

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 13 April 2026

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

Present:

Councillor J Doughty (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

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| Councillors: | O Collins | G Doughty |
| | J Aitman | D Edwards-Hughes |
| | T Ashby | D Newcombe |
| | D Enright | J Robertshaw |
| | R Smith | S Simpson |
| | A Mubin | J Treloar |
| | R Crouch | |
| Officers: | Derek Mackenzie | Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |
| | Mark Lewis | Head of Estates & Operations |
| | Nigel Warner | Responsible Financial Officer |
| Others: | PC Hannah Leggott | Thames Valley Police |

184 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Bailey. Councillor T Ashby advised he would arrive late to the meeting.

Before the formal proceedings of the meeting, the Chair read a short acknowledgement in memory of former Councillor & Mayor Clive Knowles, following which the Council observed a minute's silence.

185 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

186 **MINUTES**

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

187 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

188 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Council received a verbal update from PC Hannah Leggott of Thames Valley Police (TVP) on current policing matters in Witney.

PC Leggott advised that TVP had experienced no significant concerns locally and reported that the recent Easter period had passed without any notable issues, which was welcomed by Members. She also outlined recent community engagement via the two "Have a Go" days held by TVP, one at The Leys in Witney and another in Carterton.

Members then raised a number of questions to PC Leggott.

In response to a query regarding TVP's flag policy, PC Leggott explained that flags displayed on the public highway fell within the remit of OCC as the Highway Authority. Police only become involved where there was a risk to public safety, or where matters such as hate-related incidents arose.

Concerns were raised regarding three recent events held on Church Green by a group targeting teenagers, particularly in relation a monthly charge reportedly made to attendees and the distribution of multivitamins. PC Leggott confirmed TVP were aware of this activity and advised that their Schools Officer was actively reviewing the matter.

Members also raised concerns regarding individuals posing as veterans in and around the Woolgate area. PC Leggott confirmed that TVP was aware of the issue and that officers had attended and moved individuals on approximately three weeks prior. She was not aware of this being an ongoing issue, however encouraged further reporting should the behaviour continue.

A question was raised regarding whether the police station in Witney was currently manned, following a report that a member of the public had used the external telephone but received no immediate answer. Members heard that the telephone was connected to the TVP central call centre rather than directly to the station itself. Whilst there may occasionally be a delay, all calls were routed to that manned facility.

In response to a question on shoplifting, PC Leggott advised that offenders involved in recent incidents were typically individuals travelling into the town specifically to carry out this activity.

With regard to anti-social behaviour, PC Leggott responded that current levels were not considered high, although she acknowledged that such incidents were never pleasant for those affected.

A Member formally thanked Thames Valley Police for their persistence in addressing drug dealing activity in and around the Cogges estate.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

*Cllr T Ashby arrived at 7:16pm
PC Leggott left the meeting at 7:18pm*

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

Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr J Robertshaw provided an update on the progress of pothole repairs across the area and advised that a review of booking for the recycling centre provision was being sought. He also confirmed that highway works at Shores Green were progressing well and remained on track for completion in June.

West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr R Crouch advised that work on achieving Council of Sanctuary status was nearing completion and was expected to formally commence shortly. She also reported that the Ukraine resettlement and support programme was due to come to an end in November.

Cllr D Enright updated Members on activity at Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre, noting the introduction of bright, colourful umbrella displays which had enhanced the appearance of the area. He also advised that plans were being developed to review the public spaces within the centre, with a view to providing additional seating and planting, including improvements to under-utilised grassed areas. Members also heard that a successful Easter period had been experienced, including the delivery of an Easter egg hunt.

In response to this update, Cllr J Treloar asked that the lighting within the multi-storey car park be reviewed, having observed areas where it appeared to be underperforming.

Cllr R Smith advised that a business rates motion had been brought at West Oxfordshire District Council, resulting in a decision to review discounts for local businesses. She also highlighted plans for improved education and communication with businesses to provide greater clarity on how business rates were calculated. Additionally, she reported that the Local Plan 2043 remained on track, with a target for delivery in summer/autumn.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

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

Witney & District Twinning Association

Cllr R Crouch provided an update which advised members that representatives in Le Touquet had established a dedicated team to promote and support the twinning relationship. A request was made for consideration to be given to the procurement of suitable gifts for the Mayor to present during official visits.

Members were also advised that limited information was available regarding the proposed visit of delegates from Le Touquet and Underhaching over the May bank holiday so it remained unclear whether an informal drinks reception would be required. It was hoped that confirmation would be received by 17 April.

Additionally, it was advised that Korbinian Rausch had been elected as the new Mayor of Unterhaching, appointed for a seven-year term from 4th May.

Witney Town Charity

Cllr R Crouch advised that the Charity continued to carry out regular inspections of the Almshouses to identify and address any issues affecting residents.

RAF Brize Norton Local Consultation Group

Cllr D Newcombe advised that two forthcoming events were planned for April. One event would promote the 30th Anniversary of the Tactical Medical Wing to which all members had been invited, while the other would provide an update on the extensive runway improvement works that were continuing at the base.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

191 **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 17 FEBRUARY, 10 MARCH & 31 MARCH 2026**

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

Cllr J Treloar noted he was omitted from the attendees list for the meeting of 10 March.

Resolved:

1. That, the Cllr Treloar be added to the attendee list for 10 March 2026 and,
2. That, the minutes of the Planning & Development Committee held on 17 February, 10 March & 31 March 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

192 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 9TH MARCH**

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

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee held on 9 March 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

193 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 16TH MARCH**

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 held on 16 March 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

194 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 23RD MARCH**

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

SC147 – Members were updated that the Deputy Town Clerk would be reviewing the information gathered regarding the delivery of the newsletter.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 23 March 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

195 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 30TH MARCH**

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

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee held on 30 March 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

196 **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2026**

The Council received the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 18 March.

The Chair expressed his thanks to the Councillors who had attended and advised Members that it had been the best attended in the past 20 years.

The Committee Clerk provided a verbal update of the action taken as a result of questions that arose in the meeting which had been passed to other organisations for actioning and advised that Officers would publish updates to residents.

Additionally, in response to a Members question, it was confirmed that Officers were looking into the potential of a youth-based politics event to be held to garner younger residents' views.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 18 March be noted and,
2. That, the verbal update be noted and updates publicised in the most appropriate way.

197 **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 Deputy Mayor also took the opportunity to specifically highlight and congratulate Volunteer Link-Up on achieving its recent Kings Award. Members heard that this reflected a significant level of long-term commitment, collaboration and sustained effort by the volunteers to achieve. Members recognised this a testament to the dedication and positive impact of the volunteers within the community, and the Council noted their appreciation for their work.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

198 **MAYOR ELECT**

The Chair, Cllr J Doughty invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year.

Cllr R Smith proposed, seconded by Cllr J Treloar that Deputy Mayor Cllr J Doughty serve as Town Mayor. With no further nomination's forthcoming, it was therefore duly agreed that Cllr Jane Doughty be Mayor Elect by the Council for the municipal year 2026/2027

Resolved:

That, Cllr Jane Doughty be Mayor Elect/Designate for the ensuing municipal year.

199 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received the report of Compliance & Environment Officer along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations concerning current Health & Safety matters.

The HE&O highlighted the outcome of recent Health & Safety checks at Tower Hill Chapel. These identified the need to introduce a formal booking arrangement for the building in order to ensure its use was properly recorded and managed. Members noted that this was necessary to maintain appropriate oversight and compliance with Health & Safety requirements.

Members were advised that the Health & Safety Policy Statement had been updated, including a change to the Council's appointed Health & Safety Advisor and it was explicitly emphasised that Health & Safety was the responsibility of the Council. Members unanimously agreed the adoption of the updated Health & Safety Policy Statement recognising their responsibilities under the Policy to support, promote and comply with the Council's Health & Safety arrangements in order to help maintain a safe working environment and mitigate risk.

Members were pleased to note an increase in the reporting of near-miss incidents, which was welcomed as a positive indication that encouragement to staff to report concerns was proving effective. It was recognised that near-miss reporting was an important mechanism for identifying potential hazards at an early stage, ensuring appropriate action could be taken and issues were not overlooked.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted; and
2. That, the updated Health & Safety Policy Statement be adopted and Members' responsibilities under the Policy be recognised.

200 **VANDALISM & ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council received the report of vandalism and anti-social behaviour that had occurred since the last meeting.

Members noted the incidents outlined and acknowledged the continued impact such behaviour can have on Council assets, staff and users, even when overall levels were not considered excessive.

The Council also heard that, upon completion of the Courtside development at The Leys, additional security measures would be introduced, including the installation of modern, high-quality CCTV. Members welcomed this improvement and noted that the enhanced security was expected to provide reassurance to users of the site and assist in the deterrence and investigation of future incidents.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

201 **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OXFORDSHIRE**

The Committee Clerk provide a verbal update advising Members that responses had been submitted in respect of all three proposed models as previously resolved by the Council. A decision was expected to be made in June or July 2026.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

202 **CIVILITY & RESPECT**

Members received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which outlined the options available to the Council in relation to the Civility & Respect initiative.

It was proposed by Cllr R Crouch, seconded by Cllr D Enright, that the Civility & Respect Pledge, as presented, be adopted and signed by all Members of the Council. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

During discussion, Members reflected on the importance of fully understanding the commitments being made when signing the pledge.

A Member raised a question regarding training. It was recognised that, whilst Council-provided training opportunities had been well supported and well attended by Members, there was currently no mandatory training that Members were required to undertake. However, it was acknowledged that some subject areas carried greater risk and importance than others, in particular GDPR and IT security training.

The Committee Clerk highlighted the availability of training opportunities for Members and advised that, should any Member feel, they would benefit from further or additional training, they should contact officers in order for this to be arranged.

Resolved:

That, the Civility & Respect Pledge be adopted and signed by all Members of the Council.

203 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no communication from the Leader.

204 **POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER - NEWSLETTER**

The Council received the latest newsletter from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Resolved:

That, the newsletter be noted.

205 **NOTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION RESULT AT LE TOUQUET**

The council received notification of the re-election of Daniel Fasquelle as Mayor of Le Touquet for a further five-year term in Witney's twinned French town of Le Touquet Paris Plage.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

206 **NATIONAL EMERGENCY BRIEFING**

The Council received and considered the correspondence relating to the *National Emergency Briefing* film.

Members noted that the film was the work of private individuals and was not produced or endorsed by any Government body.

It was further noted that a public showing of the film was scheduled to take place on 13 June in Eynsham, which some Members indicated they may attend.

Following discussion, it was proposed that consideration as to whether Witney Town Council should arrange or support a showing of the film be deferred to the Climate & Biodiversity Committee for further consideration at its meeting scheduled for 19 May. This proposal was unanimously agreed.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted; and
2. That, consideration of whether the Town Council should arrange a showing of the film be referred to the Climate & Biodiversity Committee.

207 **NOTICE OF DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT LEGAL EVENT MODIFICATION ORDER 2026**

The Council received the correspondence regarding the Notice of Definitive Map and Statement Legal Event Modification Order 2026 for Witney paths 43 and 55.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

208 **NORTH LEIGH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Council received and considered correspondence relating to the North Leigh parish Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Following discussion, it was proposed and unanimously agreed that the matter be deferred to the Planning & Development Committee for full consideration at its next meeting on 21 April 2026.

Members additionally requested that the Committee give specific consideration to any potential implications the development plan may have on the proposed Community Governance Review as part of its deliberations.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted; and
2. That, consideration of the North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan be referred to the Planning & Development Committee at its meeting on 21 April 2026, with due regard given to any implications for the Community Governance Review.

209 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no Questions for the Leader of the Council.

210 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

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: 8.21 pm

Chair