

Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 2nd February, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Full Council - 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

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

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, public meetings may be filmed, audio-recorded, or photographed. Anyone intending to record the proceedings is asked, as a courtesy, to inform the Committee Clerk before the meeting begins.

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. Public Participation

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

4. **Council Budget: Revised Budget 2025/26 and Estimate 2026/27** (Pages 4 - 8)

To receive and consider the report of the RFO along with the draft revised budget for 2025/26 and the estimates for 2026/27.

a) **Minutes - 5 January 2026** (Pages 9 - 11)

To receive the draft minutes of the Extra Ordinary Council Meeting held on 5 January 2026 for information only.

5. **To formally Declare the Precept for 2026/27** (Pages 12 - 14)

To receive and consider the report of the RFO and if appropriate, declare the precept for 2026/27.

6. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

To consider and if appropriate, to pass the following resolution:

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.



Town Clerk

Members Interests & Registration Of Gifts & Hospitality

Members are reminded that any changes to the register of interests previously completed by them or any registration of Gifts or Hospitality received which exceed £50 should be reported to the Town Clerk **within 28 days** of the occurrence.

COUNCIL TAX/ PRECEPT OPTIONS

	Current	OPTION 1 +7.5%	OPTION 2 +4.91%	OPTION 3 +3.82%	OPTION 4 +4.2%
Council Tax (Band D)	£203.37	£218.63	£213.35	£211.15	£211.91
Increase per year	-	£15.26	£9.98	£7.78	£8.54
Increase per month	-	£1.27	£0.83	£0.65	£0.71

Note for information: Extract from the minutes of the meeting of 5 January 2026:

“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” and later:

“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.”

SEE MINUTES FOR FULL CONSIDERATION OF THIS MATTER.

Option 1 - Base option

Revenue requirement 2026-2027 £2,174,104

Capital

RENEWALS FUND CONTRIBUTIONS	£82,639	
WEST WITNEY LOAN REPAYMENTS	£47,575	
SPLASHPARK RENEWAL	£19,250	
PLAY EQUIPMENT	£75,000	
IMPROVEMENTS BASKETBALL KGV	£15,000	
HALLS PROPERTY	£50,000	
WORKS PLANT & EQUIPMENT	£5,961	
VEHICLE - LAKE & COUNTRY PARK	£17,800	£313,225
		<hr/>
		£2,487,329
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Council Tax £218.63

INCREASE 7.50%

Option 2 - Utilise some 25/26 savings/committed sums

Revenue requirement 26-27	£2,174,104
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Capital

RENEWALS FUND CONTRIBUTIONS	£82,639	
WEST WITNEY LOAN REPAYMENTS	£47,575	
SPLASHPARK RENEWAL	£19,250	
PLAY EQUIPMENT	£75,000	
IMPROVEMENTS BASKETBALL KGV	£15,000	
HALLS PROPERTY	£50,000	
WORKS PLANT & EQUIPMENT	£5,961	
VEHICLE - LAKE & COUNTRY PARK	£17,800	£313,225

50% of 2025-26 committed sums	-£60,078	
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Precept	<u>£2,427,251</u>	
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Council Tax	£213.35
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INCREASE	4.91%
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Change from option 1 in bold print.

Option 3 - Utilise some 25/26 savings/committed sums & fund 50% Hall works from EMRs

Revenue requirement 26-27	£2,174,104
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Capital

RENEWALS FUND CONTRIBUTIONS	£82,639	
WEST WITNEY LOAN REPAYMENTS	£47,575	
SPLASHPARK RENEWAL	£19,250	
PLAY EQUIPMENT	£75,000	
IMPROVEMENTS BASKETBALL KGV	£15,000	
HALLS PROPERTY	£25,000	
WORKS PLANT & EQUIPMENT	£5,961	
VEHICLE - LAKE & COUNTRY PARK	£17,800	£288,225
50% of 2025-26 committed sums	-£60,078	
	<u>£2,402,251</u>	

Precept	<u>£2,402,251</u>
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Council Tax	£211.15
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INCREASE	3.82%
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Change from option 1 in bold print.

Option 4 - Utilise some 25/26 savings/committed sums & fund 33% Hall works from EMRs

Council Tax at RPI for Dec.25 = +4.2%

Revenue requirement 26-27 £2,174,104

Capital

RENEWALS FUND CONTRIBUTIONS £82,639

WEST WITNEY LOAN REPAYMENTS £47,575

SPLASHPARK RENEWAL £19,250

PLAY EQUIPMENT £75,000

IMPROVEMENTS BASKETBALL KGV £15,000

HALLS PROPERTY £33,670

WORKS PLANT & EQUIPMENT £5,961

VEHICLE - LAKE & COUNTRY PARK £17,800 £296,895

50% of 2025-26 committed sums -£60,078

£2,410,921

Precept £2,410,921

Council Tax £211.91

INCREASE 4.2%

Change from option 1 in bold print.

**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)

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

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



Agenda Items: To Formally Declare the Precept 2026/27

Meeting Date: Monday 2 February 2026

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 12 noon on the day of the meeting to allow for a full response at the meeting.

Background

The purpose of this report is to outline the formal recommendation which the Council will need to approve to give the Town Clerk the authority to serve this precept.

Current Situation

Summary

Base revenue budgets have been prepared on current activities and patterns of income and expenditure. However there are major pressures across the Council budgets as a whole resulting from revenue and capital growth which will impact on precept and council tax.

In order to reduce the budget requirements your officers scrutinised the estimates for accuracy during their preparation and subsequently and also identified some potential savings in the base.

Your officers have also reviewed the position regarding reserves, both earmarked and general reserves. There is no scope for using general reserves for in-year spending, as the Council is recommended to have three months net revenue expenditure in general reserves and will be at that level by the end of the financial year. However there is some scope for prudent use of earmarked reserves.

During the cycle of meetings during November 2025 Councillors carefully considered the revenue and capital budget requirements and the Council further considered and debated matters at a meeting on 5 January 2026. At the latter meeting the Responsible Financial Officer made a presentation and following discussion Members requested that a number of options for funding the Council's 2026/27 should be brought forward to the meeting on 2 February 2026.

The report at the previous agenda item gives full details of the proposals and options.

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 implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. The RFO has approached the budget with prudence so as accurate budget as possible can be set at this early stage, although there may be some opportunities to make savings if required to balance the budget.

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council's risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council's objectives.

Financial implications

These have been detailed during the budget cycle, as well as in the previous agenda item.

The estimated tax base for 2026/27 is 11,377.10 (2025-26 – 11,298.35). This means that during 2026-27 each £1 of Council Tax in Band D would generate a precept income of £11,377.10.

The current (2025-26) Band D council tax is £203.37 per annum.

The RFO can advise Members that the 2026/27 budget estimates and the various options given in the report at the previous item are both prudent and robust. The level of reserves is adequate to support the 2026/27 financial position. With regard to the Medium-Term Financial Plan this is predicated on the Council continuing to set realistic budgets. This means that the Council will need to balance current needs and future financial stability, to ensure that adequate reserves are maintained. Therefore the Medium-Term Financial Plan/ Strategy should be further reviewed during 2026/27.

It has previously been noted that if the Council had increased the Council Tax in line with inflation during the last five years (RPI October 2019 to October 2025) the Council Tax level in Band D for 2026-27 would be £216.60.

Recommendations

Members are invited:

1. To note the report.
2. To agree the precept for 2026/27;
3. To authorise the Town Clerk 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 agreed at 2 (above) in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2026/27.