

Climate & Biodiversity Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Tuesday, 19th May, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee - S Simpson, A Mubin, D Newcombe, J Robertshaw, J Aitman, G Meadows, R Smith and J Doughty (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

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.

This meeting will be broadcast live via Microsoft Teams and recorded; by attending or participating, you consent to the recording and public sharing of audio and video, which may be made available for later viewing. For details on how personal data is handled, please see the [Privacy Notice](#)

To view the meeting please follow this link [Climate & Biodiversity Committee Meeting | Join meeting in Teams | Microsoft Teams](#)

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. Election of Vice-Chair

To elect a Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

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

5. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 8)

To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Minutes held on 13 January 2026;

Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress on any item).

6. **Finance Report (TO FOLLOW)**

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee.

7. **Committee Terms of Reference** (Pages 9 - 10)

To review the Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) if appropriate. The current TOR's are attached.

8. **Annual Residents Survey Results** (Pages 11 - 15)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the 2026 annual residents satisfaction survey for this Committee.

9. **Climate Action Plan Report (TO FOLLOW)**

To receive and consider the report of the Compliance & Environment Officer.

10. **Seasonal Planting Schemes** (Pages 16 - 20)

To receive and consider the report of the Head of Estates & Operations regarding the Autumn 2026 planting scheme.

11. **Biodiversity Update (TO FOLLOW)**

To receive and consider the report of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer.

12. **Lake & Country Park Report (TO FOLLOW)**

To receive and consider the report of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer.

13. **National Emergency Briefing** (Pages 21 - 22)

To consider the showing of the [National Emergency Briefing film](#) in the Corn Exchange. (Full Council Minute 206 13.04.2026 Refers)

14. **DEFRA Biodiversity Consultation** (Page 23)

To receive correspondence from NALC and consider a response to the DEFRA Biodiversity Net Gain for brownfield consultation.



Town Clerk

Agenda Item 5

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

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Terms of Reference
Meeting Date:	Tuesday, 19 th May 2026
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is for Members to review and recommend terms of reference for the Committee for the forthcoming municipal year.

Background

At the Annual Council Meeting held on 6th May 2026, it was resolved that terms of reference for each Committee would be reviewed at each meeting in the current meeting cycle.

Current Situation

The current terms of reference for this Committee are:

- a) To work to achieve energy efficiencies and net zero carbon emissions in the Council's operations and facilities by 2028, in line with the Council's Climate Emergency resolution made in June 2019;
- b) To manage the Council's Environmental Spaces, including Amenity Areas, Witney Lake and Country Park, Tiny Forest and Community Orchards (except recreation grounds);
- c) To oversee the management of the Council's tree stock across the town;
- d) To engage with Central Government, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, local Oxfordshire organisations, relevant stake holders and other organisations to initiate local action on climate change (towards achieving net zero carbon emissions) air & water pollution, and other environmental issues within the town;
- e) To encourage biodiversity and healthy recreation in the environmental spaces;
- f) To explore and promote the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy;
- g) To identify ways for event's organisers to reduce the carbon footprint of events held on council ground. Any financial or policy change implications should be recommended to the Council;
- h) To oversee the maintenance of the Council's infrastructure concerning planting displays (including hanging baskets);
- i) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Town Mayor and the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights;
- j) The quorum of the committee shall be 4 members.

The Committee is asked if it would like to make any amendments to the terms for the forthcoming municipal year The Committee may like to consider the following changes/additions:

- k) To oversee the work of the Council's Climate Action Working Party.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

7. A Green & Resilient Town

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 - see text in the report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - see text in the report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Without clear terms of reference, Council committees risk role confusion, weak accountability, legal challenges, inefficient decision-making, and poor alignment with Council objectives. Clear and regularly reviewed terms of reference are essential for accountable, transparent, and effective committee operations.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

- The work of the Committee is funded from pre-defined budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Review the terms of reference; and
2. Consider any changes to the terms of reference; and
3. Recommend such changes be made to Full Council on 13th July 2026.



CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Annual Resident's Survey 2026

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 19 May 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to present Members with the results of the annual residents' satisfaction survey, conducted between February and May, regarding services overseen by this Committee.

Background

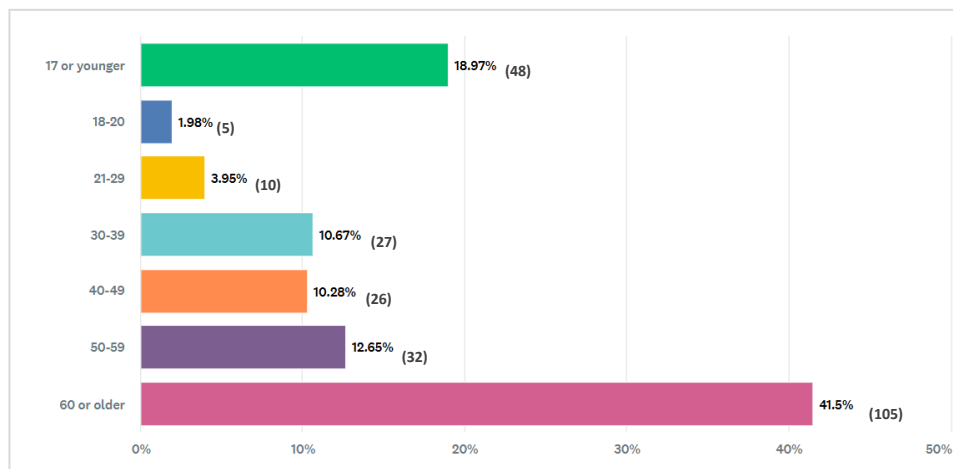
The survey was sent to every household in the post and was promoted online via social media and in the local secondary schools; 272 responses were received in total.

While the number of responses is a very small percentage of the population, the results are still an important resource in advising the Council in which areas projects, communications, and future spending should be considered and what matters to residents.

Current Situation

Responses from younger residents were noticeably lower this year, with participation from school-aged respondents (18 and under) decreasing from around 186 responses in 2024 and 122 responses in 2025 to 48 responses in 2026.

Respondent Age Demographics



Survey Scores Overall

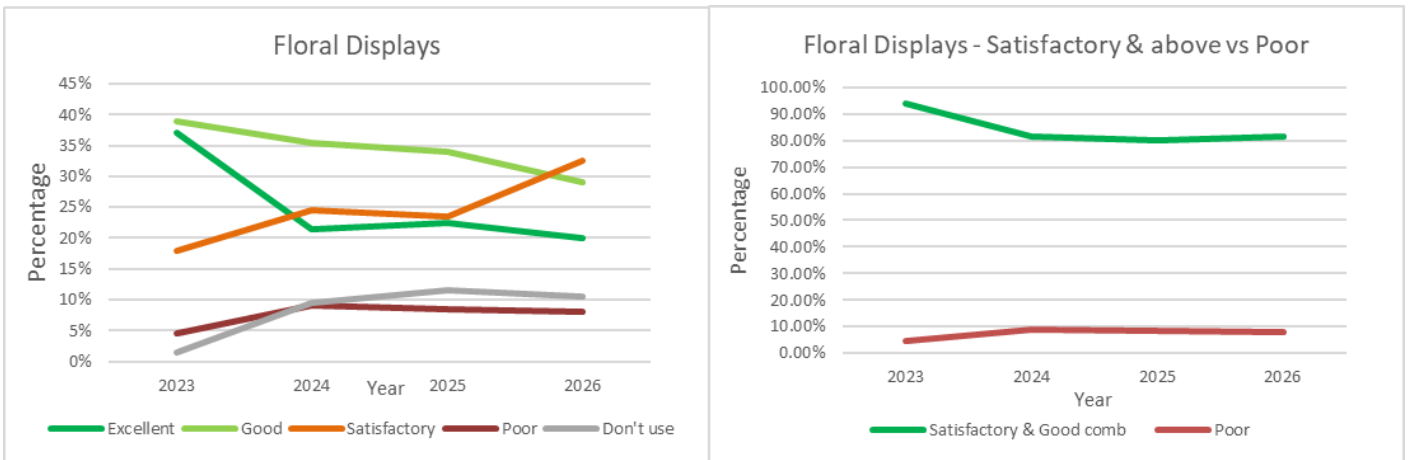
The following table shows how the services scored overall in the survey (with percentages rounded).

As a comparison, the figures/percentages from the previous three years' surveys are included.

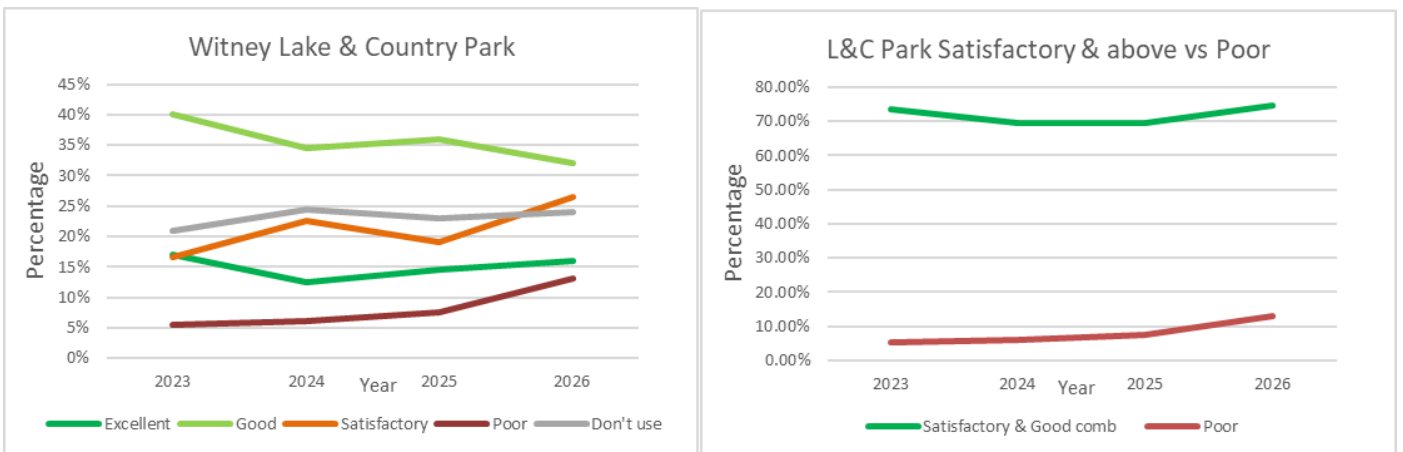
Service		Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	% comb	Poor	Don't use	Resp
Floral Displays (including Hanging Baskets)	2026	20% (55)	29% (79)	32.5% (88)	81.50%	8% (22)	10.5% (28)	272
	2025	22.5 (77)	34% (116)	23.5% (80)	80.0%	8.5% (29)	11.5% (39)	341
	2024	21.5% (92)	35.5% (153)	24.5% (107)	81.5%	9% (40)	9.5% (42)	434
	2023	37% (80)	39% (85)	18% (39)	94.0%	4.5% (10)	1.5% (3)	217
Witney Lake & Country Park	2026	16% (53)	32% (86)	26.5% (72)	74.50%	13% (35)	24% (66)	272
	2025	14.5% (50)	36% (123)	19% (65)	69.5%	7.5% (25)	23% (80)	343
	2024	12.5% (54)	34.5% (150)	22.5% (99)	69.5%	6% (27)	24.5% (106)	436
	2023	17% (37)	40% (88)	16.5% (36)	73.5%	5.5% (12)	21% (46)	219

The following graphs track performance over the previous four years for these services in the previous three years.

Floral Displays infographics



Witney Lake & Country Park infographics



Comments

In addition to the results above, the survey also welcomes specific comments, all of which relating to this Committee can be seen below:

- “I’m a student at Woodgreen, I have lived in Witney since I was born. I’ve found that it is so much nicer going on walks here than I thought, because of the gorgeous places to walk like Witney lake, and the flowers that just liven up everything in a wonderful way. I’m really grateful that everyone in town is so kind and approachable and I like to go to the park all the time with my friends”
- “I think the grass cutting was a better standard when the contractors did it with reel mowers. The lake was better when bikes were banned. Putting picnic tables there has encouraged people to set fires/BBQs. The churchyard was much nicer when it was cared for properly -now it just looks neglected, which is disrespectful to those interred there. Money spent on flowerbeds would be better spent on mowing verges & weed killer for pavements, even if it isn't really your job - it is our town. Every year the hedge on Station Lane blocks the footpath. Please cut it back, it is perfectly legal to do so, the ban only applies to farmers.”
- “Witney floral displays are lovely. Tasteful colours. Not garish. Well done to those involved!”
- “Floral displays are fine, but need more on roundabouts - they're a mess! Tower hill and Deer Park specifically. Town council need to get their finger out of the country park and make our town look pretty again.”
- “A number of the planters in the town filled with water over winter. Witney Lakes obviously faces challenges with spill over from the river this makes using the path on a mobility scooter or wheelchair uncomfortable and difficult. I'm also concerned at the ecology of the lake given the amount of sewage in our rivers. Access to Witney Lake from the town is unpleasant and off putting/feels unsafe to a woman on her own.”
- “Everything is good but we don't shout about it. Things could be better, like the lakes signage to and from, events in Witney to get involved in”
- “The Lake & Country Park need rethinking.”
- “Due to flooding Witney Lake isn't accessible during periods of heavy rain. It would be appreciated if this could be looked at so that the lake walk is accessible all year round.”
- “Please stop spending my money pollarding trees that belong to the Church, whilst those on council land are left to fall & block the river, increasing the flood risk. Please also [stop filling the potholes at the lake] with sand is a waste of time & money.

- “Really [need] somewhere to lock your bike up at Witney Lake”
- “The flower baskets and displays always make my day when I see them”
- “Would love to see more creative use of formalised flower beds from rows of annuals constantly replaced to borders using perennials and shrubs as well. Lovely wildflowers on Welch way island!”
- “We are fortunate in having several open/natural grassed spaces nearby and we hope they are maintained for the future. It is however a huge disappointing that these grassed areas and wildflowers are regularly mown down by over-zealous council contractors during the summer discouraging wildflower growth and the support of pollinators, insects, birds and small mammals.

Corporate Strategy

The Council’s Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council’s long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to ‘make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.’ This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

Impact Assessments

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

- a) Equality - The residents’ survey helps identify service inequalities and amplify underrepresented voices, supporting fairer, more inclusive decision-making. It may also highlight items which need addressing under the Equality Act 2010.
- b) Biodiversity - The Council must ensure any issues are dealt with in line with biodiversity legislation and its own policy.
- c) Crime & Disorder - The survey provides the ability to highlight concerns about safety and anti-social behaviour. The survey can inform targeted responses, resource allocation, and partnership working with police and community safety teams. It may help identify hotspots, vulnerable groups, and areas needing intervention such as the cemeteries.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The survey supports the Council’s climate emergency commitments by ensuring resident feedback can help shape relevant policies and actions.

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.

There is a reputational risk if the Council does not address comments received in its satisfaction survey as it will be seen as not listening to residents.

The Council’s committees will have competing demands on the overall Council budget, so any

additional project funding has to be balanced and proportionate. Additions should be in line with Councils objectives and adopted policies/strategies.

Social Value

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

Listening to residents' feedback on Council services delivers significant social value by showing empowerment, inclusion, trust, and community wellbeing; It affirms that their opinions matter and helps build a sense of respect and transparency. This is especially important for the Council, where inclusive decision-making ensures diverse needs are reflected in service design and delivery.

Internally, it supports continuous improvement across the Council's services and helps identify future objectives thereby demonstrating meaningful change.

Financial implications

- There are no new implications from the contents of this report at this point. The Committee may like to consider further projects based on the feedback or increasing/creating budgets for any item.

Recommendations

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

1. What action is required from the results of the survey for services under the remit of this Committee.

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Seasonal Planting Strategy
Meeting Date:	19 May 2026
Contact Officer:	Head of Estates and Operations

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Seasonal Planting Strategy of floral displays within Witney Town Council's portfolio.

The Council recognises that floral displays contribute significantly to the appearance and character of the town. The council's objective is to create attractive, sustainable, biodiverse, and climate-resilient floral displays across Witney that enhance civic pride, support wildlife, improve wellbeing, and provide value for money through a balanced approach combining seasonal bedding and perennial planting.

Background

The Council cares for over 12 hectares of public open spaces, including parks, small green areas, flower beds, and shrubs. Seasonal floral displays including hanging baskets, lamp post brackets, and mounted floral standards bring colour to the town throughout the year.

Public green spaces play an important role in improving the appearance of communities, supporting biodiversity, and enhancing wellbeing.

The committee's decision in January 2026 was to move towards a mixed approach to planting combining perennials and bedding plants from the autumn onwards.

Current Situation

Witney Town Council Seasonal Flower Planting Strategy

Witney Town Council aims to create vibrant, colourful, sustainable, and biodiverse floral displays that enhance civic pride, strengthen the town's identity, and improve the appearance of parks and public spaces throughout the year.

Floral displays are recognised as an important feature of the town, contributing positively to the experience of residents, businesses, and visitors while also supporting wildlife and environmental sustainability.

The strategy seeks to ensure that planting schemes are visually striking and memorable, helping Witney stand out as an attractive and welcoming market town, whilst balancing environmental responsibilities and long-term financial sustainability.

Strategic Objectives

The Council will maintain bright and attractive floral displays in key locations while increasing the use of sustainable perennial planting across suitable public spaces. Planting schemes should provide colour, texture, and visual interest throughout the seasons and contribute positively to the character of the town.

The strategy also aims to support pollinators and biodiversity, reduce long-term maintenance requirements, and improve climate resilience through more sustainable planting practices. Annual themes and commemorative displays may continue to be incorporated where appropriate to celebrate civic events and important occasions.

Strategic Planting Approach

Witney Town Council will continue to adopt a balanced planting model that combines seasonal bedding in high-profile locations with perennial planting in parks, verges, and wider green spaces.

Seasonal bedding will continue to play an important role within the town centre, memorial areas, hanging baskets, gateways, and other prominent civic spaces where bold colour and immediate visual impact are desirable. These displays help create a welcoming environment and contribute to the town's overall attractiveness.

Perennial planting will increasingly be used within parks, road verges, roundabouts, and green corridors where longer-lasting planting schemes can provide colour over extended periods while improving biodiversity and reducing maintenance requirements.

All planting schemes should be designed to maximise visual impact through strong colour combinations, varied textures, and long flowering periods. The Council recognises that sustainability improvements should not result in displays appearing dull or neglected, and planting designs should therefore remain vibrant, attractive, and well-maintained throughout the year.

Seasonal Planting Framework

Spring and Summer Displays

Spring and Summer planting should focus on delivering bold and colourful displays that enhance public spaces and create a positive impression for residents and visitors. Seasonal bedding plants such as antirrhinums, begonias, geraniums, petunias, cosmos, and marigolds will continue to provide strong seasonal colour in focal areas.

Perennial planting will increasingly be integrated into these schemes through the use of species such as lavender, rudbeckia, salvia, echinacea, sedum, penstemon, and ornamental grasses. These plants not only provide extended flowering periods and visual structure, but also improve biodiversity and drought tolerance.

Planting designs should ensure that displays remain full, colourful, and visually engaging throughout the season. Hanging baskets and raised displays should continue to use cascading and trailing plants to maximise visual appeal within the town centre and other key locations.

Autumn and Winter Displays

Autumn and winter planting should continue to provide colour and structure during the darker months and prevent public spaces from appearing empty or unattractive. Winter bedding plants including pansies, violas, wallflowers, cyclamen, and polyanthus will continue to be used in prominent areas where winter colour is most valued.

These displays should increasingly be complemented by evergreen shrubs, ornamental grasses, heucheras, hebes, skimmias, and winter-flowering plants to provide year-round

interest and structure. The use of contrasting foliage colours and textured planting should help maintain visual quality during the winter season.

Location-Based Planting

High-profile civic spaces, including the town centre, memorials, entrance gateways, floral towers, and public seating areas, should continue to receive the most colourful and formal displays. These locations are important in shaping first impressions of the town and should therefore maintain a high standard of presentation and seasonal interest.

Within parks and open spaces, planting schemes should balance naturalistic perennial planting with carefully designed feature beds that continue to provide colour and visual attraction. Meadow-style planting may be introduced where appropriate, although care should be taken to ensure areas continue to appear managed and welcoming rather than neglected.

Road verges, roundabouts, and green corridors are particularly well suited to drought-tolerant perennial planting. These areas can provide waves of seasonal colour while reducing watering and maintenance requirements and improving the overall appearance of the town.

Biodiversity and Sustainability

Under the Environment Act 2021, the updated Biodiversity Duty legally requires all public authorities in England, including town and parish councils, to actively conserve and enhance biodiversity.

The Council's planting strategy will contribute positively to biodiversity and environmental sustainability while retaining strong visual appeal. Increasing the use of nectar-rich plants will support pollinators including bees and butterflies, while reduced soil disturbance and fewer seasonal replacements will help improve soil health and reduce waste.

The Council will continue seeking opportunities to reduce water consumption, and lower carbon emissions associated with plant production and transportation. Biodiversity-focused planting should demonstrate that environmentally sustainable landscapes can also be colourful, attractive, and beneficial to the wider community.

Annual Themes and Civic Events

Seasonal displays may incorporate themes that recognise important civic events, commemorations, and celebrations throughout the year. These will include Remembrance displays and may include heritage-themed planting for national commemorations, Pride displays, royal celebrations, and environmentally themed planting schemes.

Thematic displays should be concentrated within highly visible locations to maximise their impact and should complement the wider planting strategy while remaining appropriate in scale and cost.

Equality and Community Wellbeing

The Council recognises that attractive and well-maintained public spaces contribute positively to mental wellbeing, civic pride, and community identity. Floral displays should therefore be distributed fairly across the town so that all communities can benefit from attractive and welcoming environments.

Planting schemes can also help encourage greater use of parks and public spaces, support social interaction, and improve perceptions of safety and care within the local environment.

Maintenance and Operational Considerations

The strategy seeks to maintain high visual standards while reducing unnecessary maintenance burdens over time. Increasing the use of resilient perennial planting will help reduce watering requirements, minimise seasonal replacement work, and improve the long-term sustainability of planting schemes.

The Council will continue to monitor plant performance and public feedback and may trial new drought-tolerant and long-flowering species where appropriate. Opportunities to improve storage and overwintering facilities may also be explored to support future planting efficiencies.

Monitoring and Review

The planting strategy should be reviewed annually to assess visual quality, biodiversity outcomes, maintenance costs, water usage, and public satisfaction. Planting schemes should remain flexible to allow for improvements and adjustments based on operational experience and changing environmental conditions.

A wider strategic review should take place every five years to ensure the approach continues to meet the Council's objectives and the expectations of residents and visitors.

Summary

A balanced approach that combines colourful seasonal displays with increased perennial planting is considered the most effective and sustainable strategy for Witney Town Council. This approach will maintain the town's reputation as an attractive and welcoming destination while supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, and long-term value for money.

The strategy ensures that public spaces remain vibrant, visually distinctive, and enjoyable throughout the year, helping floral displays continue to serve as an important attraction within the town and its green spaces.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

5. A Beautiful Witney

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 - is linked to seasonal floral display planting through fair access to attractive public spaces, inclusive decision-making, and representation of diverse communities. When planting is focused only on affluent or tourist areas, it can reinforce inequality.
- b) Biodiversity - seasonal floral displays in Witney are used as a tool to enhance urban biodiversity, support pollinators, and meet sustainability goals, while still improving the appearance of public spaces.

- c) Crime & Disorder - research shows that well-maintained green spaces (including parks, landscaped areas, and planted public spaces) tend to be associated with lower rates of crime and vandalism, especially when they are attractive, visible, and actively used by the community.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Local governments and environmental campaigns in the UK are responding to the climate emergency by expanding urban planting initiatives including trees, wildflowers, shrubs, and other vegetation to help mitigate climate impacts and support biodiversity.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

While perennial planting may require similar levels of initial investment, it is expected to provide improved long-term value through reduced replacement costs, lower watering requirements, and less intensive maintenance. Seasonal bedding will remain important in key locations where strong visual impact and civic presentation are priorities.

The Council will continue to seek an appropriate balance between financial sustainability, environmental responsibility, and maintaining high-quality floral displays.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report and recognise that a balanced approach prioritising the use of perennials while retaining seasonal displays in key locations is considered the most effective and sustainable strategy.

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: National Emergency Briefing

Meeting Date: 19 May 2026

Contact Officer: Committee Clerk

The purpose of this report is for Members to consider showing the National Emergency Briefing film and recommend a suitable date.

Background

At the meeting of the Council on 13 April 2026, following consideration of correspondence received, Members resolved that the decision be deferred to the Climate & Biodiversity Committee. (Full Council Minute 206 13.04.2026 Refers)

Current Situation

The National Emergency Briefing is a 50-minute film that sets out the case for urgent government action in response to the climate and nature crisis, including informing the public through a national televised briefing supported by regular updates. It advocates for a science-led emergency response to accelerate emissions reduction and improve resilience, helping to strengthen understanding of these issues at both national and local levels.

A number of community screenings are already scheduled within the local area, including Charlbury on 11 June, Eynsham on 14 June, Chipping Norton on 14 July, and St Mary's Church in Witney on 16 July. In order to complement these events and avoid duplication, whilst maximising opportunities for residents to attend, potential dates for a screening at the Corn Exchange have been identified as 27 July and 3 August, reflecting venue availability and providing a suitable gap following other local screenings.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

7. A Green & Resilient Town

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 – Showing the film supports inclusive community engagement in line with the Council’s duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- b) Biodiversity - While the proposal has no direct impact on biodiversity, it supports increased awareness of climate and nature issues, aligning with the Council’s duty to conserve and enhance the natural environment.
- c) Crime & Disorder - There are no crime and disorder implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - The proposal supports the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration by promoting awareness and community engagement on climate change and environmental issues.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

- To maximise public access, community screenings are offered free of charge
- There would be a potential staffing cost dependent on the time of the showing of the film and if the café is to be open.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Decide whether to show the film
2. If yes, when and at what time should it be scheduled.
3. Consider if the café should be open ahead of the film showing
4. Consider Inviting the Witney MP and other local influential people including journalists
5. Consider if a member of the committee should host a follow up discussion following the film for those gathered to consider how to respond to Parliament.

From: Chris Borg – Policy Manager NALC

Sent: 05 May 2026 14:00

Subject: Re: Chance to respond to DEFRA Biodiversity Net Gain for brownfield consultation.

To: CEN

Dear colleagues.

I hope you are very well. NALC is currently responding to a raft of other policy consultations so won't be responding to this one, but DEFRA have published a consultation here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/biodiversity-net-gain-considering-a-targeted-exemption-for-brownfield-residential-development>) on a potential exemption from biodiversity net gain (BNG) for certain residential developments on brownfield land. The consultation proper link is here (<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra-biodiversity-net-gain/biodiversity-net-gain-considering-a-targeted-exemp/>).

Do have a read of this document and encourage your parish or town council, or county association to respond direct if you get the chance.

Very best wishes and thanks.

Chris Borg

Policy manager

nalc

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