitation and,
6. That, officers develop a low-cost partnership event for Heritage Open Days 2026, working with local heritage partners and,
7. That, the Council of Europe flag be flown from the Town Hall annually, subject to its donation and appropriate planning consent, if required.

SC46 **WITNEY: PAST PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the notes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January be noted and the recommendations therein approved.

SC47 **IN BLOOM**

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

It was confirmed that the Council would not be entering the Thames in Chiltern Bloom competition in 2026 as resources would be diverted to improving Unterhaching Park and preparing it for future planting.

In relation to the Schools in Bloom wheelbarrows, the Committee was presented with theme options for this year's challenge and invited to nominate an organisation to be offered a guest wheelbarrow, in line with recent practice.

The Committee also discussed community gardening and schools' vouchers. It was agreed that schools should be asked to retain receipts for purchased items. Community gardening groups would be asked to identify any items required, with vouchers issued only where items could not be sourced through the Council's suppliers. As a new garden bed, it was agreed that the Queen Emma's Community Garden group should be provided with a £50 voucher to support its establishment.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the decision not to enter Thames & Chiltern in Bloom be agreed and,
3. That, Yellow Submarine be invited to be the guest wheelbarrow organisation for the In Bloom Challenge 2026 and,
4. That, the theme for Schools in Bloom challenge for 2026 be Sensory Wheelbarrows (plants to stimulate the senses) and,
5. That, the voucher arrangements for community gardens and schools as presented in the report be approved.

SC48 **WITNEY YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee received the report of the Administrative Assistant – Communications & Engagement, which provided an update on their recent activities and notes of their meeting held on 8th January 2026.

Details were provided on meeting frequency, discussions, daily school slides, elected roles, a visit to the House of Commons and an event – A Taste of Witney which the group were planning to run in the spring.

Members welcomed the updates but expressed disappointment that a visit to Parliament was proving difficult to arrange. It was suggested that the Council could also consider informal engagement events hosted by the Youth Council, such as the recent Pizza and Politics evening in Witney, which was oversubscribed and well attended by young people.

Resolved:

1. That, the updates and notes of the Youth Council be noted and,
2. That, consideration be given to future informal engagement events.

*During the Following item Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly between 7:11pm and 7:13pm
Cllr A Bailey left the meeting between 7:17 pm and 7:20pm*

SC49 **YOUTH SERVICES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk on youth services in Witney and matters currently being addressed by the Town Council.

Members discussed the Youth Services Grant Scheme, as requested by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee, and agreed that the criteria and timeframe should remain unchanged.

Updates were received on The Station detached youth group, the West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership, and youth club provision in Witney. Members agreed that youth clubs were needed but noted that the Town Council did not have the budget to support them directly. It was acknowledged that other stakeholders and existing groups, including uniformed organisations, already provided a mosaic of youth activities, and that further work should be informed by the Youth Needs Assessment.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Youth Services grant and previous timeframes remain the same for the 2026 awards and,
3. That, the updates on Youth Club provision, The Station and the West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership be noted.

SC50 **TOWN CENTRE FORUM**

The Committee received an update on the Forum and delay in the process of holding the first meeting. Invitations had been sent to relevant stakeholders asking for their nominations to the group.

Members welcomed the update and expressed their enthusiasm to take forward this collaborative opportunity.

Resolved:

That, the update on the progress of the Town Centre Forum be noted.

SC51 **MARKET SQUARE SEATING**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council concerning the installation of seating in the High Street, Witney.

Members were advised that the proposal had been under consideration at District Council level for some time and would be funded from a specified grant and was therefore entirely separate from the County Council's Witney High Street refurbishment project.

Concerns were raised regarding the ongoing cleaning, maintenance and suitability of the proposed circular benches around trees at the location. Instead, Members agreed that the Council would take on ownership and future maintenance only if two or more Eastgate benches were installed in the area.

Recommended:

1. That, the correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council be noted and,

2. That approval be given for the Town Council to take on responsibility and future maintenance of two or more Eastgate benches in the High Street area, as presented, with the cost of installation being met by the District Council.

SC52 **BIKE RACKS & BIN STORES**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council concerning a request to remove bike racks to allow the installation of a bin store in Market Square, Witney.

Members supported the proposal, noting that it would improve the appearance of this area of Market Square, but confirmed that the Council would not take on responsibility for bin store maintenance. In response, it was agreed that all cycle racks removed, together with additional racks, should be relocated elsewhere in the town centre, with all costs met by the District Council.

Recommended:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, approval be given for the removal of the cycle racks at the proposed location, subject to the same number (or more) being relocated within the town centre, with costs and any necessary pavement repairs funded by West Oxfordshire District Council as part of this scheme.

SC53 **WITNEY TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS - DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL PROJECTS TO UTILISE S106 DEVELOPER FUNDING**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from the Infrastructure Delivery Team at West Oxfordshire District Council concerning unspent Section 106 developer funding for town centre improvements.

Members were advised that a proportion of the funding had been allocated to two other District Council projects, including wayfinding, which was agreed to be a high priority. Members expressed disappointment that the request had been received now, with funding needing to be spent by the end of autumn, making forward planning difficult, particularly given the lack of an agreed plan for the County Council's forthcoming High Street refurbishment.

There was no clarity on the town centre limits or the remaining funding available, but several options were discussed, including a bandstand, arts trail, additional High Street seating and benches incorporating public art. However, Members agreed that the preferred option was the creation of a parklet in the parking area to the north of Witney's War Memorial, noting that this had been considered previously but deemed too costly within earlier budgets.

Recommended:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the town centre limits and approximate amount of remaining funding be clarified and,
3. That, a parklet on Market Square in front of the war memorial be proposed.

The meeting closed at: 7.57 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 8f

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

Held on Monday, 2 February 2026

At 7.10 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

| | | |
|--------------|---|--|
| Councillors: | J Aitman R Crouch A Bailey J Doughty | T Ashby G Doughty S Simpson |
| Officers: | Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Nigel Warner Caitlin Head | Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Responsible Financial Officer Finance Apprentice |
| Others: | 6 members of the public. Councillor Georgia Meadows Councillor James Robertshaw | |

F70 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

F71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

F72 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 24 November 2025 were received.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 24 November 2025 be approved as correct records of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

F73 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from Windrush Community Choir, Oxfordshire Foster Care Association (OFCA) and West Oxfordshire Performing Arts Foundation (WOXPAF) in support of their grant applications under agenda item 13.

The Committee reconvened.

*During the following Agenda Item
Three members of the public left at 7:24pm
A Member of the public left at 7:42pm
A Member of the public left at 7:57pm
A new Member of the public joined the meeting at 7:59pm*

Cllr J Robertshaw left the meeting briefly between 7:42pm and 7:44pm

F74 GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and Deputy Town Clerk concerning grant activity to local organisations.

Members considered each application in turn and welcomed the high level of engagement from groups providing services to the community. As it was not possible to fully fund all applications, Members undertook further scrutiny and discussion, including whether alternative grant funding might be available and whether some requests met the agreed criteria. In some cases, applications did not clearly demonstrate the community benefit of the proposed purpose.

The Committee showed particular interest in an application to establish a community arts festival and, while unable to offer the full amount requested, agreed that support could be provided as subsidised use of the Corn Exchange as an alternative.

Members also noted the application from the Oxfordshire Play Association and that funding for this had been agreed through a separate budget line.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Witney Woodland Volunteers be awarded a grant of £653 and,
3. That, Windrush Church of England Primary School be awarded a grant of £250 and,
4. That, Be Free Young Carers be awarded a grant of £2,000 and,
5. That, Oxfordshire Foster Care Association be awarded a grant of £400 and,
6. That, Windrush Community Choir be awarded a grant of £2,350 and,
7. That, West Oxfordshire Performing Arts Foundation be awarded a grant of £1,000 towards the bursary part of their application and subsidised hire of the Corn Exchange for an inaugural Festival of Speech, Drama & Musical Theatre and,
8. That, this subsidised hire fee be taken from budget line 4111/408 and,
9. That, Oasis Family Church is not awarded a grant on this occasion and,
10. That, the grant application from Oxfordshire Play Association for £1,000 towards a 2026 Play Day as previously agreed in principle, be noted and approved and,
11. That, any underspend in the grants budget for 2025/26 be rolled forward to the budget for 2026/27 and,
12. That, these grants be awarded under the General Power of Competence and awardees be asked to acknowledge the Town Council in any promotional material.

F75 **TREE POLICY**

The Committee received and considered an updated Tree Policy for approval by the Council.

The policy had been recommended for approval by the Climate & Biodiversity Committee at its meeting on 13 January 2026.

Members agreed that the planting of trees on Council land should be addressed in the policy, including clarification that the Council would remove them where prior permission had not been granted.

Members expressed concern that the policy may be too restrictive for vulnerable residents. Officers advised this had been considered when the policy was recommended for approval and assurances had been provided on the issue.

Resolved:

That, the revised Tree Policy, with the above amendment on planting without permission, be agreed and adopted by Witney Town Council.

F76 **MEMORIAL TREE POLICY**

The Committee received and considered an updated Memorial Tree Policy for approval by the Council.

The policy had been recommended for approval by the Climate & Biodiversity Committee at its meeting on 13 January 2026.

Resolved:

That, the revised Memorial Tree Policy be agreed and adopted by Witney Town Council.

F77 **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

The Committee received and considered an updated Information Technology Policy for approval by the Council.

Although the Council already had IT policies, they were in need of review and, in line with changes to the annual governance and accountability return, it was timely to review them in line with these requirements based on sector guidance with technological advice from the Council's IT provider.

Members welcomed the policy, noting that it covered both Councillors and employees and was very robust in nature.

Resolved:

That, the revised Information Technology Policy be agreed and adopted by Witney Town Council and reviewed after twelve months.

F78 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer with the accompanying payment schedules, bank statements and reconciliations for October and November 2025.

Resolved:

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

| Payment reference | In the sum of: | Account |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| DDs, ELPs (electronic payments) and Standing Orders October 2025 | £194,579.95 | General CB 1 |
| Cheques 35192-35195, DDs, BACs and Standing Orders October 2025 | £11,257.12 | Imprest CB 2 |
| DDs, ELPs and Standing Orders November 2025 | £246,605.10 | General CB 1 |
| Cheques 35196-35201, DDs and Standing Orders November 2025 | £15,007.92 | Imprest CB 2 |

F79 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2025-26

The Council received the final interim report of the Council's independent Internal Auditor for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Members were advised there were no issues to draw members attention to. The Leader of the Council thanked Officers for their diligence in achieving the positive report.

Resolved:

That, the internal Audit interim report for 2025/26 be welcomed.

F80 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2026

The Committee received and considered the report of the Senior Administrative Officer/Committee Clerk concerning the Annual Town Meeting which would be held on Wednesday 18th March 2026.

Members were presented with outline proposals for the meeting, including options for its layout, format, and management.

It was agreed that the current format utilising round tables and part of the retractable seating had been successful and did not require changes. Operational arrangements for the evening, as set out in the report should be managed by officers.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the former layout and format for the meeting be agreed as presented in the report and,
3. That, all other operational arrangements for the meeting be delegated to officers.

F81 COMMITTEE CALENDAR 2026/27

The Committee received a draft calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 council year.

The Deputy Town Clerk highlighted a significant proposed change for the coming year. The period between mid-May and July, which traditionally included two Committee cycles, had been particularly compressed, often placing pressure on both Council business and day-to-day operations. It was therefore proposed that the number of Committee cycles be reduced from six to five.

Members acknowledged the issue and noted the high volume of meetings currently held by the Council and the benefits a reduction could bring. While there was some concern that reducing the number of cycles could result in longer meetings, it was agreed that this approach should be trialled and reviewed after one year to determine whether further changes were required.

Recommended:

That, the calendar of meetings for 2026/27, as presented be recommended for approval.

F82 FINANCIAL MATTERS REFERRED FROM SPENDING COMMITTEES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk outlining the financial decisions taken by spending committees during the last meeting cycle.

An update was provided on a raised planter request from the Witney Allotment Association, previously considered by the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee. A revised cost breakdown reduced the requested amount to £2,000. Members were supportive, acknowledging some reservations about the number of plots this would return, but agreed that supporting retirees and those with reduced mobility was important.

A further verbal update was provided on the spring newsletter printing and distribution. Three comparative quotes had been obtained as requested by the Stronger Communities Committee. Taking into account previous issues with Royal Mail delivery, the Committee agreed to proceed with Provider A.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the recommendations of the spending Committees as detailed be approved and,
3. That, the request and funding of raised planters at Lakeside Allotments for the sum of £2,000 be approved, subject to these being reserved for use by older persons and or those with reduced mobility and,
4. That, the quote of Supplier A be approved for the printing and distribution of the Spring newsletter for the sum of £2,818.

F83 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved:

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

The member of the public left the meeting at 8.01pm

F84 **EXTERNAL STOCKTAKE UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the external stock takers report for the bar operations of the Council.

Members welcomed the positive report and low surplus and congratulated the Bar Manager and her team on their excellent work.

Resolved:

That, the external stocktake report be noted.

F85 **PROPERTY, LEGAL & INSURANCE MATTERS**

The Town Clerk/C.E.O provided a confidential verbal update on matters relating to the Council's property and legal matters.

Members were advised that Heads of Terms had been agreed for the lease of the Courtside Hub and facilities at The Leys. The terms provided long-term stability for the tenant, guaranteed income for the Council, and included regular reporting requirements.

The Committee also heard that progress had been made on draft Heads of Terms for a new lease to West Witney Sports & Social Club, which were currently under negotiation for implementation following the completion of the ongoing refurbishment. During the build, the cost of utilities and services was being covered by the Council.

Members noted that a full building survey, including the roof at Langdale Hall had recently been carried out, with a report to follow in due course.

Finally, Members were advised that officers were exploring the creation of the Community Trust, to manage the day-to-day running of Windrush Place Pavilion and its pitches in line with the model previously adopted at Madley Park Hall. Initial legal and start-up costs would be met by the Council to support good governance and long-term sustainability.

Resolved:

That, the Town Clerk's confidential verbal report be noted.

The meeting closed at: 9.04 pm

Chair

FULL COUNCIL



Agenda Item: Civic Announcements

Meeting Date: Monday 16 February 2026

Contact Officer: Secretary to the Mayor

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

Supporting the Community

Wood Green School concert – Deputy Mayor also attended

ICE Centre Ball – Deputy Mayor attended

Christmas lunch Witney Day Centre – Deputy Mayor attended

Oxon Army Cadet Force County Awards ceremony – Deputy Mayor attended

Speaking to School Council re charities - Windrush Primary School

Visit Army Cadets – Joint Cadet Unit

Opening Little Ferns Play Café – Langdale Court Witney

Representing and Promoting Witney

Chair of WODC Civic Carol Service – Deputy Mayor attended

Lord Mayor Christmas Carol Concert – Oxford Town Hall

Holocaust Memorial Day – Oxford Town Hall

High Sheriff's Law Lecture – Oxford

Raising Funds -Mayor's Charities 2025-26:

Mayor's charities: Apollos Clothing, Witney Food Bank

Any hospitality totalling £50 or more afforded to the Mayor whilst undertaking any event as Civic Leader of Witney Town Council will be declared as hospitality in line with the Councillor Code of Conduct & Localism Act 2011. The acceptance of any hospitality does not afford the provider any undue influence or favour in any Town Council business.

FULL COUNCIL



Agenda Item: Health and Safety Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 16 February 2026

Contact Officer: Compliance and Environment Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on Health and Safety across the services and facilities provided by the Council.

Background

It is the policy of Witney Town Council to comply with our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (as amended), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended) and other supporting legislation concerning Health and Safety. At all times we endeavour to provide and maintain a healthy and safe working environment for our employees, and to protect the health and safety of all visitors; including contractors, temporary workers, and members of the public, who might be affected by our operations.

Current Situation

In accordance with the approved Witney Town Council Health and Safety Policy Statement, Members are reminded that they have a collective responsibility for the Health & Safety of the organisation.

Departmental managers remain accountable for compliance within their areas of responsibility which is overseen by the Compliance and Environment officer.

The key objectives are to ensure that the Council operates in a lawful manner in respect of health and safety compliance with its service delivery and functions, identifying and advising management and Council of possible risks and finding solutions to mitigate such risks.

The Council's health and safety consultants, GH Safety Ltd (part of Opus Safety) provide additional specialist support to the Council.

A review of risk assessments is currently underway across all Council operations.

Compliance Table

| Compliance Inspection, Testing and Servicing Status | Corn Exchange | Town Hall | Admin Office | Burwell Hall | Windrush Ind. Est. Temp Works Depot | Stanley Court Temp Works Depot |
|---|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Fire Risk Assessment | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| Fire Alarm Testing | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Landlord | N/A |
| Fire Extinguishers | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| Steel fire exit staircase | Completed | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Emergency Lighting | Completed | Completed | Due | Completed | N/A | Completed |
| Security | Completed | Completed | Completed | Due Scheduled 12/02/26 | N/A | N/A |
| Lift | Due | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Gas Safety | Completed | N/A | N/A | Completed | N/A | N/A |
| Electrical Periodic | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Landlord | Landlord |
| PAT Testing | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| Legionella Risk Assessment | Review | Completed | Completed | Completed | Landlord | Landlord |
| Asbestos | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Report provided with Lease. |
| Air Handling Unit | Completed | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Air conditioning | N/A | N/A | N/A | Completed | N/A | N/A |

PAT testing of Council electrical equipment was undertaken on 13 January 2026.

Training

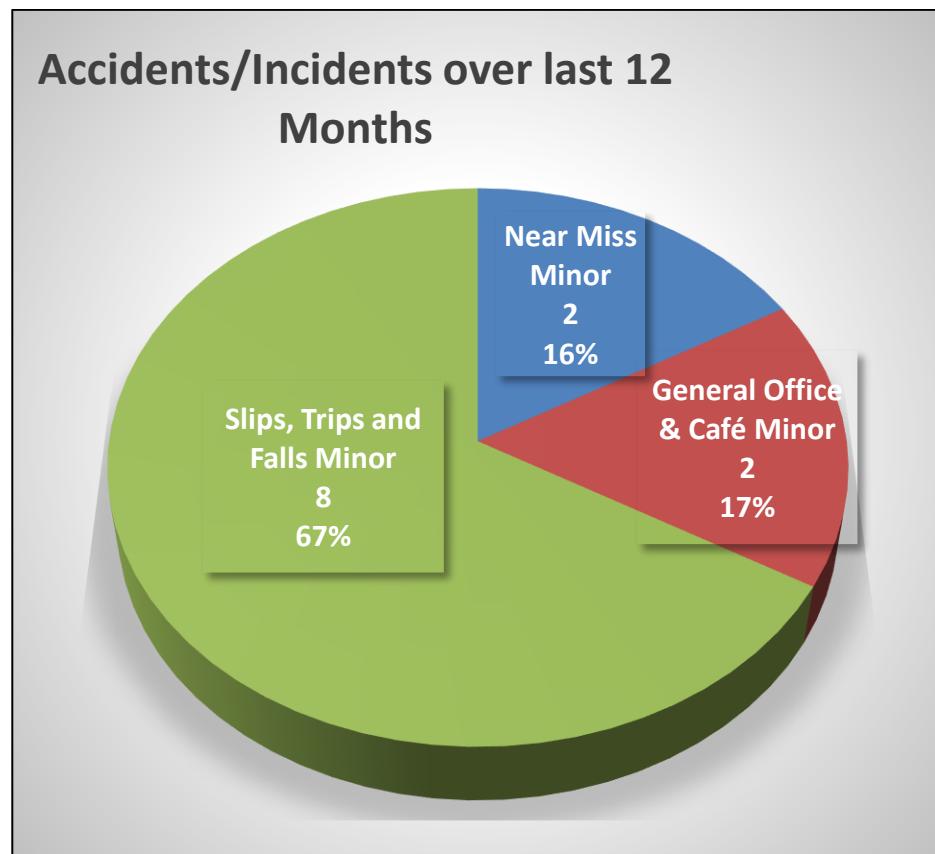
A two-day LANTRA Awards Technical Tractor Driving Course has been successfully completed by three members of the Operations Team and the Green Spaces Operative. The training also covered the safe and effective use of the front loader and flail mower. This qualification ensures that the team can carry out maintenance work within the Council's green spaces safely, competently, and in accordance with required standards.

One new member of the Café team has recently achieved Food Safety Level 2 certification.

Health and Safety incidents

- RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations)
 - No reportable incidents.

- Accidents/Incident
 - Two staff reported accidents/incidents have occurred since the last meeting consisting of the following category and severity:
 - Slips, trips and falls - Minor.
- Near Miss
 - There have been no reported near misses since the last meeting.



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) Ensuring equality in health and safety measures so that all individuals, regardless of their background, job role, or personal circumstances, have equal access to a safe and healthy environment.
- b) Biodiversity plays a crucial role in health and safety measures, influencing public health, workplace safety, and overall environmental well-being.
- c) Crime and disorder pose risks to health and safety in workplaces, public spaces, and healthcare settings. Issues such as violence, theft, and vandalism can compromise safety measures.
- d) The Environment & Climate Emergency is a critical issue that directly impacts health and safety measures in workplaces and communities. It is important to integrate

environmental and climate considerations into the council's health and safety policies to protect workers, reduce environmental hazards, and build resilience against climate-related risks.

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.

All accidents and incidents are properly documented and investigated with measures put in place in order to prevent reoccurrences.

Social Value

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

There are the broader benefits that the Council generates for employees and the public embedding a safer, healthier, and more productive workforce.

Financial implications

The Council makes budgetary provision in order to carry out its obligations in relation to its statutory compliance checks using external contractors to certify the work accordingly.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.

Vandalism/Anti-Social Behaviour

9 Dec 2025 – 16 Feb 2026

| Date | Item/Location | Date/Time/Who Reported | Materials Cost | Staffing Costs | Action | Police Reference |
|-------|--|------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------|----------------------------|
| 23/12 | Theft Windrush Cemetery | Senior Admin | Nil | Nil | n/a | INC-20251223-0634 |
| 15/01 | Two dog bins destroyed- The Leys | HE&O | | | | No info at time of writing |
| 26/01 | ASB at Works Team compound in the West Witney car park | Project Officer | | | | No info at time of writing |
| | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | |

Cost can include replacement purchase or an approximation of additional staffing costs.

Witney Town Council – Calendar of Meetings 2026-27

| | | All meetings held at the Corn Exchange, Witney unless otherwise stated on the published Agenda | | | | | | |
|--|-----|--|--|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT | 6pm | Tuesday | 21 April 12 May 2 Jun 23 Jun* | 14 Jul 4 Aug 25 Aug 15 Sep 6 Oct* | 27 Oct 17 Nov* | 8 Dec 5 Jan 26 Jan* | 23 Feb 16 Mar 13 Apr | 27 Apr |
| CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY | 6pm | Tuesday | 19 May | 8 Sep | | 12 Jan | | |
| PARKS & RECREATION | 6pm | | 1 Jun | 7 Sep | 2 Nov | 11 Jan | 8 Mar | <i>Town Council Elections 6 May 2027</i> |
| HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS | 6pm | | 8 Jun | 14 Sep | 9 Nov | 18 Jan | 15 Mar | |
| STRONGER COMMUNITIES | 6pm | | 15 Jun | 21 Sep | 16 Nov | 25 Jan | 22 Mar | |
| POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE (& Personnel sub-committee) | 6pm | | 22 Jun | 28 Sep | 23 Nov | 1 Feb | 12 Apr | |
| COUNCIL | 7pm | Monday | 22 Jun*** 13 Jul | 12 Oct | 7 Dec 14 Dec ** 4 Jan ~ | 22 Feb | 26 Apr | |

Annual Council Meeting – Wednesday 19 May 2027

Annual Town Meeting – Wednesday 24 Mar 2027

NOTE: CHRISTMAS BREAK – Meetings will not be called between 14 Dec 2026 and 04 Jan 2027 unless deemed necessary

* Indicates Full Planning & Development Committee Meeting, including minutes which will be held 'in person' with other planning meetings being held online.

** Meeting on 14 Dec 2026 for budget purposes only

× Meeting outside of normal schedule due to Bank Holiday

*** Meeting for adoption of AGAR

~ For Budget Precept Sign Off

Witney Traffic Advisory Committee at 3.00pm – 29 June 2026, 22 Sept 2026, 12 Jan 2027 & 23 March 2027

[Download the Calendar dates](#)

FULL COUNCIL



Agenda Item: Governance – Register of Interests, Hospitality & Data Protection

Meeting Date: Monday, 16 February 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to remind Members of their obligations concerning register of interests, declarations of hospitality and data protection.

Background

Members' Register of Interests

The *Local Government Act 2000* and *Localism Act 2011* dictate rules on this and set out that all elected town and parish councillors must complete a register of interests' form. This form should detail any financial or other interests that might cause a conflict of interest in their Councillor duties.

Councillors are required to register their interests within 28 days of taking office. They must also keep their statutory register updated, notifying the Town Clerk and District Council's Monitoring Officer of any changes within 28 days of their occurrence.

Additionally, councillors must declare any interests in matters discussed at council meetings. This declaration is made through their general declaration form, or at Council, or committee meetings they attend. Parish and Town Councils are required to publish the register on their own website, if they have one.

Hospitality & Gifts

Witney Town Council has an adopted Code of Conduct, as set out in The Localism Act 2011. The Code of Conduct states Councillors:

- 8.1 *Shall not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.*
- 8.2 *Shall register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.*
- 8.3 *Shall register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that they have been offered but have refused to accept.*

Members should report any Gifts or Hospitality received which exceed £50 to the Town Clerk within 28 days of the occurrence in the first instance.

Data Protection

The Town Council must ensure it adheres to the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Witney Town Council as a corporate body is a Data Controller for all the personal data which is processed for Council activities and has a collective responsibility for ensuring compliance with this legislation.

There are policies, privacy notices, a data map for processing in place and training is provided to staff and Councillors. The Council's current policies and Privacy Notice can be found [here](#)

Members were provided with data protection information in their Councillor Induction packs and have been offered data protection training since that time. As a general reminder:

- Personal data is information about a living person, that can identify them either directly or indirectly.
- Processing is anything done with or to personal data, including collecting, using, storing and deleting it
- The data subject is the person about whom personal data is processed e.g. a resident
- The data controller is the person or organisation who determines the 'how and what' of data processing.

Current Situation

The Council has recently reviewed both its Privacy Policy and IT Policy, both of which contribute to fulfilling the Council's data protection obligations. Generic signatures have also been added to Members' Council email address correspondence.

Members are reminded of their individual obligations with processing personal data, as data collected in the role of Councillor is subject to data protection legislation.

Members are likely to have three roles where processing the personal data of others and must be cautious, particularly regarding 'sensitive data'.

- Member of the Council
Councillors make use of personal data provided by the Council when acting as a member of the Council, for example, as a member of a committee. In this circumstance the Council is the registered data controller. Personal information held by the Council will not be used for political purposes unless both the Council and the individuals concerned provide consent.
- Ward Councillor
Councillors use personal case work material in their own right when they are acting as a representative of residents of their ward, for example, in dealing with complaints. All

Councillors are required to take the context in which personal information is collected to decide whether their use of the information will be fair and lawful.

- **Political Party**

Councillors access, collect and deploy personal data through their political campaigning, particularly at election time. In this circumstance, the political party will be the data controller. When campaigning for election as the representative of a political party, candidates can use personal information, such as mailing lists, legitimately held by their parties. However, personal information they hold in their role as representative of local residents, such as complaints casework, will not be used without the consent of the individual

Personal data should only be kept as long as necessary, it cannot be kept 'in case' you need it. Once a subject has been dealt with, all personal data should be deleted. Please remember WhatsApp messages as part of any formal group, are subject to Data Subject Access and Freedom of Information requests.

Dual/Triple-hatted Members

Each individual Authority has its own privacy notice which sets out what data it processes and why. These will all be different as each Council has separate remits.

If contacted from a resident on your Town Council platform on a non- town council related issue, please reply to them on the email address for the Authority which is responsible and explain this to the resident. Please then delete from the town council platform.

Training

Members are asked to advise the Deputy Town Clerk immediately if they have any data protection training requirements, have any issues or believe there has been a data breach of Council information.

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 – no direct implications.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

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.

Personal/reputational risk to Members should they break they fail to update their register of interests, advise of hospitality provided. Failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Reputational/financial risk to the Council as a corporate body if data protection laws are not adhered to. Members are reminded the Council has a training budget and if any Councillor does not understand their obligations, they should ask for training.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

There are no financial implications pertaining to this report.

Recommendations

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

1. That, Members note their obligations regarding Register of Interests,
2. That, Members note their obligations regarding Gifts & Hospitality,
3. That, Members note their obligations regarding Data Protection.

5 JANUARY 2026

OPEN LETTER: STRONGER VOICES, STRONGER GOVERNANCE AND STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

I am honoured and excited to be elected as chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) at such a pivotal moment for our sector. I am grateful for the trust placed in me by county association representatives on our National Assembly and optimistic about what we can achieve together.

I want to pay tribute to the late Keith Stevens for his leadership, dedication and commitment. He leaves a lasting legacy and solid foundations on which we can continue to build. I am conscious of the responsibility that comes with following in his footsteps.

Parish and town councils are the bedrock of community life across England. They are an invaluable asset to our country, essential to strong local government and paramount to the success of devolution. At a time of significant change, it is more important than ever that our collective voice is heard. As your chair, I am determined to ensure that voice is stronger, louder and more influential at every level of government.

Across the country, parish and town councils are stepping up to meet growing expectations and increasing responsibilities. Many are taking on new assets and services, responding to financial pressures, and navigating the impacts of local government reorganisation. They are doing so with resilience, innovation and a deep commitment to their communities. NALC must continue to step up alongside them, shaping the national conversation about the vital role of grassroots local government and championing high standards across our sector.

Stronger governance will be central to this work. We must continue to drive forward good governance in parish and town councils, from financial accountability and transparency to professionalism and the highest standards of ethical leadership. It is the cornerstone of our credibility. It means supporting parish and town councils and councillors with clear advice and guidance, training and access to best practices, while also ensuring that NALC itself remains transparent, accountable and responsive to its members.

As we move forward, I will continue to champion a culture of respect, compassion and care within our sector. Councillors balance public service with demanding personal and professional responsibilities, while clerks and

council staff work tirelessly behind the scenes. We must recognise that dedication and support the wellbeing of those who serve residents every day. Strong parish and town councils rely on strong people, and we must never lose sight of that truth.

Looking ahead, NALC and county associations have a critical role to play in helping parish and town councils prepare for the future. From digital transformation and climate adaptation to community resilience and new service models, the challenges and opportunities facing our sector are evolving rapidly. We must anticipate change, share learning widely and ensure that councils of every size are equipped to thrive and remain at the heart of local decision-making.

Strong partnerships will underpin our success. The relationship between NALC, county associations and parish and town councils is fundamental. I am committed to strengthening communication, engagement, and working better across our network. One size does not fit all, and our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We must all continue to listen carefully, respond constructively and ensure our sector feels connected, represented and supported. It will also require continued engagement with sector bodies, stakeholders and partner organisations.

These priorities, stronger voices, stronger governance and stronger partnerships, will guide my approach as chair and shape how NALC supports parish and town councils at every level. Working with the vice-chairs, Cllr Sue Baxter and Cllr David Francis, and the National Assembly, I look forward to building an effective and inclusive organisation that equips councils and county associations to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

By strengthening our voices, our governance and our partnerships, we can ensure that parish and town councils remain a powerful force for the communities they serve. Thank you for placing your trust in me. I look forward to working with you all as we shape the future of our sector together.

Cllr Iain Hamilton
Chair



The [**Improvement and Development Board**](#) has introduced the Councillor's Statement of Assurance. This initiative strengthens our commitment to creating positive, supportive and respectful parish and town council environments.

While parish and town councils can demonstrate their organisational commitment by signing the [**Civility and Respect Pledge**](#), councillors themselves must also personally commit to upholding these values in their daily work and interactions.

Councillors who lead with civility and respect set the tone for their council and help ensure that council meetings and decision-making are effective, inclusive and fair.

The statement is not a legal document or contractual obligation. It is a public affirmation of personal values and conduct.

Together, the Councillor's Statement of Assurance and the Civility and Respect Pledge give parish and town councils and councillors the tools to create a positive and professional culture.

Simply download the editable PDF form below, fill in your details and declaration, then save and return the completed statement to your parish or town council



Appendix

Civility & Respect

IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

Councillor's Statement of Assurance

I confirm that I have read the council's Code of Conduct, including the principles of public life, and understand my obligations and the behaviour expected of me whenever I am acting as a councillor.

Understanding my duties as a councillor, I will adopt the principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. I will also:

- Behave respectfully towards others, including those I disagree with.
- Uphold the values identified in my council's Code of Conduct.
- Attend training required by the council as part of my role as a councillor.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

From: Andrew Brown
Sent: 02 February 2026 13:10
To: Sharon Groth
Subject: Request for a Community Governance Review

Dear Sharon Groth,

Thank you for your email to the Chief Executive dated 5 January 2026 (ref: A6) requesting a Community Governance Review (CGR) to consider the boundaries of the Witney Town Council civil parish area.

You may be aware that the Council passed an amended CGR motion last week which commits the Council to "consider undertaking a Community Governance Review focused specifically on parish and town boundary arrangements across West Oxfordshire".

The intention is to bring forward a report to members with advice on undertaking a CGR including a scope, timetable, resource requirements and consultation plan, once the LGR model for Oxfordshire has been decided.

Your request is being considered as part of a larger process in the context of local government reorganisation, and we will be in touch again in due course.

With best wishes,

Andrew

Andrew Brown
Head of Democratic and Electoral Services (Shared)



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

www.westoxon.gov.uk
