

**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)

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

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 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